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BMTA Headquarters



President's Column

'All there is to thinking is seeing something noticeable which makes you see something you weren't noticing which makes you see something that isn't even visible.' Norman Maclean

Having read *A River Runs Through It* some thirty years ago, I recently picked this book again from my bookshelf. I read and then re-read Maclean's quote a half-dozen times, thinking about his meaning. As I read, I remembered the first time I walked southbound from Skeenah Gap to Little Skeenah Creek, alone, passing along the flank of Rhodes Mountain, down to the saddle between Rhodes and Licklog and then over the summit of Licklog Mountain. As I walked along the Benton MacKaye some years ago, I noticed a massive yellow poplar growing just off the trail somewhere near the saddle between Licklog and Wallalah. 'All there is to thinking is seeing something noticeable which makes you see something you weren't noticing...'

For me, seeing this huge yellow poplar which had escaped sawmills from a hundred years before – and a hundred years before that – left a lasting impression. The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is a *conservation based organization*. Conservation is a concept -- an idea -- that is not as visible as a 300 year-old-yellow poplar. Yet the visual site of many things along our trail defines the thought and need to preserve, to conserve, the natural beauty of the area.

Conservation and improvement of the trail corridor will always be a fundamental part of our mission. Most chances for significant improvement to the trail are centered in Georgia, in and around Cherry Log and Blue Ridge on Sections 6 and 7, where we still have significant road walks. Recently, a few BMTA members have been gathering periodically in Ellijay over cervezas and salsa to discuss alternatives to some of the road walks. Private lands are involved in all of the alternatives and private lands are the reason BMTA Boards for many years have not had much success in moving the trail off roads in the Cherry Log area.

No matter how much we would like to re-route the trail using a mixture of National Forest and private lands, we must remember that private lands are private lands and we must respect that. It can take years for the right property to come available – if ever. But we can continue to try, to be good neighbors and stay in contact with land owners.

After a particularly long beer and salsa night, one of the items on my to-do list was to contact a couple of land trusts. We wanted to understand the process of using land trusts to identify and help purchase private lands – lands that we hoped would later be acquired by the Forest Service. These contacts were eye-opening, and well worth the time spent on a phone call. As some of you know, last December Congress passed S571 allowing the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest to divest itself of a number of outlying properties and to use funds from the sale of these properties to purchase tracts which are better suited for Forest Service management. This program was supported by the Nature Conservancy and the Conservation Fund among others, and ensures that the Chattahoochee/Oconee National Forest can use funds from divestitures to purchase more appropriate properties!

However, this is a slow moving program. Trusts doing much of the lending in Georgia already have ownership of millions of dollars of land – some of which they have owned for as long as five years. Immediate responses from contacts ran along the lines of “call back in a year, after we see if the National Forest can pull funding together on existing promises.” But they did offer an observation: When you are ready, approach landowners with a specific offer or plan. Interest is always at its peak if a specific offer is on the table.

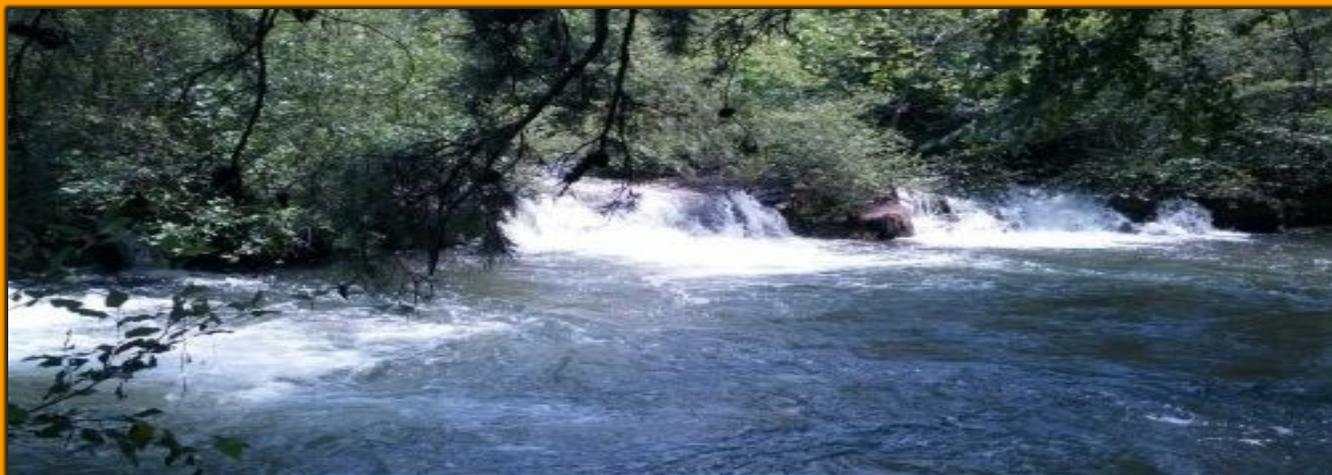
The overall process was educational – for many reasons. Generally speaking, conservation trusts can’t pay fair market value on a piece of property. They must acquire property below appraised value and sell to the ultimate owner, in this case the Forest Service, near fair market value. The difference in purchase versus sales price ultimately must cover carrying costs – which can be substantial.

A typical deal on private property acquired for National Forest ownership requires some give from all parties – a landowner who can donate some portion of the overall value to the trust, an organization such as the BMTA which can fund some of the purchase through its donor and membership base and a land trust which can fund the bulk of the purchase and hold until Federal funding is available.

In short: whether through easements or more direct property purchases involving land trusts, the BMTA must expect and prepare to help fund any land deal as we strive to improve the corridor. We don’t want to own the property, but we must be prepared to help fund it.

Let me leave you this month with my favorite literary passage from the same author that provided our beginning – Norman Maclean. Just take a moment and enjoy.....

“Eventually all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world’s great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters.”



Annual Meeting Hike and Activities Schedule

Click [HERE](#) for more detailed information:

ALL HIKES MEET IN THE FONTANA VILLAGE LOBBY AND LEAVE AT INDICATED TIME!

Thursday

Halloween Hike

1:00 PM / Easy / 5 Miles / Dick Evans

Halloween Cemetery Hike. Visit two old cemeteries in the National Park. Easy gravel road walk with views!

Friday

Nichols Cove

9:00 AM / 6 Miles / Moderate / Dick Evans

Follow the BMT from Big Fat Gap thru Nichols Cove to Tapoco Lodge.

Fontana Dam / Lakeshore

1:00 PM / 3 – 5 Miles / Moderately Easy / George Owen

Cross the tallest dam in eastern America (480 feet) on the BMT. Then, head north on the BMT / Lakeshore trails for 1.5 – 2.5 miles.

Hangover Hike

TBD — 6 Miles — Strenuous — TBD

Hike from Big Fat Gap to the Hangover, spectacular view.

Saturday

Boat Trip & Hike

Sign Up at Hospitality Table in Lobby

9:00 AM / 5 Miles / Moderate – Dick Evans

*Boat capacity is 20 persons. / There is a fee for the boat ride.

Take Fontana Ferry to North Shore of lake. Visit old cemeteries and hike over Welch Ridge to Proctor, then boat back.

About an hour later, a second boat trip will depart for Proctor to visit the old town site (a 1 - 2-mile hike).

Lookout Rock

9:00 AM / 5 - 8 Miles / Strenuous / George Owen

Climb from Fontana Inn to Lookout Rock (1.9 mi.) and trek westward a bit enjoying mountaintop views beyond - all on BMT.

Yellow Creek Mountain Trail

9:00 AM / 7.8 Miles / Strenuous / TBD / Vehicle Shuttle Required

Drive to Old Field Gap Road and hike the Yellow Creek Mountain Trail section of the BMT.

Sunday

Bear Pen Gap

9:30 AM / 2 Miles / Moderate / Dick Evans

Old Field Gap Road to Tapoco Lodge. Lunch at the Lodge, then depart for home, or additional hike after lunch.

Yellowhammer Gap

9:45 AM / 4 - 6 Miles / Moderately Easy / George Owen

Take part of the BMT from Tapoco Lodge toward Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness, part return, side trail or two. Lunch at Tapoco Lodge early afternoon. Then travel home.

Self-Guided Hikes

Yellow Creek Falls

3/4 Miles – Easy

Hike to Yellow Creek Falls and back.

Head west (Left) on NC-28 N toward DEALS GAP / Turn south (Left) onto US-129 S for approx 5 miles / Yellow Creek Falls will be on your left.

Marina Stroll

3 Miles – Easy - Vehicle Shuttle Required

Follow the BMT from Fontana Village to the AT and the Fontana Marina.

Head north on the BMT ... across from Fontana Village Lodge.

Twenty Mile

3.2 Miles – Easy

Hike in the National Park up Twenty Mile Creek, etc. Many variations Possible.

Head left (west) on NC-28 N 6.5 miles to Twenty Mile Entrance / Twenty Mile Trail (3.5 miles).

Twenty Mile Loop

7.6 Miles — Moderate

Loop Trail with 1,200 foot elevation gain (and loss).

Head left (west) on NC-28 N 6.5 miles to Twenty Mile Entrance.

Non Hiking Activities

If interested, email jgiftwitter@gmail.com

Any Day

Fontana Dam Visitor's Center

Head east on NC-28 S toward Welch Road / Continue straight onto Fontana Dam Road / Turn left. Destination will be on your left.

Fontana Lake Tours

Fee Charged / Reservations suggested (828) 498-2129

Lake Tours depart from Fontana Marina Daily at 2 and 4 PM to see one of the deepest lakes in the country.

Saturday

Marina Boat Ride

Boat Departure Time - 1:00 PM

*Boat capacity is 20 persons. / There is a fee for the boat ride.

Head east on NC-28 S toward Welch Road / Continue straight onto Fontana Dam Road / Turn right. 40 Fontana Dam Road, Fontana Dam, NC 28733.

Wehrloom Honey

Head east on NC-28 S toward Welch Road / Turn right onto NC-143 W/Sweetwater Road / Turn right onto Rodney Orr Bypass / Continue onto US-129 N/Tapoco Road / Turn left onto Willie Colvin Road. 257 Willie Colvin Road, Robbinsville, NC 28771.

Yellow Branch Cheese & Pottery

Head east on NC-28 S toward Welch Rd / Turn left onto Yellow Branch Road / Turn right onto Old Yellow Branch Road / Tuskegee Circle. 1073 Old Yellow Branch Road, Robbinsville, NC 28771.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!!!!

by Darcy Douglas

Once again, we are asking for Membership Renewals! To Join or Renew Online using a Credit Card, Debit Card or your PayPal Account, use this [link](#). To Join or Renew using a personal check: use this [form](#), print it, fill out and mail in with your check to the address given on the form.

We are on a CALENDAR YEAR Schedule, but if you renew NOW, you will be a member until the end of 2020.

Your membership dollars really add to the organization, especially our trail building and maintaining activities. If you join at the Corporate level, your company name will appear in the newsletter at least three times throughout the year. If you join as a Life Member, you never have to give dues a thought again! And, a Benton MacKaye Trail Association membership is the perfect gift for any occasion!

Remember we are a 501c3 organization, so this is a tax-deductible expense!

Join or renew your membership now and work side by side with other BMTA volunteers to make the Benton MacKaye Trail THE preeminent mid-distance trail in the nation!

Christmas at Merciers

December 7, 2019

Blue Ridge, Georgia

**Payment for dinner reservations must be
Received by November 22!**



Use this link to make your reservations

<http://bmta.org/ChristmasDinner-2019.php>

Amazon Smile Benefits BMTA

If you are going to make purchases from Amazon please use this address: BMTA's unique link is <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1428009>. If you do so, Amazon will direct a small share of your purchases to BMTA. A convenient way to do this is to click on the link and then bookmark that page on your toolbar or wherever you keep hiking links. **Thank you!**

Orange up!!

Hunting season is upon us!

We recommend wearing bright safety colors when in the woods during hunting season.

The season varies, so we have supplied the links below to better inform you. Camping, hiking and other recreational uses are allowed year-round in the National Forests, unless otherwise posted at the WMA check station or at a specific recreation site. All WMA visitors are encouraged to wear hunter orange during the hunting seasons. Hunting is not allowed in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

You can purchase the BMTA blaze orange cap and shirt from our store at www.bmta.org/Store-Clothing.html.

Click on the following web sites for more detailed information:

Georgia: www.georgiawildlife.com/hunting/regulations

Tennessee: <https://www.tn.gov/twra/hunting/big-game/deer.html>

North Carolina: <http://ncwildlife.org/Hunting/Season-limits>



Be Bear Wise

by Marge Heller



This sign was donated by Joe Sisson and duplicate signs have also been placed throughout his Cherry Log Mountain development. Ralph Heller placed this one on the BMTA Headquarters.

Joe is working with Gerald Hodge and his new non-profit Appalachia Georgia Friends of Bears. Gerald is a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel living in Cherry Log and is also responsible for working with the GDOT to get the two new bear crossing signs on Highway 515.

For more information on the Appalachia Georgia Friends of Bears go to: <https://www.facebook.com/appalachiageorgiafriendsofthebears/>

Etowah Fall Festival

by Claire Sullivan

The Etowah Chamber and the Tennessee Overhill sponsored the Etowah Fall Festival October 5-6, 2019, at the Etowah L & N Depot. The festival puts the spotlight on local arts and crafts as well as on musical performances on the main stage.

Volunteers in the booth shared information about the BMT, maintenance trips and monthly BMTA sponsored hikes. Twenty-seven visitor signatures were obtained from those requesting BMTA information via the web.

In addition, the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) booth gave attendees a unique opportunity to try their hand at crosscut sawing. Attendees of all ages had fun participating in the crosscut saw experience. Hopefully, some will become future volunteers!

And the unexpected arrival of Almond and Peaches (trail-names), two current thru hikers, was a special treat!

Much appreciation goes to our valuable outreach volunteers. Thank you to our crosscut team; Clayton Pannell, Larry Van Dyke and Ed Sullivan. Thank you, booth volunteers; Candise Van Dyke, Aaron Taylor, Jeff DePaola, Ruth Pannell and Clare Sullivan.

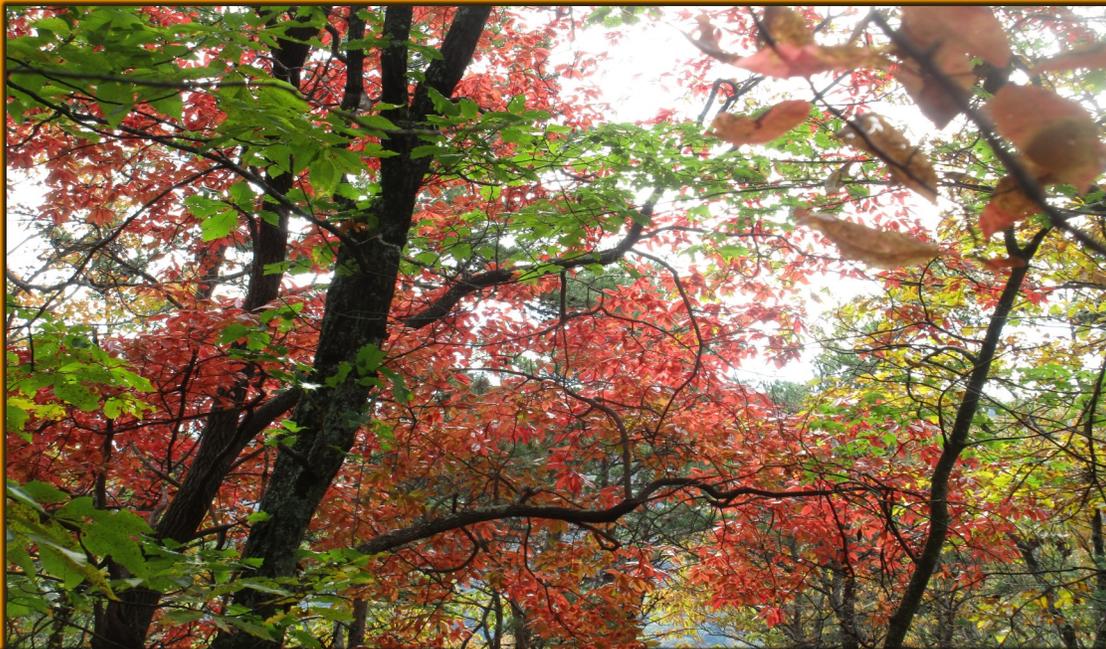


Flat Creek Loop

by Ken Cissnan with photos courtesy of Tom Atcheson

Friday, October 18, looked to be a little chilly so I pushed the meeting time back to 9:30am. Flat Creek Loop is a favorite trail of mine ... partly because it is so close to Blue Ridge ... partly because it connects to so many other nice trails, including the BMT. And partly because it is such a beautiful trail! So, with our meeting time of 9:30, our eight hikers, Ted Antal, Tom and Sharon Atcheson, Ken and Artie Cissna, Darrell and Ginny McKinney and Tom Johnson, were on the trail around 9:45. Artie and Ginny are very well-behaved trail dogs.

The hike was glorious on a beautiful morning starting with a slightly chilly and cloudy forecast giving way to a mostly sunny and warmer hike by midday. As we hiked counterclockwise we were able to lunch by the creek at the bottom of the trail. As you'd expect with such a nice day, we met a number of other hikers but surprisingly (at least to me) no bikers. The dogs behaved perfectly, though Artie left his feet a few hundred yards from the end at the sight of a chipmunk in the brush!



November Georgia Work Trip Announcement

by Phil Guhl

Work site: Big Stamp Gap

When: Saturday, November 9, 2019

Meet: 8:00 AM at Hardee's (1208 Industrial Blvd, East Ellijay, GA 30540) or 9:00 AM at Big Stamp Gap

Plan for the Day: Build a parking lot

What to bring: Minimum two liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves, snacks.

Contact: Phil Guhl at bmtaphil@gmail.com or 770-548-5590 (**Please RSVP, so we can plan on the number of tools, helmets, and people for the food/drink afterwards**).

Two things to take note of:

- 1) This is the second Saturday of the month in November
- 2) The Big Stamp Gap parking lot is finally coming to fruition after years of work on behalf of our very own George Owen.

We have several objectives:

- Install a kiosk.
- Install 15 parking blocks.
- Bore out for and install several parking bollards around an island in the middle of the parking lot.
- Level gravel.
- Possibly improve draining.
- Finish the connecting trail.
- Blue blaze the connecting trail.

A few hardwood trees were taken down to make this happen. If anyone is interested in coming out and gathering some firewood, please join us. We will chainsaw trees for those who want the wood at the end of the day. Depending on our energy level, we may split it...or not.

I look forward to working alongside each of you!

FYI: We are moving to a new email notification system. *If you would like to sign up* for the new email notification system, then click on this link: MailChimp <http://eepurl.com/gnjshD> and provide your email address and name.

Likewise...if you wish to be removed from my personal mail list notifications, reply to this email and let me know. I will remove you promptly.

Georgia October Monthly Maintenance Trip

by Phil Guhl

We came together on Saturday, October 12, (which happened to be the second Saturday of the month...hint! hint! Mark your calendars for every month). The bulk of the crew met at The Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge. Our objective for the day was to tackle the trail between Highway 60 and the Brawley Mountain Tower (Sections 5a and 5b). I could sense some discomfort and an unusual tension in those gathered as we pondered the reality of facing a day in the woods with no rain in the forecast. Breakfast helped calm the fears of the unknown.

Everyone loaded up and headed to Wilscot Gap. Some real confusion set in as the vehicles pulled up to the gap facing volunteers and runners for The Blue Ridge Ultra, which was taking place this very day. *Note to self*...check the calendar a little closer next time. The first team, Team Wilscot led by Bob Cowdrick, gathered to begin their brushing work up to the amphitheater from Wilscot Gap on Highway 60. Bob performed the safety debrief and Job Hazard Analysis with his team and off they went!

The rest of the crew drove up to the amphitheater where I gave the safety debrief, covered the potential hazards and divided into the other teams. Team Ledford, led by Dave Ricker, started at Ledford Gap and worked toward Team Wilscot brushing out the trail along the way. Team Diggers, led by Barry Allen, started at Ledford Gap, but worked toward Brawley Mountain sidehilling, repairing horse damage and installing some water diversions.

Darcy Douglas and Team Enlightening took off to blaze the trail.

The teams worked together like a well-oiled machine. All objectives were not only achieved, but achieved in record time. I couldn't be more pleased with the work ethic and spirit every volunteer displayed as we finished all 3.2 miles in time for lunch...yes! Noon lunch! We were fortunate to have cellphone service. The trail was cleaned up so quickly, I called Darcy to let her know she could stop...Dave Ricker drove up to Brawley Tower to retrieve her and Team Enlightening.

Did I mention lunch? Our Chuck Masters, Debra Guhl and Sue Ricker, did what they do very well. They worked the trail and then worked setting up the food, the condiments, the additional nutritional reimbursements...and even served the other workers. On this trip, in the spirit of Oktoberfest, we had brats, hot dogs, sauerkraut, potato salad, cookies and beverages.

Déjà vu started to set in slowly as everyone was sinking their bicuspid into the brats and hot dogs. Where were Patrick, Daina and Dara? I learned they decided to hike down from Ledford to the flagged egress point. Yep! The place where I had removed all of the flags since I thought everyone was off the trail...again. About 30 minutes later they came walking up the Forest Service Road. They figured out they passed the egress point and bushwhacked through the woods back to the road and hiked up to the amphitheater. It will be archeologists removing those flags a thousand years from now the next time we work that section.

I would also like to make a special mention of one of our new members. She is originally from northeast Georgia, but has been living in Houston, Texas for several decades now. In planning to come back to the southeast to care for a family member, she did a little Googling looking for something to do if she should have some free time. She found www.bmta.org. She then gave me a call and asked about our work trips. Turns out she did not have any spare time while caring for her loved one and returned to Houston. BUT... that is not the end of the story.

Continued next page

Last month, she drove from Houston, Texas, spent the night in a hotel, and showed up for the work trip. Afterwards, she drove back to Houston and signed up as a member. This month she made the trek again and this time she brought a friend from Spring, Texas! I am talking about Ann Redman and her friend Nancy Malone. I have seen some long travel times for folks, but I believe this takes the cake!

I want to, on behalf of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association Board, thank each and every one of our 28 volunteers: Debra Guhl, Patrick Ward, Sue Ricker, Dave Ricker, Eddie Bobbitt (guest), David Watkins, Steve Kruep, Butch Watson, Steve Pruett, Frank Forehand, Bob Nelson, Darcy Douglas, Ann Redman, Nancy Malone (guest), Steve Bayliss, Barry Allen, Dale Clark, Carolyn Sewell, Tom Sewell, Larry Dumas, David Lankford, Janice Lankford, Daina Plitkins-Denning (guest), Dara Denning (guest), Bob Cowdrick and Tom Johnson.

Iron Hill Trail Hike

by Martha Fowler



We had nine folks hike the Iron Hill Trail at Red Top Mountain State Park on October 9. It is an easy four-mile loop around Lake Allatoona. After the hike we had a fun lunch at Rocco's in Jasper!

Upcoming Hikes

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules a minimum of two hikes per month, one of five to eight miles and moderate difficulty, and one that is shorter and easier. In addition, we have occasional backpacking hikes and more difficult ones that might be called “hardy hikes.” Occasionally we co-sponsor hikes with other organizations. Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

If you are interested in leading a hike or have a hike you’d like to see us offer with someone else leading, please contact me at kcissna@usf.edu or 706-636-1741.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. With fall *finally* in full swing and winter on its way, I expect we will see some leaf color at least. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy.

November

November 1 – 3 (Friday – Sunday) LOTS of hikes at BMTA annual meeting at Fontana Hall see [page 3](#). You can also access detailed information [HERE](#).

November 11 (Monday) Amadahy Trail. **DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE** (adult humans may bring a leashed dog)

5 miles, easy to moderate along the shore of Carter’s Lake. Lunch at the marine campground.

Contact hike leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@usf.edu or 813-310-6084

November 16 (Saturday) Hike and Help the Hemlocks.

We’ll be working with Save Georgia’s Hemlocks again this year to help save some Hemlocks from the wooly adelgid, this year in the Three Forks area. No experience necessary. Get a little exercise, some education and do a good deed for our forests.

For more information, please contact Ken Cissna at 813-310-6084 or kcissna@usf.edu.

November 22 (Friday) Brush Creek Trail.

7 miles, easy to moderate.

Beginning at Boyd Gap Overlook on Hwy 64 near the White Water Center in Tennessee, the trail winds up Sheep Top Mountain and meanders close to Ocoee #3 Lake. Trail offers great views of this hidden lake. Very short shuttle.

Contact hike leader Clare Sullivan at clare7982@gmail.com

BMTA at the Hike Inn, February 20, at half price!

For additional information, contact Ken Cissna at kcissna@usf.edu or 813-310-6084.

Next Newsletter deadline is Wednesday, December 4. Thank you!