

• **OCTOBER 21, 2025**

Warnock Advances Bipartisan Bill to Establish National Scenic Trail Connecting Southern States

The bipartisan Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2025 would authorize review of the regionally renowned trail to be designated a National Scenic Trail

The legislation is first step toward granting federal designation of nearly 300-mile-long walking path along the Appalachian Mountains that connects Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina

The legislation passed out of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry unanimously

Senator Reverend Warnock: *"By preserving the natural beauty of our landscapes, we invest in the endurance of our environment to pass along a world for future generations to enjoy. I am proud to work with Senator Tillis on this bipartisan legislation"*

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA) advanced the bipartisan *Benton MacKaye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2025*, a key step towards designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a National Scenic Trail (NST) within the National Trails System. The Benton MacKaye Trail is a nearly 300-mile-long route that begins at Springer Mountain, Georgia, and spans over 80 miles in the state and an additional 200 miles in Tennessee and North Carolina. The trail has been protected and maintained by the volunteer organization the Benton MacKaye Trail Association since 1980. The legislation would authorize a mandatory study of the trail as a first step towards receiving an NST designation. Upon completion of the feasibility study, Congress may then add the trail to the National Trails System, ultimately establishing a new, federally protected footpath that will improve mobility for Americans traveling in and between Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

The legislation is led by Senators Warnock and Thom Tillis (R-NC). It is cosponsored by Senators Jon Ossoff (D-GA) and Ted Budd (R-NC).

“This bipartisan legislation is a key step towards strengthening Georgia’s forests and green spaces, creating a bridge to connect communities, and investing in our rural economies,” said Senator Reverend Warnock. ***“By preserving our natural landscapes, we can ensure future generations of Georgians can enjoy all our state has to offer.”***

“The Senate Agriculture Committee’s passage of this bipartisan legislation marks an important step toward designating a new National Scenic Trail along the Appalachian Mountains connecting North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia,” said Senator Tillis. ***“The Benton MacKaye Trail will strengthen economic development in our rural communities and create new opportunities for thousands to experience the natural beauty of the region. I look forward to supporting its passage on the Senate floor.”***

“Georgia families deserve access to world-class trails. Working alongside Senator Warnock, we are working to help preserve one of North Georgia’s treasured forests and mountains,” said Senator Ossoff.

“This is a major step forward for the BMTA and everyone who cherishes the beauty, solitude, and challenge the trail offers. The study will evaluate the trail’s scenic, natural, and recreational value, which tens-of-thousands of hikers already enjoy every year,” said Bob Cowdrick, President of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association. ***“We are grateful for the leadership from Senators Warnock and Tillis in advancing this legislation to protect the Benton MacKaye Trail and set it on the path to becoming our country’s 12th National Scenic Trail. A National Scenic Trail designation will ensure this trail is protected for future generations and remains a premier recreation destination for hikers while expanding its positive economic impact on nearby communities.”***

A National Scenic Trail designation would increase the trail’s value as a recreation destination and help safeguard diverse flora and fauna located along the path. The designation would also attract even more hikers to the region and expand economic impacts for local north Georgia and Appalachian communities. The National Trails System Act of 1968 created the National Trails System to support and promote access to the nation’s outdoor areas and connect communities by

utilizing natural resources. National Scenic Trails (NSTs) are routes that showcase significant characteristics of the nation's natural resources and recreational opportunities. Congress has the authority to establish new NSTs and is responsible for funding trail management. Since 1968, Congress has established 11 NSTs, including the Appalachian NST, which runs through Georgia.

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