



Turtle Tracks



Official Newsletter of the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association

Volume 24 Issue 2

President's Message

Hello to trail users:

Hey, the weather has turned to moisture of a different form, rain and lots of it this spring, the Badlands and surrounding country are really green, and the wildflowers are in abundance, more than usual from my memory.

First, a big **thank you** to all the **members** that showed up to make our Annual Meeting at the Eagles Club in Dickinson a very successful evening. Thanks to the Eagles for putting on a good meal and newly remodeled surroundings. Many great updates were presented by individuals and groups that make the MDH trail system operational and open for the season. The new or existing Board members elected at the meeting were Shannon Straight, Glee Mayer, and Curtis Glasoe for three-year terms. The silent auction raised over \$700 and some 42 hardy trail users attended the meeting. **THANK YOU**

The MDH mission to **promote and maintain the MDH trail system is alive and well**. Your support is really appreciated and makes our job easier to do. We also had one new member at the Founding level, Shawn Casey, and two at the Trail Boss level, Eric Lane and Brent Ravnass.

Projects we are working on as we speak, the **Forest Service** purchased the oak wood signs for the 2023 Coal Creek trail project to direct traffic on the new Coal Creek loop trail out of the camp. Good idea to get out and try out this new loop, a short, surfaced trail good in any weather especially rain. The **Highpointers Foundation** purchased the kiosk and signs, then Roger Ashley and I got them up for White Butte, the highest point in ND. Just one more puncheon to install and the trail to White Butte should be in the fully sustainable category. Thanks to all who supplied materials, labor, and access

for these projects. We also started on the 2024 restoration and surfacing project from the National Park boundary 3 miles south to the completed restoration south of the new TR library, west of the amphitheater. We were fortunate to get Western Sand and Gravel back as the successful bidder for this RTP project. They have a good start on the project and should finish in the next month or so.

The **MDH TRAIL Brochure** from The Printers, Inc. in Bismarck, is out and we are through our first 800 of them. Again, if you encounter **problems** on the Trail, don't keep them to yourself, please relay that information to the Forest Service, our MDH Facebook page, or one of our Board members, along with a milepost or GPS location of the problem, a picture will help also in the planning to fix these spots. Also look for any self-closing gates that are in tough condition. We have a maintenance plan now to handle gate repairs with the FS.

Some **guided hikes** during the field season are being planned and hosted by MDHTA members. Stay tuned for a neat way to use the MDH trail and see the badlands from that aspect.

We just received donations from the **Burke Family Fund** to purchase the materials to install trailhead hitching rails at all the trailheads on the MDH Trail. There are 20 trailheads along the MDH trail system., The FS has located the first five locations on the southern end of the MDH from BCV camp north to Plumely Draw. Now to get the materials purchased and put in place **Many Thanks** to them.

Hope to see you on the trail this summer and enjoy the trail system. Plan your 2024 trip to the **MAAH DAAH HEY Trail and don't forget the sunscreen and water!!**

Happy Trails.

Curtis W. Glasoe, President,
MDHTA

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Point of Interest:

- *Erosional pipes in the badlands form in gullies and ravines and may be 10 to 15 deep. The tops can be partially concealed with skeletons of trapped animals found at the bottom.*

Forest Service Update

by Alex Manard, DPG Recreation Program Manager

Since the commencement of the recreation season, significant developments have occurred within the Dakota Prairie Grasslands Recreation Program, marking a pivotal moment in its staffing landscape.

I stepped in as an interim replacement for Rob Schilling in October 2023. Following a successful interview process, I officially began my permanent tenure on May 19th, 2024.

The Forest Service welcomed Jeff Davis as the new Trail Manager for the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. Davis, previously with the Enoree Ranger District of the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina, brings over 25 years of experience in various facets of recreation program management. His expertise in trail sustainability, maintenance, and construction will be invaluable to the ongoing efforts of the Grasslands.

Moreover, the Forest Service has introduced a permanent seasonal program aimed at transforming temporary positions into permanent roles. This initiative seeks to bolster continuity and efficiency by hiring seasonal employees on a permanent basis. The Dakota Prairie Grasslands has successfully filled two permanent seasonal positions—one on the Medora Ranger District and another on the McKenzie Ranger District.

The recent staffing updates underscore the program's commitment to operational excellence and service continuity within the Dakota Prairie Grasslands.

Progress on Maah Daah Hey Trail Maintenance and Reroutes

The Maah Daah Hey Trail, a vital route through the rugged landscapes of Little Missouri National Grassland, has seen significant maintenance and rerouting efforts this season, aimed at enhancing trail sustainability and user experience.

One of the major undertakings involved addressing a substantial slump near the Cottonwood and Bennett area of the trail. Initially reported to the Forest Service by a permitted Outfitter and Guide early in the season, the slump spanned approximately three-quarters of a mile. To tackle this challenge, the Forest Service enlisted the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC), who arrived on June 4th, 2024, and immediately commenced work the following day.

Over a nine-day period, the MCC dedicated extensive hours to rehabilitate and stabilize the affected trail section, successfully resolving the slumped area. Their efforts have been instrumental in ensuring the trail's integrity and usability, garnering appreciation from trail users and conservationists alike.

Another significant project underway is the Bear Creek temporary reroute, spanning from Mile Post 19.5 to 19.75. In collaboration with the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, the Forest Service utilized a mechanized trail dozer to expedite the construction of the

rerouted trail tread within a single day. Despite the trail segment remaining under closure for further enhancements—such as relocating a self-closing gate, restoring the trail to a single-track standard, and constructing a bridge over the creek—the initial progress sets a promising pace for completion by the season's end.

This season, our primary focus remains on completing comprehensive trail condition surveys. These surveys are crucial in identifying priority areas for trail rehabilitation, ensuring exceptional experiences for all trail users.

The ongoing efforts reflect the Forest Service's commitment to maintaining the Maah Daah Hey Trail's quality and sustainability, reinforcing its role as a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts seeking adventure amidst North Dakota's scenic beauty.



Bear Creek Reroute. Photo by Alex Manard



Bear Creek Reroute. Photo by Alex Manard

Membership Recognition—Thank You!

Life Members:

Curtis Alkire
Bethany & Levi Andrist
Roger & Pat Ashley
Sandy Baertsch
Bahne, Kay, Charlie & Anna Bahnson
Gerard & Mary Kay Baker
Glenn & Jolene Baranko
Brittney Barnett & Daniel Dwyer
Bruce & Roberta Bishop
Chad & Emily Mitzel Brackelsberg
Bev Brierley
Richard & Lori Brierley
Doug & Kathryn Burgum
Adam & Barbra Curtis
Tom & Sherri Dickson
Kenneth & Norma Eberts
Kathy & Matt Fischer Valan
Stephen & Barbara Fix
Fraternal Order of Eagles Dickinson
Curt & Carol Glasoe
Matthew, Carter & Chase Glasoe
Greg and Michele Gunderson
Jesse Hanson & Lisa Kudelka
Ron & Sheila Hartl
Dale & Jennifer Heglund
Heidi Heitkamp & Darwin Lange
Earl Hill
William Hoeg
Dr. Tim & Amy Juelson
Ryan & Jo Marie Kadrmas
Christa Kron
Mike & Chandra Langseth
Mark Liebig
Ron Luethe
Noe Mateo, M.D.
Don & Susan Mayer
Medora Convention & Visitors Bureau
Rodney & Carolyn Mitzel
John R. Olson
Linda Pancratz Family Foundation
Mike Parke
Charles & Sandra Peterson
Hiram Rogers & Jean Gauger
Gregory Rohde

Angie Seligman & Randy Krogstad
Brian Selland
Jason, Jennifer, Morgan & Elliot Stiefel
Diane Stoltz Family
Andrea Stomberg & Bruce Britton
Shannon Straight & Spring Bakke
Vonne Tarnavsky
Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation
Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library
Foundation
Loa Tober
Glenny Ulschak
Ryan and Amy Vojacek
Steve & Janet Wieser
Nick & Lindsey Ybarra
Mark Zimmerman

Post Marker:

Kevin Kirkey
Glee Mayer

Trail Boss:

Jessica Brooke
*Eric Lane
*Brent Ravnass
Jason Signalness

Founding:

Kim Callahan
*Shawn Casey
Dickinson Convention & Visitors Center
*Dave Helphrey
Donald Kingston
Shelly Lentz
Jeremy Mahowald
Loren & Jennifer Morlock
Leonard Stanley
Robert Stein
Brian Williams

In Memoriam

Denton & Paulette Berntson
Kyle Brierley
Justin Hill
Aileen Luethe
Morris Tarnavsky

* Denotes new member at this level since last
Turtle Tracks

Searching for a solution to the Knutson Creek Crossing

by Roger Ashley

Most of the time Knutson Creek on the Maah Daah Hey appears to be slow moving, a stream that shouldn't be an issue with getting from one side to the other. The non-threatening appearance is deceiving as it can be an extreme hazard especially for horses and their riders.

awaiting assembly and installation at the site a daylong rain storm of 7.5 inches washed the unassembled wooden parts of the puncheon away. The subsurface puncheon wasn't completed until fall 2015. In August 2016 TRNP hosted a tour of the newly completed puncheon. Additional



Source: MDHTA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/247224027272578/>) See Facebook page for additional comments.

The crossing has been an issue for some time, since the MDHT became a reality in 1999. Much of the MDHT was laid over existing trails with short connecting sections joining to form the MDHT within the Park. Use of the MDHT increased over time and in 2014 then Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) Superintendent Valarie Naylor and South Unit District Ranger Grant Geis determined a course of action to build the subsurface puncheon at Park Headquarters, disassemble it and have it hauled out by horse and mule. Don Mayer, then president of MDHTA, coordinated the move. While the puncheon was



Photo by Roger Ashley, August 1, 2016

information about the effort made to install this crossing can be found in *Turtle Tracks*, Volume 14, Issue 2, page 6; Volume 14, Issue 3, page 3; and Volume 15, Issue 3, page 3, [News – Maah Daah Hey Trail Association \(mdhta.com\)](http://www.mdhta.com)

Over time, naturally occurring erosion of the creek bed changed the flow of water which is supposed to flow over the subsurface puncheon. The puncheon is now acting like a dam forcing the water to flow around the ends. The guide posts eroded/floated out from the bank so trail users have difficulty finding where to cross. “In the North Dakota Badlands usually we get 20 years or more out of these



Photo by Shannon Straight, June 1, 2024

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subsurface puncheons,” said Curt Glasoe, “but in this case the puncheon lasted less than seven years.”

A meeting was held with TRNP staff, Chief of Facility Management Phil McCall, Superintendent Angie Richman, Director of Resource Management and Science Blake McCann, and US Forest Service Recreation Program Manager Alex Manard, as well as MDHTA President Curt Glasoe, and Director Shannon Straight on June 21 to discuss a course of action to solve the recurring problem of the Knutson Creek Crossing on the MDHT. A permanent solution is desired while keeping the primary wilderness aspects intact. Several options are being looked at although a specific solution hasn't been selected the one that appealed to the group was a 40 or 50-foot-long bridge capable of carrying a horse and rider. This will provide ample capacity for the creek to carry water under the bridge and stay up out of the mud and water. Curt Glasoe, using the US Geological Survey program, estimated that at the point where the current crossing is located the drainage from 63 square miles passes that point, and at a 2% annual exceedance probability (sometimes known as a 50-year flood), over 3360 cubic feet of water per second will pass that point in a flood event. A well anchored bridge will need to be built to handle these extreme conditions. Based on experience and soil surveys it will likely need to set the anchors/pilings 22 feet deep to reach sand/gravel to support the structure, though a complete on-site analysis of soils will need to be done. Sounds like a lot of work but if it fixes the problem for at least 20 years it will be worth it.

A thorough study and obtaining the necessary approvals will take time, at least 12 months. If everything goes well and approvals are not rejected, the project will move forward to an engineered design phase and eventually installation. This also takes time. Realistically, if dollars for materials are available as well as volunteer labor it will likely be the spring or summer of 2025 before anything is seen in terms of

construction at the crossing. NPS is working towards obtaining funding for trail staffing and agreements for the fiscal year 2025. In the meantime, some seasonal staff will be doing some pruning and minor repairs for the current year.

Until a permanent fix occurs on the Maah Daah Hey Trail crossing the Knutson Creek in TRNP, hikers and equestrian users have an option to avoid the hazard using the Buffalo Gap Trail. This is perhaps the better maintained route, though longer as it will add about 7.3 miles to the trek. The Buffalo Gap Trail joins the Maah Daah Hey near mile posts 61.2 and 49.5. You will still cross the Knutson Creek but it is on a submerged wood/gravel puncheon in very good condition so there will be plenty of support for a horse. A recent hiker of that section of the trail reported the crossing is in sound condition but the water is deep because the creek is backed up by a beaver dam. Water can also run deep during spring runoff and after a heavy rain. Just be sure to line up between the marker posts on the banks before crossing.



Buffalo Gap Trail submerged concrete slab Knutson Creek Crossing, July 19, 2018. Photo by Roger Ashley.

Trail Notes

Website Improvements

Several improvements have been made to MDHTA.COM website during the past month. Since conditions in the badlands can change rapidly a link to the US Forest Service's Alerts and Notices web page has been added to the MDHTA home page. This "[View Forest Service Alerts and Conditions](#)" link will take the user directly to road and trail closures, fire closure orders, travel restrictions, and other notices. Something you should be familiar with when planning a trip on the MDHT.

At the bottom of each page on the Association's website is a

link to the Maah Daah Hey Trail (Maah Daah Hey Trail Association) Facebook page. This is a good site to learn about people's experiences on the trail and potential hazards that haven't been reported to the US Forest Service yet. Also, since dates for various trail activities are not scheduled very far in advance in time to appear in *Turtle Tracks* you should follow Facebook or check in the News tab of MDHTA.COM. Glee Mayer and Mark Zimmerman monitor the Facebook page for the Association.

The trail upkeep form has been repaired and is working

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again on MDHTA.COM. The form can be found under the “Contact” tab and in the instructions a link to the upkeep form is provided. This form allows users to report location of the problem with GPS coordinates, mile post, a description of the problem and to upload a photo. When the user clicks “Submit” the upkeep form is sent directly to the US Forest Service Program Manager Alex Manard and Trail Manager Jeff Davis. MDHTA President Curt Glasoe also gets a copy of the form to help follow up.

A tab on the home page has been added for White Butte. This page is still under development but should be completed soon. This provides information on North Dakota’s high point as well as a trail map for all those who plan ahead. White Butte trail will be added to the interactive map in the future as hikers who use the White Butte trail will tend to access the MDHT and Burning Coal Vein Campground.

Coming Soon - Crying Butte Trailhead location has been added to the interactive map trail guide on the Association’s website but is not ready for use. Expectation is that the trailhead will be ready to use later this year. The MDHT has been routed through the area where there will be trailhead parking so the trailhead on the trail guide looks to be well off of the trail. When the reroute construction is complete and the US Forest Service provides that information to us we will update the interactive Trail Guide on the website.

FAQs will be updated later this year. If you have a question that you think should be included in this part of the website send the request through the Contact form or call us.

National Public Lands Day Ice Caves Hike – September 28

Hold September 28 on your calendar for a MDHTA hike at Ice Caves. This is a hike for the entire family from the Ice Caves Trailhead to the caves. Further details will be released in *Turtle Tracks*, MDHTA, and the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association Facebook page.

Trail angels caught doing good deeds

The trail use community has it’s angels that help out in making the trail experience extra special. Two angels should be noted here. The first is Jennifer Morlock, long time MDHTA member and co-owner of Dakota Cyclery, Medora. When Jennifer drives by water cache box sites she will often stop to check for empty water containers and condition of the water boxes. And here I thought use of the water cache boxes had fallen off because in the fall when we checked the boxes fewer empties were found. This is a huge help to the Association in maintaining the boxes and keeping empty water containers from blowing around in the badlands. The second angel that helps out is Britney Barnett of Arnegard. Britney also checks water cache boxes north of Medora on the east side of the river in early spring and late fall as well as distributes and collects trail registration logs at trailheads. Thank you to the angels named here and to all the others that make the recreation trail what it is. Your efforts are appreciated.

Trail conditions change- report needed trail repairs

During this time of the year sudden high intensity rainfall occurs, sometimes several inches in just a few minutes will fall and can change a section of trail from excellent to impassable. If you should come upon a section of the trail that needs work report it. Note location taking GPS coordinates or mileage marker, take a picture with your cell phone, and what appears to be the problem. Then use the Trail Upkeep Form (in last sentence of introductory paragraph) found under the Contact tab of MDHTA.COM. Complete the form, upload your photo and submit. A copy of your observations will be sent directly to the US Forest Service for review and repair.

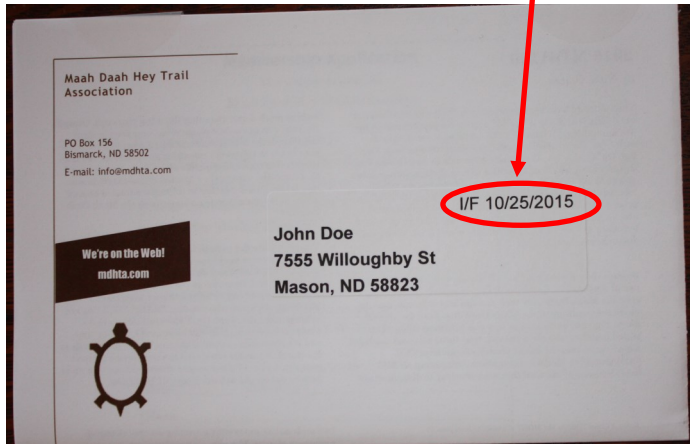
Burning Coal Vein water

After many months, the water well is back in service. Thank you Forest Service!



Membership Renewal – It May be Time!

“When do I renew my membership?” All memberships are one year in length except the three year Individual/Family Memberships and Life Memberships. To determine when your membership is up for renewal check the upper right corner of the mailing label on your newsletter. An expired membership will also be highlighted.



If you receive *Turtle Tracks* via email the email will indicate if the membership has expired.

Your current membership level (I/F = Individual or Family; F = Founding; T = Trail Boss; M = Mile Marker; and Life) as well as your membership expiration date is given. If your membership has expired please complete the membership application form found in this newsletter or go to mdhta.com/membership to complete the requested information. Include a check made out to MDHTA or if you wish to use a credit card go to mdhta.com/membership.

Moving? Changing your Email address?

Don't forget to contact us with your new postal address or email address. Stay connected.

Thanks to all those that have renewed to date!

Membership Application

Yes! I want to join the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual/Family Member - turtle pin | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Post Marker Member - wood sign on post or for home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$70 Individual/Family Member for 3 years - turtle pin | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Life Member - turtle sign & name on kiosk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Founding Member <input type="checkbox"/> Cap or <input type="checkbox"/> T-shirt S M L XL | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Trail Boss Member - trail map & turtle pin | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please do not send a thank you gift, apply it all to the trail | |

\$250+ Corporate Membership

Make checks payable to: MDHTA, P. O., Box 156, Bismarck, ND 58502

PLEASE PRINT

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____ Email newsletter: Yes No

Phone No. (____) _____

**Maah Daah Hey Trail
Association**

PO Box 156
Bismarck, ND 58502
E-mail: hello@mdhta.com

We're on the Web!
mdhta.com



MAAH DAAH HEY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Officers and Board of Directors

President—Curt Glasoe
Vice President—Amy Vojacek
2nd Vice President—Mark Zimmerman
Treasurer—Jesse Hanson
Secretary—Britney Barnett
Glee Mayer—At Large
Shannon Straight—At Large

Dates to Remember

July 20-21	MDH horse Endurance Ride from Sully Creek. Contact Angie Mikkelson at 701-690-1563
Sept 28	Public Lands Day guided Ice Caves Hike
Oct 16-17	Midwest Region Trails Workshop, TRNP

Mission Statement: 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.

Find us on 