Planning a long-distance adventure on the Arizona Trail?

Want to help with minor trail maintenance along the way?

Then join the Remote Trail Maintenance Task Force!

Responding to requests from numerous thru-hikers and riders who want to “give back” while they’re out there on the most remote portions of the Arizona Trail, we’ve developed a simple way for folks to trim back the encroaching acacia, remove problematic tree limbs, and help keep the Arizona Trail corridor clear. After all, it grows back with a vengeance every year!

If you’re interested in joining the Remote Trail Maintenance Task Force, just fill out and submit a form online and we’ll mail you a pair of pruning shears or pro hand saw along with a pair of work gloves. Just go online to aztrail.org/remote_maintenance/ to fill out the form and choose your choice of pruning shears (9.5 ounces) or a folding hand saw (8.5 ounces). We’ll also include a 1-page guide to proper brushing and trimming techniques.

Return the tool when you’re done by mailing it back to the ATA and we’ll pass it along to the next member of the Task Force. The gloves are yours to keep, along with our profound thanks for your help in maintaining the AZT.

Annual Meeting

Please join us on Saturday, February 6 when the ATA hosts the Annual Meeting at the South Mountain Environmental Education Center in South Phoenix. Members, volunteers, thru-hikers, agency partners, supporters and friends from the past few decades are expected to attend this annual gathering. We sincerely hope you will be among them.

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to get to know more about the ATA, reconnect with old friends, meet new folks who are passionate about exploration and stewardship, and celebrate the Arizona National Scenic Trail. It’s also a great opportunity to hear details about accomplishments of the previous year and get a sneak peek at goals for the year ahead.

Registration for the Annual Meeting is only $20 and includes lunch from Wildflower Bread Company. Diane Brossart, Executive Director of Arizona Forward, and Ron Klawitter, Water Analyst from SRP, will be among the featured guest speakers. They will talk about the upcoming Cragin Watershed Protection Project and what the Four Forest Restoration Initiative means for all Arizonans, especially those who love the Arizona Trail. Ras and Kathy Vaughan will also be there to share stories about their recent yo-yo (Mexico to Utah to Mexico) hike of the AZT.

Register for the Annual Meeting online at aztrail.org/annual_meeting/
Give a Helping Hand to Warrior Hikers

The Arizona Trail Association is proud to partner once again with Warrior Hike, a nonprofit organization that helps veterans “Walk off the War” on national scenic trails.

Their thru-hike of the Arizona Trail will start at the southern terminus on March 21, ending at the Utah border on May 21. Along the way, the Warrior Hikers will connect with other veterans at local VFW organizations within Arizona Trail Gateway Communities. Find out more about the program at warriorhike.org.

Two Warrior Hike participants will be needing shuttles, food and places to rest and resupply as they make their way from south to north. If you are able to help, please send a message to derwin@warriorhike.org. Dick “The Patriot” Erwin finished the Arizona Trail last year and was part of the original Warrior Hike group on the Appalachian Trail in 2013. We are pleased to welcome him as this year’s Arizona Trail Liaison for Warrior Hike.

Donations are also being accepted to assist with this program through aztrail.org/donate.html. Help us get more recently-returned combat veterans on the Arizona Trail and let Arizona’s natural wonders help heal some of the wounds of war.
As an Arizona Trail steward for a segment of Alamo Canyon near Superior, I am contacted several times each year by those hoping to access the AZT from Forest Road 4 (Telegraph Canyon Road), the only vehicle access to the trail along 36 miles of remote Sonoran Desert. “What are the road conditions,” they want to know, “and can I drive my sedan/hybrid/ rental car in there to cache water?”

My response is always a warning that FR4 is NOT maintained for passenger cars, and that it’s a rough, tough, mean piece of road that in my opinion should only be tackled by folks with high-clearance 4WD and the skills to use it. And it helps if you don’t love your vehicle too much.

So, in planning my annual fall work event for 2015, I was facing that rough ride on FR4…one that my husband would much rather I NOT take our truck on again. It’s a 7-mile hike south from Picketpost Trailhead to our usual camp at the FR4 crossing. That’s a long way for a group of backpackers to carry food, three days’ supply of water and trail maintenance tools just to get to the start of the project. After that, I’d planned a 9-mile round-trip hike brushing the trail corridor. How could I get the necessary gear in to this remote site for my dedicated trail workers and still maintain cheerful marital relations? Still more challenging, how would I get all of the same gear back out again once our event was complete?

This is a problem faced by many stewards on more remote portions of the trail. While the trail intersects and even shares alignments with many of the old roads and roadbeds, the harsh realities of the landscape often render these roads nearly inaccessible to the average driver. Carrying heavy tools and equipment into the project site becomes as labor-intensive as the project itself, and our time available for work is compromised. In this case, the day was saved when I got in touch with TRAL (pronounce it ‘trail’), the Tonto Recreation ALliance. They saved me an entire day on both ends of the project by volunteering to transport all of our gear to and from the trailhead. What might have seemed like an unlikely partnership turned into a great opportunity for everyone.

TRAL is an Arizona nonprofit corporation comprised of volunteer off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts. While their primary goal is to help improve and maintain designated roads and trails used by OHVs, their President, Rich Smith, says “The bigger picture is about being members of a larger recreational community and good stewards of public lands. We want to help the Forest Service with issues they have in managing the Tonto and we also want to help our fellow volunteer groups with their work where we can.”

In the case of our project on Passage 17, Rich helped us coordinate with Jeff Labertew and a group of Jeep enthusiasts called the M&F Jeepers who like to get out on the trails on Mondays and Fridays during the winter season. The group simply arranged their plans to drive FR 4 as part of their weekly activities. The group is made up of winter residents, who “do not get many chances to volunteer for projects like this that let them do things with their Jeeps,” says Jeff. “Many are older and have limited physical capabilities also. We all felt a sense of accomplishment after helping with your project.”

For the TRAL volunteers, my characterization of FR4 as “rough and mean” was amusing. Rich told me “For our folks, FR4 is a scenic but not particularly difficult route. It’s like a drive to the mall.”

They even offered a lift to several of the trail work volunteers who were helping to load gear into the Jeeps. In their well-outfitted rigs, the ride was comfortable and stress-free compared to the white-knuckle adventures I’d had in my husband’s beloved truck. Our group was able to accomplish more trail work with fewer hands than on any previous work event. We cleared up the entire 4.5 miles of our segment and still had time for a Dutch-oven chili cookout on Saturday evening. TRAL volunteers contributed almost 50 combined volunteer hours to the event.

And on January 13 and 14, TRAL assisted Arizona Trail stewards from the East Valley Back Country Horsemen as they repaired segments of Passage 17b. While there is often a chasm between the non-motorized and motorized trail communities, TRAL and the ATA are working together to enjoy and protect the resources we are passionate about.

If you’re interested in learning more about partnering with OHV enthusiasts to support your trail work event, contact me at volunteer@aztrail.org.

Wendy Lotze is the Volunteer Coordinator for the Arizona Trail Association, a trail steward for Passage 17a, and leader of the Arizona Back Country Horsemen.
Southern Arizona
Imagine the joy of discovering a beautiful riparian area in the low desert, or getting up close and personal with a saguaro for the first time. Thanks to the Seeds of Stewardship (SoS) program, students in southern Arizona were on the trail more than ever before in 2015, and engaging in diverse and educational partnerships with the National Phenology Network and Saguaro National Park.

In Patagonia, the Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center (PYEC) began their collaboration with SoS in the summer, kicking things off with Arts on the Trail – a five-session arts and outdoor experience. We served 25 students on summer break, bringing the beauty of the landscape back into their homes with visual art, poetry and photography. This culminated in a photography workshop with Tucson-based photographer and educator Josh Schachter. Since then, PYEC has continued collaborating with SoS and we have been working with ecologist Caleb Weaver of Borderlands Restoration to learn about restoration and conducting native species scavenger hunts.

In Vail, the STEM Club and Hiking Club at Andrada Polytechnic High School have teamed up to participate in outings – exploring Cienega Creek and snowy adventures in the Santa Rita Mountains.

In the Tucson area, EDGE Charter High School is our newest partner. Many of their 17 student participants have no prior experience in the outdoors. They are getting deeply immersed, literally, at Colossal Cave Mountain Park, visiting the cave and the Arizona Trail. This new group, along with our long-time partner schools Mansfeld Middle School and City High School, also completed saguaro surveys at Saguaro National Park-West. Each school surveyed 18-24 saguaros, taking measurements and photographs to help the Park track how these iconic cacti might be reacting to a changing climate.

Santa Rita High School and Mansfeld Middle School also have had the opportunity through SoS to collect an input data into Nature’s Notebook, a citizen science project that allows for non-scientists to track seasonal changes in the flora and fauna in their own backyard. The Mansfeld Middle School group of 7th graders created their own phenology trail on the school campus, which is now used as a schoolwide resource for a variety of subjects, from biology to English as a Second Language.

Northern Arizona
This past year has seen expansive growth for the SoS program in Northern Arizona. We began 2015 with three classes in two schools in Flagstaff, and expanded the program to include a total of seven classes in five schools. We have guided approximately 415 youth hiking and mountain biking over a collective 2,300 miles of trail. These excited students have monitored aquatic ecosystems; observed the effects of dwarf mistletoe on unhealthy ponderosa pine forest; visited healthy forest ecosystems; studied human impacts on natural environments both ancient and modern; created observational nature art; and identified plant species both native and invasive.

During our Peaks to Park bikepacking trip, five students rode more than 70 challenging miles between Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon. I still have parents in town stop me on the street to tell me what a life-changing experience that trip was for their children. After lots of experience riding smoother trails, students from Flagstaff Junior Academy Mountain Biking Club rode 15 miles of exhausting and technical trail along Passage 32 (Elden Mountain), demonstrating not only how much they have grown in skill but also in their self-confidence. During our ride we encountered a traffic jam of hikers and other mountain bikers at a popular trail junction. They all quickly began reminding each other to yield to hikers and helping one another move out of the way of the other cyclists who were moving faster than us. One of the cyclists in the other group sought me out later to compliment our students on their manners and consideration. The most exciting part of our program here in the northland though, is that we are only just getting warmed up.

To read outing reports and see inspiring photos from the Seeds of Stewardship program, please visit aztrail.org/stewardship/seeds.html

Seeds of Stewardship outings are made possible by grants from

Students from Flagstaff Junior Academy remove invasive from the Arizona Trail and Coconino National Forest.
Sabrina Carlson Photo

Over 1,000 young people participated in the Seeds of Stewardship program in 2015 through experiential, educational and stewardship activities on the AZT. Sabrina Carlson Photo

Seeds of Stewardship – Highlights from 2015
On October 17, 2015 Natural Restorations partnered with the Arizona State Land Department, Pinal County Open Space & Trails and the Arizona Trail Association to host a volunteer cleanup project at the Florence-Kelvin Trailhead in an attempt to remove broken glass and trash scattered throughout the area. Thirty-five volunteers worked to remove over 6 tons of broken glass and trash!

Over the past few decades, this area has become a routine dump site and popular location for target shooting. The amount of accumulated glass was almost unbelievable, and according to Kent Taylor, Director of Pinal County Open Space & Trails, was the most broken glass I have ever seen in one location. Working together, volunteers removed nearly every shard of glass and returned the area to its natural state. This will greatly benefit Arizona Trail users since the Florence-Kelvin Trailhead has become increasingly popular for hikers, runners, mountain bikers and equestrians exploring Passages 15 and 16 of the Arizona National Scenic Trail.

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. We also have a dedicated restoration team working year round to restore natural areas around the state, including areas that are too spread out, hazardous or remote for volunteers. Natural Restorations is environmentally conscious and approaches every restoration with an objective to leave as minimal a footprint as possible.

We are currently building our 2016 schedule and would like to hear from you if you have suggestions of natural areas that could benefit from our services. Please send an email to contact@naturalrestorations.org.

Here are a few comments from our volunteers:

“It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to partner with volunteers from the community, specifically Nicole and the team from Natural Restorations. My Home Depot team and I were shocked after seeing the condition of this beautiful area prior to our cleanup efforts. The Home Depot takes great pride in its efforts to assist in the community, efforts that help the environments that all of us live in and efforts that help the people within our community. The accomplishments that were made in this cleanup effort were simply amazing! My team and I greatly appreciate the opportunity given to us to work with some amazing volunteers making such a dramatic impact within such a beautiful natural habitat!”

Bob Misner, Home Depot Store Manager (Crismon & US 60)

“Volunteering with Natural Restorations was a wonderful experience. The entire event was very well organized and everyone was so friendly. There are some beautiful places in Arizona and I fully support any efforts to keep it that way!”

Wendy Lamaestra

“I had no way of knowing what a valuable and satisfying experience this would be! Justin and Nicole Corey are wonderfully positive people who obviously want to help clean up our wonderful Arizona. Working with them and the incredibly upbeat volunteers was very fulfilling, not like work at all, although we accomplished much. Justin and Nicole both made sure that everyone was safe, hydrated, and knew all expectations. This was an enriching experience and I will join them again!”

Jeff W. Johnson

If you would like to volunteer with Natural Restorations, please email us at contact@naturalrestorations.org.

Donations are encouraged to help with cleanup supplies, gear and logistical expenses. To donate, please visit our website, naturalrestorations.org. With your help, Natural Restorations can continue restoring natural areas across the state. The Arizona Trail Association is the nonprofit fiscal sponsor of Natural Restorations, making all donations to Natural Restorations 100% tax deductible.
yo-yo

noun
1) a toy consisting of a pair of joined discs with a deep groove between them in which string is attached and wound, which can be spun alternately downward and upward by its weight and momentum as the string unwinds and rewinds.
2) a stupid, insane, or unpredictable person.

verb
1) to move up and down along the same trajectory
2) an out-and-back adventure along the same section of trail, starting and finishing at one location, allowing the traveler to experience the same territory from different perspectives.

“10/14 Day 27 – The difficulty of this yo-yo AZT hike is overwhelming a lot of the time. I have BIG questions every day about whether I can do it. 1,396ish miles left. Crawling along the trail. (Just) Fruit for the 58 miles to Pine over crazy challenging terrain. Bugs. Little H2O. Overgrown bushes grabbing and scratching. Tears, Sweat. Blood. Hungry.”

Kathy’s AZT Yo-yo journal

When we set out to yo-yo the Arizona Trail, hiking it from one end to the other and then back again, we expected it to be one of the most difficult challenges we had ever faced. That was the entire point: to push our bodies, minds and relationship to their limits, and then past those limits, to see what existed beyond. And that turned out to be the ideal mindset for our adventure, as the AZT delivered all that and more.

There’s no point in trying to sugarcoat this: the AZT is a badass trail. True, there are easier stretches and harder stretches, and over its 800 miles it features enough variety to offer challenges appropriate for hikers, runners, bikers and equestrians of all skill and experience levels. But be forewarned: the AZT isn’t a trail for testing the waters; it’s a trail for testing your mettle.

For those who choose to travel the Arizona National Scenic Trail from end to end, whether in one extended push or broken up into sections, it’s a journey of dizzying heights and crashing lows, both literally and figuratively. A hard-won summit has no choice but to precede a descent in both physical and mental topography. And as the weeks and miles pile up and the AZT takes its toll, the slow motion butt-kicking it doles out can begin to feel as though the trail doesn’t WANT you to succeed.

However, any sense of a personal grudge on the behalf of the trail is an illusion. It doesn’t care one way or the other if we silly humans succeed or fail in our self-gratifying attempts to thrash our way through.
across the state of Arizona. The AZT abides. It is neither malevolent nor beneficent. It simply exists as a boundless, beautiful and brutal landscape: a wilderness that mirrors the internal hinterlands of the Human Heart and Mind, the very places into which we must delve in order to come face to face with our own most essential Humanity.

But this description isn’t meant to dissuade anyone from attempting the AZT: the technical nature of the trail tread; the far flung and frequently nasty water sources; the brutal climbs and relentless descents; the inhospitable foliage and extreme range of weather possibilities; amongst myriad other challenges are the very reasons TO do it, Because it’s only after we push through the deepest darkness of the tempest that the new day dawns brighter than ever.

“Day 91 – Good morning! The sun is shining and it’s only lightly breezy. The hills are beautiful dotted with juniper. The grasslands, we are here again and they are in a different stage, gentle and blowing, dry and golden. The hills are rolling and only the distant peaks are dusted in snow. Sirena’s visit was immensely uplifting. I feel good this a.m. It’s warm and the end is in sight.”

Kathy’s AZT Yo-yo journal

Ras and Kathy Vaughan, aka Team UltraPedestrian, are ultramarathoners, adventure runners, and thru-hikers who write about their adventures at www.UltraPedestrian.com. Follow them on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter at @UltraPedestrian.

On December 20, 2015, Kathy and Ras Vaughan of Whidbey Island, Washington became the first people to yo-yo the 800-mile Arizona National Scenic Trail. For 93 days, this adventurous couple traversed the state of Arizona twice, covering a total of 1,668 miles on foot.

Ras embraces the inspiring views along the Arizona Trail as it descends into one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

After 1,668 miles Ras and Kathy reach the U.S./Mexico border, where their yo-yo adventure began 93 days before.

Hiking northbound and southbound in the same season gave Team UltraPedestrian an opportunity to experience the AZT in a way that nobody else has.
Just 53 northwest of the southern terminus of the Arizona Trail, northbound travelers find their first chance to rest and resupply in the Gateway Community of Patagonia. Arizona Trail signs welcome and guide you right into this friendly town, with a population of 900.

Patagonia has everything you need in a small town, starting with The Stage Stop Inn and its attached restaurant, The Wild Horse, located on McKeown Avenue, Patagonia’s “Main Street.” Owners Lynne and Gerry are proud Business Partners of the Arizona Trail Association and act as Trail Angels; arranging transportation, receiving and shipping packages, providing laundry service, or whatever else you may need. Many unique bed and breakfasts also dot the landscape. Resupply is possible at the Patagonia Market and also at Red Mountain Foods, which has a wonderful organic selection.

For a small town, Patagonia has a wide variety of restaurants to satisfy the hungriest of trail travelers. Right as you get into town is the Ovens of Patagonia, another Business Partner. It’s got a delicious assortment of baked goods, deli sandwiches, coffee, locally-made gourmet items and a freezer full of helados, decadent Mexican ice cream bars.

The Velvet Elvis is a longtime favorite, serving stone baked, whole wheat crust pizza with an unusual variety of toppings and organic salads. On the other end of the spectrum is the down-home Wagon Wheel Saloon, which has bar fare and cold beer. Heartly burritos and other Mexican dishes can be found at Mercedes Restaurant.

A vibrant artist community, Patagonia has a variety of galleries that showcase both locals and artists from around the world. The annual Fall Festival in October is a weekend celebration of artisans and musicians. Patagonia’s Arizona Trail Day is an opportunity to experience the beauty of local trails and the nature and history that surrounds them. Mark your calendar for this seventh annual gathering on April 22-23.

The Patagonia area is rich in history and attractions from ghost towns to world-class birding. Nearby Sonoita Creek contains incredible biodiversity in a riparian habitat and the Nature Conservancy has an interpretive facility and trail network at 150 Blue Heaven Rd. Farther downstream, Sonoita Creek is dammed to create Patagonia Lake. This picturesque 250-acre lake is 2.5 miles long and has numerous options for boat-in campsites as well as a large camping area for tents and RVs near the marina. The Sonoita Creek State Natural Area accessed on the east side of the lake is a more primitive experience, and has a trail network with three hike or ride-in campsites.

Mountain biking is very popular in Patagonia and there are a number of loops with forest roads that can be done right out of town. “The Loop” is 14.3 miles with about 600 feet of elevation gain. From Patagonia, take the Arizona Trail along Harshaw Road south 3.2 miles to dirt Harshaw Creek Road/FR 139 and turn left. Follow Harshaw Creek Road, lined with sycamore, ash and cottonwoods for 4.3 miles until you come to a stop sign at a T intersection with another dirt road. Turn right and after 0.4 miles you’ll find yourself back on pavement – the other end of paved Harshaw Road. Continue on Harshaw Road 6.5 miles mostly downhill back to Patagonia. Don’t have a bike? Paragon Bike Rental has you covered.

Currently, the Arizona Trail north and south of Patagonia involves traveling on paved and dirt roads. There is an exciting project awaiting Forest Service approval to realign the trail and build new singletrack, which would enhance the Arizona Trail experience and provide some amazing loop options for hikers, runners, mountain bikers and equestrians alike. Look for updates on the project later this year.

For more information on where to eat, stay and play in the Gateway Community of Patagonia, visit aztrail.org/gateway/patagonia.html.

Sirena Dufault is the Gateway Community Liaison and Social Media Coordinator for the Arizona Trail Association. She can be reached at gateway@aztrail.org.
Did you make a resolution this New Year to spend more time getting out, giving back or making a difference? Are you looking for a rewarding opportunity to contribute to the activity or environment that you love? Have you considered becoming a passage steward on the Arizona Trail?

Stewardship of a passage of the Arizona Trail is a great privilege, one that is becoming increasingly sought after by individuals and organizations who wish to demonstrate their commitment to the unique ideals and opportunities the trail presents. They may have different beliefs, backgrounds and communities – and even different ways of enjoying the trail – but they all have a real desire to ‘give back’ to the resource in a meaningful way. With the trail gaining notoriety and the rapidly growing popularity of outdoor recreation, it is critically important that we have engaged stewards to interact with trail users, monitor the trail’s condition, and perform regular maintenance when necessary.

Take a minute to review the list of passages in need of stewardship. Perhaps one of them is near and dear to your heart already, or maybe you see something on the list that you want to get to know a little better. If you have your heart set on a passage not listed here, don’t hesitate to contact us and let us know what area interests you. We are always looking for co-stewards to help share the load (and the love). The list is changing constantly, and there may just be an opportunity just right for you!

For more information on becoming a Passage Steward, contact volunteer@aztrail.org or one of the Regional Stewards listed at aztrail.org/at_stewards.html.

Field Notes - Oracle Ridge

In November, the Arizona Trail Association and Arizona Conservation Corps teamed up to tackle the overgrowth on Oracle Ridge (Passage 12), an area that frequently receives negative comments from trail users due to the locust, catclaw, oak and other thorny bushes that frequently invade the trail corridor. ATA volunteers focused on the first half-mile of trail north of the trailhead near the gateway community of Summerhaven and left the more arduous terrain to the professionals.

On November 7, a group of 10 volunteers led by Bernie “Trail Dog” Stalmann and Regional Steward Jeff Bridge cleared the path with brand new string trimmers (aka weed whackers). The rest of the crew worked hard to beat back the brush with loppers and removed many patches of grass with pulaskis. In a few spots, benching and clearing small drainages was necessary. They also removed innumerable loose rocks from the tread. At the end of the day the crew had a little extra energy, so they cleaned up the trailhead and parking lot. Thanks to Bernie, Mary, Ray, Randy, Mike, Scott, Doris, Dave and Ellen for their help.

Thanks to a grant from REI-Tucson, a crew from Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) spent over a week improving the AZT between Oracle Ridge Trailhead and Dan Saddle. Here are a few impressive numbers from their effort:

- Total Crew Hours Worked: 414
- Hours Worked by Program Staff: 36
- Total Trail Improved: 2.1 miles
- Tread Maintained: 3,960 feet
- Corridor Cleared: 7,140 feet
- Downed Trees Removed: 3
- Rock Check Steps Installed: 3

If you want to experience the fruits of their labor, wait until the snow melts on the north side of the Santa Catalina Mountains, then plan a point-to-point journey from Summerhaven to Oracle along this beautiful and challenging segment of trail.
A growing number of Gateway Communities along the Arizona Trail celebrate the outdoors with Arizona Trail Day events. These gatherings give trail enthusiasts an opportunity to meet locals within the small towns that give the AZT much of its charm; listen to dynamic presentations; enjoy guided hikes, runs and rides; soak up live entertainment; and maybe even sip a cold Arizona Trail Ale. Each Trail Day event has its own local flavor and activities. Visit one or all of them this year and celebrate the AZT!

**Save the Date for Arizona Trail Day Events Across the State**

February 13  
Legends of Superior Trail Festival

March 12  
Arizona Trail Day – Page

April 23  
Patagonia EARTHfest

September 9-11  
Arizona Trail Celebration Weekend – Flagstaff

November 12  
Arizona Trail Day at Colossal Cave

Fall 2016  
Arizona Trail Day – Oracle

Date TBD  
Pine/Strawberry Trails Day

To learn more, please visit aztrail.org/trail_day/ for more details as they become available.

**Business Partner Spotlight:**

**M & B Sedan**

Mountain biking from Picketpost to Kelvin and need a ride back to your car? Want to hike through the Superstition Wilderness but don’t want to leave your car at a remote trailhead? Need a lift into town during your thru-hike? The ATA is proud to announce a partnership with a new shuttle service to handle all of your Arizona Trail transportation needs between Oracle and Pine! M & B Sedan is a welcome addition to the Business Partner program, and fills a gap that has long existed within central Arizona.

M&B Sedan is a family-owned business offering transportation to and from your trailhead destinations on the Arizona Trail between Oracle and Pine. Certified at both Phoenix Sky Harbor and Phoenix Mesa Gateway, they can arrange your transfers from hotel to trailhead to airport. Their fleet includes SUVs for up to 7 passengers and sedans for up to 3 passengers.

Contact them at mbsedan.com or (877) 627-3326.
For many of us, preparing our daypack is an automatic exercise; we bring the essential gear to have a good and safe day working on the trail. Brushing project? Bring a small, flat file to sharpen loppers when the palo verde and mesquite trees dull the blades after two hours. Rock Armoring? Bringing a 12-foot tape measure really makes your life easier when you are wandering around the desert looking for the right rock. But getting ready for a work day requires more than just the right stuff in your pack. Sure, you need to have enough water and actually remember to grab that lunch out of the fridge, but having the right tools goes beyond being ready for the elements and the long day ahead.

Trail maintenance is not just standing in the sun doing manual labor, or telling your friends how far you took those tools for a walk. For those of us who devote time to improving our favorite trails, we appreciate doing something that improves our natural world and the camaraderie that comes with sharing these experiences. The life of a trail worker is about great memories, great friends and the best of stories. But beyond the good times, we are looking to make the trail better and make our built environment more sustainable. To truly do good work, to make the trail a better experience for all, and to protect it from the forces of nature requires a combination of skills.

Trail work is part science, part art. The earth science component involves the hydrology of the area, the substrate of your trail tread, as well as knowledge of geology, vegetation zones and weather patterns. The Arizona Trail travels through a stunning array of landscapes, requiring careful observation to determine what maintenance techniques will best improve the environment around the segment of trail you care for. The sociological side involves knowing why we use the trail, how the land in front of us is the foundation of making the right decisions. As lovers of the outdoors, we already spend time studying our environment. Now it’s time to apply those thoughts from our brains to the earth.

**Tip for the Trail Steward:** Think like the water! Where is it coming from? Does it run down the trail and for how long? Did the erosion you see happen fast or over time? Studying the effects of water will go a long way in helping you determine what forces are at work, and what strategies will best maintain the segment of trail you steward.

So the next time you are out there taking those tools for a walk, stop and look around. This will become habit forming and will help you have a great day on the trail.

Mark Loseth is the National Trails Coordinator for American Conservation Experience. Tips for Trail Stewards is a regular column intended to further your understanding and skills in trail maintenance. The ideas have been developed, tested and proven by trail professionals on the Arizona Trail. To learn more about the art and science of trail stewardship, sign up for one of the Arizona Trail Steward Trainings offered by ACE throughout the year by visiting aztrail.org/volunteers/training.html.
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