Restoring Trail
by Sabrina Carlson

On November 15, 2017, seventy students from Kinsey Inquiry and Discovery school traveled to the Double Springs Campground to access the Mormon Lake Passage (Passage 29) Of the Arizona National Scenic Trail for a trail improvement project.

The Mormon Lake passage has been getting a great deal of attention and work this fall with tread improvements and reroutes where necessary to fix damage and erosion. The students were excited to be part of this massive repair effort. One of the most powerful pieces of our particular brand of service learning through trail building and public lands stewardship is how real, necessary, and technical it is. It is rare that adults trust children to do such complex projects. The added knowledge that they were a vital piece of a larger project that our entire agency was invested in gave them a greater sense of purpose and pride.

With such a large group it becomes necessary to divide into teams to make the management of trail work and tool use easier. Half the students headed out before lunch to tackle the trail while the other half joined me for a lesson in planning sustainable trails and the process of taking a trail from idea to built. The students designing trail had many incredibly creative ideas on how to fund and maintain their trails and the models included thoughtful inclusion of interesting features like caves, cliffs, and streams.

After working hard on tread repair and drainage improvement, we all met back up for lunch and delicious cookies. Once lunch was over we swapped groups to give everyone a chance to participate in trail building and learning.

The section of trail we were repairing had a number of steep descents into drainages that were creating sections of extreme erosion, exposed rock, and unstable tread conditions. Several large drains had to be built and shaped to handle the infrequent but intense precipitation events common in Northern Arizona. Students also worked to remove loose rock and restore soil to the trail where appropriate.
It was a super productive day and the students learn so much about hydrology, trail engineering and how empowering it is to volunteer on our public lands.

This outing was made possible with support from Arizona Trail Association members, donors and grant funds from:

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