



Repairing the Trails We Enjoy by Sabrina Carlson

On May 13, 2016, nine members of the Flagstaff Junior Academy Mountain Biking Club and their coach Neil Ross joined the Coconino National Forest and the Arizona Conservation Corps to help repair a quarter-mile section of the Arizona National Scenic Trail, Passage 34 (San Francisco Peaks) north of the Aspen Corner Junction.

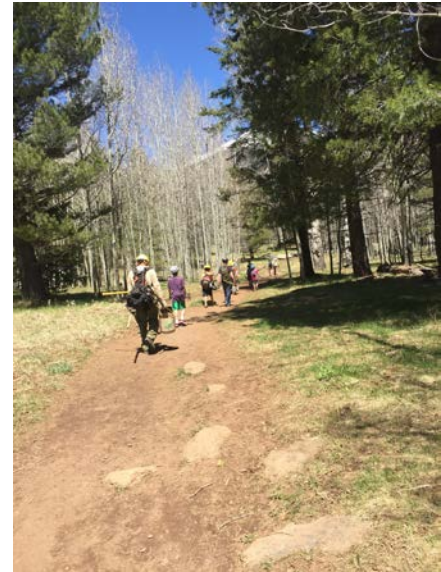
Leaders from AZCC first gave the students a safety talk, showing them all of the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) that they were to wear at all times, and the correct and incorrect way to use the tools. Once everyone was clear on safety precautions, we donned our PPE, gathered the tools, and hiked up the trail to where the USFS had set pin flags marking the drains we were to dig.

Once we arrived at our work site, each adult took 2-3 students to work on either cleaning out and reinforcing an old drain, or digging a brand new one. Each drain needed to slope below the grade of the trail, and then dirt needed to be backfilled just downhill of the drain to ensure water would move off the trail and into the small retention basin at the bottom of the drain. Each time I bring a group out for trail work I marvel at the basic hydrology and engineering skills they learn from this work without even realizing they are doing it.

The work was hard, especially when digging through tough prairie grass to add new drainage, and the students all took turns working the tools and taking breaks. Even on a relatively cool afternoon everyone worked up a sweat and had to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. But the views were spectacular and we knew that in another couple of weeks we would return here to ride this very section of trail and we could admire our handiwork.



Digging sod is super hard work!



Hauling Tools

On our way back to school, the students discussed in amazement about how much time and how many people it took to fix just one tiny piece of trail. They tried to imagine the immense job of maintaining the entire 800 miles of Arizona Trail, or the thousands of miles of trails in our National Forest and other public lands all around the US. They seemed to grasp at least a small bit of perspective about the

importance of volunteering to help keep our trails in good condition. They all agreed that when we returned to ride this section, we would really feel like we had really earned it.



This Seeds of Stewardship outing made possible by a grant of funds from:

