

Turtle Tracks

Official Newsletter of the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association

Volume 3, Issue 2

Summer 2002

Enjoy, Don't Destroy!

Put 'Leave No Trace' Principles to Use on MDHT

The Maah Daah Hey Trail corridor is a landscape of rare and rugged beauty. Although this country is adaptive, the varied terrain of the MDHT also fragile. Careless feet, hooves or tires may negatively impact the area forever. In both the badlands and prairie trail users and campers must be careful not to hinder vegetation or contribute to unnatural erosion.

Fires, campsites, and various modes of transportation may all have detrimental effects on the landscape. Responsible trail users will want to try to ensure that impact is minimal, and where possible, is a positive rather than negative impact.

Here are some specific recommendations that will enable you to "Leave No Trace":

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Know the regulations and special concerns for the area.

Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.

Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.

Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into groups of 4-6.

Repackage food to minimize waste.

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Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.

Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from creeks and rivers.

Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

In popular areas:

Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.

Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.

Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

In pristine areas:

Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.

Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

Dispose of Waste Properly

Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Remove horse manure from campsites.

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TRAIL ASSOCIATION**

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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.

*MDHTA logo used with permission from
USDA Forest Service*

Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.

Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.

To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from creeks or rivers and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

Leave What You Find

Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.

Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.

Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.

Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.

Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.

Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.

Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

Respect Wildlife

Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.

Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.

Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.

Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.

Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.

Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.

Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.

Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.

Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.☀

A Word from Our President—

Curt Glasoe

President, Maah Daah Hey Trail Association



Hello fellow trail users,

Spring is upon us, I think, but winter is really hanging on. It is time to check out the saddle and tack, hiking boots and pack, and the bike and all the accessories. The trail season is about to begin or will have by the time this issue is circulated. The sports shows are pretty much over and we had our first Board meeting of the year in April. Please see the abbreviated minutes to follow in this issue.

We have a great start on new and renewed MDHTA Memberships. Thanks to Jo Marie Kadrmas our Executive Secretary for her efforts. Be sure and tell the folks around you about the MDHTA— like the ol' salesman said, "If you can't sell to your friends, who can you sell too?? Not your enemies—that's for sure!"

Mark June 29th on your calendar for the Grand Opening of the renovated Buffalo Gap campground and new trail (hopefully the weather cooperates, and the construction will be done). We plan to have a Board meeting the night before in Medora. The time and place will be announced later.

New things happening on the MDHT:

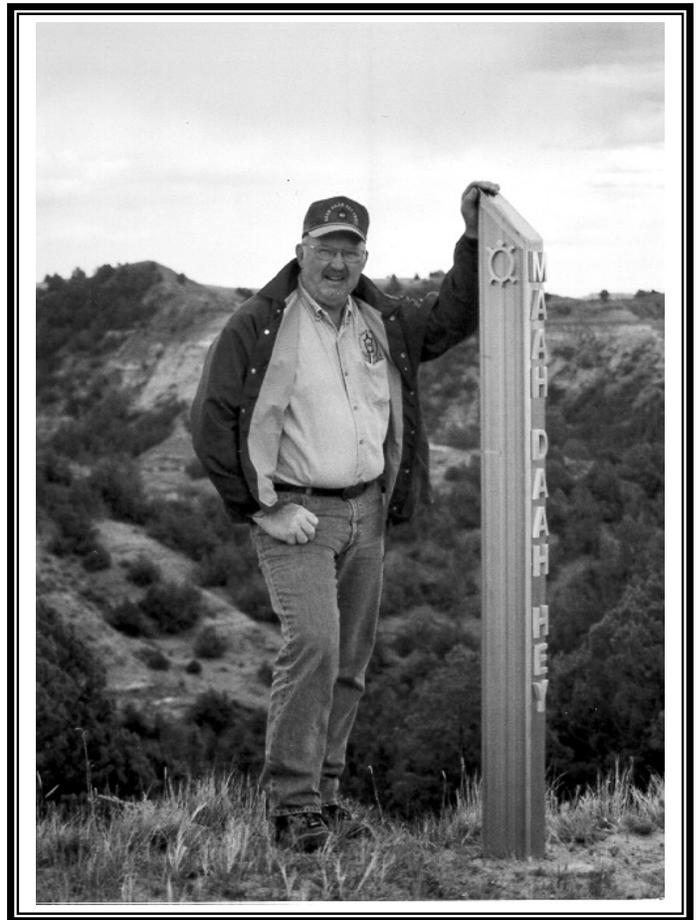
1. The trail from Mile Post 0.0 will be relocated inside the Sully Creek campground to better access the river and avoid other campers. Also, new kiosks with current information will be placed in Sully Creek by the State Park and Recreation Department.
2. All MDHT directional signs should be in place this field season, especially along the highways and roads to the new campgrounds along the trail.
3. Plan and possibly construct a reroute to the north around the bad crossing at Corral Creek, near Mile Post 88.5. A bridge was originally planned but scoping showed a better location that would not require a bridge.
4. Additional surfacing will be placed on various clay and erosive sandy areas.
5. An idea to connect Watford City to the

MDHT trail is also in the works with the County and City governments along with the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service supporting such an endeavor. If MDHTA members would like to help, please holler, like a proper name for this connector trail, I thought the name "Wolf" was a good start.

6. With MDHTA dollars and other cooperators, a water well will be drilled in the Elkhorn Camp. So all camps will have potable water by late summer.

A big **Thank You** is in order to Don and Susan Mayer for becoming Life Members. Also a belated thank you to Chuck and Cheryl Helm a mile marker member from 2000, and to Wayne Dawson for becoming a "Trail Boss" member.

Happy Trails
Curtis W. Glasoe, President



MDHTA President Curt Glasoe at the MDHT midway post

Photo Credit—U.S. Forest Service

High Tech Hide & Seek—

Geocaching in Primitive Places: Pro/Con

Geocaching (pronounced geo-cashing) is a worldwide game for users of the Global Positioning System, or GPS. The game basically involves a GPS user hiding "treasure" -- the cache and its contents -- in a public place like a park, along a trail, or on a National Forest. Then the cacher publishes the exact coordinates on the Internet so other GPS users can go on a "treasure hunt" to find it.

Is geocaching a perfect opportunity for enjoyable and challenging recreation or an inappropriate use of primitive places?

Most caches are something like this: a Tupperware container or ammo box filled with unrelated trinkets such as key chains, wooden nickels or pocketknives. Others have a theme, such as foreign coins or rubber bugs. A logbook is often placed inside the cache so players can record the find and share their thoughts. The rules? They are simple. If you take something, you must leave something.

A relatively new sport, geocaching has only existed since May 2000 — that's when the U.S. government stopped intentionally degrading the GPS signals available to the public — but it has grown considerably since. These days there are upwards of 13,870 active caches hidden in 109 countries throughout the world!

Geocachers are hikers, Boy Scouts, techno-junkies, and outdoor enthusiasts from all walks of life. Most are environmentally conscious and try not leave to a trace—footprints, disrupted soils or vegetation, litter. Most even devote time after the find to scatter leaves back around or repair any wear they may have encountered. Unfortunately, there is always a bad apple that gives the sport a bad name—such as those who trample an area trying to find a cache.

Pros Say:

- Geocaching is a cool way to learn to use a compass. It can be a neat way to learn new and very useful skills
- It's a way to find trails that other people don't know about, waterfalls or breathtaking

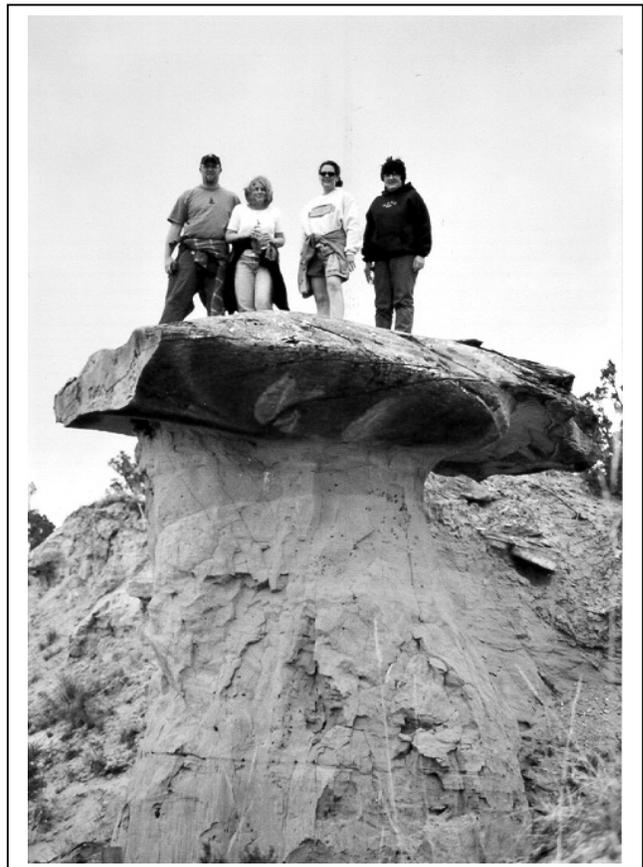
landforms, quaint towns that are fun to spend a day in.

- Campers and tourists are drawn into a less sedentary, more exciting pastime.
- Adds an adventurous twist to hiking.

Cons Say:

- There can be serious environmental wear and tear if a geocache gets to be a popular destination.
- Some consider caches litter or abandoned property—hence something to be disposed of.
- When stashed in wilderness or primitive areas on National Forest or National Park lands, geocaching can disrupt the solitude that people traditionally seek in such places.

So what do you think? Decide for yourself whether planting a geocache is consistent with Leave No Trace principles (see "[Enjoy, Don't Destroy](#)", cover story this issue). What are the cumulative impacts of geocache seekers at frequently visited caches? Is geocaching the perfect opportunity for enjoyable and challenging recreation or an inappropriate use of primitive places? ☀



*Conquering the pinnacle!
Photo Credit—U.S. Forest Service*

MDHTA Meeting Minutes

MDHTA President, Curt Glasoe called the April 4, 2002 meeting to order at the Rattlesnake Creek Grill and Brewery at 4:00 pm MST. Board members present: Curt Glasoe, Jennifer Morlock. Others present: Grant Geis, National Park Service, Don Mayer, MDHTA member, Mark Zimmerman, ND Tourism, Russ Walsh, USDA Forest Service, Jo Marie Kadrmaz, executive secretary.

Curt reported that the current balance of the MDHTA is about \$7200. Swede Nelson was absent and therefore unable to give the group and update on the ROW request to Bennie Lange. There was discussion of having some open houses for the public in May. Ron Lueth was absent and therefore unable to give the group an International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) update. He will be attending an IMBA event in Moab, Utah later this month.

Curt displayed a variety of caps, handkerchiefs, t-shirts, etc. the MDHTA has for sale to the public. The group suggested that the font on the t-shirts be changed to the font of the embroidery on the caps. Also, it was suggested that some camouflage handkerchiefs and caps be ordered to sell. Les Albaugh will be selling items at Sully Creek campground again this year for the MDHTA. Russ moved for Jennifer M. to handle an order for 250 MDHTA water bottles to sell to the public. Various info will be printed on the bottles: the MDH Trail logo, name of the MDHTA, Badlands of North Dakota, and the three icons (triangle) to represent hikers, bikers, and equestrians alike. Jennifer M. seconded the motion. The motion carried. All fees will go to Dale Heglund.

Jo Marie gave the secretary's report. There were 51 current members of the MDHTA, and 37 non-renewed members. Jennifer M. moved to follow-up with these non-renewed members by sending them another membership application and letter. Russ seconded the motion. The motion carried. Jo Marie prepared and distributed folders for the five MDHTA board members which contained copies of the MOU \$13000 Elkhorn well, the MDHTA by-laws, and her employment contract.

Russ Walsh reported that the MDH Trail maps are being updated and should be available by mid-summer. Last year, the Forest Service completed

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As you recall, the Maah Daah Hey Trail (MDHT) was one of eight featured International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Epic Rides in August 2001.

Volunteers worked a collective 200 hours to surface 2000 feet of trail during the Epic trail workday. On the day of the trail-ride 39 participants pedaled and jammed their way up to 32 miles!

Check out the IMBA website to view a slideshow of the MDHT Epic Ride. Use this URL to get there: http://www.imba.com/epics/maah_daah_hey_trail.html

To score your own Epic Ride—retrace the actual route using this guide!

- 1) START! Travel 8 miles north of Grassy Butte, ND on U.S. Highway 85 and turn west on Road 823. Proceed west approximately 8 miles to the Maah Daah Hey Trail.
- 2) FINISH! Travel 1-½ miles north of Fairfield, ND on U.S. Highway 85 and turn west on Road 712. Proceed west approximately 20miles to the river crossing. Cross the river and continue 1 mile south to the junction. Take Road 708 1-½ miles to the Maah Daah Hey Trail river overlook.

NOTE: National Grasslands roads include many twists and turns—navigation can be tricky! Use an official Maah Daah Hey Trail map to help find your way.



Photo Credit—ND Tourism

31 miles of trail. They also developed and improved 4 campgrounds along the trail. Signs have been ordered to mark trail junctions, and should be up in June. Also, highway signs have been ordered to identify the campgrounds where possible. The campgrounds offer: toilets, potable water (with the exception of Elkhorn), camp spurs, places to park campers, and kiosk info centers. New projects for the Forest Service include installing a bridge by Lisbon, ND and surfacing the entire North Country Trail, as well as ongoing maintenance on the MDH Trail. There is currently a Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grant for kiosks and surfacing portions of Buffalo Gap Trail also. The Forest Service will be ordering trail counters for strategic places on the MDH this year, too.

Mark expressed the need for a comprehensive info sheet for travelers who want to come and use the MDH Trail. Instead of directing these people to various websites, he would like to give them the majority of the info they need in one place (on one info sheet). Currently, potential visitors may be discouraged because they are unable to find all the info they need to make a trip to ND and the MDH Trail. Mark will be contacting Dale and working on the preliminary work-up of such a sheet, and has asked for input and assistance from the MDHTA. Mark also reported attending sport shows where over 500+ MDH Trail flyers were handed out. An article about the MDH Trail has also been submitted for publication to the Paint Horse Journal. Mark stated that he "is happy to help promote the MDH Trail", and he receives various emails, sometimes between 6 to 10/day specifically asking about the MDH!

There will be an Endurance Ride on the MDH Trail Sept. 21st. There will be team and individual competition. For more info, go to www.epicadventure.net or contact Jennifer M. or Jennifer Berger at the Forest Service. *Editor's Note: Since the April meeting of the MDHTA Board, the MDHT 100 Endurance Race has been canceled by its promoter. Whether or not the race will be held next year is unknown.*

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 28th in Medora, ND. The annual board meeting will be scheduled to take place in the fall. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Jo Marie Kadrmas, MDHTA Executive Secretary on 4/11/2002 ☀

Day Hike Spotlight: Andrews Creek

Looking for a bite-sized adventure perfect for a sunny Saturday morning? Only a stone's throw from downtown Medora is this Maah Daah Hey Trail destination: Andrews Creek.

Take plenty of water and wear appropriate outdoor gear including sturdy footwear and a hat or bandana for shelter from the elements. You might pack a granola bar or other easy-to-lug food, plus sunscreen and binoculars.

Travel northwest from Medora on the main thoroughfare (there is a paved walkway on the side of the road). As you approach the I-94 on/off ramp, you will see the MDHT access south of the road. This is where to hop on the trail and embark on your adventure.

Andrews Creek, located near miles 4 and 5 of the MDHT, is a scenic, badlandsy delight. Follow the well-beaten path as it snakes southward toward Sully Creek Campground. The Trail itself meanders past stunning rock formations on winding switchbacks, and yields a bighorns-eye-view of the Medora area.

Want to make it a round-trip? Between milemarkers 3 and 4 follow the two-track road east to the Medora Musical Parking Lot, down past the Chateau, and back into Medora. All the adventure; half the time! ☀



Hiking near Andrews Creek on the MDHT

Photo Credit—U.S. Forest Service

Badlands in Bloom--

Wildflowers Along the MDHT

Planning a trip on the MDHT this season? From May through September trail users take pleasure in an array of wildflower blooms. With a pocket guide and a little practice, you can identify hundreds of prairie plants.

This time of year you will discover several species of penstemon, with colors ranging from white to pink to violet. "Penstemon" refers to the flowers' five stamens. Some species are fair forage for deer, sheep and pronghorns. A historical medicinal use of the plant root is to ease the pain of toothaches.

In drier, sandy sites, you may come across the fuchsia bloom of a ball cactus. Bees are attracted to their pollen-laden blossoms.



Purple Coneflower in the sunlight

Photo Credit—Jennifer Berger



Prairie Rose, blooming along the MDHT

Photo Credit—Robin Nieto

As spring turns to summer you will see North Dakota's state flower: the prairie rose. Rose hips are nibbled on by wildlife. Plains Indians used the hips to heal many ailments, and ate them when food was scarce. Today people use this plant as potpourri, to steep tea, and as a source of vitamins A and C.

Also plentiful in the summer is purple coneflower or Echinacea. This sturdy pink-flowered plant is a member of the Aster family and is known locally as

"Black Sampson". This plant was important to prairie tribes as an herbal medicine for snake bites, stings, toothaches, coughs, soreness, mumps, measles, arthritis, smallpox, boils and more...talk about a cure-all! The plant's large taproot has recently been harvested and marketed as an immune system booster.

Many green fields will be dotted summer-long with the white flat-topped clusters of common yarrow. Leaves of this plant are fern-like and have a sage scent. Historically, yarrow was used to stop bleeding, treat sores and as a mild laxative. It is popular in xeriscaping circles as a particularly drought-tolerant and hardy perennial.

As summer turns to fall, regal purple spikes of blazing star emerge across the upland prairie. This plant, also known as gayfeather, has a deep taproot, which was used by Plains Indians for healing wounds, swelling, diarrhea and gonorrhea. Butterflies flock to this flower to feed on its nectar.

All these and more await you along the MDHT. Come surround yourself in their beauty! ☀

READERS

You can get published in Turtle Tracks! Each quarter, our readers contribute to the following departments:

“Volunteer Action”

“My Day on the Maah Daah Hey”

“On the Web”

We also invite original articles and photographs depicting your unique recreation interest (i.e. hiking, biking, equestrian, other non-motorized), your technical tips (i.e. map-reading, selecting hiking boots, eating freeze-dried food), safety messages, trail conditions, and opinion/editorial pieces.

Model contributions after what you have seen published in this and other issues of TT. Limit article length to 500 words or less. Send items to our address or editor's email printed on page 2, lower-left.

Membership Application

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

- \$25 Individual/Family Member
- \$75 Founding Member \$200 Trail Boss Member
- \$500 Mile Marker Member
- \$750 Gatekeeper Member \$1000 Life Member

Check level of sponsorship above

*Make Checks Payable to: MDHTA, P.O. Box 156, Bismarck, ND
58502*

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE 100% TAX DEDUCTABLE!

Date: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Clip & Mail This Coupon ✕

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