

Enjoying the Fruits of our Labor with a Ride Along the AZT

by Sabrina Carlson



Back on April 17th, members of the Flagstaff Junior Academy Mountain Bike Club had worked on the section of Arizona Trail leading out to Fisher Point from Flagstaff. Their stewardship work included digging drains and filling in wallows. On May 20th, 7 club members got to take an after-school ride over the same trail we worked on the month before. After a busy school day the youth and two teachers loaded up bikes for this on-the-trail adventure.

We parked at the quiet back corner of the Sam's Club parking lot where the kids rode bikes around to test brakes and gears. After double and triple checking everyone's food and water supply we started off down the Flagstaff Urban Trail System trail past the ponds at Lonetree. We decided to cut off the rubbly AZT climb and curved around the back side of the mesa behind the ponds. The club leader was in front for the ride out where he started everyone out at a swift warm-up pace. After climbing around to join back up with the AZT, we paused for some excellent instruction by Mr. Ross on how to handle trail curves by leaning your bike to one side (bike body separation) rather than trying to steer with your handlebars.



FJA Mountain Bike Club members on an afterschool ride along the Arizona Trail – the very same segment they helped improve earlier this year.

We continued out on the Flagstaff Loop Trail where we had a sweet and smooth downhill where we all got to practice what we had just learned. After rejoining the AZT we got to ride right over the trail that the club had worked on just a month earlier. We paused for a few minutes for a snack at “the cave” just below Fisher Point. While we “rested” some of the kids took turns trying to ride their bikes up the steep and precipitous hill in front of us. They quickly decided it was a hill better suited for walking.

We decided it was time to head back so we wouldn't be racing the dark too much. I took the lead on the way home, and had the kids in front stop several times to wait for the back of our pack.

When some mild objections to waiting for the slower kids arose, it made for a great opportunity to talk about the difference between a race and a group ride, including how important it is to always cheer on our friends at the back of the group. After all, the guy in the back is still riding faster than all the kids on the couch...right?

They seemed to REALLY take this to heart and offered genuine cheers to their friends as they rolled in one by one. After the ride, I asked those who had come on the trail work day for their thoughts about riding over the work they had done they agreed that it had been much better to ride it after our work, than it would have been before. One boy said, "I noticed that the sections WE worked on, actually rode smoother than the parts the grown-ups fixed." Don't tell the grown-ups...but he was right.

Until next time FJA Wolfpack...Ride On!



Taking a break in the sandstone alcove known as "the cave" along the Arizona Trail.

This outing was made possible by a grant of funds from:

