



## A LOWLY RODENT CHANGES THE WORLD

**H**iking along the mighty Susquehanna River...I feel the presence of long-ago inhabitants. I trek upon the very footfalls of the once-powerful nation that was dubbed Sisawehak Hanna Len or "Oyster River People". That was one of the names given to the natives of this cliff-shouldered waterway. But, the Lenape tribe, their sworn enemies, called them the "Mengwe". Literal translation: "without penis". Ooh. Burn.

Nevertheless, I bet the Lenape surely didn't call them such a moniker to their very faces as the Susquehannocks were heavily armed with flintlock firearms during the 1600's. The Swedes traded arms for furs and mind you, at this point in time, the Swedes were also a formidable military power.

There was a frenzy of beaver trapping ranging ever-westward as creeks and waterways were slowly being depleted of this much sought-after rodent. Political conflicts swirled in all directions as native and European nations made alliances to satisfy the huge demand for pelts of the largest North American rodent. Most fashionable at the time were beaver hats. What? British gentlemen strolled the streets of London in Davy Crockett headwarmers? Think again.

Here's why beaver pelts suited the millinery industry. Our furry friend has a double layer of fur: the long coarse outer hairs and the short finer inner layer of hair. This inner layer was somehow harvested and felted to make the indomitable top hat. Felt, not raw fur ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaver\\_hat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaver_hat)).

Eventually, the Susquehannocks roundly defeated two of the Iroquois Nations: the Cayuga and Seneca in what history would dub the Beaver Wars. Throw in a few angry French that were allied with the Huron nation and more action ensued all the way up to Canada. It was a wild time in the marshes!



Alas, sadly, by the late 1670's, the Susquehannocks (also called the Conestoga by the British) were being decimated themselves by smallpox. By the 1800's, there were only 300 natives left in the "Susky" river valley. Then the Paxton boys of Chester County massacred nearly the last of them.

So right about then, silk hats took over the fashion scene. Thus, the lowly beaver got a reprieve. It was a close call! It was almost an endangered species. Some states would later re-populate this creature.

Why would they do that? Here we have an animal that weighs generally 45 lbs...but older ones can get up to 100 lbs! They spend their days chewing into the cambium of trees for nutrition. Trees are felled, dams are built, water is deepened so that by winter, the lodges will not be iced

in. Clever little rodents! In addition, these semi-aquatic animals can stay underwater for 15 minutes! They are excellent swimmers; their only danger while in water is from trappers.

*continued on page 2*



## Mason-Dixon Trail Quarterly Hike

Sunday, March 21, 2021 See page 2 for more details

## Beavers *continued*

Most importantly, they are a keystone species. Which means they increase biodiversity. Flooded areas are wildlife havens. Many species are “lentic” which means they need slower water. Salmon and trout thrive in beaver habitat. Frogs, turtles, dragonflies, snail and mussels welcome beaver-engineered ponds. Ranchers out west are encouraging beaver activity to retain water in arid fields. In addition, the dams themselves act as filters for nitrogen and other substances. It’s all too complicated for this writing...entertain yourself with this Vimeo produced by a beaver apologist. (Whose teeth, by the way, rival that of his furry friend. Just sayin’.) ([vimeo.com/498400245](https://vimeo.com/498400245))

So, what about the dreaded “beaver fever”? Beavers have been unjustly accused of spreading giardiasis...but many species

lurking in the woods do also. People can spread it to people! Giardia is a parasite that has caused misery in many outdoors folks who drink unfiltered water. Not right away...give the tiny little pests three or four days to explode exponentially in your GI tract. Suddenly, then more explosions ensue, of the biological variety. Fortunately, giardiasis is treatable. ([www.cdc.gov/parasites/giardia/pathogen.html](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/giardia/pathogen.html))

So as you hike along our abundant creeks and marshes, be on the lookout for raw spikey chewed tree trunks, dams, and if you’re lucky: a lodge. Listen quietly...slap! There he goes. He slithered under water. You just missed a glimpse of the rodent that entangled North America’s earliest settlers and native inhabitants in some wild trap ‘n’ trade wars!



## M-DT Quarterly Hike

**Sunday, March 21, 2021**

**Hike:** 10:00 am

The next hike of the Mason-Dixon Trail System (M-DTS) will be on Sunday, March 21 at 10 am. Parking for the hike will be at the Lock 12 Parking Lot on River Road, 1/4 mile north of Holtwood Rd (PA-372) , Airville, PA (LAT/ LON 39.814553, -76.331322). The parking lot is shown on M-DT Map 5. It’s the lot closest to the square indicating Lock 12’s location. Please bring a face mask for when we’re gathered together. Once the hike starts we should be able to maintain social distancing and dispense with the masks. There will be both short (2-3 mi) and medium (4-5 mi) options. We will drive about a mile from Lock 12 to parking for our hike up Oakland Run. (Contact [president@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:president@mason-dixontrail.org) if you need detailed directions to get to the Lock 12 Parking Lot.) Because of the difficulty in finding a large enough room to accommodate social distancing for the Board Meeting, the meeting will be held at an earlier date via Zoom.

# Trail Maintenance Highlights

## || Winter 2020

- Steps have been popping up all over the Mason-Dixon Trail. Last spring, a set of steps showed up in Principio Business Park about a mile east of Belvidere Road. Then this fall, another set showed up just south of Quarry Road north of Havre de Grace. The next set popped up above Mill Creek Falls in Airville, PA and finally, the longest set of steps appeared near the beginning of the climb up from Fishermens' Park toward US-1. I predict another set will show up above Mill Creek later this year. Some people might like to see steps built into that messy switchback just south of the top of the climb up from Fishing Creek. It would be difficult getting the lumber all the way up there. Texas would have to freeze over first.
- Five new marker posts were installed through Peach Bottom power plant section of the trail. Just north of Conowingo Dam, the bench cut at Policemen's Cove was repaired and the stream crossing washout at Hopkins Cove was fixed.
- The Saw Mill Run bridge near Otter Creek Campgrounds needs to be redecked with rough cut pressure treated 2x6 boards but the source in York County is no longer carrying them. If you know of a source for rough cut pressure treated lumber, please contact Jim Hooper, [james.hooper@att.net](mailto:james.hooper@att.net).
- Lancaster Conservancy has recently acquired 70 acres adjacent to the Hellam Hills Nature Preserve which includes the Buzzards Roost overlook. The conservancy is working with the M-DTS to reroute the Mason-Dixon Trail to the overlook. For more information go to [www.lancasterconservancy.org/news/lancaster-conservancy-protects-70-additional-acres-in-hellam-hills-nature-preserve/](http://www.lancasterconservancy.org/news/lancaster-conservancy-protects-70-additional-acres-in-hellam-hills-nature-preserve/).

## President's Message

According to the CDC website, activities are safer if you can maintain at least 6 feet of space between you and others, the activities are held in outdoor spaces and people are wearing masks. So, as long as everyone follows these guidelines, we should be able to have a safe (and enjoyable) hike.

Having the quarterly meeting is a different issue. March is often windy and cold, so the Board considered reserving a large meeting room but the rooms we've used in the past are not available due to COVID-19 restrictions and most of them wouldn't accommodate social distancing anyway. So, we decided to hold the board

meeting via Zoom a few weeks before the hike.

Based on the continued increase in trail use, map sales and new memberships, a lot of people have been following the CDC guidance. I hope some of these new members will join us on our Sunday, March 21, hike along Oakland Run. I also hope that for our June Board Meeting we can reserve a picnic pavilion, so that these new members can join us for the Board Meeting, where they can get a better idea of what's required to keep the Mason-Dixon Trail open and how they could help us do that.

## MASON-DIXON TRAIL SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

### President

Tim Schmidt  
1803 Orwig Rd., New Freedom, PA 17349  
(717) 235-5940  
[president@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:president@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Vice President

Volunteer Needed  
[vicepresident@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:vicepresident@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Secretaries

Ruthie Franczek & Linda Lambert  
[secretary@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:secretary@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Treasurer

Volunteer Needed  
[treasurer@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:treasurer@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Director - Pennsylvania

Jim Hooper  
[padirector@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:padirector@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Director - Maryland

Mike Hall  
[mddirector@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:mddirector@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Director - Delaware

Mike Ott  
[dedirector@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:dedirector@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Trail Coordinator - Western Section

Roxanne Strine  
[westerncoordinator@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:westerncoordinator@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Trail Coordinator - Central Section

Mike Hall  
[centralcoordinator@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:centralcoordinator@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Trail Coordinator - Eastern Section

Pete McLaughlin  
[easterncoordinator@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:easterncoordinator@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Newsletter

Tony Nardi  
[newsletter@mason-dixontrail.org](mailto:newsletter@mason-dixontrail.org)

### Website Coordinator

John Beatty  
[jbeatty@gmail.com](mailto:jbeatty@gmail.com)



## MASON-DIXON TRAIL SYSTEM

Tim Schmidt  
1803 Orwig Road  
New Freedom, PA 17349



**Our blazes are Sky Blue and can be easily spotted from a distance. Depending on the location, you may see them as plastic blazes or round emblems.**

**Because we are a system of trails, we often share our path with another trail belonging to a local, county or state park. This means that you may see another color next to ours, such as Red in the Broad Creek area of Maryland. In other places our trail passes through State Game Lands or private property. We appreciate that hikers who visit our trail system have a passion to help us keep the trails beautiful and litter-free.**

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 \$24 (which covers initial membership as well as the M-DT maps) to:

**Mason-Dixon Trail System, Tim Schmidt, 1803 Orwig Road, New Freedom, PA 17349**

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

**Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail web site at: [www.mason-dixontrail.org](http://www.mason-dixontrail.org)**

**Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/theMDTS](https://www.facebook.com/theMDTS)**

# M-DTS Board and Members Meeting

## Minutes of November 8, 2020

The meeting at the York Hiking Club cabin in Airville, PA was called to order at 1:00 pm by President Tim Schmidt. Also present were Mike Ott, Jim Hooper, Rob Campbell, Maureen Campbell, Maurice Tippet, and Linda Lambert.

### SECRETARY'S REPORT

The minutes of the 9/13/20 meeting were approved with the note that Rob Campbell was also in attendance at that meeting.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report was reviewed and approved as submitted.

Tim explained that due to unexpected circumstances, Stacey Kingsbury was forced to resign from the Treasurer position. Tim will continue to serve until the position is filled.

The Treasurer's Report for the 3rd Quarter of 2020 was reviewed and approved.

### MEMBERSHIP

No updated report was given. Tim advised Linda that the next steps to updating the Membership List are to review/correct invalid or outdated email addresses and to complete the end-of-year purge of the list (remove anyone who is not a Lifetime Member, a Maintainer, or who has not made a financial contribution in the last three years.)

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

■ **Clothing** — Rob Campbell advised of the current clothing inventory and last quarter's sales.

PRODUCT	SIZE	INVENTORY	SOLD LAST QUARTER
Caps		16	1
T-Shirts (logo on front/ map on back)	S	1	10 (total, sizes not given)
	M	4	
	L	12	
	XL	12	
	XXL	3	
T-Shirts (map on front/ logo on sleeve)	S	2	2 (total, sizes not given)
	M	5	
	L	9	
	XL	2	
	XXL	0	
Patches		20	

#### ■ Maps —

- Extra 2016 maps were distributed as well as 2020 map proofs
- Map Sales for Q3 were reported: 76 sets + 24 to new members for a total of 100 maps sold
- Discussed changes needed for 2020 maps
  - Remove the history notes to allow trail descriptions to be in larger font
  - Consider a separate trail booklet to accompany the maps
  - Should Trail Coordinators have some map sets on hand to give to Maintainers?
  - Discussion of whether 2020 maps should be sold on Avenza

■ **Website** — No progress made on pending projects: combining map updates with trail status reports, combining camping and lodging lists, having web content files backed up on Google Drive. Volunteer needed to help with Facebook postings.

### TRAIL REPORTS

■ **Razor Strap Road to US 40 Pedestrian Crossing at MD 272** — No progress.

■ **Vulcan Quarry** — Plans and specifications have been approved, but no construction is expected in 2020.

■ **Hellam Hills Phase 3** — Pending Liability Agreement with Lancaster County Conservancy.

### NEXT MEETING

In consideration of social distancing/ indoor meetings, the next business meeting will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, February 24th at 7:00 pm.

The companion hike will be at Oakland Run on Sunday, March 21st at 10:00 am. Meeting is at the Lock 12 parking area.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.