



## Sinagua 6th Graders at Work on the Trail by Sabrina Carlson

One April 11, 2016, 28 students from Ms. Esparza's 6th grade class at Sinagua Middle School got to lend a hand with the Coconino National

Forest and American Conservation Experience near the Little Elden Trail Head to repair part of the Arizona National Trail, Passage 32 (Elden Mountain).

We first divided the class into two groups to spread out the workload. One group built trail by digging drains and filling in eroded areas with rock wall reinforcement. This would help keep the trail firmly attached to the hillside. The second group spent time identifying and removing invasive weed species. Since the Schultz Fire had affected that area, there was quite a significant amount of weed material around.



Hauling Rock!



A loop trail with a lot of facilities!

We then played a game called "Micro Trails" where we discussed the various considerations it takes to build a trail – location, user groups, access, scenic overlooks, and other trail attractions. What kinds of facilities would be available, and who will pay to build and maintain this trail? After a creative conversation, they each constructed a miniature trail with yarn using the terrain around them to help plan their route. This group was very imaginative with their ideas and unusually practical about their thoughts on fundraising. When asked how they will pay to construct their trail, many would say things like "I'll pay for it myself! I plan to be rich!" or "We will charge people \$20 a day to use the trail! That will cover the costs!"

There were also suggestions that maybe outdoor gear companies who make backpacks or hiking shoes might donate money in exchange for promotion. Maybe a group interested in conservation would donate some money to keep the area natural and scenic and prevent future commercial development. A few students were inspired by a recent trip to Disneyland. After a recent trip there, one young lady had learned that Disney had trashcans every 15 feet to prevent littering. She envisioned a full service trail experience with bathrooms, snack bars, and of course, many options for disposing of visitor's trash.

This was one of the most technical and physically demanding trail work days our students have done so far and they did an amazing job! By the end, everyone felt quite accomplished with their work, but oh so tired!



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