

Benton MacKaye Trail Feasibility Study Act passes U.S. House

Submitted material

A government study may soon be held to consider making the Benton MacKaye Trail a national scenic trail.

The United States House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 2768 — sponsored by Reps. Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.), Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.), Charles Edwards (R-NC) and Lucy McBath (D-Ga.) — which requires a feasibility study into making the trail a national route to be completed within two years. The bill will now move on to the U.S. Senate.

“We are grateful for the leadership from Reps. Fleischmann, Cohen, Edwards and McBath for advancing this legislation to protect the Benton MacKaye Trail



SPECIAL TO THE ADVOCATE & DEMOCRAT

and set it on the path to becoming our country's 12th National Scenic Trail (NST). We also extend our thanks to the members of the House of Representatives for passing this legislation. We urge the Senate to act swiftly to bring it to the

floor for consideration,” Benton MacKaye Trail Association President Bob Cowdrick said.

The last time a National Scenic Trail designation was approved by Congress was 17 years ago in 2009.

Ninety-five percent

of the 288-mile-long Benton MacKaye Trail already is on public land. One hundred seventy-three miles of the trail already enjoys the enhanced protection provided by the 1964 Wilderness Act for Wilderness Areas.

The designation of the BMT as an NST would ensure the entire trail is protected for future generations and will remain a premier recreation destination for hikers, officials said. More than 100,000 visitors hike the trail annually and an NST designation, officials noted, would mean the positive economic impact on nearby communities will increase substantially.

To learn more about BMTA's quest for National Scenic Trail designation for the BMT, visit bmta.org/quest-nst/