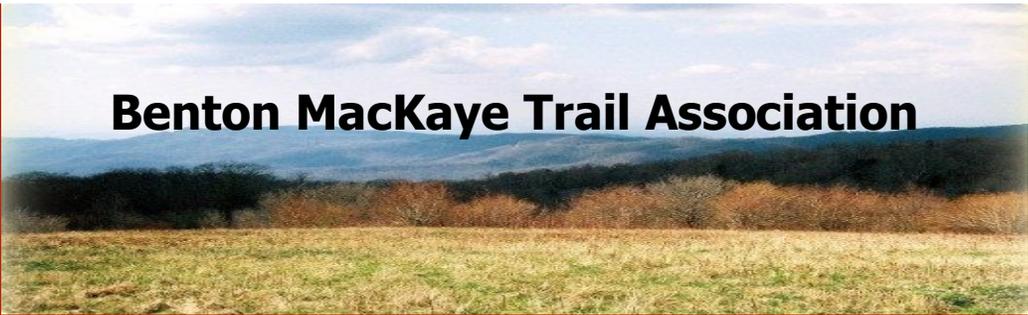




SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Annual Meeting Review
- iPhone GPS Application
- Board of Directors 2012
- TN/NC Work Trip
- Sissons Work Trip
- Georgia Relocation Project
- President's Column
- Fire Creek Endangerment
- BMTA buy Chainsaw Pack
- Fun Hike on Tapoco
- Corridor "K"
- General News
- New Members
- Letter from the Editor
- Calendar for 2012

President: Dick Evans
 Vice President: David Blount
 Secretary: Sara Bland
 GA Maintenance: Tom Keene
 TN/NC Maintenance: Rick Harris
 Smokies Coord: Ernie Engman
 Trail Construction: Bill Hodge
 Hiking: Vacant
 Membership: Vic Fredlund
 Treasurer: Kim Hainge
 Publicity: Marge Heller
 Newsletter Editor: Gene Nix
 Conservation: Betty Petty
 Past President: Ralph Heller
 State Rep GA: Bob Ruby
 State Rep TN: Vacant
 State Rep NC: Vacant



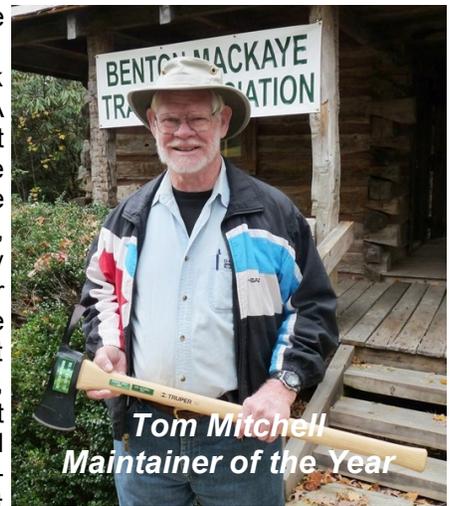
Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 11

NOVEMBER 25, 2011

Annual Meeting-November 2011

Tom "T.O." Mitchell was named Maintainer of the Year – 2011 by President Dick Evans at the 2011 Annual Meeting last weekend at Coker Creek Village. Tom has long been known as the BMTA Tool Man, keeping our trail tools and equipment in top shape. In addition, this year, with the move to the new "World Headquarters" building in Blue Ridge, Tom designed and built the new tool room, organizing the Georgia tools in a way we only dreamed of before! The new tool room is a major asset to the BMTA and we really appreciate the extra effort on Tom's part. Because he was not able to attend the Annual Meeting, Dick Evans, plus Vice President David Blount, Past President Ralph Heller, Publicity Director Marge Heller and Treasurer Kim Hainge surprised Tom at the headquarters building this past Wednesday to present the Honorary Maintainer Pulaski award.



*Tom Mitchell
Maintainer of the Year*

Additionally, at the Annual Meeting, a special Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to Eric Eades, (who could not attend), thanking Eric for all his contributions over the years to building and maintaining the trail.

We had great, albeit chilly, weather for the Annual Meeting Weekend. Early morning rain and clouds on Friday gave way to sunny weather for 19 folks to hike up Sycamore Creek towards Whigg Meadow. Hike Leader Rick Harris led a good pace and everyone enjoyed the late Fall colors. Afterward, most stopped at the bakery in Tellico Plains for a "reward" for their efforts.

Saturday morning, the indefatigable Rick Harris, accompanied by 8 folks or so, did some 8 miles on the ridge between Sandy Gap and Unicoi Gap, visiting the old Doc Rogers house and sanitarium. Liz Carter led a shorter hike to Turtletown Falls and Shinbone Ridge.

Sunday, two shorter hikes were enjoyed by the attendees. As before, we "sold out" at Coker Creek, since many of their facilities were winterized and not available, but most enjoyed the visit. Saturday evening after supper was billed as a "Hoedown", but due to scheduling, it did not start until 9:00 PM, so only a few of the "party goers" were able to join the youth group meeting there at the same time, but had a good time. I did not hear any reports of BMTA folks riding the "Bull" in the Rec Hall, but photos would be welcomed! All enjoyed the bonfire and the hay ride thru the village under the moonlight.

iPhone-GPS Application

By Ralph Harris



iPhone
GPS Application

I have been having fun getting acquainted with my new iPhone. Among the Apps I have downloaded is a GPS application that is very rich in features and appears to be a very useful tool for trail work. This App, GPS Motion X, seems to give the iPhone all the functionality of a dedicated full-featured GPS receiver. It works with the latest iPhone 4 series phones as well as the 3GS and 3G models, all of which contain actual GPS receivers built into the phone. Therefore, they will perform GPS functions even when out of range of cell towers.

This program will create waypoints and tracks and give information such as altitude profiles, average speed, total climb, total descent, time and distance to waypoint. It will give directions to follow a pre-recorded track and give distance traveled. If in range of a cell tower, it will download map info and hybrid data, which includes topo, road, and aerial picture data overlays. This information can also be downloaded into the iPhone ahead of time, in case there is no cell tower in range.

Now, the neat features for trail maintenance! The program will create a track when following a trail. When the phone user comes upon a reportable problem, he/she can use the program on the phone to operate the phone camera to take a picture. At the same time the picture is taken, a waypoint of the location is created on the track and the latitude of the waypoint is recorded. Also, an area to add text is opened up on the iPhone screen. There one can add a description of the problem. If a cell tower is in range, the App has the provision to send an email, or FaceBook entry containing all this info, including picture - immediately. Or this information will be held to be sent at a later time when the internet is available. Track and waypoint info or lat/long data can be also be uploaded to topo map software for viewing and printing from a PC.

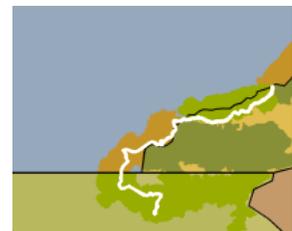
There are several possible problems using an iPhone versus a GPS receiver. A dedicated GPS unit probably has a more powerful receiver than the iPhone. In GPS mode the iPhone consumes battery power more rapidly. I once forgot to turn mine off and completely drained the battery.

There may be other Apps which work as well. This one is the best I have found. Also, other smart phones have good apps for GPS tracking. It would be interesting to hear from members about their experience with different GPS receivers, smart phones or otherwise. That way members considering purchasing this equipment will be better able to make an informed decision. Let's hear from you.



Board of Directors 2012 Season

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| President – Dick Evans | Publicity – Marge Heller | Secretary– Sara Bland |
| Vice President – David Blount | Newsletter Editor – Gene Nix | Webmaster– Terry Miller |
| Secretary – Sara Bland | Conservation – Betty Petty | |
| Treasurer – Kim Hainge | Membership – Vic Fredlund | |
| Georgia Maint– Tom Keene | State Rep– Bob Ruby | |
| TN/NC Maint– Rick Harris | Past President– Ralph Heller | |
| Smokies Maint – Ernie Engman | Trail Construction– Bill Hodge | |
| Construction – Bill Hodge | Newsletter– Gene Nix | |



Benton Mackaye Trail Association

TN/NC BMTA Work Trip - Saturday Nov 26

By Rick Harris

Rick Harris is planning the monthly BMTA TN/NC work trip to occur as scheduled on the calendar on Saturday, Nov 26, the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Rick says we may be working on the Unicoi Mtn Trail section from the motorcycle trail down to Coker Creek. We have a new maintainer for this section, Zoe Zardis, replacing Eric Eades who has moved to South Georgia. The last maintenance on this section was one year ago, so it most likely needs logging and brushing out. Zoe will probably hike the trail in the next few days and report back to me what work is needed.



Cherohala Skyway Vistor Center

Tentative plans are to meet on Nov 26 behind the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center in Tellico Plains at 9 AM (or 8:30 AM at Tellico Grains for breakfast). If you are coming from the south, then you could meet us at the Coker Creek Campsite down at the end of FS 22B close to where Coker Creek joins the Hiwassee River around 10 AM. From there we will shuttle up to TN 68 crossing to start our work for the day. Some people may choose to work uphill from Coker Creek till they meet those coming downhill.

Let Rick know if you are available for the work trip on Sat, Nov 26. Rick mentioned that it is the Saturday after Thanksgiving, but last year they had one of the best turnouts on that same day. I suppose by that time most people are just tired of all the company, all the food, and want some exercise.

Contact Information

Richard Harris
423-253-6358 home
513-260-1184 cell
HarrisRi@aol.com

There are two new illustrated maps for the Smokies which highlight the BMT. They are closer up (40,000:1). They are: #316 - Cades Cove & Elkmont and #317 - Clingmans Dome & Cataloochee. Both show parts of what is included in #229 covering the whole park (70,000:1). Bob Ruby, bmtabob@gmail.com

Sisson Property Work Trip-Nov 9

By Dick Evans

On November 9th, after the Annual Meeting, President Dick Evans, Vice President David Blount, Treasurer Kim Hainge and Past President Ralph Heller met in Blue Ridge to change over signature cards for the Association Bank Accounts and look at potential sites for next year's Annual Meeting. David Blount, never one to let an opportunity pass, used the chance to get some help installing supports below one of the new bridges installed this Summer and Fall over the creeks on the Sisson Property Section of the BMT in Blue Ridge. Kim took the photos, while David used Dick and Ralph's muscle power (okay, plus a crowbar) to slightly raise the bridge and put small shims under the bridge decking to eliminate deflection on the tread and make the bridge much more stable. Although the bridge was perfectly safe, this removed the "wobble" that hikers experienced crossing this section bridge. Many thanks to David for following up on this issue.



November 12 - Georgia Relocation Brings Out 17

By George Owen, Trip Leader, & Ralph Heller

Construction of an uphill relocation of the Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT) at so-called "No-Name Gap" 2.6 miles north of Three Forks brought out the biggest group of workers on our trail in quite some time – 17 in all.

We began the work trip on November 12 as usual with breakfast at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. Many of the group gathered there, and we were delighted to have one of our long-term BMTAers and former board member Elma Ettman show up for breakfast to visit with us.

Then it was "move on" to Three Forks where several others were waiting to join us. For the first time ever, we took a new route to the work site: several winding miles up Forest Service Road 251 past Hick-

ory Flats Cemetery and subsequently 251B to the beloved open meadow on the BMT just a half-mile south of our work site. By mid-morning we were busy at work on our first sidehilling in new trail construction.

While many "old-timers" came out, we also had some new folks. These included: Norman Hayes from Savannah, Will and Lois Taylor from Ellijay and Zoe and John Zardis from Coker Creek. Briefly, in the morning, we also had Robert Smith, the new wilderness specialist for the Blue Ridge District of the Forest Service meet with us in the meadow. It was also good to have another fairly new guy with us for the third time, Brock Birdsong, who travels a long way from Pulaski, TN – and he knows how to use the tool by the same name as that town!

We all gathered on the hillside beside our freshly dug trail for a half-hour lunch break and good conversation at 12:15. Then we returned to our trail-digging chores before 1:00, and worked until mid-afternoon. During this time we almost completed the entire lower quarter of the relocation between where the new trail leaves the old BMT and where it crosses it again for the first time.

It was also our pleasure to see a fair number of hikers out using the BMT in the area that day, including a group of Boy Scouts. Some other folks were preparing to camp at the meadow as we came out there to pick up our vehicles to return home.

My thanks goes out to all of you who came out to work and to experience what it is like to build trail. A special thanks is owed to Walt Cook, who provided the initial trail-building training to those who were novices at constructing new trail.

ATTENDEES: Steve Bayliss, Brock Birdsong, David Blount, Walt Cook, John Franetic, Vic Fredlund, Norman Hayes, Ralph Heller, George Owen, Bob Ruby, Mona Street, Mark Yost, John Zardis, Zoe Zardis, and **Visitors** Robert Smith & Lois and Wil Taylor.

HOURS REPORT: Travel – 104.75, Work 104, Total hours 208.75

*Note – travel time was high due to time it took to get in to work area by car



President's Column: by Dick Evans

Just before Thanksgiving, we learned of a group seeking permission to hold a 100 mile marathon on part of the Trail in north Georgia between Bushy Head Gap and Dyer Gap on March 3rd. It is called the "Doubletop 100 Ultramarathon." We anticipate that the call for comments from the Forest Service will come out sometime before Christmas. This is an important issue, and we will send a special email to Members asking you to provide comments to the Forest Service about this. The Board will provide an "Official" response to this request as it has a direct impact on the Trail.

Additionally, there is a request for comments regarding Fires Creek in the Andrews/Murphy area of North Carolina. This does not have a direct impact on the BMT and the Board has always held that as a group, we will only comment on issues that directly impact the BMT. That said, we do want to make folks aware of this, as the date for comments to be received is December 9th, and this does have an impact on trail maintained by the Mountain High Hikers. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a note from Richard Sullivan of MHH regarding this proposal, and I hope you will read this information and provide comments to the Forest Service.

Remember that BMTA Membership runs with the calendar year, and take the time now to renew your membership. Just go to www.bmta.org and click the Membership Info Link to go to the page. You can renew using your Credit or Debit Card, Paypal Account, or print out a form to include with your check if you wish to mail your renewal.

Another important item is our Activities Page. It is a Full Year Calendar that you can print out and put on the fridge, giving you the year's activities at a glance. It will be available on each Newsletter.

A few thoughts about Thanksgiving are also in order. The story of the first Pilgrim Thanksgiving are fairly well known, with the local Indians unselfishly sharing their food supply with the Pilgrims in Plymouth. It occurs to me that the Trail Maintainers have the very same spirit as those Native Americans. When you maintain trail, you do so giving of your time and efforts for people you will probably never meet. The Pilgrims were very grateful, and likewise, the hikers on the Trail are very grateful for the efforts of the maintainers in keeping the Trail open for them. I just want all the section maintainers, and folks who help with the monthly work trips and otherwise help maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail to know that your efforts are essential and very much appreciated by those who use the Trail. You are truly "leaving a footpath for generations to follow." Thanks for all you do.....Dick



Fire Creek Endanger of Impending Destruction

I am writing to make you aware of the impending destruction of a beautiful unspoiled 20,000 acre tract of National Forest Service land in Western NC. The area is Fires Creek, which is a high ridged horseshoe shaped river valley that Fires Creek drains. The area at present is a wilderness like experience and bear sanctuary with no human habitation, no powerlines, and very pristine watershed. Unfortunately there is a small 50 acre private withholding near the Rim on the far back corner of this area that the landowners are petitioning the FS to get road access to their property. It would involve constructing over 2.3 miles of new road, and improving almost 2 miles of existing FS road all of which runs right along and crosses native brook trout habitat. You can read the environmental assessment that was done by the landowners and reviewed by the FS at: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5338579.pdf

We only have until Dec 9th to comment on this action. I know everyone is busy this time of year with the holidays, but I encourage you to spend 15 minutes reading the first 25 pages of this report and write in protest to.

If you would like more information or to see the letter I send, please contact me at rjsullivan@pol.net

Thanks for you help in the matter!

Richard Sullivan
BMTA Member

Tusquitee Ranger District, USFS
Attn: District Ranger
123 Woodland Drive
Murphy, NC 2828906

BMTA buys Chainsaw Packs

BMTA buys Chainsaw Packs, by Dick Evans

The BMTA has just bought two new Chainsaw Packs to help with trail maintenance. Even though most of the trail is in wilderness where chainsaws are not allowed, we do have enough sections where they are permissible to need this assistance. In the past, maintainers have had to carry the saws by hand or on their shoulders, so this should help with that. One pack will be in Georgia and one with the Tennessee/North Carolina Maintenance Director. These packs, even after a discount negotiated by Ralph Heller, still cost nearly \$200 each, so they will be carefully controlled by the Directors. If you think you have a need for one, just call either Maintenance Director and make your case.

I was able to try one of the packs on the Tapoco Section Fun Hike on November 19th, in part because I had some trees down that needed to be cut, and in part because, as President, I get to play with the cool tools first! My general impression is that the pack is, indeed, a heavy duty article. As shown in the Empty Photo, it is basically an external frame backpack type strapping arrangement. On the back is a nylon carrier, which has to be adjusted to the individual saw. The cinching strap on the bottom of the carrier is tightened to allow just the handle of the saw to protrude, and then the two upper straps on the carrier are tightened to hold the saw steady. There is a block on the top of the frame that holds the blade of the saw, with a strap above that to secure the blade. You do need to use the blade scabbard to protect this block. With that, the saw is in place and secure. There is a strap from each shoulder, adjustable in the front, that then clips to the top of the carrier and supports the carrier. It did take a while to get the straps adjusted, but once that was done, the saw was very stable and easy to carry. Removing the saw is very simple, you unclip the shoulder strap and the blade strap, and the saw should come right out.

The pack comes with four accessory packs and an axe scabbard. These are help to the webbing by what former military folks will recognize as ALICE clips, allowing them to be repositioned. These are not shown in the "Empty" photo. I started by mounting the axe. In the pack mount, it would hand down from the waist band and hit the back of your leg with each step. I reversed the clips and inverted the axe, keeping the scabbard on the waist belt, but the handle was then pointed up, and I secured it with two (included) straps next to the chainsaw blade. These seemed to me to be a much better arrangement.



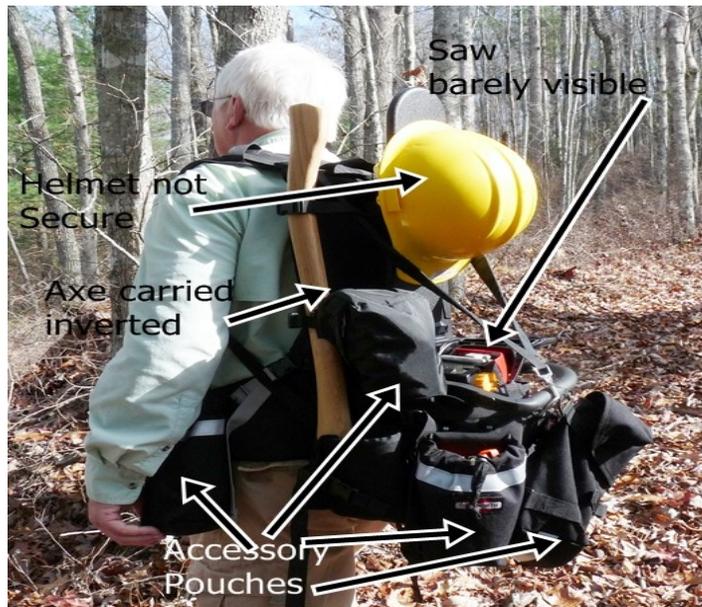
Three of the accessory packs are basically water bottle carriers, although used for other purposes. I was able, in one, to put extra fuel and chain oil, plus wedges, and a small cloth. Those were small bottles of the fuel, but adequate for the day. I put this on the right hand side of the carrier next to the waist belt. I used another on the left in the same relative position for small gear, files, etc. The axe scabbard mounted next to that, and then the last "water bottle" carrier continuing around the left waist belt. The fourth pack was a larger general pack intended for an emergency fire shelter for fire line crews. As received, it was on the right hand front of the waist belt. As soon as we started hiking, I hated that position, as you had to keep your arm out from the body so that you didn't hit it with each swing of the arm. I found that position annoying. In addition, shortly after starting, the pouch fell off the belt in mid step. Figuring I had not properly attached the ALICE clip, I reinstalled in the same position, only to have it fall off again after a short distance. At that point, a careful examination revealed that those ALICE clips were not clicking in place, and the weight of the pouch just forced the nylon thru the clips, and the pouch fell. At that point, we moved to pouch to the rear of the carrier and secured it with snap links, and it remained there the rest of the trip. I suspect that with proper ALICE clips, it would not have fallen off, but the relocation was a much better location, although this leaves the person carrying the pack with no personal pouch accessible while walking.

Continued on Next Page

BMTA buys Chainsaw Packs (Continued)

BMTA buys Chainsaw Packs, by Dick Evans

Although I personally do not use one, it would be possible to attach a hydration pack to the rear of the pack to the right of the blade. I carried my chaps in a personal pouch held to the left of the blade next to the axe handle, which was fine. By adjusting all the various straps, it carried just like a loaded backpack would with the same weight. After we moved the larger pouch, the pack felt comfortable to the folks who carried it, but it does require a fair amount of adjusting to fit it properly for each person. I would suggest for a work trip not passing it around to various workers, but adjusting it to one person and not changing. If you plan on using one, you would need to get it a couple days early to allow fitting your saw to it, and then adjusting its frame. Don't try to get it in the morning of the trip and do quick adjustments-it will take longer than you think to get things right. Hike around your neighborhood for a bit to test it out with a full load. Once you get things set, I think you will find these a great asset to trail maintenance trips. I give it 8 out of a possible ten.



Incentive to Attend November 26 Worktrip

Saturday, November 26 - TN/NC Work Trip - BMT Section 14a - Unicoi Mountain Trail Section - Our monthly BMTA TN/NC worktrip is scheduled on the calendar on Saturday, Nov 26, the Saturday after Thanksgiving. We will be working on the Unicoi Mtn Trail section from the motorcycle trail down to Coker Creek. We have a new maintainer for this section, Zoe Zardis, replacing Eric Eades who will be moving down to southern GA. The last maintenance on this section was one year ago, so it needs logging and brushing out. Zoe hiked the trail recently with her husband and reports that there are 12 or so trees which need to be removed and a fair amount of brushing out is needed. Plans are to meet on Nov 26 behind the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center in Tellico Plains at 9 AM (or 8:30 AM at Tellico Grains for breakfast). If you are coming from far south, then you could just meet us at the Coker Creek Campsite down at the end of FS 22B close to where Coker Creek joins the Hiwassee River around 10 AM. From there we will shuttle up to the TN 68 crossing to start our work for the day. Some workers may choose to work uphill from Coker Creek till they meet those coming downhill. Let me know if you are available for the work trip. I know it is the Saturday after Thanksgiving, but last year we had one of our best turnouts on that same day. I guess people were tired of all the company, all the food, and wanted to get some exercise. Contact Rick Harris, 423-253-6358 (h), 513-260-1184 (c), HarrisRi@aol.com.



As an extra incentive to come work off some of that Turkey, Dressing and Pecan Pie, come join us all on Saturday after Thanksgiving and get a free cool looking car sticker which says BMT Maintainer on it. If you don't show up you don't get one. I will only give them out to those people who show up on our work trips. Above is a picture of the sticker. It is a peel off sticker so only the white part is on your car window. Thanks to Ernie Engman for getting them designed and made for us.

Fun Hike November 19th on Tapoco Section

Trip Report by Dick Evans

On a cloudy, but otherwise great day in November, 17 folks attended the Fun Hike on the Tapoco Section of the BMT. Located at the Tennessee/North Carolina Border north of Robbinsville, the Tapoco Section is located on land owned by Alcoa Power Generating, Inc., and held for public recreational use. This section connects the Trail in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We have long had a great relationship with our friends in Alcoa, and they strongly support the Trail and recreational activities on those lands. Maintained by Dick and Margaret Evans, this section was subjected to a wild fire a couple of years ago. Although most of the obvious evidence of the fire is gone, the long term effects remain. Route finding in the area is difficult in the area of the fire, the blazes, most of which were burned, have been replaced by yellow (not the red) flagging tape through the area. This will probably get reblazed this Spring once we can determine which trees will survive. In addition, to help control the blaze, a bulldozer was used in the area and went over the Trail in places. The good news is that the forest is recovering nicely, and within a few more years, all traces of the fire will be gone.



On this fun hike, we tooted a chainsaw, noted in another article, and cleared some trees blocking the trail, in addition to adding more yellow flagging. The section is about five miles long, with a three mile hike along an old gravel road on the north end, and then a climb to the state line ridge and following part of the original Appalachian Trail before coming down to the Cheoah Dam. After leaves are off the trees, there are some great views into the northern end of the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness, with the ridge from Beech Gap north to Fodderstack in the distance. The BMT follows that ridge north from the Cherohala Skyway. There are some views over the western end of the National Park, including Gregory Bald and Newton Bald on clear days. On this trip, it was pretty clear and the views were great. We ran into some hunting dogs on the ridge, and they followed us for a while, leaving to follow scent trails, then coming back. At the end of the trail, we met the dog owners, hoping to get their bear this year. We had a very nice conversation with them. I always, when running into a hunter, tell them I hope we didn't hurt their hunt, and they always have said that hikers caused no problems for them. It really is a great example of two uses of the same recreational area at the same time that doesn't harm either usage. Bear hunters using dogs present no danger to hikers, as they wait for a kill until their dogs have treed a bear. Unless a hiker is in a tree in a bear suit with several dogs below baying, they are in no danger. Likewise, the dogs are not "attack" dogs, but very friendly and part of the hunter's family. The best advise is to try to ignore the dogs while you are hiking in the areas. They may follow you for a while, and then leave to follow a trail.

In any event, everyone had a great hike, the trail got some light maintenance and then most everyone went back to Dick & Margaret's house for chili and dessert. Two big pots of chili were consumed, along with Pam Sullivan's fantastic Apple Cake, which went well with some ice cream, and brownies for all. With any luck, the calories consumed were about the same as those expended in the hike!

Dick

Corridor "K" - by Dick Evans

Several decades ago, the Appalachian Regional Commission determined that lack of suitable transportation infrastructure (AKA roads) was a major cause for the Appalachian Region not developing as fast as the rest of the country, and they embarked on an ambitious program of road construction throughout the area. What goes by the name Corridor "K" currently was envisioned as improving (their words, not mine) transportation and commerce between Asheville, NC, and Chattanooga, TN.

Through the years, most of that corridor has been upgraded to four lane, divided highways. Two sections remain to be completed, one section near Robbinsville, NC, which does not impact the BMT, and the section in Polk County, TN, near the Ocoee Gorge, which does potentially impact the trail.

The BMTA has been a very active participant in the public portion of the planning of this section, including Past President Betty Petty serving on the Citizen Resource Team advising the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and many BMTA members attending various public meetings.



I was contacted and asked to have BMTA Representatives at a special meeting on November 16th at the Ocoee Whitewater Center to learn and discuss the situation to date. In response, Past President Ralph Heller, Membership Director Vic Fredlund, my wife and I joined Betty at the meeting, giving the BMTA the largest contingent at the meeting, by far. Some parts of the information duplicated what had been disseminated before, but to bring everyone up to date, I felt that an article might be best. As some of you remember, at the start of this process, the TDOT had proposed possible routes over the Kimsey Mountain Highway to the north of the gorge, and a route to the south. Those have been formally dropped, and they are now looking at possibilities through the gorge itself. The good news is that all the various possibilities still locate the "new and improved" road basically where the current road is at the site of the BMT crossing at Thunder Rock Campground. The Board of Directors has a standing policy that we will only get involved in conservation issues that directly impact the trail, but I do suggest to every member to go to the TDOT website and review the alternate routes to the west of the crossing. As we were talking informally after the meeting, I suggested to two of the planners that we might drive down to the crossing to see things "on the ground", and they accepted, as did Chester Sutherland, the TDOT Project Manager. In addition, Laura Lewis, from the Cherokee National Forest, joined us at the trail head and crossing to discuss alternatives. We looked at the possibility of an underground tunnel or overhead bridge as a way for hikers to safely cross the highway. No firm conclusions were reached, but we were able to get our points across to the planners about the difficulty of hikers crossing roads at grade, and I anticipate that this will be included in the final plans. Since the exact grade level of the new road at that site is still in the planning stages, the discussions were generic in nature, but I was very impressed that they did take the time to visit the site and listen to our concerns.

Their project schedule calls (hopes?) for a final plan in some 18 months or so, with construction beginning in 2013, but that seems very optimistic to me. At this point, construction cost estimates are close to one billion dollars, and even though the Appalachian Regional Commission has funded part of it, the state of Tennessee still has to come up with some matching funds, not an easy thing in today's economy. The short answer is that I do not expect to see any major changes in that area for several years at best, and the planning process will probably take a lot longer than TDOT officially estimates. Hikers should expect to see no major changes at that crossing for a long time. We will continue to be very actively involved in the planning process regarding the crossing alternatives, and will keep the membership informed.

BMTA Store

BMTA Store
You may have noticed that if you click the BMTA Store Link on the Website, you get to a page that says all mail orders are on hold. We are in the process of integrating the Store with Paypal, but like most projects, it takes some time. We HOPE to have the Guidebooks on line within a few days, and the rest of the printed materials after that, with the hats, shirts, etc., about the first of the New Year. If you really, really have

to have something from the Store, call Dick at [828-479-2503](tel:828-479-2503) and we'll see what we can do, otherwise, watch for information in later Newsletters.

Line Drawing Artist Needed

Are you a Line Drawing Artist? Can you do black & white line art? If so, do we have an offer for you! We need to prepare some mate-

rials for the upcoming Maintainer Training session, and we need an artist to take our (poor) layouts into something that can be printed professionally. If you can help, call:

Dick at 828-479-2503 or email "President@bmta.org".

Maintainer

Training

Session on

March 3rd.

More details

in next

Newsletter.

Maintainers Training Session-March 3

All Section Maintainers or folks who want to do Trail Maintenance! Plan on attending the first Maintainer Training Session on March 3rd. We will have a full day of Maintainer Basics, How-To's, First Aid Training, and more. Location still pending, but save the date. We will open it for Registration in the next Newsletter, but we hope to have as many Maintainers as we can.

Hiking Guide to the Smokies

The Guide to the BMT in the Smokies is in progress, but we probably will not get it out this Winter. We are looking at a Spring/early Summer Release right now, but watch the Newsletter for details. It will be worth the wait!

BMT Databook

Bob Ruby has put the finishing touches on the latest edition of the BMT Databook, and it should be out in December. We will have it on the Web Store and will let everyone know when it's ready.

Smokies Hikers-Attention

Smokies Hikers - Attention!

The Laurel Gap Shelter is in the process of being rehabilitated. At present, the Shelter is CLOSED for use until the work is finished. Best estimate is sometime in December, weather dependent. BMT Thru-Hikers should plan on using Campsite #44, McGee Springs, and then hiking 14 miles to

Campsite #38, Mount Sterling, Reservations Required. For updated info, call Park Backcountry Information - [865-436-1297](tel:865-436-1297) or check the Park Website for Closures.

<http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm>



Laurel Gap Shelter



American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation Participants

Betty Gill	Columbus, MS
Bill Twitty	Greenville, SC
Eric Randall	Nashville, TN
John Carmichael	Brownsburg, IN
Kathy Stege	Macon, GA
Sarah Slover	Cary, NC
Tina Stambaugh	New Castle, NY
Mark Harrold	North Wales, PA
Tina Temple	Owensboro, NY

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association welcomes the following new members.

Greg & Jan Hitt	Venice, FL
Greg Crago	Avon Lake, OH
Jan Stansell	Suches, GA
Rita Miller	Blairsville, GA
Dayton & Martha Miller	Blairsville, GA
Troy Spence	Sevierville, TN
Phyllis Loman	Hiawassee, GA
Vince Ebbecke	Hobe Sound, FL
Lydia Young	Hobe Sound, FL
Frank Graham	Canton, GA
Dorothy Hansen	Morganton, GA
Norman Hayes	Savannah, GA
Gary Bryant	Lady Lake, FL
Kathi Vandermolen	Ellijay, GA
Mary Rose Campbell	Marretta, GA



Letter from the Editor

By Gene Nix

My name is Gene Nix. I will be serving as your Newsletter Editor for the upcoming New Year. I am a retired school teacher spending most of my career teaching in Fannin and Gilmer County. I am a native of North Georgia and have



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been an avid hiker since childhood. I am new to the Benton MacKaye

Trail Association but not the Benton MacKaye Trail. I have hiked this trail since the 1980's and continue to hike it today. Many things have changed over the past 30



Gene and Brian In 1992

years but one thing that hasn't is the trail. It is still as beautiful and pristine as it was in my youth. All four of my sons grew up hiking the BMT. Gene and Brian, which are 31 and 28 years old, hiked



John and James in 2010

with me in the 90's. John and James, which are 8 and 4, are hiking with me today. As we move into the New Year, I look forward to working with the Association and hope to work with and meet as many of our members as possible. Please don't hesitate to submit articles and pictures about your own adventures on the BMT. You can email me at Editor@bmta.org

Print out and put on the fridge, giving you the year's activities at a glance.

Benton MacKaye Trail – 2012

JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH							APRIL						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31					26	27	28	29				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					

MAY							JUNE							JULY							AUGUST						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30	31	

SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER							NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3							1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30																					30	31					

Repeating Events

- Federal/State Holidays
- 2nd Saturday - Georgia Work Trip
- 4th Saturday - Tenn/NC Work Trip
- Fun Hike & Board Meeting

Special Events

- Feb 24 - Federal Land Managers Meeting
- March 3 - Maintainer Training
- March 17 - Annual Walk Thru
- April 22-28 - AHS Volunteer V
- Smokies Cleanup Trips
- Nov 16-18 -Annual Meeting Weekend
- June 2 - Nat'l Trail Day