

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8403

To amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a national scenic trail.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 15, 2024

Mr. COHEN (for himself, Mr. FLEISCHMANN, Mr. DESJARLAIS, Mr. EDWARDS, Mrs. MCBATH, and Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Benton MacKaye Trail as a national scenic trail.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Benton MacKaye Na-
5 tional Scenic Trail Feasibility Study Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that the Benton MacKaye Trail—

1 (1) is a scenic, nonmotorized trail that traverses
2 approximately 287 miles over some of the most re-
3 nowned forests and mountains in the States of Geor-
4 gia, Tennessee, and North Carolina;

5 (2) showcases a wide variety of scenic views, in-
6 cluding high-elevation peaks, mature forests, and se-
7 cluded waterfalls;

8 (3) passes through wilderness that is rich with
9 biodiversity;

10 (4) passes through six designated Wilderness
11 Areas, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,
12 and the Chattahoochee-Oconee, Cherokee, and
13 Nantahala National Forests;

14 (5) provides a wide array of easily accessible
15 hikes for novice and intermediate hikers, as well as
16 more challenging trails for backpacking;

17 (6) supports economic opportunities for numer-
18 ous rural communities which benefit from the visi-
19 tors of the trail spending their money on accom-
20 modations, food, and outdoor supplies;

21 (7) runs from Springer Mountain in Georgia,
22 through Tennessee, and extends through the Great
23 Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina;

24 (8) is physically accessible; and

1 (9) can be maintained at a minimal cost be-
2 cause—

3 (A) the Benton MacKaye Trail has been
4 maintained at its current length since 2005;

5 (B) 95 percent of the Benton MacKaye
6 Trail is located on Federal land; and

7 (C) the Benton MacKaye Trail has been
8 successfully constructed, maintained, and man-
9 aged by the Benton MacKaye Trail Association
10 since 1980.

11 **SEC. 3. BENTON MACKAYE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL FEASI-**
12 **BILITY STUDY.**

13 Section 5(c) of the National Trails System Act (16
14 U.S.C. 1244(c)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
15 lowing:

16 “(50) BENTON MACKAYE TRAIL.—

17 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Benton MacKaye
18 Trail, a scenic, nonmotorized trail that tra-
19 verses approximately 287 miles in the States of
20 Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

21 “(B) STUDY.—Not later than 1 year after
22 the date of the enactment of this paragraph,
23 the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation
24 with interested organizations, including the
25 Benton MacKaye Trail Association, shall com-

1 plete and submit to Congress the feasibility
2 study for designating the Benton MacKaye
3 Trail as a national scenic trail.”.

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