



From the Trail

What in Blue Blazes?

According to freedictionary.com, the idiom “in blue blazes” is used as an intensifier after a question word (what, where, etc.) to express extreme confusion, surprise, or aggravation. I’m sure many hikers on the Mason-Dixon Trail have felt at least one of those emotions when they encountered the blue blazes pictured here in a 1-over-2 configuration. You can also find them in a 2-over-1 configuration. What do these triangles of 3 blazes mean? Does 1-over-2 mean something different than 2-over-1? Why didn’t they use a standard blaze?

If you Google “hiking trail blazes” and look at the images, you’ll see lots of the standard blazes using one or two rectangles but there’s only a couple of images that show three rectangles and they’re all labeled the same. The label for the 1-over-2 is “Start of Trail” and for 2-over-1 it’s “End of Trail”. Since you usually find these blazes on the M-DT in the middle of a hill, that’s probably not the intended meaning.

Most of these 3 rectangle blazes occur on the M-DT in York County between Norman Wood Bridge and Wrightsville. This 30-mile section that parallels the Susquehanna River is designated a National Recreation Trail and is the most rugged and steepest section of the M-DT.

From most of the trailhead parking in this River Hills area, you have to climb several hundred feet from near river level to the ridge. After a while on the ridge, you descend back down to river level to cross a stream and then climb back to the ridge. Much of these 30 miles were built adjacent to the river on a thin ribbon of property owned by the power company (currently Brookfield Renewables). Because of the narrowness of the power company’s land and the steepness of the hill, the trail must use multiple switchbacks to



climb those hundreds of feet. There are turn blazes at each turn of the switchbacks. Often both the uphill and downhill turn blazes are visible at the same time from one or both directions. In an attempt to reduce this confusion, the turn blazes were, in a sense, slid together; however, if the trail is going uphill and to the left (or downhill to the right) that results in a 2-over-1 blaze while uphill and to the right (or downhill to the left) results in a 1-over-2 blaze. If you think your confused now, just imagine yourself on a steep, rocky hill carrying a can of paint and trying to figure out whether the next blaze should be 2-over-1 or 1-over-2. I think most people just picked one of the options and used it for every turn blaze.

At the November 18, 2017 meeting, the M-DTS Board discussed these nonstandard turn blazes and decided to only use the blazes shown in the Appalachian Trail Fieldbook, which covers hiking trail design, building, and maintenance. The Fieldbook only shows two turn blazes, the vertical double blaze and an offset double blaze. Over the next year or two, the 2-over-1 and 1-over-2 turn blazes will be replaced with vertical double blazes.



Mason-Dixon Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Saturday, March 10, 2018 See page 2 for more details

Trail Maintenance Highlights

|| October – December 2017

EASTERN SECTION

- Members of the Friends of White Clay Preserve and Wilmington Trail Club relocated a section of the Pennel Trail along White Clay Creek near Preserve parking lot #2 from the edge of a field into woodland adjacent to the creek. The M-DT is co-located on this trail.

CENTRAL SECTION

- 2017 was a busy year for the Central section of the Mason Dixon trail. In addition to the normal maintenance that our section crews handle throughout the year there was a focused effort to trim 100% of the trail between Havre de Grace and the Broad Creek Boy Scout Camp. This work included lopping, weed whacking and cutting blow downs along the trail. This work ran from August through December and should help our maintainers get a jump on their normal spring maintenance.

- Our 2018 focused effort will be a complete trail marker refreshing from Havre de Grace to Lock 12. This will include repainting and adding blazes where needed. We'll also be adding some trail marker posts at locations where summer foliage tends to make the trail harder to follow. Any help with this effort will be greatly appreciated. Contact the central section maintenance coordinator if you're interested in helping.

WESTERN SECTION

- York Hiking Club's "Thursday Work Crew", went on four exploratory hikes of the former Marietta Gravity Water Company property to find a route on which to relocate the M-DT from the 2.5 road walk along River Drive about 4 miles north of Wrightsville, PA.
- Blow downs were cleared from Cuff's Run hollow (Roxanne & Dave Strine), Oakland Run (Paul Yatabe) and the Otter Creek Area (Tom Morley and Jeff, Scott & Charles of EA Engineering)

Thanks Mike!

Mike Calabrese retired as Vice President citing personal reasons. I'm sure his 5-hour roundtrip from Vienna, VA to the M-DT was part of that. Mike has been a frequent attendee at work hikes and meetings over the last 20 years

Before serving as Vice President, Mike stepped in as webmaster after the untimely death of Dwayne Shreve. The website at that time was connected to Dwayne's personal account and Mike couldn't get the password, so he was unable to make any changes. He quickly registered a new domain name, www.mason-dixontrail.org and stood up a new website. Over the next three years, he transformed the M-DTS web presence from static webpages to a site that ran business processes, including sales of maps, memberships and clothing, reporting trail issues, and an online form to volunteer as a maintainer. He also added several other features including an online archive of all our newsletters (with Ron Gray's help), a map updates section, a suggested hikes section and backpacking info to name a few.

If that wasn't enough Mike also volunteered to be the Vice President in addition to his role as webmaster. During his two years, he attended many meetings and took on several projects. His most significant project was leading the implementation of digital trail maps using Avenza's smart phone app. You can access a couple of free maps of hikes on the M-DT or purchase M-DT maps 4 and 5 from the M-DT website. Mike's last project fittingly involved a terminus, the Eastern Terminus. More info on that elsewhere in this newsletter.

M-DT Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Sat., Mar. 10, 2018

Hike: 9:00 am

Meeting: 12:30 pm

The next board meeting of the Mason-Dixon Trail System will be held at 12:30 pm on Saturday, March 10, 2018, at the Perryville Branch of the Cecil County Public Library, 500 Coudon Blvd., Perryville, MD 21903. The carpool for the work hike will leave at 9 am from the library parking lot.

The work hike will be on the M-DT in the Principio Business Park. We will hopefully complete the work that was started in February 2017 and has been continued by local maintainers since then. Our goal is to clear 3 short sections which will finish relocating all of the trail in Principio Business Park within the area approved by Stewart Properties (the rest of the 3 miles are already within the approved area). The work hike requires loppers and hand saws to clear the flagged route through the brush. Bring snacks/lunch and water for the hike. If you have loppers and folding saws, bring them as well.

Directions to the hike and meeting:

From I-95 Exit 93, drive south on MD Rt. 222 for 1.7 mi. Turn left onto US-40 East and drive 0.3mi. Turn right onto Coudon Blvd. and drive 0.2 miles to the library parking lot on the right. The carpool for the hike will leave from the library parking lot at 9 am. The meeting will convene in the library's meeting room at 12:30 pm.

President's Message

Back in January, I was walking on the M-DT along Otter Creek in 3 inches of snow with Jim McCoy, a longtime section maintainer. I was lagging behind Jim. He was intent on finding the next blow down while I was enjoying the scenery. I stopped at a bend in the creek and looked up at the opposite bank, a 200-foot tall wall of rocks and trees. The morning sun accentuated the many layers of grey rock topped with brilliant white snow. The image was just as stunning as anything on my Sierra Club wall calendar. There are many special places like this on the M-DT. I'm sure all of you know of a few spots on the M-DT that you treasure and want to preserve.

Jim McCoy and I joined M-DTS about the same time over 20 years ago. We were part of what I consider the second generation of maintainers/officers. The first generation was made up of the people who helped with the creation of the organization and the building of the trail almost 40 years ago. A few of them are still active but Jim Hooper is the only one on the M-DTS board.

One thing these two generations had in common is that they saw the M-DT as a treasure, often a hidden treasure, that was worth dedicating a significant amount of time and effort to preserve.

Most of them started out as a section maintainer; some attended a few board meetings and then, after a little arm twisting, agreed to serve on the board.

Many of you reading this are in what I would consider the third generation. I think the many new section maintainers that have volunteered over the last couple of years indicate that you too see the M-DT as a treasure worth preserving and are already dedicating time and effort towards that end.

The first two generations are getting up there in age and are getting ready to pass the torch. Over the next four years, we will need to replace the Vice President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the President. Trail Maintainers are necessary to keep the trail open but board members are also needed for the planning and coordination to keep the organization running. Both roles are required to preserve this treasure. Please consider attending a board meeting to see what's involved in running the organization. Hopefully, some of you will be willing to take this extra step to preserve this treasure.

Dump Cleanup

The "final" clean up of the dump on the M-DT just south of Fishing Creek is scheduled for Saturday, April 7, 2018. Safe Harbor Dam is supplying a dumpster. Meet at Barry's Country Food Market parking lot, 2589 Craley Rd, Craley, PA at 9 am. Bring work gloves and boots. If you have a four wheel drive vehicle, please bring it since we have to drive across the farmer's field to haul the trash to the dumpster. Please let us know if you are coming by contacting Jim Hooper at j.e.hooper@ieee.org.



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Eastern Terminus Relocated

|| December 13, 2017

On Tuesday, November 14, 2017 Chester County Trail Club member Don Barber, Wilmington Trail Club member Gary Kirk, Brandywine Conservancy & Museum of Art Preserve Manager Kevin Fryberger and Mason-Dixon Trail member Mike Calabrese got the permission agreement signed and moved the easternmost .2 miles of the M-DT from Fairville RD to Conservancy land between the railroad tracks on Fairville RD and US 1 just south of Fairville RD. We are again sharing this stretch with the Brandywine Trail. At right is a picture of the new eastern terminus. We moved the eastern terminus sign, blacked out all the old blazes on Fairville RD and placed blue M-DT blazes below the white Brandywine Trail blazes on the posts, trees and fences on the new stretch.

A few trivia bits about the eastern terminus sign. It has the number 87 carved into the back of it. That was probably the year that Louise Sis and her husband Rick made these signs and placed them at the then M-DT termini at Whiskey Springs and



Ludwig's Corner, PA. These signs are made of salt treated wood and have held up well. We also found a fake wood dymo label on the back of this sign dated 3-20-2002. That may have been when Rick Maerker moved the sign to Fairville RD but it seems a bit late in time. Anyone have any other explanation? The sign made the move OK. However, one of the bolts on the sign rusted through and needs to be replaced.

It was a great day to work on the trail. .2 miles of the M-DT were taken off of roads today. About 65 more to go.

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