



Backpacking the Mason-Dixon Trail **THEY TOOK THE CHALLENGE!**

Ever thought of backpacking your way along this serene and sometimes seriously dicey trail end to end? Read on....

"Mother Nature will always win." So says MDT thru-hiker Andrea. She witnessed the devastation of Otter Creek and enjoyed viewing various ruins being taken over by plants and trees.

Robin, her partner in this adventure, basked in "being in the moment of what I was seeing. Being disconnected. Phone off."

These are the highlights of thru-hiking the MDT, camping along the way or staying at hotels. It took Robin and Andrea two weeks to traverse the 140 miles from High Point Park to Chadds Ford. (They will return to finish the final 60 miles to the western terminus in the spring.) They hiked at what they felt was a moderate pace covering ten to fifteen miles on a 9-to-5 day, ate well, slept like logs, and never felt unsafe! The late-October weather graced them with days in the 50s, nights in the 30s and minimal rain. They shared a tent and brought along hammocks which they soon ditched to save weight. Seven days in: was their rendezvous with a friend to re-supply food and fresh clothing.



View from High Point Park



Andrea and Robin

DAY ONE

That being said, Day One was a rude awakening. Starting at 10:30, they planned to reach Apollo Park shelter: 14 miles! However, the Fish Creek traverse over the arête was treacherous. Both admitted that they overpacked: 35 to 40 lbs, which they managed to balance along this rock-scrambling trail sans trekking poles. I'm gritting my teeth just thinking about this! They made it over boulders edging along steep drops, cruised down through Greenbranch, then tackled Cuff's Run...which is a ravine flanked by serious switchbacks. Here they had to actually take their packs off and shove them through the boulder squeeze! They finished the day by stealth camping near there. This was their first ten grueling miles. Whew!

continued on page 2



Boulder squeeze

Mason-Dixon Trail Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Sunday, March 10, 2019 *See page 2 for more details*

Backpacking *continued from page 1*

DAY TWO

Day Two brought them trekking along the scenic ridge trails carved out by glacial retreat as the mighty Susquehanna was formed. Evening found them at Otter Creek Campground. Halloween night! The witch at the campsite next door entertained them with twinkling lights bouncing high off the fall foliage and smokey effects. There was general macabre revelry throughout the camp.

DAY THREE

Day Three brought lunch at Peavine Island. I asked if all the trash that the summer crowd of swimmers and hikers left there bothered them. They looked at me...what trash? Oh duh...we had massive flooding recently. Mother Nature won again! Night was spent at

the Boy Scout shelter near Lock 12. As they sat enjoying their campfire they heard a wild yowl. Then a heavy crashing thru the woods. Grabbing their headlamps, they spotlighted a bobcat not 15 yards away. What was it after?

Worse yet...were Robin and Andrea on the menu? Stay tuned to the next episode (next newsletter)!



Boy Scout shelter

M-DT Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Hike: 9:00 am

Meeting: 12:30 pm

The next board meeting of the Mason-Dixon Trail System will be held on Sunday, March 10 at 12:30 pm at the London Tract Meeting House in the White Clay Creek Preserve near Landenberg, PA. A pre-meeting hike will begin at 9:00 am. Parking for both events is at the adjacent Preserve Office parking lot, 405 Sharpless Rd, Landenberg, PA. There will be two hikes: a longer 6-mile loop hike along White Clay Creek on the M-DT and Charles Baily Trail and a shorter 3-mile loop hike on the M-DT and a little used road through the park. Bring snacks/lunch and water. The 6-milers may not return to the parking lot much before the meeting.

DIRECTIONS

From I-95 Exit 1 in Delaware

Head north on S College Ave (DE-896) for 2.5 mi, turn left onto W Main St, move to the right and drive 0.1 mi. Turn right onto New London Ave (DE-896 & PA-896) a drive 4.2 mi. Turn right onto London Tract Rd and drive 1.4 mi. The parking lot will be after the intersection on your left.

From the New London exit of US-1

Head south on PA-896 and drive for 8.2 mi. After the shopping center on the right, bear left onto Indiantown Rd and drive 1.5 mi. At the 2nd stop sign, continue onto London Tract Rd and drive 0.1 mi to the parking lot on your left.

Trail Maintenance Highlights

|| **October – December 2018**

WESTERN SECTION

- Another 100 hours of cleanup & restoration of the M-DT along Otter Creek was performed in 12 work trips by 16 individuals most of whom worked on multiple trips. The cleanup involved gathering and hauling the trash up to the road. The restoration required chainsawing many trees. Some of them were large trees, more than 24" diameter that had been washed downstream into precarious positions. Also, four short relocations have been built so far to bypass washed out sections of the trail. The M-DT is open along Otter Creek but there's still a lot of cleanup and restoration to do.
- Chainsaw and lopper work was performed along the Susquehanna from Greenbranch to Cuff's Run and also along Oakland Run.

CENTRAL SECTION

- Another tenth of mile was built through the rocks on the relocation between Lock 15 and Peavine Island. A 20' long frame of a travel trailer was removed from a gully about halfway through the relocation. It will be replaced with a bridge made of treated lumber. So far the frame and railings have been built. The lumber for the decking should arrive in January. We like to offer a special thanks to Exelon for their support with both the trailer removal and supplying the lumber for the new bridge.
- Also Exelon is currently reconstructing the washed out Glenn Cove bridge and will soon allow us to restore the trail back to it's original location.
- Between Susquehanna State Park and Broadcreek new marker posts were installed as needed and trail blazes received a fresh coat of paint.
- National Trails Day at Conowingo Dam Saturday June 1, 2019.

President's Message

On behalf of all the members (and users) of the Mason-Dixon Trail System, I want to thank all the recently elected board members for volunteering to provide the administration and guidance that is essential to current maintenance and future existence of the M-DT. In addition to their board duties, all of them are also active Mason-Dixon Trail maintainers.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Recently, M-DTS has been quite successful at recruiting new trail maintainers. We are now in the enviable position of having more maintenance volunteers than needed for our current maintenance model which dedicates 1 maintainer to approximately 2-miles of trail. I plan to discuss rethinking this model at the March 10 meeting. Don't get me wrong. I want to encourage continued volunteering, we just have to rethink how best to use our volunteers.

We haven't been quite as successful at recruiting board members. Despite announcing the need for new Treasurer about a year ago, we haven't received any inquiries. It's essential that we fill the Treasurer's position within the next few months. Even though recruiting maintainers and board members is going in opposite directions, rethinking how we're doing things is appropriate in both cases. Maybe we need to divide the current Treasurer's duties among more than one person. That's something else that I plan to discuss at the next board meeting. Almost all the Treasurer's duties can be performed from the comfort of your own home and on your own schedule. Please contact me at president@mason-dixontrail.org to find out how you can help ensure the future of the Mason-Dixon Trail. Or you could just come to the March 10 board meeting to find out.

THANKS ROB!

I want to thank Rob Campbell for his 9 years of service as Secretary. Rob was always very exacting in recording the minutes and could be relied on to remember what happened in past meetings, thereby prevented the board from reversing or redoing something they had enacted just a few meetings before. During these years, Rob had also been active in the Maps Committee and responsible for coordinating the printing of the trail maps.

ELECTION RESULTS

Rob Campbell & Ron Gray met January 22, 2019 to record the votes for the new slate of officers. The results were as follows:

President: Tim Schmidt
Vice President: Volunteer Needed
Secretaries: Ruthie Franczek and Linda Lambert
Treasurer: Volunteer Needed
Director – Pennsylvania: Jim Hooper
Director – Maryland: Mike Hall
Director – Delaware: Mike Ott
Trail Coordinator – Western Section: Roxanne Strine
Trail Coordinator – Central Section: Mike Hall
Trail Coordinator – Eastern Section: Pete McLaughlin

MASON-DIXON TRAIL SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

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Backpacking the Mason-Dixon Trail

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*Read about Andrea
and Robin's journey
on the Mason-Dixon Trail*

Peavine Island view of Norman Wood Bridge

The M-DTS Newsletter is published about four weeks in advance of each of the four M-DTS board meetings held annually. Submissions are welcomed.

The Mason-Dixon Trail System, Inc. is a non-profit all-volunteer, service-oriented association of trail clubs and individual hikers that has as its purpose the use and conservation of the backcountry through the development of new trails in the mid-Atlantic states. The nucleus of M-DTS is the 199-mile Mason-Dixon Trail which passes through historic and scenic areas of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware.

New members are welcome. To join, send \$20 (which covers initial membership as well as the M-DT maps) to:

Mason-Dixon Trail System, Frank Kempf, 2174 Esbenshade Road, York, PA 17408

Thereafter, the annual fee is \$7. Life membership is available for \$250.

Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail web site at: www.mason-dixontrail.org

Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/theMDTS