



# Arizona Trail News

News and Information from the Arizona Trail Association

Autumn 2015 | Volume 23, No. 3

## Arizona Trail Completion Award

For many years, those who have walked or ridden the entire length of the Arizona Trail have asked the Arizona Trail Association to provide a completion award. Some trail organizations offer a certificate or a finisher's T-shirt, but we wanted to develop something original, beautiful and functional – an award that carries with it the spirit of Arizona. So after much contemplation, the ATA is proud to announce the development of the Arizona Trail Completion Award in the form of a copper belt buckle. And for those who can't imagine wearing a belt buckle, we've got a copper pin that doubles as a pendant so you can clip it to your pack or wear it around your neck. We are confident these are the finest completion awards of any long distance trail in America.

All you have to do to get one is survive the entire Arizona Trail and fill out a Completion Survey online: [www.aztrail.org/completion/](http://www.aztrail.org/completion/)

The artwork for the belt buckle features the Arizona Trail logo, a saguaro cactus, ponderosa pine tree, the San Francisco Peaks, and the total mileage of the trail. The design was developed by Chris Carls, a graphic designer for Cirrus Visual Communication in Tucson. Chris can often be found mountain biking on the AZT at night (after his children have gone to bed) near the Gabe Zimmerman Trailhead.

We handed Chris's design to Jason Butler, a local metalworker and sculptor who handcrafted the awards from zinc and copper, then individually stained each with four different patinas. Jason has been passionate about sculpture for nearly 20

years and has taught at the University of Arizona, Pima Community College and several Tucson area high schools. He has been mountain biking and running the Arizona Trail since 2003.



Even if finishers choose not to wear them, belt buckles and pin/pendants can be used as a magnet, mounted on a wooden plaque, soldered on to a gate, or integrated into just about anything you can think of. These unique Completion Awards feature a "Made in AZ" stamp on the back and will last a lifetime. We know you'll enjoy them... and if you ever see another one, you'll know you're in the company of someone else who has experienced every mile of the AZT.

Belt buckles and pins/pendants are available with four different original patinas:

**Polished** –these shine like a brand new copper penny.

**Tarnished** –it would take many years and hundreds of miles to make the polished

version look like this.

**Western**– slightly tarnished, these have dark brown highlights that help bring out the features of the buckle.

**Oxidized**–as copper ages and oxidizes there are natural green hues that appear. We just sped up the process a bit to produce this very old looking style.

Whether individuals finish the AZT one segment at a time over many years or all at once, the ATA is able to provide these unique awards for just the cost of shipping and handling thanks to our friends at Pioneer Title Agency. The staff, family and associates of Pioneer Title Agency collectively finished the entire Arizona Trail this year and now they're supporting this program by underwriting the cost of the awards. A huge thanks to Pioneer Title for their support!

In addition to the award, finishers who complete the survey help the ATA gather important data about preferred methods of navigation, gateway community impact, and much more.

Finishers will be compiled into a database and available for viewing online. So we may finally be able to answer the age-old question of "How many people have done the whole trail?"

If you have finished the Arizona Trail, please fill out the survey today!

[www.aztrail.org/completion/](http://www.aztrail.org/completion/)

Dear Friend of the Arizona Trail,

Autumn is a very special season in Arizona. Brilliant colors decorate the canyon floors as the grasslands turn golden and snow dusts the tops of the peaks. The brisk mornings and warm afternoons make for perfect temperatures out on the Arizona Trail. I sincerely hope you're able to spend some time on the AZT and experience all that this trail has to offer.



I had the pleasure of talking with some thru-hikers recently and they were literally glowing from their six weeks of adventure between Utah and Mexico. It was delightful to hear how two peoples' lives can be positively affected by a good long walk in the woods (and deserts and mountains and canyons). Like many people, they wanted to know how many people had actually finished the entire AZT. Although the ATA hasn't kept track of this in the past, we are now!

Through our Completion Survey (see article on page 1) we hope to be able to accurately track everyone who has completed the trail on foot, bike, horse, in segments, all at once, southbound, northbound, etc. Finishers' names and the amount of time it took them to complete the AZT will be posted online.

If you know anyone who has survived the entire length of the Arizona Trail, please encourage them to get in touch with the ATA. As a gift of congratulations, we're awarding finishers with a copper-plated belt buckle or pin-/pendant. More info is available at [www.aztrail.org/completion/](http://www.aztrail.org/completion/)

Thank you for your continued support of the Arizona Trail Association and your enthusiasm for the Arizona National Scenic Trail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew J. Nelson".

Matthew J. Nelson  
Executive Director

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## To Print or Not to Print?

Want to receive the Arizona Trail News by email instead?

Send us an email at [ata@aztrail.org](mailto:ata@aztrail.org) and we'll email directions on how to read the full-color version of the newsletter online. The "paperless" option saves ATA printing and postage expenses so we can direct more resources toward the trail.

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## Arizona Trail Association

PO Box 36736 | Phoenix, Az 85067 | 602-252-4794 | [www.aztrail.org](http://www.aztrail.org)

## The Arizona National Scenic Trail Our Vision...

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

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# Building a New Highline

by Wendy Lotze

Those who are familiar with the Highline Trail tend to have a mixed relationship with it. They love the rugged land it travels through, its tall pines, soaring cliffs and sweeping vistas. They may be fascinated by the history of the route, which was established in the late 1800's to link homesteads and ranches along the base of the Mogollon Rim. For 17 miles of its 50-mile length, the Arizona Trail shares the Highline's tread, aligning two of Arizona's premier trails; one is a National Recreation Trail and the other a National Scenic Trail.

These same users, however, often fight with the steep and sometimes badly eroded trail conditions. The climb out of the Pine Trailhead, in particular, is rutted and rocky – the kind of trail users love to hate. It's no fun for hikers, impossible for runners, a heartbreaker for mountain bikers, and downright dangerous for equestrians...not the best representation of the Arizona Trail.

On October 3-4, an army of volunteers descended on the Pine Trailhead determined to transform this part of the trail. In partnership with the Tonto National Forest, the ATA identified a new alignment for the initial climb out of the trailhead which would provide more sustainable trail for Highline and AZT users. The initial cut

was made by American Conservation Experience in a matter of hours – chopping through tree roots and brush-covered hillsides to create a clear track – but there was still much manual work to be done, including removing the downslope berm, smoothing out the tread and fine-tuning the track.

Forty-five willing hands showed up Saturday ready to work, including more than 20 first-time volunteers. Armed with McLeods, Pulaskis and pick mattocks they hiked one mile and set to moving earth. Seasoned veterans from the ATA, the Pine-Strawberry Fuels Reduction trail team and Tonto National Forest divided the group into small teams and worked on segments throughout the project area.

When it was time to call it quits for the day, the group returned to the Pine Trailhead for a feast of fajitas and a potluck of delicious treats. Campfire entertainment was provided by Neil and Sharon Morrison, who arrived in full pioneer costume and told stories of Zane Grey, famous author and former Rim Country resident. It was a beautiful night

under the stars full of laughter, fun and friends. Sunday, a smaller but very dedicated team of volunteers headed out to complete



Fresh new tread replaces the horribly eroded fall-line trail just east of the Pine Trailhead. Wendy Lotze Photo

more of the work in the morning. When they were done, 0.6 mile of the new trail was made available to users to bypass some of the ugliest portions of the Highline's western end. The event also resulted in nearly 500 volunteer hours donated and a number of new trail-work enthusiasts recruited to help carry the ATA's tradition of volunteerism into the future.

Special thanks to Mike Brandt and the crew from the Pine-Strawberry Fuels Reduction team who provided tremendous support to the event both on and off the trail. Also thanks to Chelsea Muise and Chris Welker from the Tonto National Forest for their energy and vision. Without their support, this project would probably still be on the drawing board. American Conservation Experience (ACE) was an important link in the chain of this project, too, providing expert machine work, intelligent trail design consultation and outstanding volunteer training.

Keep an eye on our Event Calendar for upcoming opportunities where you can help improve problem sections of the Arizona Trail. One small project at a time we can work together to make the AZT one of the greatest trails in America.

Wendy Lotze is the Volunteer Coordinator for the Arizona Trail Association. She can be reached at [volunteer@aztrail.org](mailto:volunteer@aztrail.org).



Volunteers brushing the corridor along a recently rebuilt segment of Arizona Trail. Wendy Lotze Photo

# Gossamer Gear's AZT Rukus Pack

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 are being constructed and will be only be available for sale at the ATA Online Store:

[www.aztrail.org/store/at\\_store.php](http://www.aztrail.org/store/at_store.php)

The Rukus ultralight backpack is a minimalist high volume hauler. This 40-liter pack holds a remarkable amount of stuff for its weight. The Rukus is easy to get into when you need it due to its short and wide profile. They are the ultimate day pack for hikers, runners and mountain bikers, and ultralighters can also take it on an overnight adventure. It makes a great urban bag, too, and helps with everything from getting groceries to holding a laptop or tablet. And it weighs less than 12 ounces!

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
- ♦ 4 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 are on shoulder straps

Order your Gossamer Gear AZT Rukus Pack before they're all gone at [www.aztrail.org/store/at\\_store.php](http://www.aztrail.org/store/at_store.php)





# Natural Restorations Cleans Up the Coconino

by Nicole Corey



On August 15, Natural Restorations partnered with the Coconino National Forest to host a volunteer cleanup event in the pines. Our goal was to remove trash and construction debris scattered throughout the area near Sheep Hill Tank, outside Flagstaff. Volunteers worked for more than five hours to remove 5.63 tons of trash. We removed large piles of shingles, pallets, couches, televisions, mattresses, tires, rugs, carpet,

plastic and glass bottles, aluminum cans, clothing and shoes, cardboard, broken glass, a broken-up concrete slab and much more. We filled a rollaway dumpster to capacity before we could collect everything dumped in this area. Volunteers gathered after the cleanup to discuss our accomplishments for the day and enjoyed lunch provided by Sprouts.



Volunteers worked to fill an entire roll-off dumpster in one day!  
*Natural Restorations Photo*

To view pictures from the cleanup, visit [www.naturalrestorations.org](http://www.naturalrestorations.org), click on About Us and Completed Restorations. Natural Restorations works throughout Arizona removing trash, graffiti and anything foreign to the environment from natural areas. We host several volunteer cleanups each year when restoration sites are safe for volunteers. When areas are too hazardous or remote for volunteers, we have a dedicated restoration team for those sites. Natural Restorations is environmentally conscious and approaches every restoration with an objective to leave as minimal a footprint as possible.

Stay tuned to learn about another successful volunteer event on October 17, 2015 where we hosted a Broken Glass & Trash Cleanup



When one dumpster was filled, a trailer was utilized to haul away the last of the trash. *Natural Restorations Photo*

at the Florence-Kelvin Highway Trailhead of the Arizona Trail. If you would like to volunteer with Natural Restorations, please email us at [contact@naturalrestorations.org](mailto:contact@naturalrestorations.org). With your help, Natural Restorations can continue restoring natural areas across the state. The Arizona Trail Association is Natural Restorations' non-profit fiscal sponsor, making all donations to Natural Restorations 100% tax deductible. To donate, please visit [www.naturalrestorations.org](http://www.naturalrestorations.org).

Here are a few comments from volunteers:

*"The cleanup was a great opportunity to give back a little to the trail that gives me so much pleasure! The event was well organized with plenty of tools, snacks and support. It was wonderful to see the immediate affect of our efforts."*

Sandy Fortner, Volunteer

*"It was a pleasure working as a volunteer with Natural Restorations who I found to be clearly dedicated and noticeably committed to rehabilitating and preserving the natural beauty of our great state. I look forward to working with them in the future."*

Bob Benincasa, Volunteer



Removing furniture and garbage from public land is just another day's work for Natural Restorations. *Natural Restorations Photo*

*"Anyone looking for a 'worthy cause' volunteer opportunity should check out Natural Restorations. A few hours can make a big difference. It's great when you can help out with something and see immediate results. I've been impressed with just how much trash and garbage can be cleaned up, with even a small group of people, in just a few hours of time. Kudos to Natural Restorations for their admirable undertaking to help keep our forests and recreational areas clean!"*

Tracy Fleming, Volunteer

*"So much of what happens to public land—fire, invasive plants, landscape-scale disturbances—is irreversible, at least in our lifetimes. But as ugly as these trash piles are, they can be cleaned up, and it doesn't take an act of Congress, or a massive mobilization of bureaucracy, or a huge amount of money. A dedicated coordinator and a group of volunteers can make an immediate visible impact on the public land in a few hours. You just have to do it. And it makes you feel really good."*

Shawn Redfield, ATA Trail Director & Volunteer

# THE LAST AMIGO

My Southbound Journey of the Arizona Trail in 25 days and 10 hours



by Rob "Strider" Trep

I was running through the night when I saw a pair of green eyes to my right, reflecting menacingly off my headlamp. "Here we go again," I thought as I casually pulled a rock from the waistband of my running tights. Experience had taught me that this maneuver was the only way to feel safe at night in the vast desert. I quickened my pace and whipped the rock as hard as I could and started my ritualistic dance meant to scare off mountain lions (think "Caveman on Fire" and you will get the idea of what it looked like). To my surprise, a young cow jumped about three feet in the air and took off at the speed of light. I called out "Sorry!" as I kept my pace on down the trail.

I first discovered the Arizona Trail while training in Pine for a series of ultras called the Four Deserts, held in Jordan, China, Chile and Antarctica. The concept was to carry all food, equipment and water for 150 miles while running across the most rugged landscapes and highest elevations in the world. When I told two of my ultra friends about my discovery, we quickly agreed that we would give the entire 800-mile trail a go. The time we were shooting for was 21 days, 14 hours, 16 minutes – the Arizona Trail's fastest known time, set by Adam "Krudmeister" Bradley in 2011. We knew we would be a good team because we ran the Antarctica race together under the name "The Three Amigos."

My amigos were Inia Raumati, an ER doctor from New Zealand and Brett Foote, a chiropractor from Australia. They would bring medical expertise to the table, and I'm pretty good at packing boxes and carrying equipment.

We pored over maps, guidebooks and various websites for about a year. Communication was a challenge, but we worked around the 17-hour time difference with late night Skype sessions. Every detail was discussed and fine tuned until we felt comfortable. We

grappled with issues from where to ship our food to how many squares of toilet paper to bring. Although we spent a full year planning, I guarantee that we could've continued planning for another two. There were just so many variables to consider, but at some point you have to say enough is enough and hit the trail.



The path ahead was what motivated Rob Trep to keep moving forward. *Strider Photo*

So there we were in September, getting ready to take our first step. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a stumble. As Inia prepared to board his flight from New Zealand, he came down with a bad case of pneumonia. He was out. Our equipment list, our resupplies, and every other facet of the race was impacted. Plus, we lost our doctor, which really freaked out my wife.

So now our team was down to Two Amigos. Brett was proven and reliable but he injured himself after 180 miles south of the Utah state line. He was also out. I was the last Amigo. In all honesty, the psychological impact of this was devastating. However, I knew that if I didn't finish the run I would regret it for the rest of my life.

Brett followed me for a couple of days and then my wife threw some equipment in the car and chased me down at various trailheads along the way. I guess it was important for her to verify that I was alive and well.

My experience with the trail was life

changing. I found it to be totally authentic and damn tough. I had hoped to put in 50-mile days, but the trail had its own ideas. It was extremely rare to tackle the same issue two days in a row. There were days when I ran out of food, water, got lost in a canyon, GPS malfunctioned, lost the connection to my SPOT receiver, could not get cell phone reception, got scratched to hell with thickets of thorny bushes, overheated, dodged rattlesnakes, and don't even get me started with those 19 different pesky mountain lions.

The terrain was TOUGH. I fell about once a day, and even dislocated my shoulder on a particularly gnarly crash in Pine. But hey, just pop it back in and keep chugging, right? I think one of my lessons from the trail was that sometimes I'm not in charge. Maybe I needed to let go of my Type A objectives and just enjoy the run.



Rob Trep consults maps and searches for available water sources along his cross-state run. *Strider Photo*

If you're thinking about tackling this great trail, here are a few specific lessons learned along the way:

- You can scream all you want, but if you want to scatter mountain lions just throw rocks.
- Adjust water consumption to your supply and do not venture more than ½-mile off trail to investigate possible water sources. It's a waste.





One of the many photos Rob took while running between Utah and Mexico. *Strider Photo*

- Keep a hill between you and all hunters. Some like to shoot randomly, especially at night.
- Small foam pads can reduce shoulder fatigue from backpack straps and can also be placed under your hips for a better night's sleep.
- SPAM is the caviar of trail food. Seriously.
- Ensure all of your equipment uses the same sized batteries. Distinguishing between AA and AAA in the dark gets annoying. Plus, it's super heavy.
- Keep your feet clean and bring extra socks. Clean socks on the trail feel like total luxury.
- Circle possible water sources on your map the night before and keep it tucked into the front straps of your pack.
- Make sure you interface with the awesome volunteers at the Arizona Trail Association. There are too many individuals to thank for the water, encouragement, support and guidance. I could not have done it without them.
- And lastly, don't be afraid to ask for help and pray often. Honor God, Honor the Mountains, and Finish the Trail! If there's anything I can't stress enough, it's this: commit to completing the Arizona Trail. It will change your life.



FINISHED! Rob Trepa's selfie at the US/Mexico border. *Strider Photo*



Marathon – Half-Marathon – 10K

**Saturday, December 5th, 2015**

This trail marathon, half-marathon and 10K traverses the valley between the Santa Rita and the Rincon Mountains. It offers spectacular, sweeping views and is mostly a gentle, winding descent through ocotillo, prickly pear cactus, creosote, and mesquite. The point-to-point marathon begins on the Coronado National Forest near Oak Tree Canyon and runners follow the AZT north. The half-marathon begins near The Lakes Trailhead and follows the second half of the marathon course. The 10K starts near Sahuarita Road and Hwy 83 and runs along the final 6.2 miles of the marathon course. All races finish at the Gabe Zimmerman Trailhead on the Arizona Trail near Vail. Transportation is provided to each start line on a chartered bus.

Whether you are looking to set a trail marathon PR or are attempting your first off-road run, this event is an ideal way to experience the Arizona Trail. Well-stocked aid stations, friendly volunteers and spectacular views are waiting for you. Proceeds benefit the Arizona Trail Association and its mission to maintain and protect the Arizona National Scenic Trail.

To register, volunteer or for more info, visit:  
**[www.aztrail.org/vailtrailrun/](http://www.aztrail.org/vailtrailrun/)**



Rob Trepa is a 41-year-old, self-proclaimed Family Man and small business owner. He lives in Peoria, Arizona with his wife Kristi and their daughter Brianna. He can be reached at [roberttrepa@yahoo.com](mailto:roberttrepa@yahoo.com).



# Exciting Happenings in Oracle

by Sirena Dufault

The view from the top of Arizona's highest (and newest) adventure zip line tour in Oracle. *Sirena Dufault Photo*

The Gateway Community of Oracle is located in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains and has long been known as an artist's community and weekend getaway. The area is dotted with guest ranches perfect for spending some time on the Arizona Trail at American Flag Ranch, Tiger Mine Trailhead and Oracle State Park.

This season, Arizona Zipline Adventures will be adding a whole new dimension to recreation in Oracle. Just 2.5 miles from the American Flag Trailhead, folks will be able to experience a five zipline eco-tour from 450 feet to Arizona's longest at 1,500 feet! The course goes through an ecosystem lush with ocotillo, alligator juniper, prickly pear cactus and agave and overlooks the beautiful San Pedro River Valley with the Galiuro Mountains in the distance. Arizona Zipline Adventures also features a Giant Swing and Leap of Faith and their High Ropes course is perfect for team building events for businesses, families and groups of all kinds.

Zippering through the air not your thing? Not to worry, there's plenty of other fun to be had at Peppersauce Station. Named for the nearby caves, the complex has

interpretive hiking trails outlining the history of this former gold panning location and a 3,000-square-foot enclosed patio perfect for relaxing or having a bite to eat. The ever-popular Oracle Patio Café will be providing the food so it's sure to be delicious. The patio is also great for events, retreats and weddings. Arizona Zipline Adventures will be hosting an Arizona Trail Association event in 2016; we'll release more details as they become available.

Peppersauce Station is sure to become a go-to for travelers on the Arizona Trail. Trail users can call for a shuttle from the American Flag Trailhead and refresh and resupply with showers, laundry and a small shop with camping, hiking and biking gear, and local goods. They will also accept resupply packages and in the future will be offering long-range hiker and mountain bike shuttles. There is a campground and several mini-cabins on site, with equestrian facilities located just across the street at the Hay Creek Ranch.

Last year, the community of Oracle and Arizona Trail users suffered the closure of the Oracle Market, leaving only the convenience and dollar stores for resupply. "We saw that the community was hurting

from the lack of healthy food options and wanted to do something to help," said Stacy Ranieri who owns the Oracle Patio Café with her husband David. They remodeled their restaurant and in May opened the Oracle Patio Market, much to the delight of locals and visitors alike. The Oracle Patio Market carries an eclectic mix of locally sourced foods, staples, organic vegetables, baked goods and grab-and-go meals.

Arizona Zipline Adventures is at 35406 S. Mount Lemmon Highway, five miles past the entrance to Oracle State Park. Visit <http://ziparizona.com> or call (520) 308-9350 for more information.

Oracle Patio Café and Market are at 270 American Avenue and are open Tuesday – Sunday from 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. for the Café and 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. for the market. Visit [oraclepatiocafe.com](http://oraclepatiocafe.com) or call (520) 896-7615.

*Sirena Dufault is the ATA's Gateway Community Liaison. She can be reached at [gateway@aztrail.org](mailto:gateway@aztrail.org).*



# WANTED: Trail Stewards

The Arizona Trail Association is in need of trail stewards to take responsibility for segments of the Arizona National Scenic Trail in various parts of the state. Stewards can be individuals, families, businesses, club, groups, or any collection of individuals that want to work together for the benefit of the Arizona National Scenic Trail.

Responsibilities include regularly visiting your segment; reporting on conditions and maintenance needs; organizing trail work events with help from Regional Stewards; and helping make your segment the best it can possibly be!

Some trail stewards maintain their segment monthly with the help of friends and family, while others organize public trail work parties once or twice per year. Others never pick up a tool, but regularly report on conditions to the Regional Steward and Trail Director. The most important elements of being a good trail steward are love for the Arizona Trail and a commitment to help improve it.

The ATA provides training and guidance, and rewards your efforts with a specially designed Trail Steward baseball cap. Trail tools are made available for all maintenance needs, in

addition to gloves, hardhats and other safety equipment. We also offer Steward Orientation and Training events numerous times throughout the year.

Being a trail steward is rewarding beyond words, and connects you with the Arizona Trail, its users, and other trail stewards in a very meaningful way. Contributing to the care of the trail at the ground level is among the most important ways to sustain this experience for future generations. Are you up for it?

If you are interested in becoming a trail steward, please contact Wendy Lotze, Volunteer Coordinator, at [volunteer@aztrail.org](mailto:volunteer@aztrail.org). Or email the Regional Stewards listed on the ATA website: [www.aztrail.org/at\\_stewards.html](http://www.aztrail.org/at_stewards.html).

Even if your favorite segment of trail already has a steward assigned to it, we are looking to add co-stewards to many segments, and shorten the length of various passages to make trail stewardship more manageable for all.

To learn more about stewardship, please visit [www.aztrail.org/steward\\_information.html](http://www.aztrail.org/steward_information.html)



## Field Notes - Saddle Mountain, AZT Passage 22

by Shawn Redfield



Before



After

Work on the Mt. Peeley project has resumed with vigor following the summer heat hiatus in an area that has long been a priority for the Arizona Trail Association (ATA).

American Conservation Experience (ACE) arrived in early October with their mini-dozer and completed 2.5 miles of work, converting the ancient roadbed into trail, carving robust drains into the old road bed and filling in huge washouts. They accomplished miracles through the boulder field near Thicket Spring. Hand crews will visit the area soon to finish the trail component of the project.

ATA volunteers returned on November 2 to work on installing new trail signs. The wooden signs along the route had disappeared in a 2012 wildfire so replacing them is important. Volunteers placed new wooden signs at the Cornucopia/Thicket Spring Trail junction

and at the wilderness boundary in McFarland Canyon. The new signs installed last spring at the Mt. Peeley Trailhead and the connection junction were remounted following finishing treatment to prevent cracking from exposure to the weather.

If you've never been to this wild and rugged part of the Arizona Trail, put it on your bucket list.

*Shawn Redfield is the ATA's Trail Director. He is a full-time volunteer and dedicates most of his waking hours to improving and maintaining the Arizona Trail. He would like to thank John Matteson, Joe Longbotham and John Ahrens for their recent help with this project, as well as REI's Tempe and Paradise Valley stores for their donation to help make this project a reality.*



# The 2015 Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stagecoach Line Ultra & Relay

by Ian Torrence



Race Director Ian Torrence (left) with 2015 champions Michelle Hawk and Mark Hammond. *Kristin Wilson Photo*

It's a long, rough and dusty drive to the Boundary aid station. Simply ask any of the crewmembers or volunteers that traveled the 25 miles of dirt road to get there to assist runners. However, as long as it may be the ride is worth it. This oasis sits at the 55-mile point of the Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stagecoach Line 100 Mile's course on the Kaibab National Forest's southern boundary with Babbitt Ranch – smack dab between Arizona's highest peak, Mt Humphrey's, and Grand Canyon National Park.

Located in the middle of a long, wide, rabbit brush covered swale one can truly say that they've now visited the wild wild west. Runners share the trail with cattle, horse, deer and antelope, and can

hear the distant bugling of elk. By the time they reach this point the sun has set and the moon has filled the sky, making colors visible without the use of headlamps. After running across the wide-open spaces of Babbitt Ranch it is at Boundary that competitors return to the trees and the singletrack Arizona Trail for the remainder of their 100-mile journey.

After having canceled the 100-mile event in 2014 due to horrendous weather, the 2015 Stagecoach went off brilliantly. We decided to keep last year's shortened 55K race within the event's repertoire. 100-mile and 55K runners started together and ran simultaneously over a 9000-ft. shoulder of Mt. Humphrey at

Aspen Corner, visited the Hart Prairie Preserve (famous for its Bebb willow trees), wildlife and views of the San Francisco Peaks, and through the golden aspen stands and ponderosa pine forests of the Coconino National Forest before descending to Cedar Ranch at 6400 ft. 55K runners ended their race at Cedar Ranch but the 100-mile runners continued on through ranch land and on to Boundary.

From there, historic locations like Moqui Stage Station and Hull Cabin and seasonal watering holes like Russell and Watson Tanks doubled as refueling points not only for the tourist-carrying stagecoaches at the turn of the 20th century but also served as aid locations for today's 100-mile contestants.

Jim Walmsley, two weeks after his 7:05 performance at the IAU 100K World Championships in the Netherlands, set a new course record in the 55K in 4:04:33. Kelsey Gray shaved 30 minutes off her 2014 time to win the women's 55K race in 5:51:22. Utah's Mark Hammond showed up to test his body after his 21-hour effort at

the Wasatch Front 100 Mile three weeks earlier. Uncontested, Hammond raced to win in 17:37:25, 4 minutes faster than Michael Versteeg's 2013 winning time. Perhaps the story of the day was Michelle Hawk, from Tucson, AZ. She was the fastest female, placing second overall, in 19:08, almost two hours faster than Suzanna Bon's 2013 winning time. We congratulate all 17 100-mile and 33 55K finishers and the 10



Runners share some camaraderie along the long and sometimes lonely path between Flagstaff and Grand Canyon.

*Kristin Wilson Photo*

relay teams that finished this challenging course. Their registration fees contribute greatly to the ATA and its mission to maintain and protect the Arizona Trail.

Make plans to be at Stagecoach's 2016 edition scheduled for September 24th & 25th. Volunteering for this event is a lot of fun, and will put in deep into the heart of some of the wildest terrain in Arizona so you can help support the individuals who push themselves to incredible extremes out on the Arizona Trail.

For complete results, inspiring photographs and much more, please visit [www.aztrail.org/ultrarun/](http://www.aztrail.org/ultrarun/)

*Ian Torrence is the Race Director of the Stagecoach Ultra, a professional coach for McMillan Running, and an Arizona Trail Steward for Passages 35b and 36a.*



Running in the tracks of the historic Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stage Coach Line.

*Kristin Wilson Photo*





# Scenic Resources Inventory

We all know that the Arizona National Scenic Trail has some of the most incredible views... looking into the mountain ranges of Mexico from high in the Huachuca Mountains on Passage 1; the ribbon of green trees and the dramatic spires of the Gila River Canyons from Passage 16; the view of Grand Canyon from Ooh Aah Point along Passage 38...the list goes on and on.

Now, for the first time, the US Forest Service is working to document the scenic resources that make the Arizona Trail unique. And they're asking for your help! From now until December 15, please take a moment to share information about your favorite scenic vistas along the Arizona Trail. Even if you just pick a few, this will help populate the Scenic Resources Inventory – a vital part of the USFS Comprehensive Plan that will help protect the trail into the future.

Just send an email to **[tamara@aztrail.org](mailto:tamara@aztrail.org)** with the following information or mail it into the ATA office (534 N. Stone Avenue Tucson, AZ 85705):

1. Your name
2. Your phone number and email address (if we have any follow-up questions)
3. Specific Passage/Segment you are writing about
4. Significant Scenic Resources (wilderness, major peaks/mountain ranges, scenic byways, special vegetation, historic sites, lakes and other water features, unique canyons/drainages, major views/vistas, etc.).
5. List items with state-wide importance and those important to trail users on a specific passage. Please indicate those that have statewide prominence with an asterisk (\*).
6. Current Scenic Impacts (mines, transmission lines, road crossings, wildfires, communication towers, etc.)
7. Threats to Scenery (e.g., urban growth, proposed mines and transmission lines, forest health problems, etc.)
8. Areas Where Scenery is in Excellent Condition (e.g., Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, etc.)
9. Other thoughts related to scenery (including opportunities to protect or improve scenery)

Thanks for taking the time to share your thoughts about the Arizona Trail's most scenic spots between Mexico and Utah.



Inspiring views of the mountains of Sonora, México from Passage 1 in the Huachuca Mountains.



The tailings of the Ray Mine dominate the viewshed near the Gila River along Passage 16.



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