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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 43, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2026

Simply Put

by Joy Forehand

Why a National Scenic Trail Designation for the BMT Is Good for Both the BMT and Nearby Communities.

LONG TERM PROTECTION FOR THE BMT

Ninety-five percent of the 288-mile-long Benton MacKaye Trail (BMT), which traverses three states, already is on public land. One hundred seventy-three of those miles pass through six Wilderness Areas as well as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park which is maintained as Wilderness. Those 173 miles already enjoy the enhanced protection provided by the *1968 Wilderness Act* for Wilderness Areas.

If the BMT is designated as a National Scenic Trail (NST), the rest of the trail will have much-needed extra protection.

As an NST, the BMT would be managed either by the Forest Service (USFS) or by the National Park Service (NPS). The Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) has a 45-year history of a close working relationship with both the USFS and the NPS. The three organizations have worked as partners to preserve, protect and maintain the BMT.

That working relationship will be made even stronger by an NST designation for the trail.



Continued next page

Once designated, an optimal location study will be performed to evaluate what issues may exist and/or changes that are needed within the BMT's corridor. The study will provide a detailed analysis of both the issues and potential future remedies and opportunities.

The trail's corridor will be monitored for viewshed protection. Only 15 miles of the BMT is on public roads or private land. In the event additional land considered valuable for the trail's corridor becomes available, the BMT, as an NST, will be eligible to receive funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The BMT could utilize these resources to acquire land from willing sellers to increase protection along the trail's corridor.

Another benefit for the BMT will be enhanced environmental and wildlife-related protections and habitat management. The natural character of the trail will be preserved. The impact of visitors to the trail would be monitored. If heavy traffic begins to erode the trail, the trail's manager may authorize measures to mitigate damage done to the environment.

The BMTA already works closely with the USFS and NPS to make sure the trail is open for all to enjoy. The trail's manager will make sure any special events do not have a detrimental effect either on the trail's corridor or on the enjoyment of other hikers while hiking on the BMT. Events would be regulated so both participants and nonparticipants traverse the trail safely with minimal impact to the trail while they enjoy the journey.

ECONOMIC BOOST FOR NEARBY COMMUNITIES

The already popular BMT draws more than 60,000 hikers annually. An NST designation will increase that number significantly. Those hikers will visit nearby communities to purchase even more goods and services.

Studies on trails and greenways consistently show they can increase the value of nearby residential and commercial properties, leading to higher local tax revenues. Increased property value means the quality of life in the surrounding area will be enhanced, making it more attractive for new residents, remote workers, and small businesses focused on outdoor recreation.

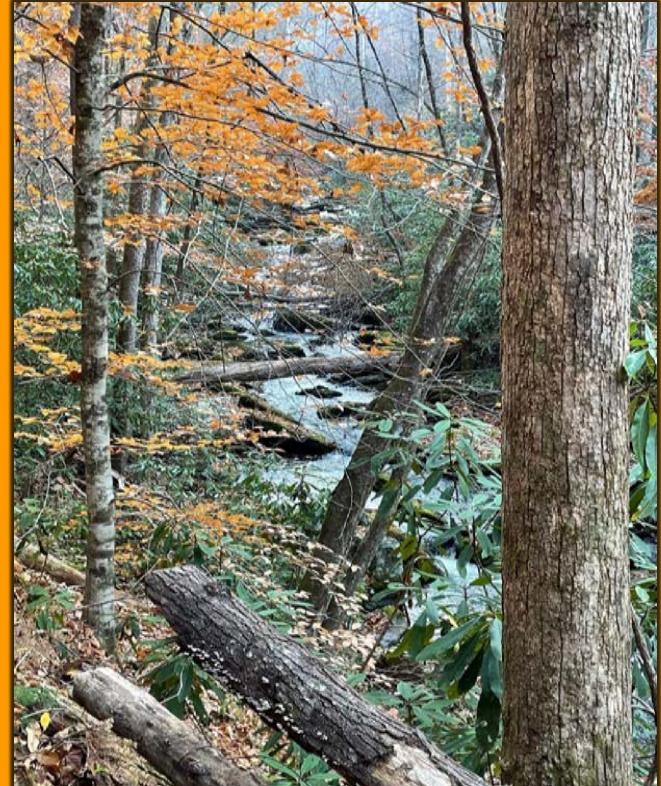
The additional demand for outfitters, guides, shuttle services, hostels, and campgrounds will create new jobs – a boon for existing local businesses.

The hospitality sector -- restaurants, coffee shops and lodging providers – in communities along the trail's corridor will see significant increases in customers patronizing their businesses.

Grocery stores, pharmacies, Post Office, etc. also will benefit from the influx of hikers, their friends and families.

Contact your senators and representatives to let them know why YOU think the BMT should be designated an NST. Go [HERE](#) for information on contacting them.

To learn more about the quest for National Scenic Trail designation go to [NST](#).



Crosscut Recertification Course Thunder Rock Campground February 18 Offered by Mason Boring

Deadline to signup is February 11

- ◆ Date: February 18
- ◆ Place: Thunder Rock Campground
- ◆ Time: 9AM
- ◆ Contact: Joe Cantwell at icantwell@bmta.org or Patrick Ward at pward@bmta.org

Volunteers Needed

The Ocoee District is looking for volunteers to staff their front desk.

The work staff are having to take turns working the front desk answering the phone and questions from visitors since they can no longer hire staff to do this responsibility. This front desk duty really impedes their own position responsibilities If you are interested contact Mason Boring at mason.boring@usda.gov.

Here is the location for the office:

Ocoee Ranger District Cherokee National Forest
3171 US-64, Benton, TN 37307
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/1qN8t1HmAyytqNaq5>



**Help Us Do What We Do Best
Maintain the BMT**

Join or Renew or Donate Today!

On the BMT in Cherry Log

by Ralph Collinson



It is always a great day when you get to spend time on the BMT. One area of the trail goes through a cabin community in the Cherry Log area between Ellijay, Georgia and Blue Ridge, Georgia. There is a small chapel on the trail, a unique point of interest not to be missed!



Save the Dates

2026 Annual Meeting & Hike Fest
November 5-8, 2026

Copperhill Brewery in Ducktown, TN

Watch for Details in the April Newsletter

President's Column

“Collaboration remains our greatest strength, and together we are building a clear, confident path for the future”

by Bob Cowdrick

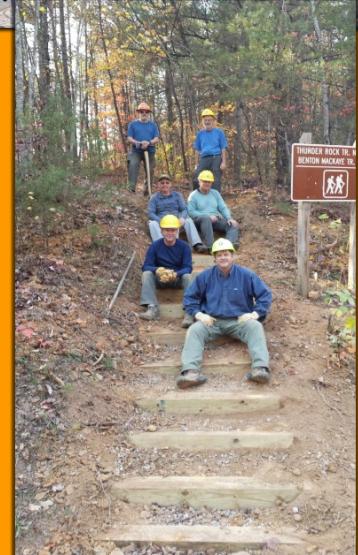
The new year is off to an encouraging start for the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. On January 30, we hosted our BMTA Land Managers Meeting—a gathering that brought together representatives from all five USFS Districts. The energy in the room made one thing clear: collaboration remains our strongest asset.

This annual meeting has become a cornerstone of our shared stewardship of the Benton MacKaye Trail. This year’s session was especially productive. Everyone valued the open communication and mutual support, and we spent time identifying the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as we look toward 2026.

The timing could not be better. The discussions at the Land Managers Meeting aligned with the goals of the [Strategic Plan](#), reinforcing that we are moving in the right direction and doing so together. With the Strategic Plan as our guide—and with the continued cooperation of our partners—we are well-positioned to protect, maintain, and celebrate the Benton MacKaye Trail for years to come.

We held sessions on training, publicity, safety, future projects and outreach. As the BMTA continues to grow, so does our responsibility to share our mission with a wider audience. Whether through community engagement, digital outreach, or partnerships with local organizations, we are committed to elevating the visibility of the trail and the people who care for it.

I left the meeting inspired by the shared commitment in the room. Joe Sauls, Conasauga District Trail Tech remarked " The BMTA is our most organized and best partner we have!". Thus, the work we do is very much appreciated.



Hooper Bald / Huckleberry Knob Hike

by Rick Harris with photos courtesy of Brenda Harris

My wife Brenda and I led this hike to the high balds in about five inches of snow. Ten brave souls were on the hike (Me, Brenda Harris, Penny Strickland, Shelley Cadousteau, Molly May, Judy Norton, Clare Sullivan, Melissa and Darrell Shefffield and our dog Nahme). This was Nahme's first real experience with snow, and, boy, did she love it! She kept doing zoomies in the snow and burying her head in the snow, rolling over and over. She just couldn't get enough of it. She highly recommends this activity and feels sorry for the folks who cancelled out on the hike for a variety of reasons. They really missed out on a great experience. A total of 25 folks were at one time, or another signed up, but we still ended up with a good group of nine explorers + Nahme. We couldn't ask for a better day to hike in the snow at high elevation. The hike was originally scheduled for the previous Friday but had to be rescheduled due to very cold temps and icy roads. On my trip up the night before the original date, the temp was five degrees, and the roads were quite slick. But on our hike the weather was in the upper 30s, the views were incredible, the snow was tolerable and the wind was nearly zero.



We met at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center, then carpooled up to the wide pull off along the Skyway between Hooper Bald and Huckleberry Knob. We did not try to access the official parking lots due to black ice covering the access roads. From our cars, we first headed up to the top of Hooper Bald at 5429'. It was not slippery even though it was quite steep, since the snow was about 5" deep and soft without any ice to speak of. Once at the top I told of the history of the famous rock and of the Hoopers and later the hunting lodge.



"PREDARMS CASADA, SEP. 1615"

In brief, the rock has a Spanish inscription "PREDARMS CASADA, SEP. 1615" which translates to "forearms married September 1615". It was once thought to be written by DeSoto's band, but DeSoto was not on Hooper Bald in the year 1615. Then it was thought to maybe be deserters of DeSoto. But the most likely scenario is that a Spanish couple got married there in September of 1615. Perhaps, their surname was Predarms.



As to Hooper Bald itself, Dr Enos Hooper owned the property along with 13,000 acres down toward Robbinsville and he moved to the bald with his wife and five sons and three daughters in 1840. They raised cattle and a special breed of horses known as the Hooper Pony, which he sold as farm horses in the region. His sons fought in the Civil War, and they all returned safely but to a family in heavy debt. Enos borrowed \$1200 from a Tennessee man but could never pay him back. He lost much of his property in the settlement.

Dr. Hooper died in 1872 at the age of 76. The remaining property was split among his kids. Much of the land eventually became part of the Nantahala National Forest.



The view from the famous rock on Hooper Bald.

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The view from the top of Huckleberry Knob looking toward the Smokies.

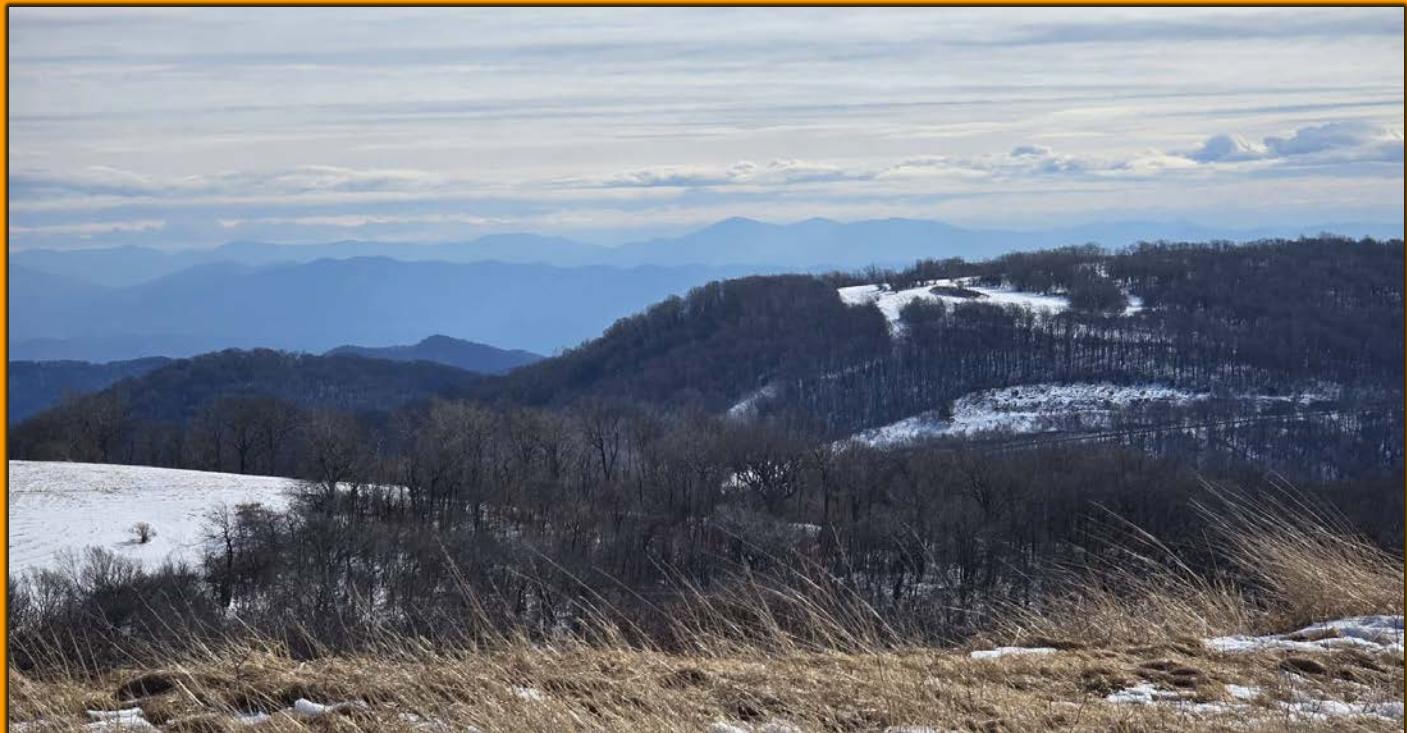
However, the land around the bald was bought by the Great Smoky Mountain Land and Timber Company, which then in 1908 sold much of the land to the Whiting Manufacturing Company. Whiting hired George Gordon Moore to establish a European style hunting preserve. He fenced in a large part of the property and built a 10-room lodge and several outbuildings. The buildings had running water, electricity and telephones. He hired Cotton McGuire to run the lodge and brought in buffalo, elk, bear, turkeys and nine huge Ural Mountain Russian Blue Boars (one male and 8 females). Many famous folks traveled to Hooper Bald including such folks as the Vanderbilts. However, the road from the valley below was 25 miles of steep rutted wagon trace and the enterprise began to lose money. The animals all escaped and were either killed or died of exposure, except for the boars. The boars began to take up residence in the mountains and to mate with regular farm pigs, leading to the hybrid boars that now populate much of the Appalachian Mountains. Cotton McGuire continued to lead hunting and fishing parties over the ensuing years for the rich folks who could make it up the mountain. Cotton met and married Mabel Hooper, a great granddaughter of Enos. Their family lived in the caretaker house which burned down, forcing them to move into the lodge. Cotton and his family eventually left the mountain. The lodge collapsed and was later bulldozed off the side of the mountain. Eventually, the property came into the hands of various private individuals as well as the USFS.

Our hiking group returned to the cars and ate lunch, then hiked up to the top of Huckleberry Knob, the fourth most prominent peak in North Carolina. There we met a family with three small children enjoying the day, just as we were.

I then told the story of the gravesite on top of the bald. Back on December 11, 1899, two lumber workers from the lumber camp along Sycamore Creek, Andy Sherman and Paul O'Neil, headed out of their camp up over Hogjaw Gap and into North Carolina, trying to make it to Robbinsville. They intended to go down Santeetlah Creek, but got lost and ended up on the top of Huckleberry Knob in the freezing temps. Their bodies were discovered nine months later with several empty jugs of whiskey lying about. Andy Sherman was buried where he died. Paul O'Neil's skeleton was taken to Robbinsville and reassembled and put on display in Dr. Robert Orr's medical office.



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The view from Huckleberry Knob looking toward Hooper Bald.

The views from Hooper Bald and Huckleberry Knob were incredible. We could see Clingman's Dome (Kuwohi), Mt LeConte, Gregory Bald, Cheoah Bald, the high mountains which the AT traverses in NC, Nantahala Gorge, Big Frog, Brasstown Bald, and the Cumberland Plateau. We could even see the steam coming out of the Watts Bar Nuclear Power Plant.

We returned to our cars and drove down the mountain and ate supper at the Tellicafe in Tellico Plains. The food was a delicious end to an amazing day!

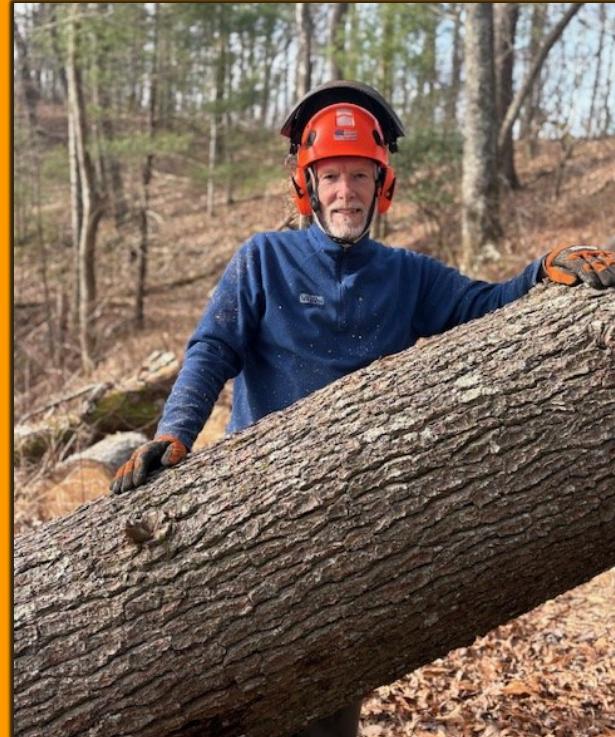


Maintainers Were Out and About

Even though both regularly scheduled maintenance trips for January had to be cancelled due to the weather, Section Maintainers continued to keep the trail cleared and ready for hikers.



Jesse Hayden and Daphne Martin at a blowdown on Section 14b.



Steve Hayden "Sawing is easier than picking it up."



Patrick Ward - The Cable Guy. Patrick removed a trip hazard cable across the trail at Unicoi Gap. Repeated work trips and attempts to pull it out, dig it out, had been unsuccessful. An antique cable cutter, passed down to him from his father, did the job!



Making way.

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Ed Sullivan focused on a blowdown on Section 11.

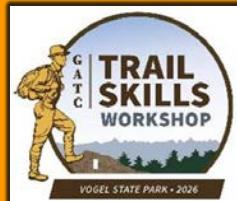
Trail Skills Workshop October 9-11

The Trail Skills Workshop has expanded over the years and now provides comprehensive training opportunities focused on building and maintaining hiking trails, especially in the southern Appalachians. This event is an excellent chance to develop and enhance the skills required to support and deliver high-quality hiking trail experiences.

This year, the workshop will be held from October 9 to October 11 at Vogel State Park in Blairsville, Georgia.

In addition to the essential trail maintenance classes, participants will have the opportunity to learn about specialized topics such as rigging, constructing log structures, sawyering and much more.

Contact:
Jay M Dement
404-731-1901

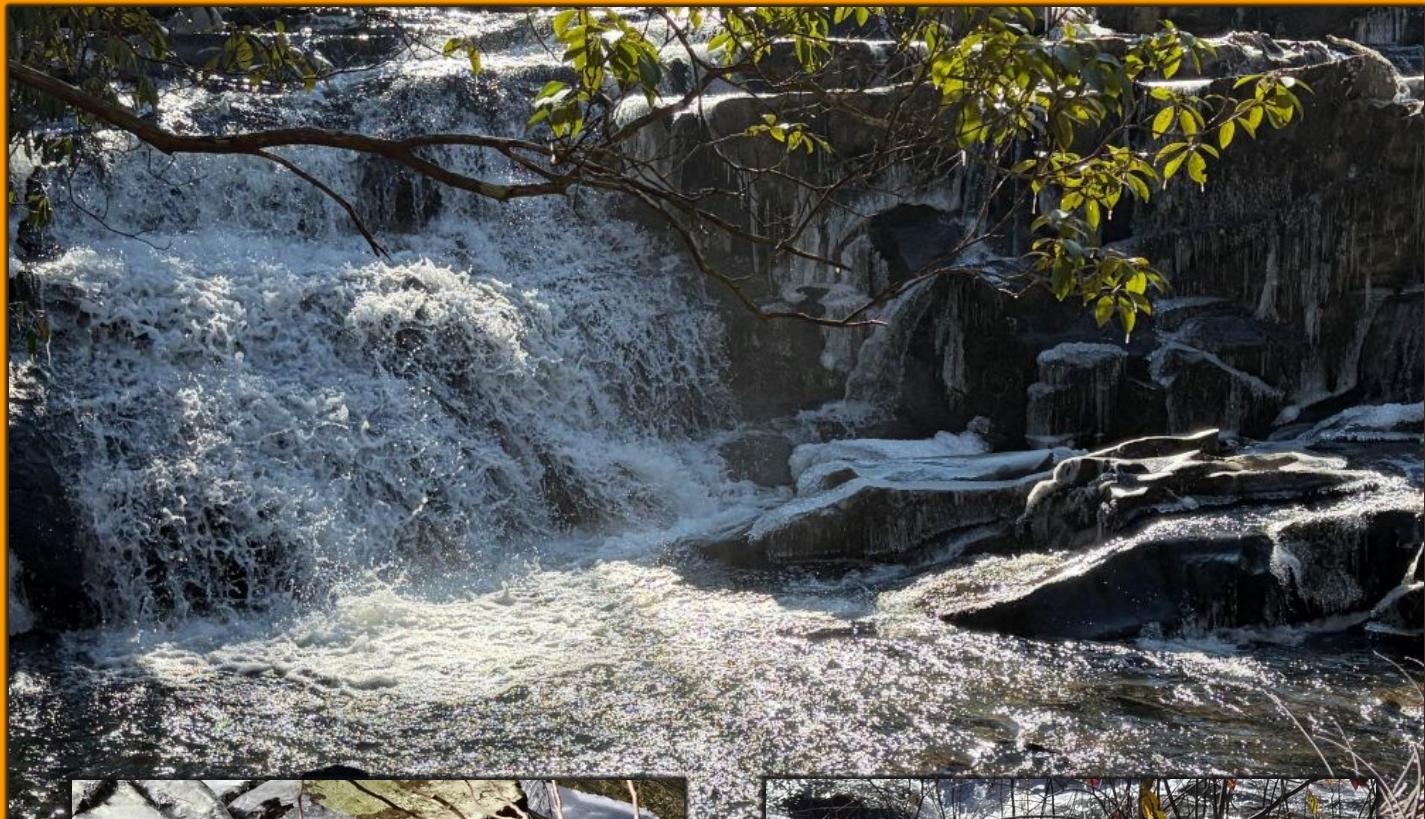


Top Notch Day at Coker Creek Falls

by Clare Sullivan with photos courtesy of Clare Sullivan and Rick Harris

It was a top-notch day along the Coker Creek Falls Trail in the Cherokee National Forest. Coker Creek tumbles over seven cascading waterfalls. The 375-acre area is designated a National Forest Scenic Area. Hikers enjoyed the exhilarating views. The falls glistened with ice. We hiked three miles down the trail to the bridge of the BMT and the John Muir Trail over Coker Creek.

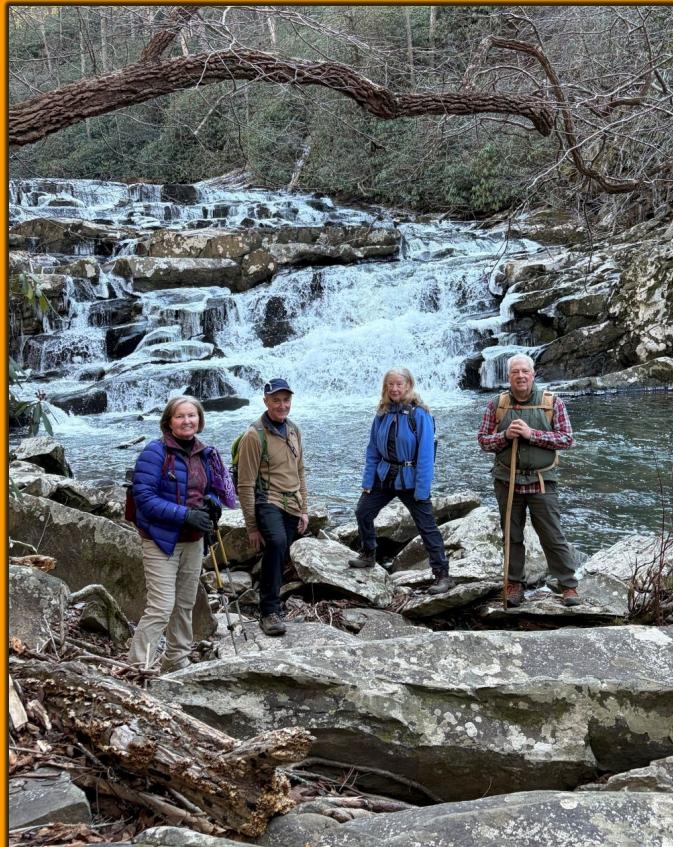
Coker Creek was the center of the Tennessee Gold District in the 1800's. Hundreds of miners were digging and panning feverishly from 1831-1854. There are gold seekers today who pan along the creek on private property. Permits are obtained through the state of Tennessee and the Gold Prospectors of America.



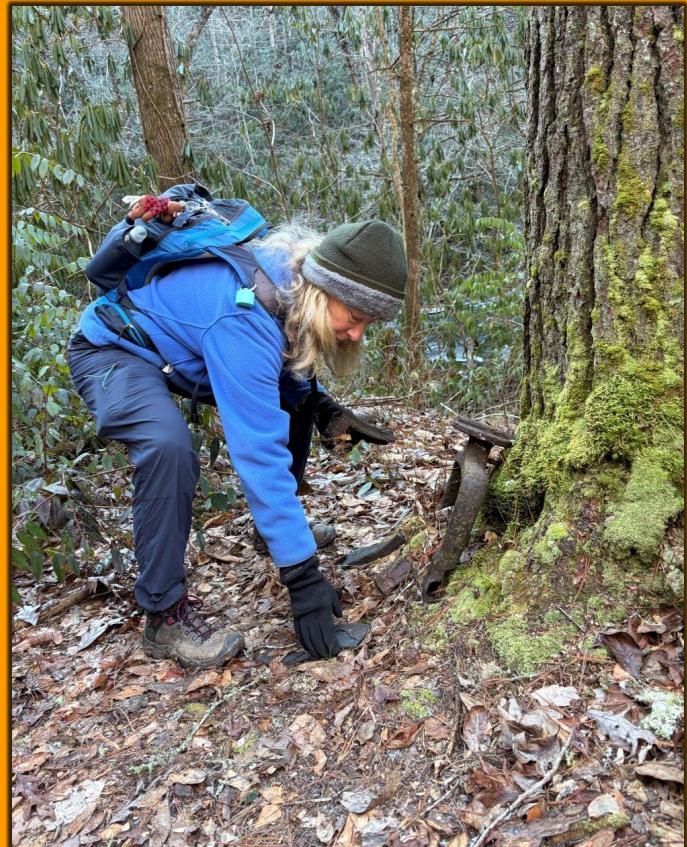
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Hikers on the bridge where the BMT crosses over Coker Creek.



Donna Jones, Doug Jones, Sue Robinson and Roger Gordon immersed in the magic of the falls.



Sue Robinson examining iron remains that were frozen to the ground.



Simply stunning!

BMTA to the Len Foote Hike Inn for Half-Price

by Clare Sullivan

The beautiful Len Foote Hike Inn has reserved rooms for BMTA members on Monday, February 23, 2026. All rooms will be half-price. Members can call 706-344-1547, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-2:30 PM, to make a reservation. You cannot reserve online. Let them know you want a room transferred from Clare Sullivan's name to your name. **The deadline for reserving is Monday, February 16.**

The cost for two hikers is \$124.70, which includes dinner and breakfast. One person in a room is \$92.80. These prices include taxes. While there, you can enjoy a history and tour of the inn at 5:00 PM.

Rick and Brenda Harris will be giving a presentation on "Paddling the Boundary Waters" about a canoe paddling trip in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota.

Feel free to visit the Len Foote Hike Inn website at [The Hike Inn](#). If you'd like to hike to the Hike Inn with others contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org. Meet at the Amicalola Visitors Center at 10:00 AM.

Books to Hike By

by George Owen

Why have the BMT Trail guides & the Data Book

Our newsletter editor Kathy Williams has requested starting last month that I, as a BMTA co-founder and leader over many years, and a devoted book reader, provide our newsletter readership frequent book reviews starting with last month. So here goes another one, and I chose a set of books I consider very important for our membership in this case.)

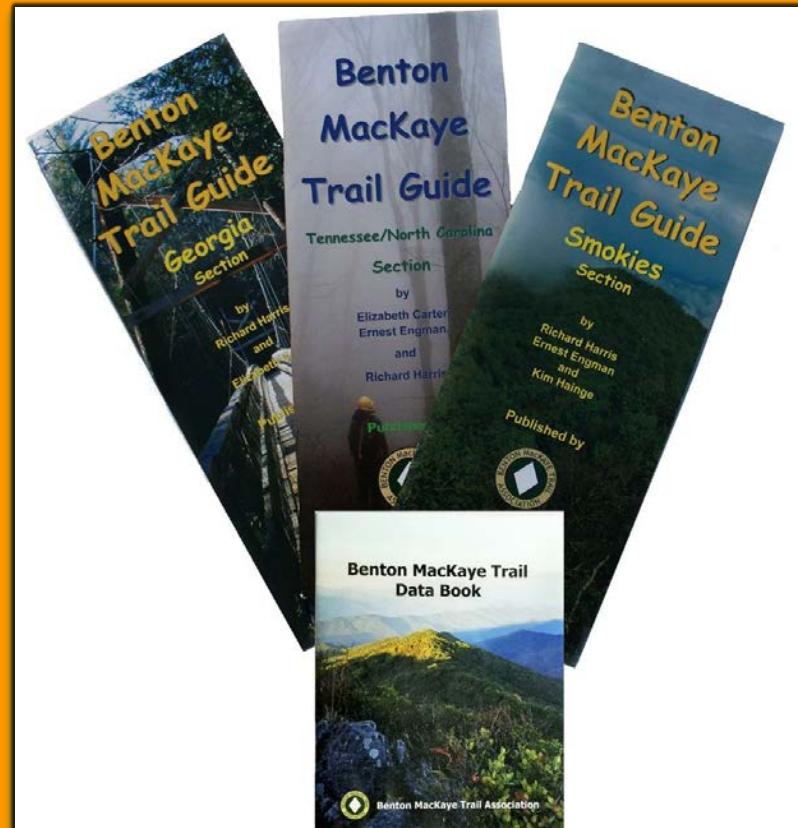
I am constantly amazed at the frequent times I have found among our newer membership, and even older members, little or no knowledge about the excellent "official" guidebooks and the pocket-sized data book covering our Benton MacKaye Trail across the three states of our passage. If you have never seen or used even one of these, and you like to hike the BMT, then I think you are really missing something.

The **three guidebooks** were written by Rick Harris and have undergone revisions and updating along the way to keep pace with any changes. Between them, the excellent detail they can provide for any BMT hike is unbeatable. They will greatly broaden your hike information and give you accuracy for your trek provided nowhere else - not on the net or anywhere else. The guidebooks cover (1) Georgia and a few miles in Tennessee down to the Ocoee River, 2) Tennessee and North Carolina from the Ocoee River to Fontana Dam environment and finally 3) the entire Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Each guide thus covers just a little under a hundred miles.

The pocket **Data Book** gives the section-by-section mileages and other information like trailheads, water, campsites, elevations, etc. across all three states.

The data is constantly checked and updated. It is small and easily tucked away. If I carry nothing else on a BMT trek, my pack always has the Data Book. I recommend that all Hike Leaders should have this little booklet. The Hike Leader can share the data with others on the hike. We in BMTA are greatly indebted to the two editors from the start, Bill Ristom for the first edition, and Bob Ruby for subsequent editions,

Now we come to the more detailed **BMT guidebooks**. The primary editor, trail walker with his dog, and excellent researcher for all three guidebooks is Richard Harris, a prime light for decades to today of the BMTA/BMT. In my mind no one knows the entire BMT better than Rick, and he really exhibits how to choose great pertinent information about the trail scattered all along its 288 miles.



He had the following assistant editors helping him with these books:

Georgia - Elizabeth Carter

TN/NC - Elizabeth Carter and Ernest Engman

Smokies - Ernest Engman and Kim Hainge.

Each guidebook is between 50-60 pages, loaded with general information about that part of the trail in the first part, then section by section coverage of the BMT for that approximate ninety miles. The three guidebooks are 4x11 inches, so they can fit into a back pocket or elongated pack pocket. The beginning of each book begins with an introduction that includes the historical background of that area. In the center is a wonderful two-page map of the entire trail length covered in that book. Many of the photos are in color with details on points of interest as well as distances, trailhead info, elevations, difficulty, etc.

Rick is in my mind a guidebook genius and yet so down-to-earth. I've never seen a better or clearer guidebook on any trail from Yosemite to Switzerland, and I've had lots of them. He knows so well how to condense the essentials what you need to know with loads else of interest to so many hikers. I would hate to be the person selected to follow him in being primary editor of any of these three guidebooks down future years after he's gone - tough to better or even equal Rick!!! Rick wrote these gratis with all the profits going to the BMTA. Most of the guides have been revised and updated by Rick every three years or so.

These guidebooks, so interestingly done by Rick, a now retired and much beloved former child oncologist in Ohio, are worth just sitting down to peruse parts sometime when you can't be hiking and feel after reading that you have just been on a section or two of that trail!

Also of interest is the Thru-Hikers' Guide by Ernest Engman. When Ernie turned over the Thru-Hikers' Guide (THG) to the BMTA, he turned over all rights. All profits from the new edition Rick updated and revised also go to the BMTA. Ernie no longer gets any profits from the sale of THG. So, all profits from sales of all five books (three section guides, data book, and THG) go directly to the BMTA.

The books are available at many outdoor stores across the three BMT states or through the [BMTA Store](#).

[Benton MacKaye Trail Guide, Georgia Section](#)

[Benton MacKaye Trail Guide, Tennessee/North Carolina Section](#)

[Benton MacKaye Trail Guide, Smokies Section](#)

[Data Book](#)

[Thru Hikers Guide](#)

As I write this, I am snowed in for a couple days on the lower side of a mountain. Paging through Rick's wonderful trail guides, I realized that after I finish this article, I needed to sit down tonight with them to read and enjoy after dinner. They are worthy for times you are shut in and need a good read and remembrance for times on our great trail!

Benton MacKaye Trail



Richard Harris (Digital Doc) on the BMT

Thru-Hikers' Guide®

Revised & Edited by
Richard Harris

Original Authors
Ernest B. Engman (SGT Rock)
and Kanga Engman

2025-26 Edition
www.bmta.org

Whispers of Color in the Winter Forest



Usually when trees transition from fall into winter, they transform the landscape into brilliant reds, oranges, yellows and more. Then the leaves fall to the forest floor leaving the trees bare and colorless.

But that is not the case with the American Beech. This tree hangs on to its orange/yellow foliage. This process is called marcescence.

There are competing theories on why this occurs:

- ◆ Deer deterrent where the leaves hide the buds.
- ◆ Bud protection where the leaves act as protection against the elements.
- ◆ Nutrient timing saves the leaves for mulch in the spring.
- ◆ Snow fence can hold snow at the base of the tree for moisture.
- ◆ Evolutionary holdover.

Whatever the reason they are a treat for the eyes while enjoying a winter hike!



BMTA PARTNERSHIPS

Help BMTA preserve, protect and maintain the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Become a BMTA Business, Silver, Gold, Platinum or Diamond Partner today!

Go to [Partnerships](#) to view the details.

Employer Identification #58-1428009.

**If you receive a benefit as a result of making a contribution to a qualified organization, you can deduct only the amount of your contribution that is more than the value of the benefit you receive.*

A Thank You Much Appreciated!

On behalf of the U.S. Forest Service on the Ocoee - Hiwassee Ranger District, I extend my deepest gratitude for the invaluable work BMTA completed during 2025. Your dedication to maintaining and improving our cherished trails is inspiring.

The countless hours you have spent directly contribute to the enjoyment and safety of thousands of visitors each year to the Ocoee Ranger District.

Our forests are a national treasure, and BMTA's efforts ensure they remain healthy, beautiful, sustainable and accessible. With over 237 trail miles on the Ocoee, we simply could not achieve our mission without the support of committed partners like you.

Thank you for your hard work and unwavering commitment to public service. We look forward to our continued partnership in 2026!

Kindly,
Mason Boring



Lead Wilderness & Trails Technician
Wilderness Information Management Steering Team
Region 8 Representative
Forest Service
Cherokee National Forest, Ocoee - Hiwassee Ranger District



Check Out This Month's BMT Blog

***'Three Mountain Worlds, One Trail:
Exploring the Benton MacKaye Trail's
Ecological Regions'***

MRNRA Sugar Grove, VA Crosscut Course March 30- April 2, 2026

The USDA USFS, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS) are hosting a crosscut A/B Bucking course.

Schedule:

- **Monday March 30, 8 AM to 12 PM** - First-Aid CPR (only 8 slots available)
- **Tuesday March 31, 9 AM to 5 PM** - Developing Thinking Sawyer Crosscut Class.
- **Wednesday April 1 & Thursday April 2** - Crosscut Bucking Field Sessions

*There are 25 spaces available for the Crosscut Course.
Only 8 spaces are available for the First Aid/CPR.*

Location: Mount Rogers National Recreation Area
Volunteer Trail Camp (Konnarock) in Sugar Grove, Virginia.

Registration Closes March 6, 2026

Follow the link below to register.
[MNRA Crosscut A/B Bucking Course.](#)

Into the Woods of Thunder Rock Express

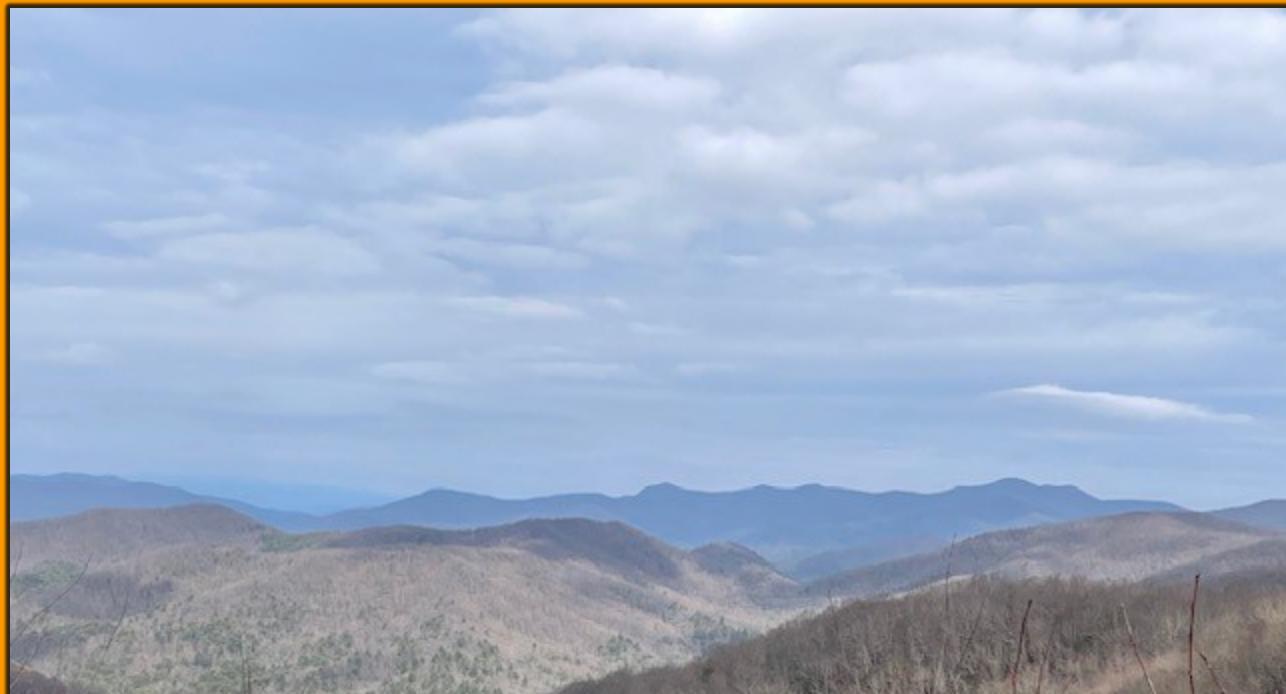


In Search of “Oh, WOW” with George Owen

by Kathy Williams

George Owen was the tour guide for Tim Owen, Ken Cissna and Kathy Williams as they searched for vistas, overlooks, drop-offs, and the ever necessary unique and interesting sources of nourishment.

We were going to travel to Helen, Georgia from Blairsville, Georgia via the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway. We stopped and took in the “Oh, WOW” view from Hogpen Gap. George narrated the history of the area as well as information on the AT as it winds its way through these mountains. Next was a visit to the Duke Creek Falls area with the stunning Mt Yonah dominating the skyline.



The view at Hogpen Gap.



Yonah Mountain

Smithgall Woods State Park was now our destination with George detailing the history of how the area became a state park. We were shown where trailheads were. Kathy and George argued over the length of the Laurel Trail. George was correct while Kathy was wrong.

Now we were in need of nourishment. George decided that we really needed to take an “Old Troll” to The Troll Tavern, which is for all intents and purposes, under the bridge. It was fitting that a sign behind George aptly described him.



“Old Troll” George, Tim and Ken.



The dual falls of Anna Ruby Falls.

Next on the tour was Anna Ruby Falls. It never disappoints. As we made our way around Unicoi State Park, we were entertained by some George stories and memories of the places within the park he had taken his family.

A short hike to the lake with a stop at the campground store was followed by a drive past the barrel cabins and over the dam to the Unicoi Lodge. We were surprised to find the parking at the Lodge jam packed. January is not usually that busy. George asked a passerby what was going on and was told that this was a gathering of Turkey Callers! The license plates were from all over the country.



Tim, George and Ken hiking at Smith Lake.

Our final destination was the third state park, Hardeman Farms, just outside Helen. George showed us a nice trail that followed the river. The trail was one of a rails-to-trails project and leads back to Helen.

The ride back took us once again on the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway. What a great way to enjoy three Georgia State Parks!

Upcoming

by Ray Laws, Hiking Director

February



February 14 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip.

Sections 1b-c (Big Stamp >>Three Forks)

Section 4 (Wilscot Gap >> Skeenah Gap)

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

February 16 (Monday) Unicoi to Helen and back. Start at the Unicoi State Park Lodge and hike into Helen and return. Moderate 6-mile hike with optional lunch in Helen after hike.

Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

February 18 (Wednesday) **Crosscut Recertification Course** Thunder Rock Campground see [page 3](#).

February 20 (Friday) Bald River Falls in the winter. Meet at the Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 10 AM. Bring cold weather gear, lunch, water. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. Your dog must be leashed. We are hoping for a frozen waterfall or lots of water crashing over the several falls. This 4.5-mile loop hike will start at the Baby Falls Picnic Area. We will go up the road to the Cow Camp Trailhead, then up the ridge on this trail then downhill to the Bald River Trail. We will then turn left (upstream) and go to the Pawpaw Branch Crossing. From there, we will return downstream along the Bald River Trail to River Road past several incredible waterfalls, ending, of course, at the iconic Bald River Falls by the road. We will then walk along the road upstream to Baby Falls and our vehicles. Afterwards, we can dine at a local Tellico Plains restaurant, maybe Mexican food at one of the two Mexican restaurants, enjoying margheritas and authentic Mexican food. If the weather is terrible on February 20, we will reschedule the hike to February 27.

Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at [rkharris@bmta.org](mailto:rharris@bmta.org)

February 23 (Monday) BMTA at the Hike Inn. **Deadline to reserve is February 16**. We will spend the night at the Len Foote Hike Inn and return the next day. If you'd like to hike to the Hike Inn with others contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org. Meet at the Amicalola Visitors Center at 10:00 AM. See [page 14](#) for more details.



February 28 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. Section 14a -- FS 22B » Unicoi Mt Trail (TN Hwy 68) and 14b -- TN Hwy 68 » Buck Bald Road.

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

March

March 2 (Monday) BMT to AT to Springer Mountain and return down the AT and back to the BMT parking lot in Fannin County, GA. Moderate five miles. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

March 6 (Friday) Two Loops of BMT/AT from Three Forks Southbound. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 5 miles.

Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



March 14 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA
 Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

March 16 (Monday) Brush Creek Loop in Ducktown, Tennessee. Moderate 4.5 miles along Ocoee Lake # 1. Contact Hike Leader Ralph Collinson at rcollinson@bmta.org.

March 20 (Friday) Exploratory Hike to Upper Lost Creek Falls, 4.5 miles. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This series of waterfalls have been lost to the outside world for decades, ever since the USFS quit maintaining the trail from the Lost Creek Campground upstream to the falls. We know people who have bushwacked on the old trail. The falls are spectacular, but it is currently very difficult to get to them. We will meet at the Webb Bros store in Reliance at 9:00 AM, then carpool to the Lost Creek Campground. Then, with hand saws and loppers, we will work our way for two miles up the old trail to the waterfalls. As we go, we will leave flagging tape on the trees to mark the route. We are hoping the USFS will allow us to open this trail back up. Once we reach the falls, we will eat lunch, then return to our vehicles. This trail, we understand, crosses the creek several times, so you must be prepared for these water crossings. This is likely to be a difficult trip, so do not decide to go until you are sure you are up to the challenge. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at [rhharris@bmta.org](mailto:rharris@bmta.org)



March 21 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA
 Contact:
 BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

March 24 (Tuesday) Talking Rock. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Easy/moderate 5 miles. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

March 27 (Friday) BMT/AT: Upper two loops on Springer Mountain from Big Stamp Gap. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). About 5 moderate miles. See all the sights: Springer Mountain, an AT shelter, the beginning of the BMT, the plaque honoring Benton MacKaye and the Owen Vista! Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

March 30-April 2 MRNRA Sugar Grove, VA Crosscut Course. For details see [page 19](#).

April

April 3 (Friday) Flat Creek Loop. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 5.6 miles. Nice loop hike featuring Flat Creek.
 Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

April 3 (Friday) BMT along Hiwassee River from Childers Creek to the Powerhouse. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. For this ~5-mile hike, we will meet at the Childers Creek Trailhead at 10:00 AM, then position some vehicles up at the Appalachia Powerhouse. Then we will return to the Childers Creek Trailhead and hike upstream along this incredibly beautiful river along the John Muir Trail (JMT) to the Towee Creek parking area. From there, we will follow the old JMT route or the road to the powerhouse. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. When we return to the parking lot at Childers Creek, we can fire up a stove and have hot chocolate and snacks, provided by Rick & Brenda. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org

April 10 (Friday) BMT – Bushy Head/Hudson Gap, out and back. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). Moderate 4-5 miles. Come out to see spring wildflowers. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.



April 11 (Saturday) BMTA GA Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact the Georgia Maintenance Director at bmtagamaintdirector@bmta.org.

April 24 (Friday) Hike: BMT – Whigg Meadow to Beech Gap, leaving Cherohala Skyway Visitor Center at 9:00 AM. Moderately strenuous with elevation gain of up to 2000 feet. THIS HIKE IS OPEN TO DOGS AND TO MEMBERS OF BOTH THE BMTA AND CHC. This 4.8-mile section of the BMT will start at Whigg Meadow (~5000' elevation) with its expansive views and will follow the BMT north to Mud Gap then along the state line ridge all the way to Beech Gap. With minimal tree foliage, the views should be fantastic with the majority of the winter should be behind us. There are quite a bit of ups and downs, so expect to get a good workout. What to bring: Lunch, water, your dog on leash. After the hike, we will have to retrieve vehicles up on the Whigg, then we can go to Tellico Plains for dinner possibly at the Ironworks Grille right on the edge of the Tellico River. They have outside seating where well-behaved dogs are allowed. Contact Hike Leaders Rick and Brenda Harris (and Nahme, our dog) at rharris@bmta.org



April 25 (Saturday) BMTA TN/NC Maintenance Trip. TBA

Contact:

BMTA TN-NC Maintenance Director at bmtatn-ncmaintdirector@bmta.org

April 28 (Tuesday) Green Mountain Trail (Deep Gap to Lake Blue Ridge). DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog) About 4 moderate miles. Up Green Mountain and then down to the Lake. Shuttle required. Contact Hike Leader Ken Cissna at kcissna@bmta.org.

**The deadline for the March Newsletter is Wednesday, March 4.
Thank you!**