

## The Work We Do FAQ



### What do volunteers do?

To keep the trail open and hiker-friendly, we might do any of the following on a work day:

- **Repair of the pathway** or tread with hoes, Pulaskis, shovels and rakes.
- **Cut back brush and annual growth** with swing blades (required in Wilderness Areas) or gas powered brushcutters, loppers and pruning shears.
- **Remove downed trees**, (blowdowns) with crosscut saws (in Wilderness Areas) or chain saws in National Forests.
- **Remove branches and sticks** by dragging off trail, with rakes or simply by picking them up and throwing them off the trail - There is a job for everyone!
- **Repair water diversions** with rakes, hoes and shovels.
- **Blazing the trail** - the trail is marked with white diamond blazes painted on the trees.

While chainsaw and crosscut saw work requires skilled, certified personnel, most trail work requires simple hard work and even young people can participate.

### I have no trail maintenance experience. What would I do?

To start with you could cut back brush along the trail with loppers or pruning shears. If you are comfortable with a hoe and shovel, you could help repair the path (tread). Our goal is to find the right job for everyone and ensure you have a safe and enjoyable day.

You'll want to watch two videos prepared by the National Forest Service. They are dated but the information shared is relevant today.

[Introduction to Volunteering](#)

[Basic Trail Maintenance](#)

**I am much more of a backyard gardener and can't see myself doing this. Is there anything else I can do?**

Absolutely! We need people with basic computer skills to help with record keeping -- also photographers and people with social media expertise. If you would like to help with special events or work in our booth at a local festival, there is a job for you. We frequently need shuttle drivers as well as volunteers to prepare end of the day snacks or meals for crew members. Go to [Volunteer](#) and complete the Volunteer Interest Form at the end of the page. We'll be in contact with you.

**What do you like best about trail maintaining?**

No doubt it's being on the trail with a great bunch of people. Always making new friends and learning new skills. It's hard work but it's healthy and gives you a good workout. Also, it is so satisfying to give back and, as they say, "...leaving a path for generations to follow."

**Can young people like teenagers or even younger help out?**

Yes, we welcome them. They need to agree to follow all safety guidelines and if they do, we'll keep them busy.

**What should I bring?**

Bring a daypack, a minimum of two liters of water, a lunch / snacks, gloves and wear good sturdy shoes or hiking boots (mid-height are fine) and long pants.

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association provides helmets and tools.

**When are work days scheduled?**

Teams go out the second Saturday of every month in Georgia.

In Tennessee, we go out on the fourth Saturday of every month.

(Except for November and December ... typically the third Saturday due to the holidays).

The only reason we would cancel or reschedule is: the weather...when safety is an issue.

**How would I find out about these work days?**

You can go to [Sign Up](#) for news, updates and announcements from the Benton MacKaye Trail Association or:

Go to Facebook [Benton MacKaye Trail Association](#) and "like" and "follow" us.

Go to Facebook [Benton MacKaye Trail Maintenance](#) and "like" and "follow" us.

Go to Facebook [Benton MacKaye Trail Hikers](#), and click on "+ Join Group" to become a member.

**How does the Benton MacKaye Trail Association pay for tools, safety gear, materials and training?**

Membership dues and donations help to cover the cost of tool replacement, construction materials, training and other conservation projects on the Benton MacKaye Trail.

You can become a member today: \$15 for a Student, \$15 for a "Retired", \$20 for an Individual, \$30 for a Family and \$50 for a Business / Corporation membership. Go to this link:

[MEMBERSHIP](#).

**What are the hours for a work day?**

The work starts between 9:00 and 9:30 AM and usually runs to 3:00 -5:00 PM, depending on the planned work, the number of volunteers and conditions.

In Georgia, we commonly meet at a local restaurant for a quick breakfast and some socializing before heading to the trail.

Due to the remoteness of many sections in Tennessee, folks regularly meet at the trailhead or at a landmark to carpool in.

**Who leads these work days?**

Experienced volunteers, many certified Crew Leaders. All are certified in First Aid and have hundreds of hours of trail work under their belts. In addition, most are certified by the National Forest Service as crosscut and chainsaw sawyers.

**If I like this kind of volunteer work how could I get trained?**

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association will assist you in all stages of your training including First Aid, chainsaw and crosscut saw certification and on the field orientation.

**What happens after I am certified?**

In addition to helping out on scheduled work days, you may be assigned to be the primary maintainer for a section of the trail.

**Would I have to take this training in order to continue volunteering?**

Certainly not. There is always work -- clearing the trail, cleaning water bars and much, much more.

**Anything else I should know?**

Yes! Safety is a priority of every crew leader. The entire crew receives a Job Hazard Analysis (what needs to be done and any relevant issues) and a Safety Briefing at the beginning of every work day. In addition, you'll need to sign a waiver of liability before you start your day's work.

**What do I need to do to have my own section to maintain?**

Begin by reading these two documents.

**[What Are The Requirements of a Section Maintainer?](#) And [General Responsibilities of a Section Maintainer.](#)**

The documents should answer all your questions. When you are ready to volunteer, contact the [GA Maintenance Director](#) or the [TN/NC Maintenance Director](#).

**I am 60 years old and don't know if I can keep up with the younger members.**

If you are only 60, you'll be one of the younger members of any crew. No matter your age or trail experience, there is a job for you. Join us soon!

**Still have questions?**

Questions: Contact the [GA Maintenance Director](#) or the [TN/NC Maintenance Director](#).

**About:** The Benton MacKaye Trail is an almost 300 mile long hiking trail in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. It extends from Springer Mountain (start of the AT) to the north end of the Smoky Mountains ... a large portion of the trail goes through Wilderness.

The trail was built and is maintained by volunteer members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. We welcome everyone who wants to help maintain the BMT and we encourage you to join us on our maintenance trips!



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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