



Turtle Tracks



Official Newsletter of the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association

Volume 14, Issue 2

President's Message

Hi Everyone, I want to thank all of the members for attending our annual meeting. It is always fun catching up with friends we have not seen in awhile. It was great to meet the new attendees and hear about their interest in the trail.

With multiple events occurring on the trail this year, the trail will see even more exposure than normal, so I sure hope the weather cooperates and everyone can enjoy themselves.

We have several projects that are nearing completion. The water cache boxes have arrived and will be installed along the trail early this season. We are going to update and refresh our website this year. We have made progress with an administrative issue with the IRS, which should be complete by the end of May. Thank you all for responding so quickly, voting for the change in our articles of incorporation.

We are continuing to work with the USFS on accomplishing trail maintenance without

them hiring a trail crew again this season. Please it is more important than ever; as you use the trail this season, keep an eye out for trouble spots, and post to our Facebook page. It is a great "real time" way to get information out to other users. Post your pictures, weather and your experiences, while on the trail, it is a great way to share the trail with others. Consider joining our new Trail Scout Program (for more information, see page 3), a great way to give something back.

I hope that everyone is ready to get out and enjoy the trail system this year, so have a great season, and we hope to hear from you soon!

Don Mayer President

See you at the Grand Opening!

Inside this issue:

<i>Grand Opening</i>	2
<i>Call for Volunteers</i>	3
<i>Water Cache Box Update</i>	3
<i>Trail Scout Program</i>	3
<i>Above & Beyond</i>	4
<i>Knutson Creek Crossing</i>	6
<i>Trail News</i>	6
<i>Grant Funding</i>	7
<i>Membership Recognition</i>	7
<i>Dates to Remember</i>	8

Special points of interest:

- *Maah Daah Hey* means "Has been and will be around for a long time," or "Grandfather."
- MDHT Grand Opening June 7-14, 2014

Maah Daah Hey Trail System Grand Opening, June 7-14, 2014

by Randy Snyder, MDHTA Member & Grand Opening Representative

The completion of the Deuce/MDHTII to the Burning Coal Vein campground will provide an opportunity to celebrate the entire Maah Daah Hey Trail System. A Maah Daah Hey Trail Grand Opening is scheduled for June 7-14, 2014. Festivities will begin at 11:00 on the 7th with introductions, remarks and a ribbon cutting. Lunch will follow at noon and then there will be activities until 3:00. MDHTA members who provided their email addresses when they renewed their membership should watch their email for more information about Grand Opening events. Activities during the week will include some family day

events, a photo contest, hikes, perhaps some competitive bike and run events, some educational speakers, work projects, etc. The Opening event will be held at Sully Creek State Park and events during the week will take place on various areas of the Maah Daah Hey Trail and end with the Medora Flag Day parade on the 14th. All MDHT founders, MDHT Association life-time members, MDHT Association members, past MDHTA officers and all trail users and enthusiasts are invited. Please feel free to invite family, friends and neighbors to this celebration. Come and celebrate one of North Dakota's premiere attractions!

Grand Opening Maah Daah Hey Trail System Ribbon Cutting Agenda

June 7, 2014

Location: Sully Creek State Park/Trailhead for MDH Trail

Time: 11am—3pm

Welcome

Introduction of Guests

History

Speakers:

U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell—tentative

Regional Forester Faye Krueger

Governor Jack Dalrymple—tentative

Gerard Baker, Mandan-Hidatsa, retired National Park Service Superintendent

Delegation

Grasslands Supervisor Dennis Neitzke

Special Award Presentation

Ribbon Cutting

Blessing

Thank you

Lunch/Activities—sponsored in part by MDHTA and ND Tourism

Volunteers for MDHT Grand Opening Wanted

by Babete Anderson, Public Affairs Officer, Dakota Prairie Grasslands

The Maah Daah Hey Trail System Grand Opening event is just around the corner and we need your help. The ribbon cutting ceremony will be held at the Sully Creek State Park south of Medora on June 7, 2014 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. The USDA Forest Service Dakota Prairie Grassland in partnership with the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association, North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department and the North Dakota Tourism are planning several activities that day and throughout the week, concluding with the Flag Day Parade on June 14 in Medora.

We are looking for volunteers on the June 7 to set up, parking attendants, setting up tents for the caterer and others, assist others with their booths, cleanup patrols and of course taking things down and final clean up. There are also needs, if you prefer, to help throughout the week with the interpretive walks, trail work or the parade. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Babete Anderson at 701-989-7302.

Water Cache Box Update

by Bruce Bishop, MDHTA Director

After the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association received permission to locate water cache boxes at various places along the trail and obtained the money by purchase water cache boxes, at a board meeting we discussed places to put these boxes. Based on recommendations from Don Mayer and Curt Glasoe, MDHTA and Forest Service staff decided to place boxes at the Third Creek trailhead, Tom's Wash Trailhead, Plumly Draw Trailhead, Bear Creek Trailhead, near the Maah Daah Hey Trail and Forest Service road 722 and near the intersection of the MDH Trail and Forest Service road 808 (just off of Highway 50 – Biecegel Creek Road.).

April 10th, I met Greg Morel from the Dakota Prairie Grasslands at the grasslands office in

Dickinson. Greg and I then drove out to the approved locations on the MDH Trail and looked for specific sites to place the boxes. The main criteria used were (1) we wanted the boxes to be somewhat hidden from the road by sagebrush, buck brush or some kind of vegetation; (2) the boxes are visible from the trail and not be too far from the trailhead or road; and (3) would be close enough to carry the boxes (they weigh 200 pounds each). Greg had some excellent ideas. The locations have been flagged and now all that is needed is a little cooperation from Mother Nature. It was a great day, the weather cooperated and we saw some beautiful country.

The Maah Daah Hey Trail Association Needs You!

Join our Trail Scout Program



Are you now riding the Maah Daah Hey Trail? Please consider giving back by becoming a Trail Scout Volunteer. Trail Scouts locate and identify trouble areas along the Maah Daah Hey Trail System. Trail Scouts will repair minor problems, and log other areas for major work. Trail Scouts will receive training, jerseys, and tools. Contact Don Mayer, MDHTA President 701-290-5434

Above and Beyond the Call of Duty on the MDHT

Nick Ybarra hosts the annual Maah Daah Hey 100 Mountain Bike Race, and rides his bike on the trail multiple times a week in the summer time. He is extremely passionate about the Maah Daah Hey and wants to see the trail be the best that it can be. But last year the Badlands of western ND got an unusually high amount of precipitation and many parts of the Maah Daah Hey trail were severely



overgrown. In some parts the vegetation was five feet tall or more! Trail users were having to bushwhack their way around and were missing turns on parts of the trail that used to be easy to follow. Nick said, all he could think was "if I had traveled from out of state or even out of country to come ride the famous Maah Daah Hey Trail and I found it in this kind of condition I would never come back and I would tell all of mountain biking buddies to not bother traveling to ride that trail!" The problem for bikers & hikers is that the tall grass beats up their legs so bad that after a few miles of the sharp blades constantly cutting the front of their shins they just don't want to continue on, and if they do it is very painful. Plus it takes them two or three times longer to get to where they are going on the trail in those conditions.

Due to unfortunate circumstances the Forest Service had no trail crew to do any trail maintenance for the 2013 season. Nick knew that if he didn't do something about the trail's condition there was no way that anyone could finish, or even enjoy, the 2013 Maah Daah Hey 100 Race. So he partnered with Jen and Loren Morlock of Dakota Cyclery and together they volunteered to mow and

do basic maintenance on the trail. The Morlocks signed a volunteer agreement with the Forest Service and took out liability insurance for the huge undertaking. Without that volunteer agreement and insurance no volunteers would have, legally, been allowed to do any of the much needed maintenance on the trail. The Forest Service lent the volunteers two big DR brush mowers and a nine hand tools. Two separate bike clubs in Bismarck also lent a couple brush mowers, and more importantly some much needed manpower. Jen and Loren personally mowed a few miles on the south end of the trail. While about a dozen other passionate mountain bikers pitched in to take on the rest of the 97 or so miles of trail on the Buffalo Gap, Long X, and Maah Daah Hey trails.

At best, one mower can only travel about three miles per hour on the most ideal parts of the trail and each mower can only cut the grass on one side of the trail at a time. If you are good at math you know that means about 200 miles of mowing and 600 hours of man power to complete the whole trail. That's not including trimming overhanging branches, moving downed trees and the areas where shovel work was needed to fix broken switchbacks, landslides and washouts!

Nick took a full three weeks off of his full-time job and went to work on the overgrown and under maintained trail. In that time he managed to organize over 600 volunteer man hours and put about 3,000 miles on his truck hauling brush mowers, weed whackers, shovels, and people around on the twisty rugged red scoria



(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

oil field roads that lead to the campsites and intersections on the Maah Daah Hey. Nick had to pre ride and scout each section of trail before going in to mow it to make sure that the brush mowers



could make it through that sections unique obstacles.

At one point in the ordeal it took six strong guys to lift two of the 350 pound brush mowers down and up a massive washout on the trail by mile marker 78. On that same day it took those six guys, two brush mowers, and two weed whackers 13 hours to mow and trim 10 miles of unruly trail between



County Road 50 and the China Wall. In some places the trail was completely gone and the weed whackers had to cut through the grass all the way down to the dirt to reclaim the lost sections of trail. Nick said, "I was more tired after those 10 miles of

trail work than I was after riding the whole trail end to end in 19 hours!" Luckily most mountain bikers will do just about anything for an ice cold PBR, so Nick kept a few in the cooler at all times for motivational purposes.

The Forest Service said that no maintenance work had been done on the Long X Trail whatsoever in about four years, and it showed. The volunteers were able to fix up the entire Long X Trail into riding condition in about four or five days. Nick and his dad also



did some volunteer work on a broken black gate that needed to be welded back together on the Buffalo Gap Trail after the whole trail had been mowed.

Long story short, in three weeks time the whole Maah Daah Hey got mowed and trimmed, except for the sections in the TRNP, the five miles from CCC to the Long X Trail intersection, and about 5 miles in the middle that were too badly overgrown and/or washed out to get the mowers in there. The Forest Service is supposed to be getting a trail crew for the 2014 summer, and hopefully they are able to resurrect those lost miles and keep the rest of the trail in tip top shape for the 2014 trail users.

Bottom line the Maah Daah Hey is a very high maintenance trail and it will always take both the USFS and passionate trail users to keep it in good shape, 2013 was the year a hand full of mountain bikers volunteered to save the Maah Daah Hey trail from near extinction. Nick says, "looking back now it almost doesn't even seem possible, but against all odds we did it!"

Knutson Creek Crossing

By Roger Ashley, MDHTA Treasurer

Knutson Creek on the Maah Daah Hey Trail located within the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park provides some real challenges to horseback riders and hikers in crossing.

During a good part of the year Knutson Creek is low and slow meandering through the badland on its way to the Little Missouri. During early spring and after summer storms this creek will overflow its banks. Except when frozen, deep mud is a serious safety issue and has been one of MDHTA's goals to promote a solution for the improvement of the crossing that would be appropriate in this wilderness designated area.

During the 2013 MDHTA Annual Meeting in Bismarck TRNP Superintendent Valerie Naylor indicated NPS was working to find an acceptable solution for the crossing after other attempts at relocating the trail had failed. At the 2014 MDHTA



Annual Meeting held last month Superintendent Naylor and TRNP South Unit District Ranger Grant Geis announced the improvement will be made towards the end of the summer. A bridge will be designed and built for the crossing. District Ranger Geis said the bridge will first be built at the park headquarters then

disassembled and hauled in by human power or horse/mule train and reassembled at the crossing.

Grant said TRNP does not have horses or mules to haul the bridge to its final assembly area but would be glad to accept MDHTA's help in putting the horse/mule

train together. Don Mayer is coordinating this part of the effort. If members or nonmembers want to participate in moving the bridge parts please contact him at westernsg@hotmail.com. Grant believes the bridge will be ready to move in July or August.

More News from the Trail

Trail system plans for 2014:

Campgrounds

BUFFALO GAP - Repair water system, widen host site pad.

COAL CREEK - Finish up installing fire rings, curb stops, solar water system, and picnic tables.

BURNING COAL VEIN - Trailhead surfacing and trails under existing contract complete this summer.

Trails

MDHII (THE DEUCE) - Finish existing surfacing contract (4 miles) from Dantz to Bear creek -

Prepare new contract from Bear creek south to Tom's wash (4 miles surfacing). Surface 4+ more miles from Tom's Wash east to Third creek.

MDH - Relocate 1 mile in Ellison Creek area; Complete low water crossings on Knutson creek, Wannagon creek, and Roosevelt creek.

COTTONWOOD - Repair slump, slides on trail.

New trail projects –

LONG X, BENNETT, AND MDH (mile posts 75-80) - will all be worked this year with grant funds to repair slumps, washouts, etc.

WOLF TRAIL extension to south and west around North Unit Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Funding for MDHTA Trail Administrator Sought

By Rod Mitzel, MDHTA Board Member

In addition to developing and overseeing MDHTA goals and objectives, the board has been also doing the day to day activities of the association such as answering emails, phone calls and letters about the trail. Also board members assist with organizing Trails Day activities, writing grant applications, and completing necessary paperwork required to maintain the organization. You may have noticed at times that we struggle to get things done. All of this has been done on a volunteer basis.

With this in mind in November 2013 the MDHTA Board approved the process to request a grant from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund (NDOHF) for a Trail's Administrator.

North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund (NDOHF) was created by the Legislature to address conservation, recreation and agricultural needs around the state using oil and gas production taxes up to \$30 million per biennium. The board felt that the MDHTA met both Directive A & B of the grant.

MDHTA requested the grant funds to hire a Trail Administrator for the MDHTA. The \$286,600.00 would have been used to develop the Trails Administrator position, pay the salary, benefits, mileage etc. for 5 years. The duties of the Trail Administrator would include but not limited to (1) scouting the trails; (2) identifying trouble areas

that require minor or major repairs or maintenance of the trail; (3) organize the repair of minor or major repairs or maintenance; (4) update the MDHT website as to present conditions of the trail; (5) answer all website, Facebook, and telephone calls regarding the MDHT; (6) develop and maintain a liaison relationship with all trail use organizations i.e. bikers, runners, hikers, horse trail riders etc.; (7) write grants for the upkeep and maintenance of the trail; and (8) expand the membership.

The grant application was completed in December 2013. On January 13, 2014 President Don Mayer and Director Rodney Mitzel attended the NDOHF Advisory Board Meeting. Don gave a presentation about MDHTA grant request and answered questions from the Board.

In March 2014 MDHTA received written notification that the NDOHF Board adopted changes as to what projects are ineligible for funding and that included "staffing." Thus the MDHTA grant application was denied.

This was discouraging but MDHTA hopes that another grant might be available in the future. Also MDHTA could consider a summer position for a college student who has interests in the outdoors.

Membership Recognition—Thank You!

Life Members:

Ken Eberts
Curt & Carol Glasoe
Dale & Jennifer Heglund
Mark Liebig
Ron & Aileen Luethe
Don & Susan Mayer
Brian Selland
Dwight & Loa Tober

Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation
Glennys Ulschak
Nick & Lindsey Ybarra

Mile Marker:

Charles & Sandra Peterson

Trail Boss:

Doug Bolken
Stephen & Janet Wieser
McKenzie County Tourism

Founding:

Curtis Alkire
Glen Bruhschwein
Dave DeSautel
Dickinson Convention & Visitors Center
Kelly Krohn
The Printer Inc.
Robert Stein
Larry & Freida Tebelius

**Maah Daah Hey Trail
Association**

PO Box 156
Bismarck, ND 58502

E-mail: info@mdhta.com

We're on the Web!
mdhta.com



**MAAH DAAH HEY TRAIL ASSOCIATION
Officers and Board of Directors**

President—Don Mayer

VP —

Secretary— Bruce Bishop

Treasurer—Roger Ashley

Director—Rod Mitzel

Director—Nick Ybarra

Dates to Remember

June 7-14, 2014	MDHTA Grand Opening Celebration
August 2, 2014	Maah Daah Hey 100
August 9, 2014	Badlands 50/50
October 2014	Extreme North Dakota Adventure Race (END-AR)

The Maah Daah Hey Trail Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing and maintaining a linear, non-motorized, sustainable, recreational trail system in southwest North Dakota, through voluntary and public involvement, and in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service.