



Caring For the Trails We Ride

by Sabrina Carlson

The Flagstaff Junior Academy Mountain Biking Club, led by 5th-6th grade teacher Neil Ross, focuses on providing its members with a solid foundation in mountain biking skills so that the students involved will grow in confidence and competence to tackle more advanced riding in the future.

One key foundational lesson these young cyclists learn is the importance of participating in the care and maintenance of the trails they enjoy through respectful riding and volunteer stewardship. On October 9th, 2015, 13 members of the club set out on the Elden Mountain Passage of the Arizona Trail to do some much needed work to repair the trail.

After a safety talk by crew member volunteers from ACE and Laura James from the USFS, students donned their helmets and collected tools to get to work.

One group set out to close a social section of trail. They collected branches, pine needles and leaves to lay heavily in the overused section of forest to show others that this section of trail was no longer open with the hopes that vegetation would soon regrow and return the forest floor to its natural state.



Hauling Dirt!



Tamping Dirt!

A second group began the process of digging a large new drain to help mitigate the substantial damage caused by rainwater channeling onto the trail. It was a big project that took this group the entire time we were there to finish. The hard working riders used dirt harvested from the drain and a nearby hillside to fill in the damage and build a check dam to ensure the water would go where we wanted it to. When they were finally finished with those tasks, youth used deadfall to fill in the wide and rubbly areas beside the trail to divert users to the appropriate path.

A third group focused on removing loose and dangerous rocks from a steep, fall line section of trail. They observed the difficulty of keeping steep trail sections in good shape. There wasn't much that could be done to improve the drainage. Though re-routing trail wasn't on the agenda for the day, students discussed what nearby possibilities

existed for laying out an alternative trail line that would be less prone to future damage. Without even knowing it, they were learning about the science of gradient and hydrology.

It was a productive and satisfying day of trail maintenance. When we were finished, several students expressed how proud they were of their work and their very specific feelings about how upset they would be if someone damaged the work they had done.

Sense of accomplishment? Check!

Understanding of stewardship? Check!

Time to ride? Check!



Proud of Our Work!

We would like to express our enormous gratitude to Jake Tiegs and all of the folks at Arizona Rafting Adventures (AZRA) for making this outing happen. The day before this event was to take place, an unforeseen transportation issue arose that could have forced us to cancel the event. Thankfully, the folks at AZRA stepped up and sent us a bus and driver to get the students out to the work site and back. Thank you AZRA! We couldn't have done it without you!!

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