

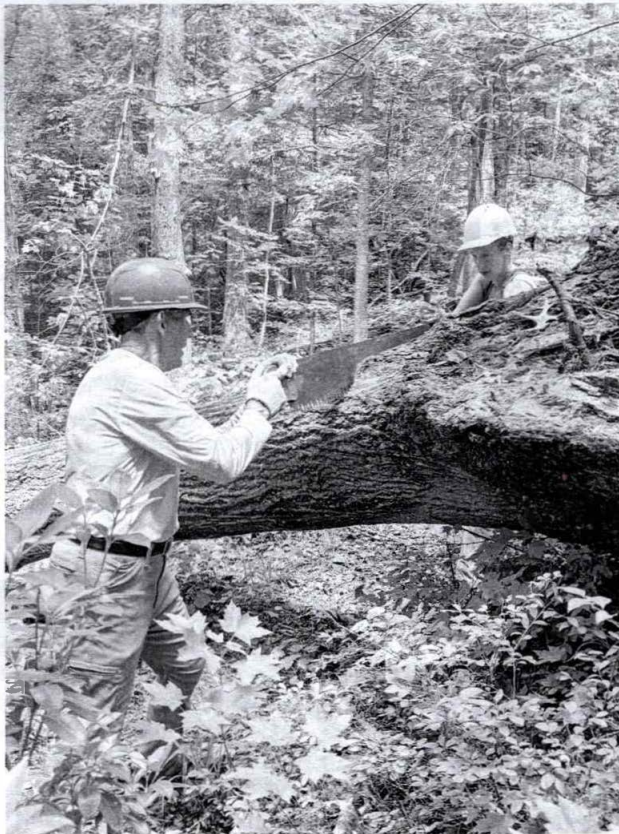
Benton MacKaye Trail Association Celebrates National Trails Day

June 7 was the American Society's (AHS) National Trails Day (NTD) – the largest trail event in the nation. In keeping with the AHS theme, “to leave the trail and the outdoor community better than we found them”, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) sponsored a work trip on the BMT's Sections 12a-b (US64 >> Kimsey Highway in Polk County, TN). Much of this trail is in Wilderness where no mechanized equipment is allowed.

BMTA's Georgia Maintenance Director, Joe Cantwell, took time to explain the history and proper usage of each tool being used during the association's National Trails Day event—crosscut saws, Pulaskis, loppers and swing blades. His insights connected volunteers to the generations of trail workers who have maintained wilderness pathways without the use of mechanized equipment, reinforcing BMTA's commitment to preserving both the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) and tradition.

To organize the tasks for the day, the sections were scouted a couple of days before the trip. Friday night's stormy weather added a few surprises as one crew encountered three unreported, major blowdowns that were not on the agenda for the day. It took the volunteers 8.5 hours to remove those trees.

Long-time BMTA maintainer Barry Allen led a crew that encountered a unique challenge – a massive chestnut oak had fallen on the rootball of a yellow poplar. As the workers tried to remove the oak, the poplar began to try to stand up, creating a dangerous situation for the workers. Consequently, the tangle was left for another trip when they could



BMT volunteers clearing trails the old fashioned way

what's going on. You have a better sense of what the tree wants to do.”

Twenty-two participants split into three crews, turning in 112 hours of work time. Crosscut saws were used on 28 trees, many 24” - 30”. Approximately 5.6 miles of brushing and lopping was done as well as 105 feet of tread repaired.

After the work was done and the tools stowed, volunteers gathered for a well-earned lunch courtesy of Lori and Jeff Patterson of Copperhill, TN.

They treated the crews to a scrumptious taco bar with all the trimmings. It was a fitting end to a day that combined hard work, camaraderie, and the shared mission of keeping the Benton MacKaye Trail a welcoming pathway through the Southern Appalachians.

If you would like to learn more about the BMT or if you are willing to share your time, talent and expertise with the BMTA, contact Joy Forehand, jforehand@bmta.org.