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President:	Tom Keene
Vice President:	Dick Evans
Secretary:	Joy Forehand
Treasurer:	Margaret Evans
GA M/C:	Barry Allen
TN/NC M/C:	Ken Jones
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Hiking Director:	Ken Cissna
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Past President:	Bob Ruby
Newsletter:	Kathy Williams
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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

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President's Column November 2016 by Tom Keene

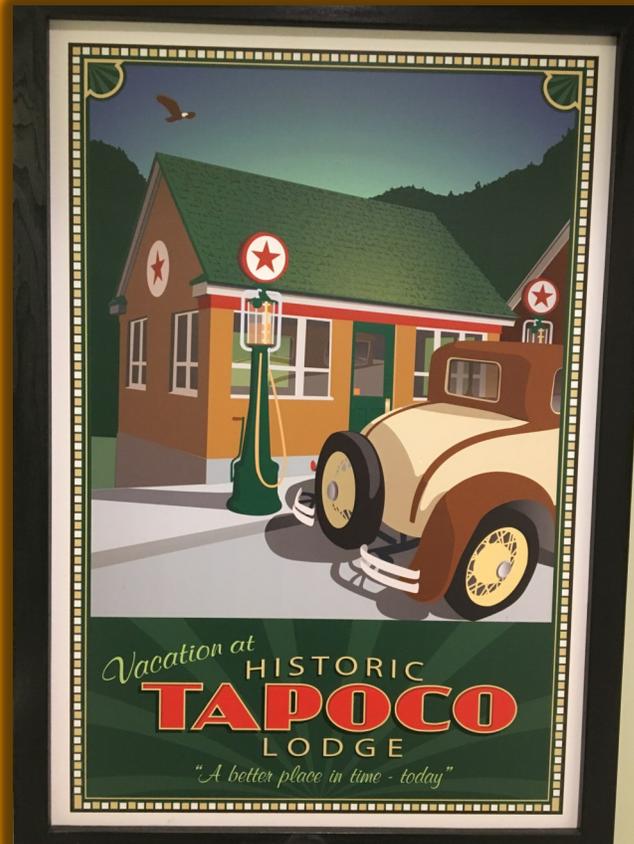
An Annual Meeting for the Ages: Or maybe one for the 1950s!

A few months ago I was on a long bike ride with a couple of other old codgers. It was hot, the headwinds were relentless, and we had not brought enough water. We were suffering. As we approached yet another hill one of my mates gasped, "My kingdom for a Nehi Orange!" It got a good laugh. There followed a conversation about when we had last had a Nehi Orange. I figured about 1958! No longer. At the recent BMTA annual meeting at the Historic Tapoco Lodge, I enjoyed a delightful and refreshing Nehi Orange -- correctly served in a returnable bottle!



That soda was one of the many delights at this year's meeting. The lodge itself, built in the 1930's and 1940's and recently beautifully restored, was a constant source of small pleasures. The lodge's beautiful setting overlooking the Cheoah River, the fine fall colors, the glorious footpaths -- including the BMT -- going off in every directions, the period-perfect signage, the vintage promotional posters, and the cozy cabins a pleasant walk from the lodge: all these and more combined to produce a special weekend.





It was not just the physical setting. Dick Evans and his team of hike leaders, including Kim Hainge, Jim Kriner, and George Owen, did a wonderful job all weekend. Meanwhile, with Margaret Evans' indispensable assistance, the guest welcome, menu selection, and the timing of the meetings and meals on a busy Saturday night, all went beautifully. The food was excellent. And so too was our speaker, Marshall McClung, career Forest Service fire-fighter and search and rescue guy, as well as esteemed local historian. One audience member commented: "I could have listened to him all night!"



Marshall McClung

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The Awards: With Darcy Douglas', Ralph Heller's and Rick Harris' able assistance the honors and awards part of the program went beautifully (and briskly!). Barry Allen, Georgia Maintenance Director, was the unanimous choice for Trail Worker of the Year.



Bob Ruby presents the Golden Pulaski to Barry Allen (on the left).

Marge Heller, long-time Publicity Director, was the first recipient (in absentia) of the new Volunteer of the Year award for service to the association other than trail building and maintenance. In addition to the individual awards, a record 46 trail workers qualified for the coveted Maintainer t-shirt for more than 30 hours of reported work hours, and no less than 13 surpassed the 100 hour mark and received a gift certificate from Forestry Suppliers and an attractive Rick Harris-designed hat. Lists of these awardees can be seen elsewhere in this newsletter.

Election of Officers: Not to worry. A new slate of officers was indeed selected for next year! These officers are, as always, listed on the left column of the BMTA website homepage. In his final and characteristically generous column in the previous issue of this newsletter, outgoing President Bob Ruby had already thanked each of the members of the outgoing board for their service.

Perhaps fittingly the final event of Saturday night's festivities was the presentation of a plaque to Bob for his service the last two years as our president. I am pleased to close this account by quoting in full the text of that plaque:

*The Members of the BMTA express their thanks and gratitude to
BOB RUBY*

for his extraordinary diligence and exemplary leadership as president of the Association, 2015-2016. The Members express particular appreciation for the milestone volunteer agreement he negotiated with the three national forests through which our trail runs.

presented

The Historic Tapoco Lodge -- November 5, 2016



The Nuts and Bolts of the BMTA

Without the tireless and persistent Warriors of the BMTA, namely the Maintainers, we would not be able to enjoy the beauty of our trails. We cannot do enough to express our appreciation for your efforts. Your dedication speaks volumes as to your character and integrity. It is always astonishing to view the statistics at the end of each year. We thought we had some great photographs of all of you from the Annual Meeting but there are times when our technology fails us and we apologize for not being able to provide a photograph of those of you who were able to attend the meeting. **Well done!!**

30+hours

Ronny Anderson
 Michael Bartell
 Connor Bayliss
 Steve Bayless
 David Blount
 Jack Callahan
 Ken Cissna
 Steve Davis
 Ellie Doughty
 Larry Dumas
 Frank Forehand
 Joy Forehand
 Ralph Heller
 John Kalabus
 Tom Keene
 Jack Kennedy
 Don Kenny
 Doug Kleiberg
 Mike Kovich
 Bryan Ligman
 Bryce Ligman
 Keith Mertz
 George Owen
 Clayton Pannell
 Tazz Reid
 Bob Ruby
 Clare Sullivan
 Ed Sullivan
 Gilbert Treadwell
 Brian Trinkle
 Mark Yost
 Zoe Zardis

100+ Hours

Barry Allen
 Bob Cowdrick
 Darcy Douglas
 Dick Evans
 Debra Guhl
 Phil Guhl
 Dave Hagen
 Kim Hainge
 Rick Harris
 Ken Jones
 Phyllis Jones
 Jim Kriner
 Bobby Mitchell
 Larry Van Dyke

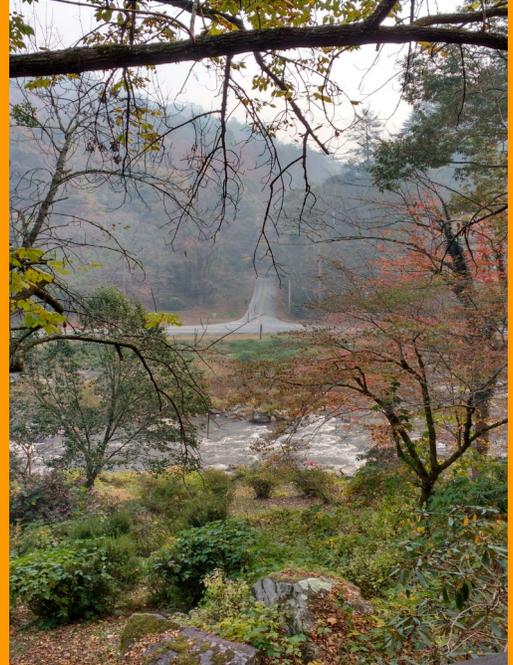


Annual Meeting Extras

by Tom Keene with photos courtesy of Kim Hainge



Two special annual meeting attendees, Evert and Linda Womack, above with outgoing president Bob Ruby. The Womack's spent their honeymoon at the Tapoco Lodge 50 Years ago last August! Evert confided that when they saw the promotions for the annual meeting in the newsletter, they decided November was a much better month to revisit the lodge than August! Happy 50th, Evert and Linda!



Yellow Creek Trailhead



Annual meeting attendees able to stay on at the Tapoco Lodge for Sunday brunch were able to experience a major water release on the nearby Cheoah River. The high water attracted kayakers from all over the southeast. Happily some of the best rapids on the kayakers run were located just below the patio seating of the lodge's grill. The kayakers and the beautiful weather together with the pizza and craft beer attracted a large crowd.

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Dick Evans-Footprints and Generations



Exquisite cuisine and decor-not the old P&J found on the trail!



Now down to serious business!



Gift shopping delights!



Lodge glows in the night.



Smoke from the fires-a sobering reminder of the fragility of our forests

Benton MacKaye Trail Presentation at REI

by Bob Ruby

- **When:** Wednesday, December 07, 2016 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
- **Where:** Atlanta REI 1800 Northeast EXP NE Atlanta, GA 30329
- **Presenter:** Bob Ruby
- **Member price:** Free
- **Non-member price:** Free
- **You must register prior to the event**

The Benton MacKaye Trail was described in a New York Times feature as "Appalachia's Other Trail" and recently by Men's Journal as one of 20 "Once-in-a Lifetime-Backpacking-Trips." It is 290-miles long, starting at Springer Mountain and ending at Big Creek at the far end of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It forms a figure-eight with the southernmost portion of the A.T. and crosses some of the most remote backcountry and wilderness areas in Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina. Completed in 2005, built and maintained by volunteers, the BMT is intended as a more-primitive, less-crowded trail alternative. This presentation includes a "virtual tour" of the BMT and describes options for hiking the trail, including day-hikes, section-hikes and thru-hikes. New for the BMT are major reroutes of the sections across the Slickrock Wilderness (just before entering the Smokies in NC) as well as 2016 reroutes at Fall Branch Falls in GA and Towee Creek in TN. Presenter, Bob Ruby, is the Immediate Past President of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association.

For up to date information and registration click on the link below:

<https://www.rei.com/events/benton-mackaye-trail-presentation/atlanta/160158>



TURTLE TOWN FALLS HIKE

by Sara & Jerry Bland

The parking lot of Home Depot in Blue Ridge was the assembly spot for 16 enthusiastic hikers to head out for Turtle Town Falls located in Tennessee's Cherokee National Forest. It was an "invigorating," beautiful, fall morning on Wednesday, October 26, 2016. Turtle Town Falls was Plan "B" after Jerry and I made a pre-view trip to Benton Falls and discovered that the falls had become a mere trickle! The drought had taken its toll there as well as a lot of other streams, etc. However, we were delighted that TTF with its beautiful wide creek and two roaring waterfalls was almost normal.

After arriving at the TTF parking area, we introduced ourselves again and posed for pictures taken by several of our "professional" photographers including Walter Polk and Clayton Webster. We were delighted to welcome new BMTA friends, Ted and Ann Wilson. They recently moved to the Talking Rock area from New York.

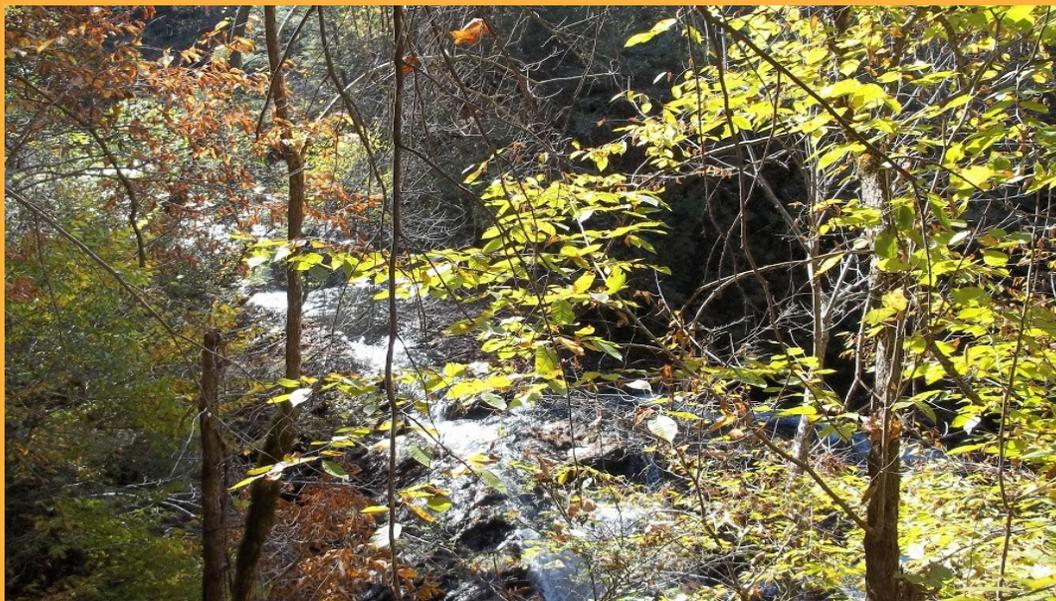


We hiked the 3.6 mile loop clockwise, mostly alongside the still prolific creek. We visited the first waterfall and it was still magnificent although the center lacked its usual flow. We arrived at the second waterfall where we enjoyed eating our lunch and basking in the sun's warmer temperature. After a leisurely lunch with lots of chatting we headed out for Shinbone Ridge.

Continued next page



As we made the climb on the wide, nicely-maintained trail, we could peer through the canopy of mountain laurel, rhododendron, white pines, and hemlocks to catch glimpses of the blue autumn sky. We especially enjoyed this portion of our hike because Clayton identified the galax, partridge berry, Christmas ferns, pipsissewa, rattlesnake plantain, and the Pawpaw tree. The climb was well worth it to see some views of the Hiwassee River set in its deep gorge. What a day! It could not have been a better day, better group, nor prettier hike!



How to Play Nicely with Lincoln Logs

November Work Trip Report, Section 11E

by Barry Allen

Thunder Rock Camp Ground was empty on the morning of November 12. It was a beautiful day, even with the fires burning heavily less than 20 miles away. But no one was in the campground; we had the forest to ourselves. Despite the fires, there was no smoke and very little haze. We had a perfect November day to install some much-needed steps on the BMT crossing of Forest Service 45.

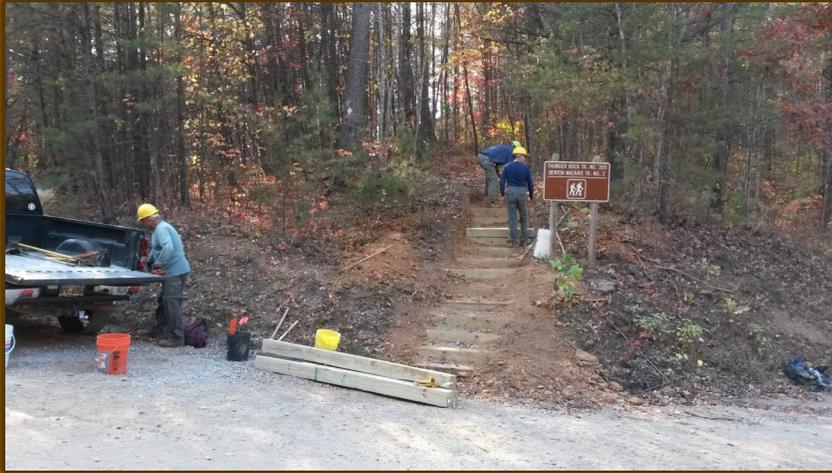
Initially, my plan was to work the existing steps close to the river while repairing several areas of trail. However, as I thought about it, it just made sense to get these new steps in and off my to-do list. The existing steps near the Ocoee could wait for another day, and I really, really wanted to improve the steep drop down to the Forest Service road. On a day with very little traffic, we could pull right up to the crossing in my truck, park and unload all the material. On a busier day, we would have had to deal with the traffic and dust from other vehicles using Forest Service 45 to access the Wilderness Area.



It was a tough but rewarding day: Doug Kleiber, Mike Kovitch, and Bob Cowdrick worked hard on the new steps. Bob worked to excavate the steps with pick ax, rock bar and shovel while Doug and Mike secured the steps with rebar and sledge hammer. These three worked steadily all morning long, constantly dealing with the added labor of a rock and stone filled landscape.

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As we enjoyed the camaraderie of the trail that day, placing the 6x6 timbers and watching as something began to take shape, I couldn't help but be reminded of the Lincoln Logs of my youth. And then I remembered the way we played with Lincoln Logs at age eight or nine. Come to think of it, I'm glad we didn't have pick axes and shovels as nine- year-olds. I mean, there is no telling what we would have done if we had access to grave digging tools!



Just up the trail from the new steps, Phil and Debra Guhl worked with Paul Brame to improve the tread on several areas between the new steps and the power line crossing. This team worked to create check dams above the trail to disperse the heavy flow of water funneling across the BMT and eroding the path. The group tugged, pulled and manhandled trees, boulders and detritus into place above the trail to disperse the water before it could be funneled into one spot. Once the check dams were in place, the same group re-dug the sections of trail that had been eroded or had sloughed downhill.

All in all, it was a great day. These folks deserve a note of thanks for all the hard work and dedication. Next time you are up in the area, please enjoy the trail and try out the new steps!

TN/NC BMT November Work Trip-November 19

By Ken Jones

We had two work trips back in the summer on BMT Section 12a / Dry Pond Lead Trail. Belonging to a group that believes that all worthwhile endeavors have to be finished, we did just that on the November Work Trip. We started the day with some welcome rain before assembling to begin work. We had a group of six that worked hard to complete maintenance for this section of the Benton MacKaye. We met at Powerhouse #3 and hiked up the trail for two miles to the spot where we had stopped brushing out on the last work trip. Two of the crew hiked another two miles to the top of the mountain and began working back downhill. The remaining four crew members continued brushing out uphill to meet up with the others. We were able to make the connection not long after lunch.

The only remaining work on this section will be to clear two large blow downs, and move the Wilderness sign to a better location. This work is scheduled to be completed in the near future by a SAWS crew. The section maintainer will also be adding some water diversions on a steep portion adjacent to Highway 64. We had a nice day to work and there were still plenty of fall colors on display.

Thanks go to the following trail workers who made this trip a success: Phyllis Jones, Ken Jones, Barry Allen, Paul Brame, Richard Harris, and Brenda Harris.



Here's the work crew, minus Barry the photographer.

Hike of BMT and AT in Three Forks–Springer Area

By Ken Cissna

Six hikers braved the possibility of chilly temperatures, significant winds, and the smoke from the wildfires for a hike on Saturday, November 19. Temperatures were brisk, as forecast, and dropped as we hiked. The winds encouraged us to keep our layers of clothing on. But we had no smoke, and when the sun came out, the skies were a brilliant blue.

Lee Graham, Meredith Deaver, Michele Przybylinski, Karl Whitlock, Bob Brown, and hike leader Ken Cissna started at Three Forks and hiked up the BMT to the second crossing with the AT, then switched to the AT for the trip back. We met a large youth group at the Stover Creek shelter on the AT. Even though it was just after noon, they were stopping for the night. We had lunch, used the privy, and continued our hike.



At Long Creek Falls

Left to Right-Lee Graham, Karl Whitlock, Meredith Deaver, Michele Przybylinski, and Ken Cissna with Bob Brown in front

Just after we got back on the AT headed north to Three Forks, we encountered our first group of SOBO AT thru hikers, two recent college graduates from New Hampshire who had been hiking for five months. They were being picked up that day at the Springer parking lot so they only had three miles left to complete their journey. After we got back to Three Forks, some of us lightened our packs or dropped them entirely, and we headed the mile up to Long Creek Falls. Despite the drought, the Falls were beautiful. We met a young couple there who were also close to completing their thru hike. They had been on the trail five and half months, and were slightly ahead of their schedule so they were stopping at Long Creek Falls for the night and were going to hike only the five miles left to the Springer shelter the next day. Their ride was meeting them at Amicalola Falls State Park two days later. In addition to these thru hikers, we saw numerous people out backpacking for several days to a week as well as a few other day hikers.

We then returned to Three Forks and headed home. Our total hike was about eight miles. It was co-sponsored by BMTA and the Sierra Club.

BMTA Survey Needs You!!!

By Dick Evans

Click on this link [BMTA Survey](#)

BMTA Folks:

At a recent Board of Directors Meeting, the Board decided to start a process of examining our electronic media outlets, like the Web Page, Facebook, Twitter, etc. To that end, we have created a short survey to see how current members are using what we have. Please take a few minutes, go to this link and please complete the questions. This is only the beginning of what promises to be a long process, but we need to find out how members are using the current information before we jump into something else.

If you have burning opinions, please feel free to email me directly, at bmta AT frontier.com.

Many thanks!!!!

Dick Evans

BMTA DECEMBER WORK TRIP ANNOUNCEMENT

by Barry Allen

- ◆ **Where:** Fall Branch Falls
- ◆ **When:** Thursday, Friday, Saturday – December 8th, 9th and 10th
- ◆ **Meet:** Fall Branch Falls 9:00 AM
- ◆ **Plan for the Day:** Tread work, step work at ramp
- ◆ **What to bring:** Minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and snack or lunch for the day.
- ◆ **Contact:** Barry Allen at bmtabarry AT gmail.com or 770-294-7384

Our plan for December is different from our normal work trip. I need two or three people each day to work setting 6x6 timbers on the steps up from Fall Branch Falls. I expect it will take two days to finish the job, but will plan on Saturday to complete any final details at the Falls.

Setting 6x6 pressure treated steps is a slower and more tedious job than a normal work event, and the number of people needed each day is lower than a normal event. I expect to work from about 9:00AM to 2:00PM and then call it a day. If your schedule allows you to volunteer one of these days, then please give me a call or send an email letting me know when you are available.

It's Membership Renewal Time for 2017

By Ralph Heller – Membership Director

December is renewal time for the coming year! As Membership Director, I am urging everyone to renew their affiliation with the BMT in a timely manner. If you are a life member or renewed within the last couple of months, you can ignore this message. Your membership is current. Thank you!! For the rest of you, it is **now** time to renew. If you have any questions about your membership status, please contact me (Ralph Heller - Membership director) at rshbmta AT gmail.com. **Be sure to replace AT with @ when sending an email.**

Memberships in the BMTA are for the entire calendar year, so everyone's membership ends on December 31. It is easy to renew; just go to the Membership section of the website to initiate the process. You can pay via PayPal with your credit card or make a copy of the Membership Application Form and send it along with a check to the BMTA address at the bottom of the form. Be sure to update any information on this form, such as address, email, phone number and interests.

Remember, both your membership payment and all donations are tax deductible if you pay by the end of the year, or next year if paid after December 31. All donations go to support the trail. The BMTA has no paid staff. Donations by check may be paid using the printed membership form, or with credit card on PayPal by clicking on the Donate button on the bmta.org home page.

Thanks for your past and continued support. If there is anything you can suggest for improving our organization or to make your membership a better experience, please let me know. See you on the trail!

Stocking Stuffers Help BMTA Just click below!



http://bmta.org/BMTA_Store.htm



North Georgia Mountain Outfitters
in Ellijay, GA : <http://www.hikenorthgeorgia.com/>



Terra Outfitters, in Blue Ridge, GA or available online at:
<http://terra.atayne.com/> Atayne

Notice to Hikers

by Dick Evans

This information is accurate as of the Saturday, November 11th Morning, but the situation is fluid and may have changed. Do not rely on this notice as definitive.

Due to the Maple Springs Fire, the Benton MacKaye Trail in Graham County, NC, is closed from Beech Gap/Cherochala Skyway to Tapoco Lodge/Route 129. The Maple Springs Fire has consumed almost 8,000 acres, mostly in the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness, and all trails in that area are closed to recreational use. As this is written, the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest area is stable, with the crews holding a line along the Naked Ground Trail from the Parking Area up to Naked Ground on the ridge. The "Big Trees" in the Upper Loop area are not immediately threatened, and crews have been removing leaves and dead growth from that area. The fire has moved uphill and has now reached the ridge between Naked Ground and Haeo (all part of the BMT). So far, this fire has not been devastating, and the majority of the live, larger trees are believed to have sustained just superficial scarring on the trunks. Brush and leaves are the main fuel source, so this may clear those areas between the larger trees. Right now, full containment is not estimated to occur before early December, with the fires expected to continue until March. We will post current information on the Benton MacKaye Trail Association and Partners of the Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness Facebook pages, and the official conditions can be found on the Maple Springs Facebook page.



BMTA Overnight at Len Foote Hike Inn

by Ken Cissna

Mark your calendars and make your reservations. Again this winter BMTA members will be able to enjoy the Len Foote Hike Inn *at half price rates!* We are hiking to the Hike Inn on Thursday, February 23 and returning the next day, Friday the 24th. This is for BMTA members and their guests staying in the same room.

For reservations, go to <http://hike-inn.com/rates-and-reservations/> and use the group code 17BMTA. For one person in a room, you will pay \$70.15 or for two \$100.63, tax included. Prices include family style dinner and breakfast—and a great hike.

The hike is about five miles, moderate difficulty, from Amicalola Falls State Park to the Len Foote Hike Inn. More information is available about the Hike Inn at <http://hike-inn.com/>.

Space is limited. If you are interested in joining us for this hike, contact the Hiking Director, Ken Cissna, by writing kcissna AT usf.edu or calling 706-636-1741.



Who knows??!! We might even enjoy a dusting of snow like we did last year!! Don't miss out!!!

Coming Again!! Winter Hike Week in the Smokies January 19-22, 2017 Sponsored by SEFTC

Many of you have in past years enjoyed the winter hiking experience during Wilderness Wildlife Week in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The tradition continues. Under the auspices of the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition (SEFTC), the second annual Winter Hike Week will be held January 19-22 in Pigeon Forge, TN.

Several hikes ranging from easy to strenuous will be held each day, beginning on Thursday, the 19th, and concluding on Sunday, the 22nd. Participants are urged to arrive on Wednesday afternoon, if possible, to take advantage of the full hike schedule. All hikes will be led by hike leaders familiar with the GSMNP trails. There is a \$25 charge by SEFTC for the event, whether you are there one day or all days. This goes to fund SEFTC's hiking and foot trails program. The SEFTC will hold its annual meeting for SEFTC board members and leadership council members on Saturday. For those not participating in that meeting, a full hiking schedule is provided Saturday.

For all the details and to register please go to the **Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition** website <http://www.southeasternfoottrails.org>. On the opening page click on the icon in the upper right for the "Winter Hiking Event" to access information and registration.

If winter hiking in the Smokies is new to you, it is actually not that strange. For some it is even the preferred season, with the smallest crowds. Ice and snow is usually not a problem, with significant snow collection mainly at the highest elevations. Usually January hikers can hike most days at lower elevations, where most of our treks occur. Should heavy snows occur, alternative low elevation flatter hikes may be substituted.

SEFTC is planning for well over a hundred people for this event. In 2016 SEFTC held this event successfully for the first time, and plans to make it an annual January occasion.

So make your special winter hiking plans now for the January 2017 SEFTC Winter Hike Week in America's most visited national park by going to the SEFTC website and registering and reserving your inn or hotel room as instructed there!



Notes from the Hiking Director

by Ken Cissna

I am thankful for the work done by Mike Pilvinsky, the Hiking Director for the past year. He provided a strong hiking program, a tradition I hope to continue.

I intend to continue scheduling a minimum of two hikes per month, one five to eight miles of moderate difficulty and one that is shorter and relatively easy. In addition, I intend to have occasional backpacking hikes, hikes that are dog friendly, and more difficult ones that might be called "hardy hikes" (you'll see one of these in December below). I also hope to have hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee (and one of these in January).

So far, we have two hikes scheduled over the next two months. More will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website for updates.

Upcoming Hikes

- **December 9, 2016-Big Frog Trail and BMT to Big Frog Mountain and back.** 11-12 miles total, moderate to strenuous difficulty, about 6.5 hours of hiking. Elevation change about 1300 feet; from 2900 feet at the start to 4220 at the top. Driving distance on dirt road 3.2 miles from Thunder Rock via FS 45 & 221. Beautiful views along ridgelines. Big Frog Trail intersects the BMT which leads to the top. Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com
- **January 9, 2017-BMT to John Muir trail along the Hiwassee River.** We will enter the BMT on Hwy 68 north of Farner, TN and hike the BMT 3.7 miles to the intersection of the John Muir Trail (has a few "blow downs") then head back along the Hiwassee (5 miles with some rocky footing and boulders along the river) to Hwy 68. Involves 2.5 mile shuttle on Hwy 68. Total hiking 8.7 miles. Contact Hike Leader Tom Sewell at SewellTom AT yahoo.com.

If you are interested in leading a hike, please contact me at kcissna AT usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

Please be advised that AT&T and BellSouth have been blocking all emails from BMTA.org. You will need to contact them to allow emails from BMTA.org.

**The deadline for the December Newsletter is Wednesday December 21.
Thank you!!!**