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BMTA Headquarters



Benton MacKaye Trail Association

VOLUME 37, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2020

President's Column

The Benton MacKaye Trail is open! From Springer Mountain to Big Creek Campground, the trail is open. Final closures were lifted for the Memorial Day weekend with the Great Smoky Mountains warning only about significant capacity reductions at many sites and 14 day advance reservations required. That is the good news. The not so good news: there are still plenty of restrictions on working the trail.

The one common theme for all of the National Forest is a reduction in crew size for those working the trail. However, each Ranger District has set different guidelines. For the first 50 miles of trail, from Springer Mountain to Weaver Creek, work crews are limited to 10 individuals. There are no restrictions on the type of work: brushcutters and all types of saws are allowed. From Bushy Head Gap to Double Spring Gap in the Conasauga Ranger District we are not yet allowed to work chainsaws or crosscut saws, so most work will be brushing and lopping. Work crews are limited to five individuals in this area. For most of Tennessee recommended crew size is four or fewer with no chainsaws yet allowed.

Prior to re-opening the trail in Georgia, the Forest Service asked that we survey the trail to ensure there were no hazards. Survey crews found the trail to be generally in good shape. Blowdowns seem to average about one per mile for the first 50 miles of trail with essentially all being passable with relative ease.

Tennessee is a much different story. With a wet year and no maintenance for two months, the trail is in rough shape. As soon as work restrictions were lifted in Tennessee, I joined a work crew for a day of crosscut work. We chose a section of trail near the Hiwassee River and in a hard, five hour day we only managed to clear three-quarters of a mile of trail. I'm afraid the Benton MacKaye is a real obstacle course from Big Frog Mountain to Unicoi Gap and beyond.

Our plan is to work the worst sections of trail, regardless of the state or National Forest. That means we intend to work Tennessee trail on the second AND the fourth Saturday of each month. In addition, we plan to organize supplemental work days as we can. *That doesn't mean we will stop working trail in Georgia.* It means that with crew size limited in both Georgia and Tennessee, we plan to take 'excess capacity' from Georgia to Tennessee on the second Saturday of each month. Small 4-5 man crews, sometimes two crews if we have the sawyers, will travel to Tennessee with crosscut and ax. It should be a fun summer! Look for upcoming work opportunities from Phil and Rick. The other end of a crosscut can be a lot of fun!

By now, many of our readers have had a chance to view the new website. As I said in the release last week, I am thrilled with the site. I want to take a minute and applaud the work of Joy Forehand in getting the new site up and running. Every organization needs a person who just doesn't let up until the job is finished. For the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Joy is that person. Thanks Joy!

A couple of notes on the new site: **FOR SECTION MAINTAINERS AND ANYONE NEEDING FORMS, PLEASE USE YOUR DOWN ARROW TO SCROLL TO THE BOTTOM OF ANY PAGE ON THE SITE. SIMPLY FOLLOW THE LINK PROVIDED IN THE FOOTER FOR BMTA FORMS AND DOCUMENTS!** From there, you will find a list of all the offerings and should be able to locate what is needed. Also, as you explore the site, please report any problems you may encounter. We have done our best to identify and resolve issues, but may have missed an item or two.

Finally, we need pictures. To keep the site fresh and vibrant, we are always on the lookout for quality pictures of the trail. Keep your camera at hand on work trips or hikes and help us with the sites of the trail.

Till next month.....

Where Do I Find BMTA Forms and Documents?

BMTA's Forms and Documents (Maintainer Report form, Work Trip Sign Up sheets, Hike Waiver and Release form, old newsletters, Bylaws, etc.) can be accessed by going to <http://bmtamail.org/>.

To go to Forms and Documents from BMTA's new website. Use the "BMTA Forms & Documents" button located in the footer of every page.

Also located in the footer of every page is a link to the current Newsletter.

<p>QUICKLINKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Discover the Trail Events Donate Join Us Today! 	<p>NEWS, UPDATES, AND ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>SIGN UP</p>	<p>SOCIAL MEDIA</p> <p>f f t i</p> <p>NEWSLETTER</p> <p>BMTA FORMS & DOCUMENTS</p>	<p>CONTACT US</p> <p>BMTA PO Box 6 Cherry Log, GA 30522</p> <p>Contact Us</p>
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Special Notice – Fontana Village Resort

Fontana Village operators have announced that they have relinquished their lease for the property and have no plans to open at present. The Tennessee Valley Authority is in the process of trying to find another operator to take over the lease, but there is no information on when or if that might happen.

The Internet Kiosk in the Fontana Lodge, used for making reservations for camping sites in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, is not available at present.

Post Office OPEN!

50 Fontana Road, Fontana Dam, NC ZIP 28733

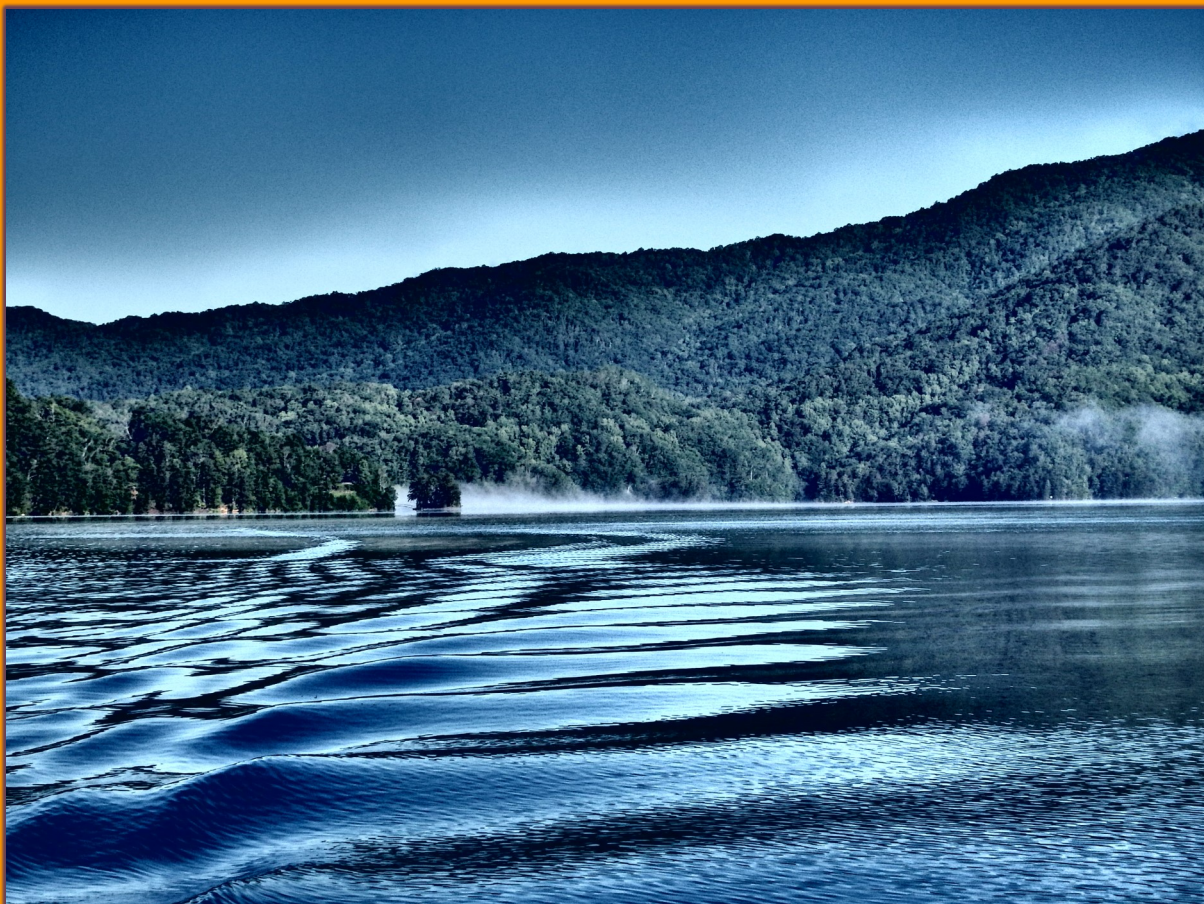
(828) 498-2315

Monday-Friday 11:45 AM — 3:45 PM.

Fontana General Store and Hazel Creek Outfitter (828) 498-2211. CLOSED!

The Marina will remain OPEN during the summer with limited services.

This situation may change at any time if a new operator is found. For now, it is best to consider the Village as closed if you are planning on hiking in the area.



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!

ALL CORPORATE MEMBERS ARE OPEN FOR BUSINESS NOW!



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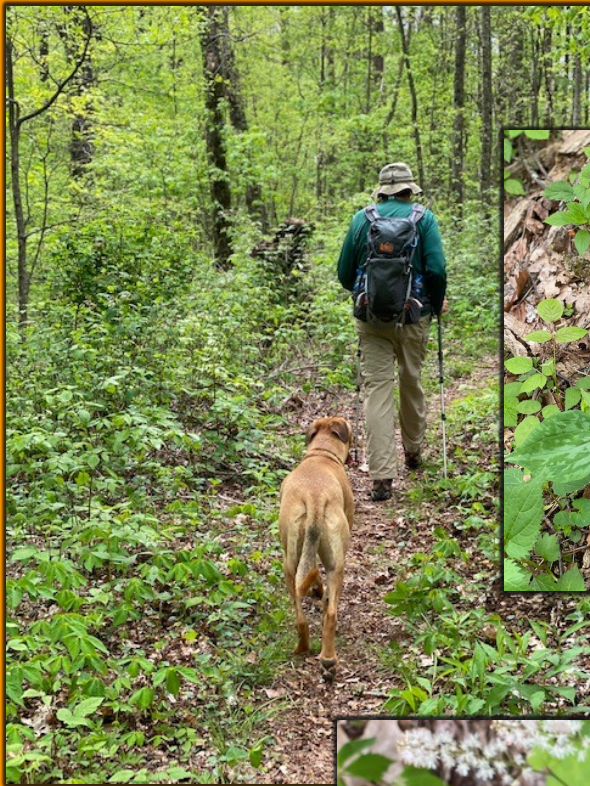


THE DUCKTOWN COPPER INN
[https://
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location](https://www.theducktowncopperinn.com/location)

Bushy Head Gap Northbound on the BMT

by Steve Dennison and Ken Cissna with photos courtesy of Deb Emery

Our start featured an enjoyable climb. At our turn-around we once again trekked upwards. We were escorted along the way by four very nice, friendly neighborhood dogs. Steve Dennison led three BMTA members: Ken Cissna, Mike Leach and Michael O'Brien as well as three guests: Bill Cox, Deborah Emery and Rod Jude. We categorized the four dogs as "guest escorts." Our hike went four miles from Bushy Head Gap to McKenny Gap, although a few of us turned around a little earlier. After we stopped briefly at Hudson Gap, Ken Cissna mentioned that there were some trilliums to be seen in the next section so we went for it. We saw yellow and pink trilliums as well as many other wildflowers. The best trilliums were at McKenny Gap where we turned around. Unsurprisingly, the way back was also four miles making for an eight-mile hike with pleasant temperatures in the 60s.



MAPS AND A BIG THANK YOU !!

by Darcy Douglas

For more than five years I have been trying to have a map created for our kiosks. We didn't have the kiosks then, but I knew we would so I began the mapping process. What I wanted was a map showing the entire Benton MacKaye Trail, in all three states, with major highways and state lines so that anyone could determine where the trail lay relative to cities, highways, etc. It DID NOT NEED to have all the other distractions that other maps have such as those useful to a hiker or backpacker. It's rather like not seeing the forest for the trees. I wanted those who might look at these kiosks to see the forest rather than the trees, albeit the global view. At last we have such a map and one will soon be placed in each of the two kiosks we now have in Georgia.

I am hereby thanking **Stewart Holt**, a fellow member of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, who assisted me in coming up with the map as I wanted it to look! Thank you, Stewart, for your creativity and for humoring me! Thank you to Marty Dominy, also, for his input about one of the side trails, the Pinhoti. This is not your typical map but is perfect for use in kiosks for the Benton MacKaye Trail. I am donating these maps for the kiosks and can provide the software should we desire to put the same map into kiosks at other locations along the Benton MacKaye Trail.

Thank you again, Stewart!!! (And Larry Dumas for helping me get them INTO the kiosks!)



If you don't have a kiosk handy just use the floor and mugs! Ha!

Your Membership Fees and Donations at Work

by Frank Forehand, Membership Director

Volunteers are BMTA's most valuable resource for maintaining the Benton MacKaye Trail. Our volunteers are our "labor force", but they need tools and materials to do their work. Your membership fees and donations provide the funds to purchase these items.

Major Projects for this year include:

Assorted Tools — Large Silky Saws, Brushcutter and Hammer Drill	\$ 2,000
2 Kiosks in Tennessee / 1 in Georgia	\$ 2,500
Thunder Rock Steps	\$ 1,100
Thunder Rock Bridge Replacement	\$ 4,600
	\$10,200

Below are examples of the cost of much-needed tools and equipment:

Hats with Face and Ear Protectors or a Hand Brushcutter	\$ 50
Lopper or Fire Rake	\$ 60
McLeod Rake	\$ 90
16" Chainsaw	\$ 200

If you haven't already joined BMTA ... for a donation of \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500, you will receive an Individual or Family Membership for the current year.

[Donate Here](#)



Tennessee Work Trip

by Barry Allen

The Tennessee work trip for May was a last minute affair. The Cherokee National Forest lifted some work restrictions a few days before the fourth Saturday and instituted a few new ones. Restrictions were meant to minimize social contact and the chance for serious injury – three or four man teams with NO chain saws were stipulated.

Recent reports from Big Frog Mountain all the way to Unicoi Gap suggested the trail was in rough shape. No chain saws and small teams mean slow, tiring work – with axes, crosscuts and smaller hand saws. *But for the first time in more than two months we would once again be allowed to work the trail – our primary mission!!*



As in the 'olden' days!

On this fourth Saturday, our small group chose to work a section of trail from Towee Creek to Wildcat Creek, much of it along the Hiwassee River. As soon as we stepped on the trail just below the switchbacks on the Hiwassee, we hit two multi-tree clusters. For the next five hours, the clearing was continuous as we worked uphill through the switchbacks: no more than 150-200 yards between tree obstacles.

We left one large red oak in the 30” class to remove later with a chainsaw. In the meantime, hikers will have to stoop a bit to get under. We ended the day on a large pine laying vertically in the trail, with several other trees (hemlock, oak and sourwood) pulled down in the mess. Five hours of work and only three-quarters of a mile cleared!



I can't say enough about the help that day – Brian Trinkle, Shane Morrison, and Patrick Ward. Brian is certified on crosscut and both Shane and Patrick have been on the other end of a crosscut often enough to know what to do. We took turns using every tool we brought. The large silky saw was a lifesaver, and the small hand saws were indispensable as well.



We remembered to bring a 5' Cant hook, making the job of rolling large logs much easier. But we forgot a simple set of loppers, which would have helped in places. As it was, we had our hands full – two crosscuts, one heavy Cant hook and a nice single bit ax for trimming and driving wedges. We made do with the tools the four of us could handle.

Wish we had remembered to take a few more pictures, but there will be many, many more opportunities to come. Small teams with crosscuts and axes – it sounds like the 'olden' days.

Georgia Maintenance Status

by Phil Guhl

Blue Ridge (Sections 1 through 6): No restrictions on tool use.

Crew Leaders must emphasize the Safety Debrief and Job Hazard Analysis (Trail Maintenance & COVID-19). *DO NOT JUST CHECK A BOX BY MENTIONING IT!*

Crew Leaders must convey that volunteers, especially those in high risk groups, should consider whether a maintenance trip during these times is worth it.

PPE Requirements still exist (Long pants, sturdy footwear, hard hats, gloves, eye protection).
Masks are optional, but social distancing should be maintained as best as possible.
People should consider whether carpooling is increasing their personal risk.
Crew must have a maximum of 10 people (including the leaders).
Multiple crews can operate simultaneously. Each crew has to be working at a different location.

Review and reprioritize work.

Example: Trash left at a campsite. Normally, this might be picked up and thrown in a backpack. Now... reconsider... may want to leave the trash and come back with a trash bag, trash picker/grabber/tongs, and appropriate PPE.

If it is not absolutely critical that it be done now, consider doing it later when appropriately equipped with the appropriate PPE.

Chainsaws are authorized with the existing restrictions:

Chain sawyer must hold a current Chainsaw B or higher certification.

Chain sawyer must have at least one swamper.

Chain sawyer must hold a current First Aid and CPR certification.

Chain sawyer must have a First Aid kit with trauma materials to control bleeding.

PPE: Chaps, Gloves, Hard hat, Eye protection, Hearing protection, Sturdy footwear.

If you have any questions or concerns about cutting a particular tree...DON'T! Walk away from it and report it to the USFS.

Private Land (Section 7): No restrictions on tool use.

In consideration of safety, please follow USFS guidelines as specified in Sections 1-6.

Conasauga (Sections 8 through 10): Restrictions on tool usage and crew size as stipulated.

Crew Leaders must emphasize the Safety Debrief and Job Hazard Analysis (Trail Maintenance & COVID-19). *DO NOT JUST CHECK A BOX BY MENTIONING IT!*

Crew Leaders must convey that volunteers, especially those in high risk groups, should consider whether a maintenance trip during these times is worth it.

PPE Requirements still exist (Long pants, sturdy footwear, hard hats, gloves, eye protection).

Masks are optional, but social distancing should be maintained as best as possible.

People should consider whether carpooling is increasing their personal risk.

Crew must have a maximum of 10 people (including the leaders).

Multiple crews can operate simultaneously. Each crew has to be working at a different location.

Review and reprioritize work.

Example: Trash left at a campsite. Normally, this might be picked up and thrown in a backpack. Now... reconsider... may want to leave the trash and come back with a trash bag, trash picker/grabber/tongs, and appropriate PPE.

If it is not absolutely critical that it be done now, consider doing it later when appropriately equipped with the appropriate PPE.

NO Sawing is currently allowed (Chainsaw or Crosscut).

Ocoee/Cherokee (Section 11): Restrictions on tool usage and crew size as stipulated.

Crew Leaders must emphasize the Safety Debrief and Job Hazard Analysis (Trail Maintenance & COVID-19). *DO NOT JUST CHECK A BOX BY MENTIONING IT!*

Crew Leaders must convey that volunteers, especially those in high risk groups, should consider whether a maintenance trip during these times is worth it.

PPE Requirements still exist (Long pants, sturdy footwear, hard hats, gloves, eye protection).

Masks are optional, but social distancing should be maintained as best as possible.

People should consider whether carpooling is increasing their personal risk.

Crew must have a maximum of 4 people (including the leaders).

Multiple crews can operate simultaneously. Each crew has to be working at a different location.

Review and reprioritize work.

Example: Trash left at a campsite. Normally, this might be picked up and thrown in a backpack. Now... reconsider... may want to leave the trash and come back with a trash bag, trash picker/grabber/tongs, and appropriate PPE.

If it is not absolutely critical that it be done now, consider doing it later when appropriately equipped with the appropriate PPE.

Chainsaws are NOT authorized (outside of Wilderness). Only crosscut saws are allowed.

Crosscut sawyer must hold a current Chainsaw B or higher certification.

Crosscut sawyer must hold a current First Aid and CPR certification.

Crosscut sawyer must have a First Aid kit with trauma materials to control bleeding.

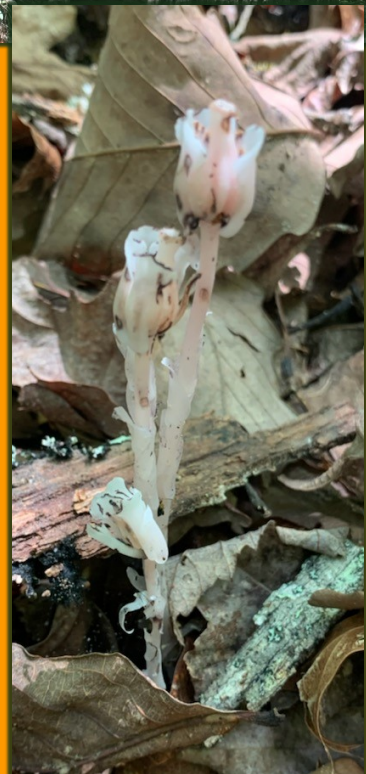
PPE: Gloves, Hard hat, Eye protection, Sturdy footwear.

If you have any questions or concerns about cutting a particular tree...DON'T! Walk away from it and report it to the USFS.



Ocoee Whitewater and Tanasi

Interesting finds - The Indian Ghost pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) and a very large burl on the Tanasi Trails near the Ocoee Whitewater Center. Did you know that Tanasi is the name of a Cherokee village that became the name for the state of Tennessee? The village is now submerged under Tellico Lake and was at one time the de facto capital of the Cherokee from around 1721-1730.



Amadahy Trail

by Ken Cissna



BMTA Hike Director Ken Cissna (and trail dog, Artie) led four other hikers around the Amadahy Loop Trail on Tuesday, May 26. The weather was beautiful—slightly overcast and not too hot.

We saw no one on the trail and just a couple of fishing boats along the far shore.

In the photo, (front to back) the hikers are new member Deb Emery; Gilmer County native and guest Karletta McCoy; and long-time members and hike leaders themselves, Sara and Jerry Bland.



Upcoming Hikes and Work Trips

by Ken Cissna, Hiking Director

BMTA normally schedules four or five hikes per month, some “leisure” hikes that are shorter and easier and some five to eight miles and of moderate difficulty. 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. Some, but not all, of our hikes are “dog friendly.” Although more hikes are in Georgia than the other states, you will find hikes in all three BMT states: Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

These, however, are not normal times. Because hiking in the out-of-doors is good for one’s mental and physical health, we encourage BMTA members and others to continue hiking as much as possible during this national health crisis *and to do so safely*. To that end, we are continuing our hiking program and welcome people to hike with us. In the interests of safety, we have instituted some modifications that you need to know about:

1. **Only hikes that do not require shuttles are allowed** under the auspices of BMTA.
2. All hikers must drive to the meeting place and trailhead in their own cars -- no carpooling except among family members.
3. Any potential hiker who is feeling ill, has traveled within the past 14 days to a location with a significant number of cases of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) or has been exposed within the past 14 days to a person who has been confirmed as or is even suspected of having COVID-19 must not come on a hike.
4. All hikes are limited to 10 participants —hike leaders may impose even lower limits.
5. Before, during and after a hike, participants must maintain an appropriate social distance from one another (an absolute minimum of six feet—but 10 or 20 is much better).

We have had to make more adjustments than usual to our hike schedule—dropping some hikes, substituting others, revising hikes to avoid shuttles, etc. Please forgive the inconvenience.

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 hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

The hikes for the next couple of months are listed below. More hikes will be forthcoming, so check the Activities Calendar of the website, BMTA’s Facebook page, our various email alerts and next month’s newsletter for updates. Enjoy!

June

June 6 (Saturday) BMT in the Cohuttas: From Watson Gap to Dyer Gap and back. 8.6 miles round trip, moderate. One rock-hop stream crossing.

Hike leader: Tom Sewell. For further information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

June 13 (Saturday) GA Work Trip - Section 6. Meet: 8:15 at the Home Depot parking lot near Dairy Queen (10012 Blue Ridge Dr., Blue Ridge, GA 30513) or 9:00 at Fall Branch Falls trailhead.

Plan for the Day: 1) Level and widen the trail 2) Water diversions

What to bring: minimum 2 liters of water, long pants, boots, gloves and lunch / snack.

Contact: Phil Guhl at bmtaphil@gmail.com or 770-548-5590 (Please RSVP so we can plan on the number of tools and helmets).

June 15 (Monday) BMT: Highway 60 to the scenic Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River and back. 7.4 miles, moderate.

Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

June 20 (Saturday) At the Ocoee Whitewater Center: Up Thunder Rock Express Trail, then onto the BMT to Forest Service road 45, back to Thunder Rock Express and down to our cars. 4 miles, moderate to difficult. We may be able to watch the water in the Ocoee River arrive at the Ocoee Whitewater Center before the hike.

Hike leader Clare Sullivan. For more information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

June 22 (Monday) East Lakeshore Trail – Morganton Bridge and Wildcat Point. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). 10.4 miles, easy.

Hike leaders Rick and Brenda Harris. For more information, contact harrisri@aol.com.

June 26 (Friday) BMT: Lost Creek Section. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog). 6.5 miles, easy. Beautiful walk along Big Lost Creek. One stream crossing will probably get your feet wet so come prepared.

Hike leader: Ken Cissna. For more information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

June 27 (Saturday) TN / NC Work Trip. Date & location to be determined. Contact Pam/Kent Mathews, pamelahallmathews@yahoo.com.

July

July 7 (Tuesday) Amicalola River Trail.

2.9 mile, easy to moderate. Begins with a half-mile boardwalk along the beautiful Amicalola River; later, observe the mighty Class 4 “Edge of the World” Rapids.

Hike leader Sara Bland. For more information, call 770-366-6053.

July 9 (Thursday) Gahuti Lite: Five Trails Loop at Fort Mountain State Park. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog).

About 5 miles, moderate. Highlights include cascading creeks, a long distance view and a lakeside walk. Ends with a moderate uphill walk.

Hike leader Ken Cissna. For more information, hikeleader@bmtamail.org

July 11 (Saturday) GA Work Trip - Section 7. For details, contact Phil Guhl, [Georgia Maintenance Director](#).

July 14 (Tuesday) BMT: To Buck Bald and back.
3 miles round trip, easy. Top provides beautiful 360 degree view of the surrounding mountains.

Hike leader Clare Sullivan. For more information, hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

July 21 (Tuesday) Cartecay River Loop Trail and Clear Creek Shoals.
About 5 miles, moderate. Includes a short drive between trailheads.

Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

July 22 (Wednesday) Select Trails of Talking Rock Nature Preserve. DOG-FRIENDLY HIKE (adult humans may bring a leashed dog).
4-5 miles, easy to easy-moderate.

Hike Leaders: Howard Baggett and Ken Cissna. For more information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

July 25 (Saturday) TN/NC Work Trip - Section 16a, Roundtop to Sledrunner Gap. For additional details, contact Rick Harris, [TN/NC Maintenance Director](#).

July 28 (Tuesday) To Rainbow Falls and back.
3.8 miles, easy. Two creek crossings. Trip to two other beautiful falls just above Rainbow Falls a possibility.

Hike leader Clare Sullivan. For more information, contact hikeleader@bmtamail.org.

July 29 (Wednesday) Turtletown Creek Falls.
4 miles, moderate. Two beautiful falls in one short hike.

Hike leader Steve Dennison. For more information, hikeleader@bmtamail.org.



The deadline for the July Newsletter is Wednesday, July 1. Thank you!