

What's up? Otter Creek, that's what! And I mean way up!

Mother Nature

Total Washout at Otter Creek

On August 31st, an intense storm front descended upon York County, east of Red Lion. This happens to be the headwaters of Otter Creek. You wouldn't think such a focused area of rainfall would wreak such havoc upon a shallow scenic creek that bubbles its way along a ravine, surrounded by hiking trails and fishing camps. What happened next was fast and furious.

The water surged down the creek basin carrying two travel trailers...yes that's a trailer bed...two houses, ATVs, a pick up truck and plenty of other items from the fishing camps. Trees were damaged as logs and all kinds of debris rolled through the raging waters, leaving torn branches and scarred bark.

Imagine if you were hiking down to the creek only to watch something crash into this tree twenty feet up!

Finally, the water receded. What was left was...well...let's just say you're faced with hiking through a junkyard.

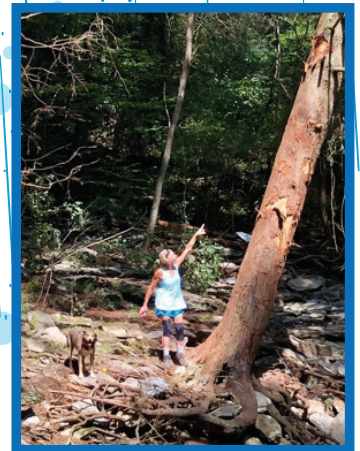
The trail adjacent to the creek is now completely blanketed with a layer of fine silt...it's actually inviting; soft with tree roots covered. But the debris is monumental.

TRAIL MAINTAINERS TO THE RESCUE!

An earnest group gathered to begin the massive clean-up of the lower two miles of Otter Creek within two days of the flood. Tom Morley, Todd Trimmer and Dave Strine chainsawed with a vengeance. More Mason-Dixon Trail maintainers gathered and went to work. There have been 2 or 3 worktrips a week since then.

We are going to need a lot more work hours dedicated to bringing our beautiful trail back to its halcyon splendor. Thursdays are typically workdays for anyone...and I mean anyone...who would like to see Otter Creek back to normal. There will most likely be weekend work parties scheduled as well. Contact Tim Schmidt, wanderfool@comcast.net, for more information

Until then.....here we are: the trail is open and passable but the footing will be more difficult because of sand washed onto the trail or bare rocks where the trail bed was washed away. The trail in these sections will be marked with orange flagging tape until it has been rebuilt at which point it will be reblazed.



Mason-Dixon Trail Quarterly Hike and Meeting

Sunday, November 4, 2018 *See page 2 for more details*

Trail Maintenance Highlights

|| July – September 2018

WESTERN SECTION

- Trail building was completed on Phase 1b of Hellam Hills Nature Preserve in July. Switchbacks were built above Dugan Run moving the trail from a steep climb up logging roads to a more gradual climb closer to the Run which then connected to the existing trail.
- In August, preparations began for the Keystone Trails Association (KTA) Trail Challenge, a 50/25K trail run/hike that includes about 23K (14.5) mi on the M-DT. Due to all the rain this summer, there was more growth than normal which required a lot more weed whacking and lopping. There were also more blowdowns than normal even though there wasn't much wind. The trail was in excellent shape and then....
- On Friday, August 31, Mother Nature rained on our parade. The flash floods caused devastation along Otter Creek and the KTA canceled the last 10K of the Trail Challenge. All of September was spent working on cleanup, repair and relocation of the M-DT along Otter Creek. There have been 12 separate worktrips involving 20 different people, most of whom have been on multiple trips, working a total of 143 hours...so far. And there's a lot more work that needs to be done.

CENTRAL SECTION

- The central section of the M-DT experienced an unprecedented amount of rainfall this summer. One of the rain storms produced a flash flood that completely washed out the pedestrian bridge at Glen Cove. Exelon is currently working on a plan to replace the missing bridge. In the meantime, a detour route has been established to guide hikers around the missing bridge. Follow the round blue trail markers along Glen Cove Road and River Road.

- Also, a result of the seemingly continuous rain, mother nature did her best to overgrow portions of the trail that had been previously trimmed back this spring. Thankfully Rob and Cathy Bartholomew took it upon themselves to keep the central section trail neat and tidy by trimming and weed whacking on a weekly basis. Without their efforts sections of the trail would have severely overgrown, making passage more difficult than anyone would like.
- The current condition of the central section is well groomed and freshly blazed, ready for your next hiking and trail running adventures. Enjoy!

EASTERN SECTION

- One of the major improvements in the eastern section has been the establishment of a new route for the M-DT through the Perryville Community Park. After scenic vistas of the upper Chesapeake Bay on a paved route along the west and south sides of the park, the trail passes onto a peaceful wooded stream-side dirt trail on the east side of the park, with the new path thanks to M-DT work parties led by Mike Hall and Rob and Cathy Bartholomew.
- In the eastern section, the M-DT continues to benefit from the trail-work efforts of local park and trail clubs. Work parties in the last quarter by volunteers from the Wilmington Trail Club in City of Newark lands and the Friends of White Clay Creek Preserve keep the trail passable. In addition, M-DT volunteers have trimmed trail sections in the Newark area of Delaware and the Principio area in Cecil County, MD.
- Nick Brock has been keeping the Principio Business Park section open with almost weekly trips of light maintenance.

M-DT Quarterly Hike and Meeting

The next board meeting of the Mason-Dixon Trail System will be held on Sunday, November 4, 12:30 pm at the Conowingo Dam Visitors Center, 4948 Conowingo Rd (US Rt 1), Darlington, MD. The hike will leave from the Visitors Center at 9:00 am. There will be a 5 to 6-mile hike on the M-DT from Glen Cove Marina to Fisherman's Park with an option to only walk about half the distance. Bring snacks/lunch and water. The 5 to 6-milers may not return to the Visitors Center much before the meeting.



Hike and Meeting

Sunday, November 4, 2018

Hike: 9:00 am

Meeting: 12:30 pm

President's Message

On Friday afternoon, August 31, severe thunderstorms deluged the eastern side of York County, Pennsylvania. There was severe flooding in 3 of the streams along which the M-DT travels: Dugan Run, Otter Creek and Muddy Creek. The flooding along Otter Creek (described in the cover article) was the worst. The creek is now about twice as wide as it was on the 30th and both side of the creek are covered with downed trees, parts of destroyed houses and other debris up to 20 vertical feet above the creek. I was with Dave Strine when I first saw the devastation. He said he hadn't seen anything this bad since he and his wife, Roxanne, worked on recovery efforts after Katrina. I was afraid the trail along the creek was done for.

That sounds pretty depressing but there's a silver lining to this very dark cloud. Within a week, there was a passable route between Kline Road and Otter Creek Campground that detoured around a half mile of the worst damage along the creek. Within 3 weeks, the trail was reopened along the whole 2016 Map 4 route through Otter Creek Gorge. There are still sections where the footing is more difficult because of bare rocks where the trail bed was washed away. A new weekly work crew is meeting on Tuesday mornings to relocate the trail around these sections. If you're interested in information on the Tuesday crew, contact me at president@mason-dixontrail.org.

One thing I've learned about trail maintainers over the years is that, just like everyone else, they notice Mother Nature's beauty while they're hiking but they also notice all the human work that was done to build and maintain the trail. From now on when I'm hiking along Otter Creek, I know I will see all the damage and remember the magnificent gorge as it was but instead of letting that get me down, I will have to look at it through a maintainer's eye and imagine how much better it looks than when I first saw the destruction and focus on the dedication and all the work that went into restoring it to its present state. On behalf of everyone who will hike the M-DT through Otter Creek Gorge in the future, I want to sincerely thank all the people that have already worked on restoring the trail and also thank all those who will help in the future.

HELP WANTED

The Mason-Dixon Trail System will be in need of a Treasurer in 2019. The primary responsibilities are to maintain financial records (income & expenditures) in the MDTS Balance Sheet, an Excel spreadsheet, to deposit cash and checks in the checking account and to reconcile the spreadsheet balance with the bank's monthly statement. The Treasurer also prepares a report for the quarterly meetings and submits an annual IRS Form 1099-N. Basic experience in Microsoft Excel is required.

If you've been thinking about how you can support the Mason-Dixon Trail, please consider this position. Board members availability, including the Treasurer's, are considered in scheduling the quarterly meetings. If you're interested or you'd like some more information or you have some suggestions, please email president@mason-dixontrail.org.

MASON-DIXON TRAIL SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

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The M-DT Challenge

On Saturday, November 10, 2018, the Mason-Dixon Trail Challenge will start 8am at Glen Cove Marina, 3801 Berkley Rd, Darlington, MD 21034. Sign-in is at 7:30 for this 7-miles out-and-back on the Mason-Dixon Trail from Glen Cove Marina (39.671804, -76.203290) to Broad Creek Boat Launch (39.694977, -76.241065). The course will not be marked other than with the blue trail blazes that mark the Mason-Dixon Trail. Participants will be required to navigate the course by following these trail blazes. Participants need to know the trail blazes symbols for a Left Turn, Right Turn and Straight. The trail will be cleared and well blazed.

Preregister at ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=60139 or register at the 7:30 sign-in on event day. Limit 75 participants. There will be raffle drawing at 10:30 and the finish line closes at 11:30. The event is FREE but for a donation of \$3 you will receive a draw string bag with the event logo printed on it. Heated bathrooms with hot and cold running water are onsite. More information is available at www.mason-dixontrail.org.



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