For many years the Arizona Trail Association has wanted to move the Arizona Trail off a powerline road in Oracle State Park. The road takes trail users up steep, eroded hillsides and under powerlines with guy wires clad in yellow reflectors – not a scenic trail experience. Given the diversity of terrain, dense vegetation and rich cultural resources within the Park, everyone knew it would be no small task to build nearly two miles of new trail here.

Thanks to the amazing staff at Oracle State Park, this project started seeing momentum in February. Then, the ATA developed a proposed route heading west from Kannally Wash using a computer mapping program, and in March we made some initial field trips. The route makes a gentle climb heading west up the ridgeline, traverses a high saddle with great views of the Santa Catalina Mountains, contours into and back out of a large valley, then passes through a scenic field of granite boulders, before joining the existing AZT in a lush arroyo.

Once we received the exciting news that REI Co-op’s Tucson store would support the project with a $5,000 grant, the ATA contracted Rob Bauer to construct 1.7-miles of singletrack using a mini-excavator. Then, a few months later, the ATA and REI teamed up to host a massive trail work project to finish the job. This included removing roots from the tread, improving drains, and other necessary finishing work. Almost 50 individuals showed up to help on Sunday, October 2.

The trail is now open for recreation, and you are encouraged to visit Oracle State Park soon and experience it for yourself. The lack of powerlines and fall-line trail is more consistent with a National Scenic Trail experience, and means a few more miles of singletrack (and fewer miles of road) which is an important part of the ATAs mission.

A huge thanks to Gary and Jennifer at Oracle State Park, Rob Bauer, REI Co-op, and all of the volunteers who contributed to this effort. With your support, the AZT is getting better all the time.
Dear Friend of the Arizona Trail,

It’s hard to believe that the autumn edition of the Arizona Trail News is coming out so late, but as everyone living in Arizona knows, there hasn’t been a noticeable change of season until just recently. It may say November on the calendar but scorching temperatures throughout the Southwest have made it feel more like summer. Normally, November and December are prime months to explore most parts of the Arizona Trail and to start planning for next year’s big adventures.

I am delighted to share the exciting news with you that the Arizona Trail Association recently hired an Assistant Trail Director to support our Trail Operations Program. Zach MacDonald will be working part-time to manage numerous trail projects throughout southern Arizona and to assist Shawn Redfield, our amazing Trail Director who volunteers thousands of hours each year. We’ve got big plans for improvements to the AZT in 2017 and Zach will be the one to make sure those plans become reality.

Many of you probably already know Zach, as he served on the ATA Board of Directors from 2005-2010. He was a crew leader during the construction of the AZT along the Las Colinas and Las Cienegas passages south of Tucson, and helped introduce many volunteers to the joys of trail work. Zach has been active with the Sonoran Desert Mountain Bicyclists (SDMB) since 2010 and helped lead this all-volunteer workforce in the construction and maintenance of many miles of trails throughout southern Arizona.

He has also worked for the Community Gardens of Tucson and has volunteered time for a number of great nonprofit organizations, including the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team in Training program and Trips for Kids of Southern Arizona. Zach has always been an active member of the community and enjoys helping people connect with the outdoors.

In 2015, Zach and his family relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico where he found a rewarding position with the United States Forest Service. Zach worked as Trails Foreman and Forestry Technician on the Cibola National Forest, where he received certification in operating a mini-excavator to build and maintain trail; earned his chainsaw certification; and managed youth conservation corps and professional trail crews to increase sustainability of trails on the Forest.

Being a Tucsonan at heart, Zach and his family returned to the Old Pueblo this year to raise their family and enjoy the beauty of the Sonoran Desert. He is excited to get more involved with the ATA and to spend more time working with volunteers, conservation corps and land managers to maintain and protect the AZT. Please join me in welcoming him as a staff member of the ATA! You can send him an email at zach@aztrail.org.

Although the Arizona Trail may be “complete” it is far from finished. We have a lot of work to do to make this amazing path from Mexico to Utah sustainable, and we’ll be asking for your help to support a variety of projects and initiatives over the next year. Whether you choose to volunteer, donate or renew your annual membership (or all three), we can only accomplish our mission with your support. Thanks for all you do for the Arizona Trail!

Enjoy this delightful season,

Matthew J. Nelson
Executive Director

Arizona Trail Association
PO Box 36736 | Phoenix, Az 85067 | 602-252-4794 | www.aztrail.org

Arizona Trail Association
Our Vision...
...a continuous, non-motorized trail traversing 800+ miles from Mexico to Utah, linking deserts, mountains, forests, canyons, communities and people.

Board of Directors
Rob Mason, President
Fred Gaudet, Vice President of Trail Operations
Larry Sneed, Vice President of Board Development
Jan Hancock, Secretary
C.W. Payne, Treasurer

Board Members
Steve Anderson
Ambika Balasubramaniyan
Susan Lagerman
Ben Murphy
Denis Ryan
Todd Sadow
Bernie Stalmann
Lirain Urreiztieta
Jeff Whitney

Honorary Advisory Council
Senator John McCain
Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick
Congressman Ruben Gallego
Congressman Paul Gosar
Congressman Raúl Grijalva
Congressman Matt Salmon
Congressman David Schweikert
Congresswoman Kyrsten Sinema

Staff & Support
Matthew Nelson, Executive Director
Shawn Redfield, Trail Director
Zachary MacDonald, Assistant Trail Director
Debbie Latorre, Membership & Administration
Wendy Lotze, Volunteer Coordinator
Tamara McDonald, Executive Assistant
Treven Hooker, Youth Outreach & Education Coordinator (Southern Arizona)
Sabrina Carlson, Youth Outreach & Education Coordinator (Northern Arizona)
David Babcock, Web Master
Aaron Seifert, GIS Director
Mel and Marlene Betani, Keeper of the Tools
Phyllis Ralley, Special Projects

Zach MacDonald, Assistant Trail Director
A Most Efficient Thru-Hike of the Arizona Trail

Anish Shatters the FKT

Anish celebrates her 19-day self-supported crossing of the Arizona Trail.

Last month, Heather “Anish” Anderson shattered the self-supported Fastest Known Time (FKT) on the Arizona Trail when she hiked alone from Utah to Mexico in only 19 days, 17 hours and 9 minutes. The average thru-hiker takes 50 days to complete the cross-state journey. Anish averaged over 44 miles per day without any significant rest, and accomplished the feat without any outside support. This includes walking from the trail to towns for resupply packages and back. She now holds the FKTs for the Appalachian Trail, Pacific Crest Trail and the Arizona Trail.

Anish finished the AZT just 10 days after Michael Versteeg set the supported FKT in 15 days, 22 hours, 39 minutes. The Prescott-area runner ran approximately 50 miles each day, and had a support crew meet him along the way with food, water, fresh clothes and sleeping accoutrements. Versteeg’s FKT is one of the most impressive ultrarunning accomplishments of the year.

Anish did it completely alone, carrying everything on her back, and wasn’t that far off Versteeg’s pace. And she never ran a single step.

I was lucky enough to catch up with Anish to find out a little bit about her Arizona Trail experience.

How did you properly prepare for the FKT attempt?
I have a few friends that have hiked it over the past few years, including Ras and Kathy Vaughan. I read the guidebook, used the ATA website, and did a lot of independent research online to get a sense of the climate and other environmental considerations I’d face along the way.

How light was your pack?
My basic kit is only 9 pounds, plus food and water. I carried a gallon of water almost all the time, so I averaged 20 pounds on my back.

Which items do you forego to drop weight?
Stove, fuel, and all cooking supplies. I don’t ever cook so I save a lot of weight and time that way. I do like sleeping in a fully enclosed tent, and I have a ZPacks ultralight tent that only weighs a pound.

How much time did you spend hiking at night?
Probably three to four hours every night was spent hiking in the dark, so 10-15 miles each day. That’s when I saw tarantulas, mountain lions and other critters, which is another reason why I sleep in an enclosed tent.

What surprised you most about the AZT?
The northern part of the trail was flatter than I thought. Also, I had never been on the east side of the Superstition Mountains or the Mazatzals, so the combination of overgrowth and sheer ruggedness of the terrain was a surprise.

Was there any one passage that was absolutely miserable?
Oh yeah – the Canelo Hills. The grass had grown over the trail, which made it impossible to find my way. I started hiking in the dark and the grasses were still wet which made me completely soaked. There I was in the dark, wet, cold, lost, getting so close to being finished and I found myself just wanting it to be over.

How did you deal with resupply on a trail with such limited options?
This was definitely the biggest challenge when compared to other long-distance trails.

How does the AZT compare to your FKTs on the AT and PCT?
For physical difficulty, it’s comparable to the PCT. In terms of the footing and grade, it’s similar to the AT. But really, it’s totally unique. I started my hiking career in Arizona, and it was very cool to be able to come back to the desert after being a mountain hiker for so many years.

Any particular moments or experiences that define the AZT for you?
I was walking down the road from Four Peaks when the super moon was rising. Being able to see that was incredible. And I was hiking at night during the Orionid meteor shower – phenomenal! Hiking through so many saguaros was probably my favorite part. I remember thinking, “This is why I am here.” The Sky Islands and the Sonoran Desert are such a treat.

Did you know how Michael Versteeg was progressing ahead of you during his supported FKT attempt?
I didn’t run into many people on the Arizona Trail, but I heard bits of information from other people I ran into. I saw Michael’s name in some of the trail registers and once I saw him signed in at Saguaro National Park I knew he was going to finish the trail in 15 or 16 days. After I finished I met up with him and we got to share some AZT stories. I think his accomplishment is incredible.

What’s next for Anish?
I don’t have any FKTs on the radar, but I plan to do lots of peak bagging this winter, including El Pico de Orizaba and Ixtaccihuatl in Mexico.

Pick one word to describe the AZT:
Beautiful.
The 16 miles that the Arizona National Scenic Trail shares with the Highline National Recreation Trail is one of the most historic trail corridors in the Southwest. Here, the pines reach to the sky and the vistas stretch out forever as the trail follows the base of the Mogollon Rim. Long before European settlers arrived in the area, the numerous canyons below the Rim provided water and productive soils which made them popular sites for human activity. One of these canyons and its history captured the hearts of the participants in our Fall 2016 Volunteer Vacation – Bray Creek.

The Arizona Trail crosses Bray Creek at mile 476, about 7.5 miles northbound from the Pine Trailhead. Even in the context of the already scenic Highline passage, this spot is special. The red and white sandstone cliffs of the Rim are cut into towers and hoodoos, and the canyon bottom is thick with walnut, sycamore and ash trees. In season, you can find wild blackberries growing along the trail and it’s common to see deer, elk and even black bears browsing nearby. A fire in 2006 burned much of the area east of the creek, opening the landscape to the amazing views south and west toward the Mazatzal Mountains. The trail tread changes color with the layers of rock, and it is not unusual to find fossilized corals and even ancient animal tracks in the rocks nearby.

Though records indicate that there was an older log structure on the property, the current two-bedroom frame house was probably built by Stewart sometime just after the 1921 property survey and utilized materials recovered from the hotel dismantled near the recently commissioned Roosevelt Dam. Visitors to the ranch can get confused by the house’s orientation: the front door actually faces the Highline Trail rather than the road that approaches from below – a remnant from a time when the trail was the primary transportation corridor to homesteaders in the area.

Stewart sold the place in 1928, and it changed hands twice more before being purchased by Bray Creek Ranch, LLC in 1983. By this time the original frame home had been expanded to include a kitchen and bathroom and a “shop” was built nearby. There was also a historic barn on the property, a log bunkhouse, an old-fashioned two-hole outhouse, a pond and a hydro-electric generator which provided electricity to the buildings.

As is true of most homes in the Rim Country, the ranch has been repeatedly threatened by fire, including the 1990 Bray...
Fire and the 2000 December Fire. In 2003, Bray Creek Ranch entered into a matching funds grant to engage in fuels reduction within the ranch and nearby Forest Service lands to protect the property. The thinning, piling and burning was completed in 2005, just three months before an escaped campfire created a running crown fire named the February Fire. This fire reached the Bray fuel break, dropped to the ground and skipped through and around the ranch. The structures and historic orchards were saved. The subsequent floods, however, damaged the dam and hydro-electric system and bisected the property with a 20 foot deep chasm along the once idyllic Bray Creek.

Bray Creek Ranch, LLC was an official steward for the Arizona Trail segment adjacent to the property from 2005 to 2007. They remain supporters of the AZT, and generously allow trail crews to use the ranch as a staging area for projects in the area. This fall’s Volunteer Vacation was hosted by the ranch, and participants enjoyed the otherwise unimaginable comfort of hot showers and a warm fire in the living room during their weeklong work event. Wandering the property between work periods, we felt a deep connection to the past and to the Arizona pioneers who once tried to make a living in this rugged and beautiful landscape. Their toughness, dedication and love of this place inspired us to work harder and appreciate all of the opportunities the trail brings to our doorsteps.

A special thanks to Mike Johns with Bray Creek Ranch for opening his doors to our event, and for his continued support of the trail. He has redeveloped the water source at the point where the trail crosses the canyon to make the cool spring water available to trail users year-round. His family has even hosted a thru-hiker or two over the years, and he looks forward to more opportunities. Mike’s work to preserve the historic ranch and buildings has ensured this piece of Arizona history continues to inspire.

**Updated Arizona Trail App is a Necessity for Navigation**

Last year we announced the launch of the first navigational smartphone app for the Arizona Trail. Since then, thousands of hikers, runners, mountain bikers, equestrians and others have been using it to find their way along the AZT. It is undoubtedly the most comprehensive navigational resource we have ever developed, and is available through iTunes and the Google Play Store for $9.99. Get it soon before the price increases in 2017!

Working with talented individuals from Guthook’s Guides and Atlas Guides, the ATA recently provided updated information to make the app easier to use and find the information most relevant to trail users. The app includes water sources, trailheads, road crossings, and thousands of waypoints to help you navigate. Think of it as the data book, water source data book, topo maps, GPS tracks, interactive map and photo gallery all rolled into a single resource. And if you’re already carrying your smartphone on the trail (for its camera, compass and other functions), this comprehensive resource is weightless.

One of the greatest features of the app is that no mobile or internet service is required to use it after the initial setup. So if you’re concerned about what happens when you don’t have a cell phone signal, no worries.

Some of the other features include:

- GPS-enabled map of the Arizona Trail with waypoints
- Offline topo maps, satellite imagery, and photographs
- More than 1,100 waypoints along or near the trail
- Detail page for each waypoint
- Elevation profile with waypoints
- GPS-enabled data book listing of all waypoints
- Comprehensive water information
- Complete gateway community and resupply information
- Trailhead information
- Text or email your location

Some of the waypoints we have integrated into the app include:

- Water sources (on-trail and off-trail)
- Trailheads and parking areas
- Resupply towns and services
- Trail junctions
- Road crossings
- Fences, gates, powerlines, toilets
- Other landmarks and points of interest

There is a free demo of the app for everyone to enjoy, which includes the 36-mile San Francisco Peaks Passage of the Arizona Trail near Flagstaff. Just search the App Store for “Arizona Trail.”

While there will always be trail users who prefer paper maps, we are confident that anyone who uses a handheld GPS device or who has experimented with apps on their smartphone will absolutely love this new product. A portion of the proceeds from app sales comes back to the ATA so we can continue maintaining and protecting the Arizona Trail.
There is a lull in the wind, a calm moment. Within seconds, gusts ruffle hats and pages of handbooks as rainclouds appear from nowhere. You wouldn’t know it from the silence, but here sits my class of third and fourth graders from Flagstaff Junior Academy, quietly tracking any sounds they hear in their Arizona Trail Junior Explorer Handbooks. We are just inside Cathedral Wash, the end of the Arizona Strip where creamy Kaibab Limestone appears from under the crumbly red Moenkopi Sandstone layers above. This is the top layer of Grand Canyon where the Colorado River has carved its way through the Colorado Plateau.

These students are part of a camping trip at Lees Ferry to learn about watersheds, ecosystems, geology, and a sense of place. Provided in part by the ATA’s Seeds of Stewardship (SoS) program, the trip is an example of the initiative to help educate and create the next stewards of our trails and public lands. The SoS program helped me plan, prepare and put into action one of my best hands-on field trips ever.

Within walking distance of our campground, Paria Beach awaits us with open space for lessons where the brightly colored blue-green river runs swiftly past the red-orange Echo Cliffs. Sabrina Carlson, the Northern Arizona SoS Coordinator, gives lessons on watershed health by having students search for various insects. Later, she leads students in a relay race armed with gallon containers to fill up tubs representing 10 percent of an average family’s water use for a day.

Fourth grader Leaf Bailen, in a post-field-trip reflection writes, “When I went to visit the Colorado River, I learned that it is actually really important to save water…if we don’t and keep taking too much water, lots of fun trips would not be had…and lots of people and plants would not get their fair share (including Mexico), so we should really think about how we use the Colorado River.”

Mariah Giardina, a parent of a student on the trip and USGS data collector who works frequently at Lees Ferry, also leads students through games about over-population of fish species. She relates the activities to her job tracking trout upstream and the endangered humpback chub downstream. Tripp Lorette, Giardina’s son and a third grader in the class says, “The Colorado River is important to everyone and everything in the Southwest. I am very proud of my mom because she helps keep the watershed in balance.”
Thanks to strong leadership from Sabrina Carlson and Treven Hooker, the ATA’s Youth Outreach and Education Coordinators, the Seeds of Stewardship program grew exponentially this year. In fact, more than 2,122 youth participant days* were recorded between October 31, 2015 and October 31, 2016. Being able to help elementary, middle and high school age youth experience the great outdoors and teach them important stewardship skills is a wise investment in the future of the Arizona Trail.

Perhaps that’s why the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust awarded the ATA a $100,000 grant in 2014, and why Tucson Electric Power (TEP) pledged $10,000 to support the Seeds of Stewardship in 2015. Both see the value in connecting youth to nature, working with teachers to integrate their existing curricula into on-the-trail activities, and organizing meaningful service projects that help youth understand the importance of stewardship. Individual and corporate donations have also helped this program grow, and with the last of the Pulliam Trust’s dollars being spent in 2017 it will be increasingly important for supporters of the ATA to help fund the Seeds of Stewardship.

If you’d like to make a donation to inspire the next generation to be the stewards of Arizona’s wild lands, please make a donation online today at aztrail.org/donate.html or mail a check to the ATA. Please write “Seeds of Stewardship” in the memo so 100% of your funds go toward this program.

* youth participant days reflect the total number of youth on each outing. Since the program is designed to provide five to seven outings to each young person during the school year, the total number of different individuals participating in the program is less than the total number of youth participant days.

Some of the highlights this year include:

- 574 4th graders were taken on outings to Wupatki National Monument, Coronado National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area as part of the Every Kid in a Park initiative.
- 80 6th graders from Mount Elden Middle School participated in trail work on the Coconino National Forest.
- 66 students from Kinsey School participated in an urban trail wildlife assessment and sensory awareness walk.
- 40 middle school students learned about the history of the Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stage Coach Line while walking where the stage coach once rolled.
- 14 middle school students from Tucson enjoyed a 4-day backpacking trip on the Arizona Trail through the Santa Rita Mountains.
- 6 high schoolers were trained in the art and science of trail maintenance, and were hired to conduct projects within Saguaro National Park.
There are very few so-called “ordinary” people who have been, and continue to be, more supportive of and outspoken for the Arizona Trail than Jack Welch. A tireless advocate for the Trail since its early years, Jack is now a cheerleader for its use and protection.

Jack walks, and he continually encourages others to walk on the AZT, the Flagstaff Urban Trail System, the sidewalk, even down your driveway. He once said, “Every doorstep in Flagstaff is a trailhead.”

He demonstrates that with Walk the Walk, twice weekly walks for the community that often go on or near sections of the Arizona Trail.

Jack encourages others to be involved in activities around town through his weekly e-newsletter. This newsletter extends an invitation to a huge pack of followers to join his 3-mile Walk the Walk, or join a group doing trail work, or attend programs he sets up with speakers on hiking, backpacking and adventure travel. Many of Jack’s regular walkers joined the ATA in the 4th of July Parade the past two years which he helped organize. You can also find him at exhibitor tables for events downtown that need a hand promoting outdoor activities or environmental and access issues.

He was a Trail Steward of Segment 33a from Fisher Point to Buffalo Park for several years. He is an active participant in virtually every organization there is in Flagstaff. These connections with the Forest Service, the County, City, and numerous community organizations gave Arizona Trail Association access to an amazing volunteer base, not only for local work events, but also for a huge response to those Close the Gap events from 2008 to 2010 that helped get the AZT completed.

Jack has probably led more hikes on the Arizona Trail than anyone else! He routinely introduces newcomers as well as old-timers in Flagstaff to segments of the AZT. He makes it especially meaningful by giving a commentary on the nuances of the trail, including the flora and fauna, bike and hike-ability, and its immediate history. And this year Jack led his 100th walk on the AZT at Picture Canyon.

Jack is currently advocating the preservation of Buffalo Park through which the Arizona Trail passes. Jack continues to talk about the Trail and to get people out on it all year long, every year – not just on National Trails Day. He is a tireless advocate for the Arizona Trail.

Jack exemplifies what it means to be a volunteer and this year we were honored to recognize him as a Volunteer Extraordinaire at AZT Day-Flagstaff on September 10. Instead of a plaque or certificate for his service, the ATA awarded Jack an embroidered plaid shirt – his attire of choice just about every day of the year.

Every year, ATA volunteers contribute tens of thousands of hours of their time in the construction, maintenance, promotion and protection of the Arizona Trail. Since time is the only thing that can never be recovered, volunteer hours are among the most valuable gifts an individual could ever give to the ATA. Without the generosity of volunteers, the Arizona Trail would not exist.

Have you volunteered for the Arizona Trail Association (ATA) this year? If so, we need to know about it! Whether you helped trim bushes from the trail corridor, placed stickers on maps, helped organize a trail event, drove supplies from Flagstaff to Tucson, attended a meeting, or contributed in any way... THANK YOU! Now we have just one small request: please report your hours. It only takes a few minutes and is incredibly important.

Reporting your volunteer hours gives the ATA very valuable information about who is volunteering, how they are volunteering, and what areas of the trail (or organization) are benefitting from your hours. These figures are reported to the US Forest Service, BLM and other agencies to show the value of ATAs volunteer corps. The total number of volunteer hours helps the ATA leverage more grant dollars to help the trail, too. Unless you report your hours, we can’t show the strength of our organization and the wonderful people that give their time every year. Every hour counts, including your travel time to and from volunteer work sites.

The ATA has an easy-to-use online reporting system that allows individuals and groups to record their volunteer hours. Please take a few minutes to think back over the past year and report when and where you helped out.
Hand-Made Mugs Celebrate the Arizona Trail

Working with the nation’s best pottery artists at Deneen Pottery in Minnesota, we are delighted to announce the first in a series of six commemorative mugs celebrating the natural beauty of the Arizona National Scenic Trail. Each hand-made mug features an iconic landscape along the AZT, in addition to some of the plants and animals that help define that particular bioregion. Each is finished with a custom glaze and will be something you’ll cherish while enjoying your favorite beverage.

The first mug in the series features a scene from within the Gila River Canyons (Passage 16), which is where the final piece of trail was constructed to officially complete the AZT in December of 2011. The dominant rock spire is an unnamed volcanic plug we have been affectionately referring to as Dale’s Butte – in honor or Dale Shewalter, the father of the Arizona Trail. Saguaro forests cover the hills and Mexican gold poppies can be seen blooming near the trail. Since desert bighorn sheep frequent this part of the AZT, a ram is included within the design. We chose a natural brown glaze for this particular mug, which will hold about 12 ounces of coffee, tea, cocoa, whiskey, water or whatever else you fancy.

AZT Mugs will be made available as a “thank you gift” for anyone renewing their membership before the end of the year at the Ironwood, Saguaro, Juniper or Ponderosa Pine levels. Even if you recently joined or renewed your membership, when you commit to another year of support for the ATA at one of these levels, we’ll add an additional year to your membership expiration date. Then you will receive a mug within a week of your renewal…while they last (only 440 mugs were created).

Please help us reach our year-end fundraising goals by renewing your membership today at aztrail.org/membership/join.html

The next mug in the series is scheduled for release in May of 2017 and will feature a scene from the Kaibab Plateau.

Gossamer Gear’s AZT Rukus Packs are Back

Gossamer Gear has gained the undisputed reputation as America’s premier ultralight backpack manufacturer, and has been the go-to company for many long-distance trail enthusiasts. From packs to shelters to trekking poles, Gossamer Gear helps you go farther, lighter. Now they’ve teamed up with the Arizona Trail Association to offer a 40-liter backpack that is designed with the AZT in mind. A limited number of these have been constructed and are available for sale at the ATA Online Store: aztrail.org/store/

The Rukus is constructed from 100 Denier Robic ripstop nylon with a Supreme air mesh harness and custom nylon webbing. It comes in a subtle Gossamer grey color, bucking the trend of flashy packs. Gossamer Gear is all about ultralight, not ultrabright. Order your pack today – just in time for the holidays – for $50. Proceeds benefit the ATA.

Rukus Details
• 1800 Cubic Inch main pack body
• Four built in pockets for plenty of storage options
• Two side mesh bottle pockets accessible without taking off pack
• Inner zippered stash pocket
• Slant top mesh big back pocket for easy access
• Removable exterior foam back pad
• Air-mesh fabric on shoulder straps for less friction, more cushion and more comfort
• Grosgrain drinking tube keeper loop on shoulder straps

Order your Gossamer Gear AZT Rukus Pack before they’re all gone!
As the Arizona Trail crosses the East Verde River, it begins a steady ascent toward the highlands of northern Arizona, leaving the southern Arizona deserts behind. The high desert juniper woodland traversed on this segment remains largely the same as it was during the time that the Yavapai and Apache people called this area home – wild, scenic and lonely. One of the unique signs of the historic presence of the Yavapai and Apache people in this area include their petroglyphs of figures on horseback, which date these glyphs to after the arrival of the Spanish.

Today, the course of the East Verde River, where this passage begins, is quiet and peaceful. During the 1870’s, however, U.S. Army Cavalry patrols from Camp Verde would often travel up the East Verde River on their way to Tonto Basin, while scouting for hostile native people. A number of violent conflicts occurred between these factions in the greater Tonto Basin area during this time.

In February of 1875, soldiers were escorting a group of Apache and Yavapai people on a forced relocation march from the Verde Valley to the desolate San Carlos Reservation in eastern Arizona after political pressure had eliminated their Verde Valley reservation. A couple of miles upstream of where the Arizona Trail crosses the East Verde, a riot broke out among the Apaches and the Yavapais, who were suffering from hunger and fatigue. The soldiers attempted to quell the riot by firing their rifles into the melee. When the smoke had cleared, many people were dead. Their bodies were left lying where they fell, and were later discovered by Mormons who came to settle at the site of Mazatzal City.

Leaving the East Verde River bottom behind, the trail begins a long, stair-step like climb up a series of mesas toward the Mogollon Rim. After the initial 800 foot ascent, the trail levels out for a couple of miles on Polles Mesa. Napoleon Bonaparte Chilson or “Poley” was one of the earliest ranchers in the area. Poley started the NB Ranch in 1881, two miles upstream of the Arizona Trail crossing, and ran his cattle on Polles Mesa and the surrounding area. Poley was involved in some of the earliest organized rodeos in America, conducted in the nearby town of Payson.

As the trail climbs higher, you can look to the southeast across the East Verde River drainage to the rounded hills on the far side of Cypress Thicker. These hills were the scene of a small scale gold rush in the late 1870’s and early 1880’s as prospectors discovered dozens of potentially promising mines. A settlement known as Marysville grew nearby, but soon emptied out as the mining boom proved to be short lived.

As Marysville died, a new town was born nearby in Green Valley. Originally known as Union Park, the little town was renamed Payson by its inhabitants, in honor of the elected official who had helped them secure a post office. Payson soon became the main supply and meeting point for the numerous ranchers in the area. The town remained a small, isolated community until State Highway 87 reached it in 1958. Today, Payson is the largest town in the area, and ranching still contributes to the local economy.

The last couple of miles of this passage climb atop the dark, rocky basalt flows of Hardscrabble Mesa. Early cowboys in this area gave it the name “hardscrabble” on account of the unrelenting, loose rock which made travel in this area difficult, even to this day.

Preston Sands is a local historian who is currently writing chapters on Arizona history for each of the Arizona Trail’s 43 passages. These will be published in an upcoming version of the Arizona Trail App and in the second edition of Your Complete Guide to the Arizona National Scenic Trail (Wilderness Press).

References:
Before she passed away in August, former state lawmaker Carolyn Allen was an ardent supporter of the Arizona Trail. When she wasn’t advocating for support of the Arizona Trail in the State Capitol she could be found building trail as a volunteer in Pinal and Maricopa Counties. The Scottsdale resident, age 78, died from complications due to nearly 40 years of living with rheumatoid arthritis on August 27.

Carolyn served 16 years in the state Legislature, including a term as Republican majority leader in the House of Representatives. She retired in 2010, saying she was weary of the increasingly bitter divide within her own party. In 2010, her last year in office, she was the only Republican in the Legislature to vote against the controversial immigration law Senate Bill 1070.

“I've left my caucus more than once on what I thought were right and principled stands,” she told the Arizona Republic at the time. “I established very early that I will not be bullied. They learned that if you screw with me, I will bite back. They don’t like me, but they respect me.”

Carolyn’s legacy will live on in the causes she championed since arriving in Arizona in the 1980s: the arts, open space, health care and the environment. Most notably, she was key in passing legislation that allowed cities and towns to buy up tracts of State Trust Land for preservation. That allowed the McDowell Sonoran Preserve in Scottsdale to add hundreds of acres of pristine desert, protecting it from development and opening it up for hiking and outdoor recreation.

Carolyn used her Southern charm to help advance her causes. “She had a way about her that could disarm a conflict,” said Suzanne Pfister, a longtime friend. She said Carolyn knew how to build bridges and keep people talking to each other, even as disagreements sharpened.

Aside from her “no” vote on SB 1070, she struck a moderate tone on issues such as health care, education and taxation, drawing criticism from GOP colleagues.

“I don’t see how we can continue to do good public policy if we’re glaring at each other,” she told The Republic as she wrapped up her legislative service. “That toxic environment is not good for the state.”

At the Capitol, she chaired committees on the environment and health and was a consistent supporter of the arts, an item that has been among the first to go when budgets get tight. Her interest in the arts ushered her into politics but lasted long after. Then-Gov. Jan Brewer appointed her to the Arizona Commission on the Arts, where she served two terms until she resigned due to health issues.

Carolyn's granddaughter, Jessica Glover, released a statement shortly after her passing, saying, “To the friends who stood by her and the many who she didn't know but respected and admired her for her leadership and dedication to purpose, thank you for giving all her hard work meaning.”

Carolyn Allen was posthumously honored with the Overall Leader of the Year Award from the Arizona Capitol Times on October 13. The entire gathering of business and political leaders rose to their feet in appreciation for her tenacity and professionalism, and many individuals shared stories about how she had profoundly impacted Arizona during her public service.

“At a time when many Americans are divided by politics, what we need is unity,” said one of Carolyn’s colleagues. “What we need is more people like Carolyn.”

Leave an Enduring Legacy

Please consider a bequest to the Arizona Trail Association in your estate planning. A bequest is a provision in your will or living trust that directs a portion of your estate to a charity, such as the Arizona Trail Association. You may bequeath a specific asset, a dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or the remainder of your estate after all other gifts have been distributed.

This is a wonderful way to be part of the enduring Arizona Trail legacy.

More information is available from your attorney, and at aztrail.org/bequest.html
Thank You to Our Generous Supporters!

Absolute Bikes
Adventure Southwest
All Star Grand Canyon Tours
American Conservation Experience
Arizona Conservation Corps
Arizona Cowgirls
Arizona Horse Lover’s Foundation
Arizona Office of Tourism
Arizona Zipline Adventures
ASARCO
Atlas Guides
AZ Partsmaster
Babbitt Ranches
Best Western Pony Soldier Inn - Flagstaff
Beyond Bread
Bureau of Land Management
Catalina Brewing Company
Camp Colley
Century Link
Chalet Village Motel - Oracle
Cirrus Visual Communications
Colorado River Discovery
Cosmic Cycles
Cox Communications
Endurance Rehabilitation
Epic Rides
Fleet Feet Sports - Tucson
General Kearny Inn
Gossamer Gear
Grand Canyon Adventures
Greater Vail Chamber of Commerce
Green Valley Recreation Hiking Club
Hancock Resources
Intel
It’s Greek to Me
Jim Click Automotive Team
Jorden, Bischoff & Hiser, PLC
Just Roughin’ It Adventure Company
M & B Sedan
Mountain Bike Association of Arizona
National Forest Foundation
National Park Foundation
National Geographic Visitor Center - Grand Canyon
Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust
Old Time Pizza - Kearny
Oracle Ford
Oracle Land & Homes/A Diamond Ranch
Oracle Patio Café
Ovens of Patagonia
Pima Trails Association
Pink Jeep Tours
Pinnacle Auto Glass
Pioneer Title Agency
Platinum Positioning
Porter’s Cafe - Superior
Powerfilm Solar
Reevis Mountain School
REI Co-op
Rosemont Copper
Saddlebrook Hiking Club
Sierra Suites
Simple Outdoor Solutions
Southwest Solutions
Southwest Trekking
Stage Stop Inn
Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative
Summit Hut
Sunnyside Medicenter, P.C.
Sunset West Building Services
THAT Brewery
The Damion Alexander Team
TransCanyon Shuttle
Tucson Electric Power Company
USDA Forest Service
Wanderlust Brewing Company
Westwind Solar Electric
Zero Day Resupply