



Strategic Plan for Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA)

Time Frame: 2026 – 2030

Mission Statement:

To preserve, protect, and maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Motto:

"Leaving a footprint for generations to follow."

Executive Summary

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) has long been a dedicated steward of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), ensuring that this iconic trail remains a valuable resource for hikers, nature enthusiasts, and future generations. As we look forward to the period from 2026 to 2030, this strategic plan outlines a comprehensive roadmap to further our mission. The plan focuses on four key goals: seeking National Scenic Trail designation, maintaining a sustainable trail, strengthening partnerships, and engaging our supporters. Each goal is supported by detailed objectives and action plans designed to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the Benton MacKaye

Strategic Goals and Objectives

1. Seek National Scenic Trail Designation

Objective: Elevate the Benton MacKaye Trail to National Scenic Trail status, ensuring enhanced protection, increased recognition, and greater access to resources.

1.1 Application Process:

- o 2026-2027: Advocate legislation in the 119th Congress that establishes a feasibility study into designating the Benton MacKaye Trail a National Scenic Trail - NST Committee
- o 2026-2030: Employ Monument Advocacy Group as lobbying consultants to guide the application process through Congress - NST Committee
- o 2027-2028: Monitor progress of feasibility study - NST Committee
- o 2028-2030: Submit legislation to establish National Scenic trail status- NST Committee

1.2 Coalition Building:

- o 2026-2027: Develop an outreach plan targeting federal lawmakers, the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, local government officials, civic organizations, conservation groups, and bordering trail organizations. Host a series of roundtable discussions to align goals and strategies -NST Committee

- o 2026-2028: Conduct a public relations campaign to highlight the importance of the National Scenic Trail designation. This campaign will include press releases, social media outreach, and community events - NST Committee and Communications Director

1.3 Ongoing Advocacy:

- o 2026-2028: Continue lobbying efforts by engaging with elected officials, participating in public hearings, and mobilizing grassroots support. Monitor the progress of the application and respond to any requests for additional information or documentation - NST Committee

- 2026-2028: Participate in public hearings - NST Committee

2. Maintain a Sustainable Trail

Objective: Ensure the Benton MacKaye Trail remains a well-maintained, environmentally sustainable, and safe resource for all users.

- **2.1 Regular Trail Maintenance:**

- o **Ongoing:** Implement a schedule of regular maintenance activities, including clearing debris, repairing trail surfaces, and updating blazes and signs -Directors of Trail Maintenance
- o **2026-2030:** Expand training programs for volunteers by providing trail maintenance skills, First Aid, CPR, chainsaw, crosscut saw, blazing and signage training – Directors of Trail Maintenance

- **2.2 Trail Improvement Projects:**

- o **2026:** Conduct an assessment of the trail's infrastructure, identifying areas that require upgrades or repairs. This assessment will include trailheads, bridges, signage, and shelters with cost estimates – Directors of Trail Maintenance and Section Maintainers
- o **2027-2028:** Prioritize the identified projects based on factors such as safety, usage levels, and environmental impact. Determine funding requirements for the projects. Consider grants for funding -Directors of Trail Maintenance
- o **2028-2030:** Execute the prioritized projects. Engage local communities and volunteers in these projects to build a sense of ownership and stewardship - Directors of Trail Maintenance
- o **2028-2030:** Conduct after action reviews – Directors of Trail Maintenance

- **2.3 Environmental Stewardship:**
 - **2026- 2030:** Provide training and information to section maintainers on environmental challenges – Conservation Director
 - **2026-2030:** Identify targeted projects to address specific environmental challenges along the trail, such as erosion, insect control and invasive species management. Collaborate yearly with other non-profit environmental organizations – Conservation Director and Section Maintainers
 - **2026-2030:** Establish a monitoring program to track the health of the trail and surrounding areas. Use this information to inform future maintenance and conservation efforts, ensuring that the trail’s natural beauty is preserved. Publish an annual monitoring report – Conservation Director
- **2.4 Land Acquisition Committee**
 - **2026:** Re-establish a land acquisition committee – Board
 - **2027:** Committee will identify, and prioritize opportunities - LAC

3. Strengthen Our Partnerships

Objective: Build and enhance relationships with governmental agencies, nonprofits, local communities, and corporate sponsors to support the long-term sustainability and growth of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

- **3.1 Government Collaboration:**
 - **2026-2030:**
 - Identify strategic partners and liaisons - Board
 - Develop presentation materials for members to share with government officials - Board
 - Conduct annual partner meeting(s)– President
- **3.2 Nonprofit and Community Engagement:**
 - **2026-2030:** Identify partnerships with other nonprofit organizations that share BMTA’s values and goals. These partnerships could include joint fundraising efforts, share educational programs, and coordinate advocacy campaigns.
 - **2026-2030** Community Building

- Solicit two companies/churches/organizations per year to participate in a BMTA workday -Outreach Coordinator and Maintenance Directors.
- **2026-2026:** Invite A Friend
 - Each board member invites two new friends per year to join BMTA functions - All board members and Membership Director
- **2027-20230:** Invite A Friend
 - Each member invites two new friends per year to join BMTA functions - All members – Membership Director
- 2026-2030:** Identify Outreach Coordinators or Event Coordinators - Board
- **2026-2030:** Engage local communities along the trail by hosting events, festivals, providing educational resources, and involving them in trail maintenance and improvement projects -Outreach Coordinator(s)
- **3.3 Corporate and Sponsorship Partnerships:**
 - **2026-2030:** Identify potential corporate partners who align with BMTA’s mission and values. Develop sponsorship opportunities that provide value to both BMTA and the sponsoring companies.
 - Formalize two new corporate sponsorships each year – Sales Director

4. Engage Our Supporters/Stakeholders

Objective: Cultivate a dedicated and active community of supporters/stakeholders who are informed, engaged, and invested in the success of the Benton MacKaye Trail.

- **4.1 Communications:**
 - **2026-2027:** Enhance communication with BMTA members, volunteers, and the broader public.
 - 2026 Create YouTube Channel – Communications Director
 - 2026 Recruit Facebook and Instagram Administrator – Communications Director
 - 2027 Refresh BMTA Website – Communications Director
- **4.2 Volunteer Engagement:**
 - **2026-2030:** Expand the volunteer program to include trail scouts whose purpose is to survey the trail for maintenance opportunities prior to work trips
 - **2026-2030:** Recruit two new trail scouts Each Year – Directors of Trail Maintenance
- **4.3 Membership Growth and Retention:**

- **2026-2030:** Launch targeted membership drives aimed at increasing BMTA's membership base.
 - **Organizations** -Present to three new organizations per year and provide membership materials about the BMTA – Outreach Director and Membership Director
 - **Exhibits** – Visit two locations per year with an information/membership table – Outreach Director and State Reps
 - **Taskforce** – Develop a task force of board members to annually contact 10 non-renewing members starting in January – Membership Director
 - **Life Members** – Contact Life Members on an annual basis with BMTA updates and seek their continual support - President

Implementation and Monitoring

Monitoring & Key Performance Indicators

To ensure the successful execution of this strategic plan, the BMTA Board of Directors will monitor the progress of the plan at each board meeting. The Board will measure the progress toward the plan by assigning Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for each action item of the plan.

- Quarterly Board Meeting Strategic Plan Review – Immediate Past President

Reporting: The BMTA Board of Directors will prepare an annual report summarizing accomplishments, challenges, and adjustments to the plan. This report will be shared with BMTA members, donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability.

- Create an annual Strategic Plan Impact Report – Immediate Past President

Conclusion

The 2026-2030 Strategic Plan for the Benton MacKaye Trail Association provides a clear and comprehensive roadmap for the next five years. By focusing on seeking National Scenic Trail designation, maintaining a sustainable trail, strengthening partnerships, and engaging our supporters/stakeholders. BMTA will continue to fulfill its mission of preserving, protecting, and maintaining the Benton MacKaye Trail for future generations.

BMTA is committed to leaving a lasting legacy, ensuring that the trail remains a cherished resource for all who seek to experience the natural beauty and tranquility of the Appalachian wilderness. This strategic plan is designed to guide our efforts, foster collaboration, and inspire our community as we work together to achieve our shared vision.

