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Points of Interest

Click the title to go directly to the page.

[One Step](#)

[You Can Help](#)

[Lumber, Rebar](#)

[A Shadowy Figure](#)

[Winter Work Trip](#)

[2022 Tool Tips](#)

[2021 BMTA Adventures](#)

[Aging Without Notice](#)

[Corporate Members](#)

[Upcoming](#)



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BMTA Headquarters



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One Step at a Time

by Joy Forehand with photos courtesy of Mischief Photography

For Chris Phillips (whose trail name is Mischief), an avid long-distance hiker and landscape photographer, his love for the outdoors encompassed his life.

On November 28, 2018, while hiking the Appalachian Trail in Virginia, his outdoor adventures came to a sudden halt. It was a snowy day with the temperature in the low 20s. He left the Knot Maul Branch Shelter on a routine trip to get water for the next morning's trek.

The stream was frozen and he had to break the ice to get to water. As he stood up, he fell backward, hitting his head and was knocked unconscious. He laid with his lower legs in the freezing stream for hours. When he came to, he knew he needed to get back to the shelter, but he was unable to stand. His feet were frozen, and he passed out again – the overnight temperature dipped to 12 degrees.

Phillips had no phone service and no food. What he did have was a strong, inner determination to survive. He managed to crawl back to the trail where two hikers found him and they were able to call for help. It was now December 1. He had been in the unrelenting freezing temperatures for three days.

“If they hadn’t come by, I wouldn’t have made it,” said Phillips.



After several surgeries and the amputation of portions of his feet, the doctors told him he would never walk again.

Friends and family “encouraged” him to accept the dire prognosis.

For months, Phillips believed there was no way he would ever return to hiking, there was no way he could do *anything*.

Then a dream changed his life.

“I had a dream ... I was still hiking on long-distance trails,” said Phillips. “More than that, when I woke up, I realized if I could get back to hiking, I could make a lot of difference in a lot of people’s lives.”

The next day, he went to therapy with his backpack on – three weeks later, they kicked him out of physical therapy.

He continued his training by walking on roads. Each step, no matter how small, was a step toward his dream of returning to hiking. His persistence paid off. Phillips re-built his endurance and physical ability to the point he could do 20-mile sections of the AT.



But he still had a major hurdle to overcome – his prosthetics kept breaking.

He made a YouTube video to show a prosthetics manufacturer what his prosthetics needed to be able to do.

He now has carbon fiber prosthetics customized for long-distance hiking.

Since returning to long-distance hiking, Phillips has an impressive resume of trails hiked including the Appalachian Trail (Georgia - Pennsylvania), the Iron Mountain Trail (Virginia), the Foothills Trail (South Carolina) as well as several “Hiking Challenges”.

Phillips recently completed his thru hike of the Benton MacKaye Trail. Between the Swinging Bridge and Three Forks, he hit his 2,000-mile mark hiking as a double amputee!

“I didn’t realize how tough hiking the BMT would be,” said Phillips. “It really pushed me physically and mentally. I would get to the top and then I would realize, wow, I just did that – I can go on; I can do this!”

“It’s a challenge (the BMT) and it’s rugged, but if you stick with it, it’s a beautiful and awesome trail,” Phillips concluded.

He plans to thru hike the AT as well as all eleven National Scenic Trails.

But his amazing exploits since his injuries are not the most important take-away from his story – at least not to him. It’s true they are impressive. But what Phillips hopes is the most important take-away for people – *never give up*. Don’t let people tell you you can’t do something. Decide what you want to do and go after it – one step at a time.

What is it you want to do? Is it to be able to backpack or thru hike a long distance trail? Perhaps you want to become a Section Maintainer. Maybe you just want to be in shape to enjoy hiking in the mountains. This is the time of year for resolutions. Make yours and then take Phillips’ advice: “Believe in yourself and push yourself to do what you want to do. You’ll never be sorry.”



YOU Can Help Make the Benton MacKaye Trail the 12th National Scenic Trail!

Contact your Congressional Representative

*Let your representative know why you believe the BMT
should be designated as a National Scenic Trail.*

To learn more, go to [representative](#).



2022 Membership Drive

To Join or to Renew your membership, go to [Membership!](#)



Donate Now!

- ◆ Membership fees & donations are the primary source of funds for preserving & protecting the BMT.
- ◆ For a donation of \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500, you will receive an Individual or Family Membership for 2022.



Minute puffballs!

Courtesy of Leah Harris

Lumber, Rebar, T-Shirts and Socializing

by Bob Cowdrick with photos courtesy of Kelly Wentworth

What do these have in common? The Thrivent Action Team made it possible for the 14 GA BMTA Trail Maintainers who attended the workday on December 11 to:

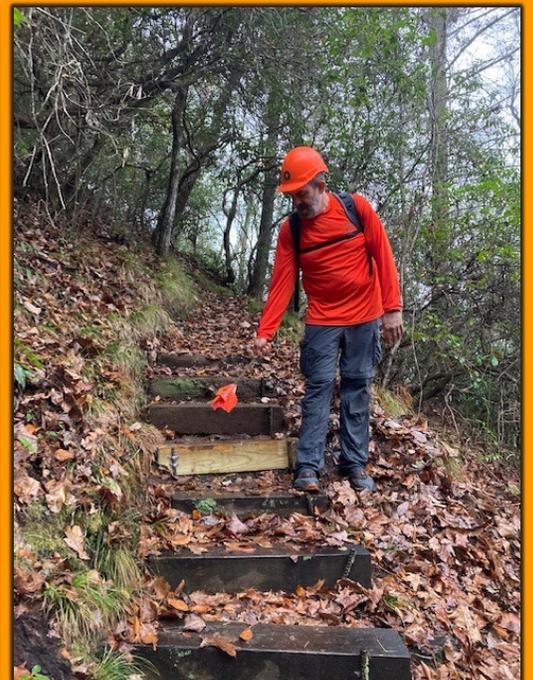
- ◆ Purchase 6x6 timbers to replace rotten steps.
- ◆ Rebuild a switchback wall with rebar and timbers.
- ◆ Sidehill and improve the tread on two sections of the trail in dire need of repair.
- ◆ Enjoy wearing our new, dry Thrivent T-shirts home after a downpour.
- ◆ After the workday, spend time socializing while chowing down on some savory Chick-Fil-A sandwiches.
- ◆ **And**, wrap up a fantastic 2021 GA trail maintenance season!

Samuel Sly volunteered to lead Darcy Douglas, Kelly Wentworth and John Nepshinsky on a tread repair project.

David Watkins with his fellow “knuckleheads” Bill Balke, Joe Cantwell and Steve Pruett headed southbound to meet up with Samuel.

Shane Morrison convinced Frank Forehand, Barry Allen, and Patrick Ward to hand carry the 6x6 timbers to the jobsite so as to test out the weight limit on the new bridge.

Steve Bayliss invited Bob to join him at the switchback repair project.



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The satisfaction of a job well done!



With some convincing, Joy Forehand was recruited to deliver the Chick-Fil-A meals during the downpour to the trailhead.

This successful workday, under the threat of rainstorms that held off just long enough to get the job done, would not have been possible without Thrivent's financial support and Ed and Clare Sullivan's detailed instructions for the projects to be completed. Thank you!

How High's the Water Mama?!

By Steve Dennison



A surprisingly deep-water crossing greeted eight hikers on a BMTA loop hike. The section maintainer and GA Trail Maintenance Director have scheduled a work trip there in January. Undeterred, none of the hikers opted to take the shorter road walk back from Daily Gap to Watson Gap.

A Shadowy Figure

by Steve Dennison



What is this shadowy creature? Standing 6'6" it loomed over the intrepid hikers at the top of Rocky Mountain!

Should they run? Should they scream in terror? Is this the apparition of Sasquatch?

Oh, wait. It is just Hike Leader Steve Dennison's daydream that he is now 6'6" instead of 5'10".

All is well!



Connie Nester, Roy Fallon and Pat McMorrow on the observation deck at Fall Branch Falls.



Pat McMorrow at the top of Rocky Mountain.



Join Us on a Winter Work Trip
The Choice Is Yours!

GA Work Trip

Sign Up for One of the Crews on the January 8 Work Trip (GA Work Trip #1)

Section 10 – Dally Gap to Double Springs

Or

Join the Overnight Backpacking Work Trip January 8 – 9 (GA Work Trip #2)

Sections 10c, 10d and 11a - Dally Gap >> Hemp Top >> Double Spring >>

Big Frog and return to Dally Gap

In the event of light turnout for Work Trip #1 or bad weather, this trip will be rescheduled.

Register for a Georgia Trip Now!

To help us plan, please sign up early!

TN/NC Work Trip

Sign Up for the TN/NC Crew on the January 22 Work Trip

19e from BMT/AT Intersection to Fontana Shelter

Register for the TN/NC Trip Now!



Tool Tips for 2022

by Bob Cowdrick

When our volunteers are working on the trail, safety for our trail workers is our number one concern. The start of the new year is a great time to remind trail workers of valuable safety tips for working with tools.

- ◆ **Get a good grip.** Wet or muddy gloves may cause a tool to slip from your hands, striking you or someone near you. Be sure you have a good grip on the tool being used.
- ◆ **Watch out for others around you.** When chopping, cutting or brushing, watch out for anyone in close proximity to your work area. The combined length of your arm and tool could reach a person working nearby. Also, watch out for trail hikers. If you see someone coming, stop working. Notify your crew members and wait for them to pass.
- ◆ **Have a clear area in which to swing.** Watch out for overhead or side hazards such as branches, rocks, limbs, etc. A hazard could interfere with the complete swing of your tool, knocking it from your hands.
- ◆ **Watch your footing.** Be sure to clear limbs, sticks, loose rocks and other debris from your “footing” area. Make sure your feet are spaced well away from your target area when using a trail tool.
- ◆ **Choose the right tool.** The wrong tool can make you work in a poor or uncomfortable position. This can wear you out and make you lose concentration. Keep digging tools in the dirt and cutting tools out of the dirt.
- ◆ **Sharp tools work best.** A dull tool can bounce off what it was attempting to cut – this can be extremely dangerous. A sharp tool will cut faster and require less effort. All BMTA tools are sharpened after each trail workday.
- ◆ **Carry the tool properly.** Always carry tools in your hands and down at your side on the downhill side of the trail. To avoid injury if you stumble, drop the tool immediately. Use blade guards whenever possible.
- ◆ **Hike safely.** Stay at least 10 feet away from other crew members on the hikes to and from the work site. Space yourself so as to avoid being injured by a crew member carrying a tool in front of you.
- ◆ **Use the right PPE (Personal Protections Equipment).** Always wear long pants, long-sleeve shirts and work boots. In case they are needed, Crew Leaders should have extra hardhats, gloves and safety glasses available. If using a chainsaw, chaps, gloves and safety glasses are required – ear protection is advised.
- ◆ **First Aid Kit.** A standard first aid kit should contain the basic components to handle minor incidents (blisters, splinters, small cuts, etc.) that may occur during a workday. When using saws be sure to bring a saw-specific first aid kit.
- ◆ **Gloves.** Work gloves are used to grip tools as well as to protect your hands from blisters, thorns, poison oak or ivy or any other minor scratches associated with trail work.
- ◆ **Safety Glasses.** Safety glasses should be worn when saws, axes, digging tools, breaking rock – anywhere flying debris may be present.

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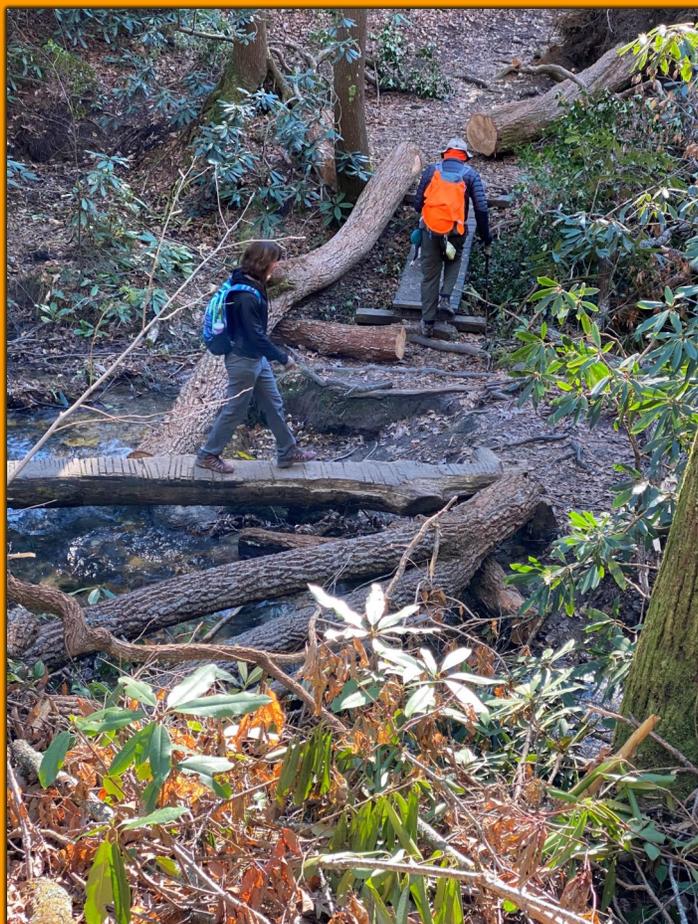
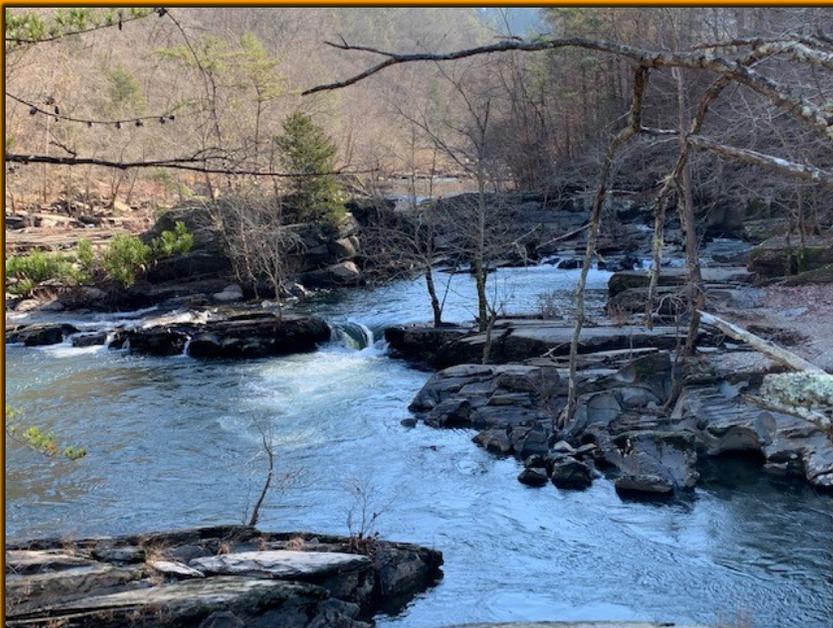
- ◆ **Hard Hat.** Protective hard hats are used when there is a danger of falling debris from above the work area (from the tree canopy or falling rocks). Hardhats are required for every member of a BMTA work crew. One can be provided if you do not have your own. An added benefit – they work great in the rain to keep your head dry.
- ◆ **Cell Phone/Ham Radio.** In backcountry areas, Emergency assistance can be hours away. A two-way radio or cell phone can help you call for assistance in case of an emergency. Always monitor cell coverage when on a trail – it may become non-existent.
- ◆ **Footwear.** Sturdy shoes or boots protect your feet from errant tools and provide solid footing when working. Consider using boots that are ankle high.
- ◆ **Water.** All BMTA crew members should carry adequate water supplies when on the trail. Two liters is the minimum recommendation. Drink frequently to stay hydrated.

I want to thank each and every one of you for helping to keep the Benton MacKaye Trail safe and open for everyone to enjoy in 2021. I look forward to working with you again in the coming year!

--Bob



2021 BMTA Adventures

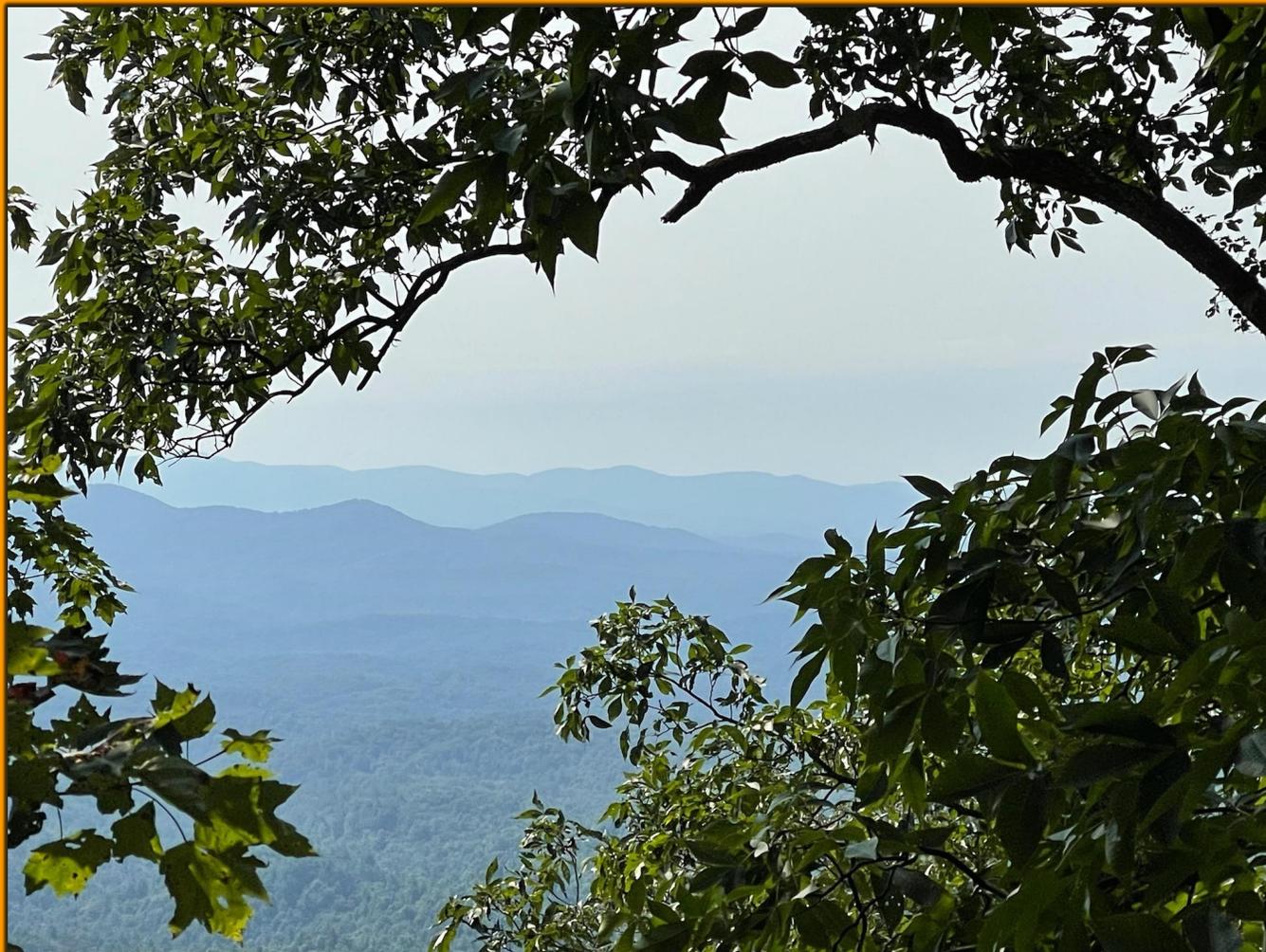












Aging Without Notice

by Kathy Williams

I see it every day. The creek rushing beside, and into, the old crumbling wall of the dam. The water battering, yet caressing, the worn stones of the dam.

Most people drive by or even walk by without even noticing that it is there. Was this once part of a mill? More likely a dam since you can see where at one time it connected to the gravel road. Laurel Creek's unnoticed mystery...



Welcome 2022 BMTA Corporate Members!

The Benton MacKaye Trail Association is grateful for the help and support provided by our Corporate Members. When you visit one of these businesses, please identify yourself as a BMTA member and be sure to thank them for their support!



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Save the Dates!
November 3 - 6, 2022
BMTA Hike Fest and Annual Meeting
 Fontana Village, North Carolina
 For reservations call (828) 498-2211.
 To receive your discount -
Mention the Benton MacKaye Trail Association!

Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Tom Sewell, Hiking Director

Guidelines for Our Hikes

Because hiking in the outdoors is good for one's mental and physical health, we encouraged BMTA members and others to continue hiking during the COVID-19 health crisis *and to do so safely*. Thus, we continued our hiking program during 2020 and 2021.

Due to the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, we have further modified our hiking program:

- ◆ We have resumed allowing shuttle hikes but caution that (a) no hikers should ride with another or have another ride with them if they are concerned about their safety and (b) unvaccinated hikers should not assume that others will want to ride in vehicles with them.
- ◆ Carpooling is permitted but not required.
- ◆ Any potential hiker who is feeling ill or has been exposed recently to a person with an active case of COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
- ◆ Hikes are limited to a maximum of 10 participants in Tennessee and North Carolina and 12 participants in Georgia. Hike leaders may impose lower limits.
- ◆ Masks are optional, but hikers should maintain an appropriate distance from one another.

January

January 5 (Wednesday) Benton MacKaye Trail from Weaver Creek to Fall Branch Falls and return. Moderate/strenuous 11.4 miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.com.



January 8 (Saturday) Two GA Work Trips Available!

Join one of the crews on the January 8 work trip or an overnight backpacking work trip **January 8-9**. Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

January 10 (Monday) Amadahy Trail at Carter's Lake. Easy/moderate 4-5 miles if you go out to the "boat/hike campground". This will be a leisurely hike. Hike Leaders Evelyn and Doug Yarns For more information contact hikeleaderEY@bmtamail.org.

January 14 (Friday) BMT from Three Forks to No Name Bald and back. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4.3 miles. Mostly following Long Creek. Largely uphill going and reverse returning. Approximately 700' of elevation change each way. We'll include a side trip to Long Creek Falls. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

January 17 (Monday) Thunder Rock Express on to Chestnut Mountain Trail to BMT down to Thunder Rock Campground. Moderate 6.5 miles/Whitewater Center in Ducktown, Tennessee. Hike Leaders Tom and Carolyn Sewell. For more information contact hikeleaderTS@bmtamail.org.

January 21 (Friday) Bushy Head Gap to McKenny and return. Moderately strenuous 8 miles. Hike Leader Steve Dennison. For more information contact hikeleaderSD@bmtamail.com.



January 22 (Saturday) TN Work Trip Section 19e from BMT/AT Intersection to Fontana Shelter. Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

February

February 11 (Friday) Talking Rock Nature Preserve. A dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Utilizes various loops in the Talking Rock Nature Preserve. We plan for five easy miles, but you may decide to add more if you wish after the hike. Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.



February 12 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 2a-b-c-d – Three Forks >> GA Hwy 60. Logout, brushout & tread repair. Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

February 25 (Friday) BMT to Rock Creek Trail in the Cherokee National Forest. Begin at Thunder Rock Parking for hikers, across Hwy 64, up the BMT to the Rock Creek Trail. Hike 7-8 miles back to Hwy 64. A few creek crossings and nice views. Short Shuttle. Moderate hike. Hike Leaders Clare and Ed Sullivan. For more information contact hikeleaderCS2@bmtamail.org



February 26 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip. Section 19c - (Green Gap-Reflector tower). Log out/brush. Contact Keith Mertz keithmertz@hotmail.com.

March



March 12 (Saturday) GA Work Trip Sections 3a-b-c GA60 >> Skenah Gap. Logout, brushout & tread repair. Contact Bob Cowdrick bcowdrick@comcast.net.

March 18 (Friday) BMT/AT: Upper two loops on Springer Mountain from Big Stamp Gap. Dog friendly hike (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). About five moderate miles. See all the sights: Springer Mountain, an AT shelter, the beginning of the BMT, the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye and Owen Vista! Hike Leader Ken Cissna. For more information contact hikeleaderKC@bmtamail.org.

To access our website calendar, go [HERE](#).

Deadline for the February Newsletter is Wednesday, February 2.

Thank You!