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# Georgia Pinhoti Trail News

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## **A Word From The President**

by Larry Madden - President

The last quarter of 2003 brought some changes to the Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association, some good, some not so good, but the outlook for 2004 is great.

We had two valuable people resign, Hillrie Quinn and Cynthia Crotwell. I know that because of their love for the outdoors they will continue to contribute to the trails community.

In October, Marty, Rick and I attended the Southeastern Foot Hills Trails Conference in Mont Eagle Tennessee. We picked up a lot of valuable tips in the various seminars over course of the three-day the conference. One really important thing that came out of the conference was the formation of the Southeastern Foot Trails Coalition. This coalition is made up of one representative from each participating trails organization in our southeastern region. Currently there are over twenty organizations in the coalition. The SFTC is planning its first meeting in April for somewhere in Alabama.

Berry College student volunteers are becoming a valuable resource for trail maintenance in the Armuchee District along Taylor Ridge in Chattooga County. This fall we had 26 volunteers and mentors from their Freshman Service Day event. Their Volunteer Services Center also supplied forty volunteers for their National Make a Difference Day event.

Jill Allison, Camp Director for Camp Misty Mountain, a Girl Scout Camp, made a commitment to adopt the segment of trail from Snake Creek Gap on Highway 136 south to Pocket Road and a portion from Pocket Road to Overlook. Within the first quarter of this year we will be holding some training sessions for the adult leaders that will be taking the girls out on the work trips. Camp Misty Mountain is located in Floyd County on Lake Marvin Road south of The Pocket Recreation Area.

The volunteer turnout is improving and, as a result, during the last quarter the work trips proved more successful. Blowdowns and deadfall continue to plague us in the Pine Beetle infested areas and swing blading is hard to catch up on. With spring approaching, a lot of volunteer hours will be needed in the swing blading arena to try to stay ahead of the rapid growth that occurs with the warmer weather and rain. Please check the Events page on the website for workdays, and contact the work leader so that you may be expected.

Work continues in the Cohuttas and more mileage has been added. Marty Dominy has spent many hours blazing the new treadway and renewing the blazes on already existing trail.

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## **And the Vice President**

by Rick Moon - Executive Vice President

I have been seeing some pretty good use in the Dalton area. I ran into 3 mountain bikers with their dogs last week as they were finishing a ride from Snake Creek Gap to Dalton. This is a great ride of 16 miles with 2 real strong climbs. They said the trail was in great shape between those 2 points. They said they saw a through hiker a couple of weeks ago over in the Cohuttas. He was heading south from the AT to Florida via the Georgia and Alabama Pinhoti. I have also observed several day hikers going in at the Dalton trail head.

## **Benton Mackaye Trail Extension Approved; To Offer Great Southeastern Loop with Appalachian Trail**

by Marty Dominy

The Deep South's Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA) received a very special holiday gift in mid-December '03 when the USDA Forest Service approved the 85-mile extension of the footpath through the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests. The trail, which begins on Georgia's Springer Mountain along with the Appalachian Trail (AT), has until now terminated after 90 miles at U.S. Highway 64 and 74 at the Ocoee River in Tennessee. Now, a long-sought double loop with the AT across three states is moving toward fruition.

The extension will allow the trail to proceed to the Little Tennessee River just south of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. From there an existing route through the southern half of the Park will take the trail across the AT at Sassafras Gap and on to Davenport Gap at the east end of the Park. Here, the trail will again connect to the AT.

An important feature of the just-approved trail route is it will provide a new link in what is being dubbed the "Eastern Continental Trail" stretching from southern Florida to eastern Quebec. Currently hikers trekking the length of this 4500-mile route that traverses various existing long-distance trails arrive in north Georgia via the Pinhoti Trail from Alabama, reach the Benton MacKaye Trail on Jacks River, then have to backtrack southeast some 65 miles before turning north again on the AT at Springer Mountain. This new extension will allow those hikers to turn north and go directly to the AT in the Smokies, saving approximately a hundred miles of hiking.

The approval by the National Forests in Tennessee and North Carolina will almost double the current length of the Benton MacKaye Trail. The new route will pass through three wildernesses: Little Frog and Citico in Tennessee, and Joyce Kimer – Slickrock in North Carolina.

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## **A Word From the President**

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Marty Dominy, Rick Moon and I spent an afternoon with Debra Whitman, USDA-FS District Ranger, checking out a problem area at Dennis Mill. Rick is working on a solution for the problem and hopefully he will have a solution before year's end. Marty, Rick, and I finished out the afternoon looking over some other issues in the Cohuttas before moving to Dalton for a meeting with Conrad Fernandez (Dalton).

Marty, Rick, and I met with Conrad to discuss our web site. As most of you know, if you had entered the site before Christmas, there was no content, and we were determined to change that with Conrad's help. We outlined the needs of the page and basic changes that needed to be made. At a work day in December I was talking with Mike Dillard, a new GPTA member, and he suggested a friend of his, Rob Rudeski (Trenton), as a member of the web team. Between Rob and Conrad they have brought the GPTA web page to life and as time goes on, we look for the content to continue to grow. If you have not already done so, check it out at <http://www.georgiapinhoti.org>.

This January 2004 brought a workday wherein several interests participated. We worked on the Simms Mountain portion of the trail. This is a cinder-based rail to trail conversion that, like most of the trail in the wooded areas of the Georgia Pinhoti, is designated multi-use, non-motorized traffic. The volunteers represented the horse community, mountain bikers, and hikers. At present there is a lot of unauthorized ATV use along this rail trail. Hopefully with community involvement, education, and lastly, law enforcement, we can get this stopped or greatly reduced.

GPTA is continually looking for adoption opportunities for trail segments. This January 27th I will be doing an adoption ceremony with a group of community volunteers in Summerville who will be adopting a segment along Taylor Ridge. The ceremony will be followed by a Georgia Pinhoti Trail presentation: who we are, where we are, where we want to be, and how does this affect your community. This is a public meeting and press releases are going out to all of the major newspapers in the area. Check out the article on page 4 for more information.

Those of you who are members, if you are not participating in work days I encourage you to pitch in. The reward is a good, clean (most of the time), outdoors experience and you will meet some of the nicest people in the world. If you are not a member, please sign up and work with us to create a recreational experience for future generations. GPTA is an all-volunteer organization that relies on participation, donations, membership dues, merchandise sales, and grant monies to carry on our mission.

## **Benton Mackaye Trail Extension**

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The first volunteer work crew began clearing trail immediately following the signing of the Cherokee decision notice. On December 23, 2003, a crew completely opened a mile in the remote Bald River watershed. BMTA Construction Director, Ken Jones of Tennessee, has set a goal of trail completion for the 85-mile segment of about December 2005. However, Ken notes that "this is not a race to the finish line. The most important things are worker safety and building a quality trail that will help minimize future maintenance needs." Slightly over 20 miles of the new route will be new construction; the remainder is on existing trails that will be upgraded and linked to the Benton MacKaye route. Several construction trips every month on the new route are now being planned by the BMTA. These all-volunteer trail crews have already had much practice, maintaining several existing trails on the proposed route for some years.

The new trail route will provide a significant amount of variation of terrain and elevation as it winds through some less-accessible areas of the Southern Appalachians. In this 85-mile extension the trail will vary in elevation from just over 1000 feet as it crosses the Ocoee, Hiwassee, and Little Tennessee Rivers, to just over 5000 feet in the Haw Knob area south of the Cherohala Highway. The trail's highest point, when completed in the Smokies, will be 5843 feet atop Mount Sterling in the northeastern part of the park.

The Benton MacKaye Trail was named for the man who fathered the idea of the Appalachian Trail over eighty years ago. Its route into North Carolina, Tennessee, and the Cohutta Wilderness in North Georgia follows closely one of the early trail routes suggested by MacKaye. About ninety-five percent of the route is on public lands. The BMTA invites you to track the new trail extension's progress on their website at <http://www.bmta.org>.

## **New Pinhoti Trail Segments Opened in '03**

by Marty Dominy

Three new segments were completed in the summer of 2003. Blazing was completed for the entire 20.6 miles in the first week of November. Two contiguous segments totaling 14.1 miles take the trail from Forest Service Road 90 at a point ½ mile east of Holly Creek Gap to the Benton MacKaye Trail along Jacks River. These segments include 5.9 miles of the South Fork Trail, the Mountaintown Creek Trail, the Bear Creek Loop Trail, and the Bear Creek Trail. With the exception of the 1.4 mile connector from the Bear Creek Loop to the Mountaintown Creek Trail, these segments are open to biking, hiking, and horse use.

The third segment begins at the Murray – Gilmer County line on Highway 2 and 52. In just under a mile, the trail intersects the rough Tatum Lead Road to take it through 1.5 miles of private property. Once back on Forest Service property, the trail leaves the ridge to follow Baker Branch, a major tributary of Rock Creek. The marking for this segment is at the end of Forest Service Road 3, 6.5 miles from the highway.

Work on the segment from Cohutta Overlook to Forest Service Road 90, and the segment leading south to Dennis Mill Road is expected in 2004.

## Upcoming Work Dates

mark your calendars

### January 30 - 31

Friday, 10am: Meet at Mack White Gap. We'll tackle trimming, blowdown removal, and water bar construction. If working both days, we'll be camping at Sloppy Floyd State Park.

Saturday we will meet at Mack White Gap again at 9:00am.

Directions from Atlanta: I-75 North to the Adairsville exit for GA Hwy 140. Follow it to Hwy 27 and turn right (north). The 4 lane will go to 3 lanes at Gore. There is a trailhead parking lot at Mack White Gap on the top of Taylors Ridge on the left.

To reach Sloppy Floyd State Park, you go past the trailhead parking lot and follow the signs to turn left for the park.

For more info contact Mike Davis at madavis@fs.fed.us.

### February 7

9am: Meet at Snake Creek Parking Lot on GA136. We will work over the mountain to Redwine Cove. Shuttle cars will be posted on each end. James Stankowitz will be leading this trip. Contact Rick Moon at 706-278-5491 or moonrc@bp.com <mailto:moonrc@bp.com> for more information

### March 6

10:00am: We will meet at the BP station at the corner of US Highway 27 and Subligna Road. From there we will drop a car or two at West Armuchee Creek, then return to West Armuchee Road to start. The climb is easier that way, and there is more downhill at the end of the day. The work is on Strawberry Mountain between West Armuchee Creek and West Armuchee Road. This will cover 4.4 miles. We will concentrate on clearing any downed trees and limbs, cutting back weeds and briers, and checking the marking on this section.

The West Armuchee Creek ford is a 12.6 mile drive from US 27. The work should conclude by 3:30pm.

Bring your lunch, plenty of water, and be prepared for any sort of weather. The trip will be cancelled if there is heavy snow, ice, or rain. Tools will be provided.

### April 3

9am: Meet at the country store at Villanow on Hwy 136. We will drive south on Pocket Road to Overlook road on the west side of the road. Proceed up Overlook Road and park on side of road at the Trail entrance on the right. we will work around the north end of Johns Mountain swing blading, lopping and clearing treadway. Bring work gloves, lunch, water and be ready to have fun!!! Your work leader will be Larry Madden and he may be contacted at LEMBicycle@comcast.net or 706-766-3800

Interested in joining us on a work trip? Here's some more info.

### What to Bring

- Boots or sturdy shoes
- Change of clothes
- Dirty clothes bag
- Personal first aid kit
- Gloves
- Lunch and water
- Rain gear
- Personal work tools
- Warm layer if cold weather is possible

### What We'll Provide

- A great group of people
- Safety advice
- Trail building expertise and training
- Soft drinks at the end of the day
- Trail construction tools

We hope to see you soon on a work date!

## Board of Directors 2003

### Larry Madden, President

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### Rick Moon, Executive Vice President

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### Marty Dominy, Trail Supervisor

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# Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association Membership Application

Regular - \$12

New

Student - \$6

Renewal

Allied Organization - \$25

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email (Required)

We will not share your information with anyone!

**Mail to: Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association Membership  
P. O. Box 3101  
Rome, GA 30164**

## Trail Adoption Meeting

by Larry Madden

There will be a Trail Adoption meeting on January 27, 2004, at 6:00 PM in the community room at the United Community Bank in Summerville, GA. Larry Madden will give an overview of trail adoption to a group of interested citizens from the Summerville/Chattooga County area. Mike Dillard, a member of GPTA and a local trails enthusiast, will head up a group of volunteers that will accept the responsibility of trail maintenance. Mike has experience in trails maintenance with GPTA and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.

Attending this adoption meeting will be representatives from USDA-Forest Service, American Hiking Society and officers of GPTA.

After the adoption of the trail segments, Larry Madden, Jeffery Hunter of American Hiking Society, and Forest Service representatives will participate in a Georgia Pinhoti Trail presentation. The presentation will give a long-range plan of the trail, future links, and its importance in the development of the Eastern Continental Trail.

For directions, contact Mike Dillard at 706.822.9948.

For more information or meeting details, contact Larry Madden at 706.766.3800.

## Work Report

by Rick Moon

The December 6, 2003, work trip was fun and productive. We had 7 workers: Neal Bowers, Larry Madden, Mike Dillard, Janet Brooks, Mike Rogers, Rick Moon, and Marty Dominy for a total of 52 volunteer hours. We parked vehicles at Snake Creek Gap and near Pilcher's Pond. We hiked and worked south toward Pilcher's Pond over Horn Mountain, mainly clearing Pine Beetle damaged pines. Marty worked north, out and back, on Mill Creek Mountain. We estimate that we cleared 7 miles of trail. We stopped for lunch on the top on Horn Mountain at a beautiful overlook. Our workers included horse riders, mountain bikers, and hikers. We had a great time and enjoyed the gift of the great outdoors together.