

AZT Administrator's Report October, 2018

- Margaret Hangan, Kaibab National Forest Archaeologist, who has been working on cultural resources on our planning team, is developing a trail-wide participating agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) with the aim of simplifying and standardizing practices related to SHPO compliance trail-wide. Margaret, Coronado National Forest Archaeologist Dave Mehalic, and Matt Nelson had a conference call recently to discuss the compliance situation on the Coronado and the challenges there. They agreed to develop a standardized protocol that can be used as a template for the SHPO agreement (Matt can provide more details).
- I and our recreation planner, Stephanie Valentine, have been very focused on the visitor capacity piece of the comprehensive plan. We have been following guidance by Francisco Valenzuela, Regional Recreation Director, who has some innovative ideas on how to address this plan requirement. We are collecting information from land managers trail-wide about each passage to document current use of the trail and how the trail is providing for the desired visitor experience. We would like to provide ATA staff and stewards the opportunity to have some input but with these meetings lasting one hour per passage, we want to be respectful of people's time so will share what we have learned when it is all compiled and see if ATA can provide additional information for us. At this point, it is looking likely that this portion of the plan is the only element that will require a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision. Much of the plan should be analyzed but the actual decision would pertain only to the visitor capacity. I hope this evolution in the process will help to expedite the implementation of the plan.
- The sign plan is complete and should not need to wait for the full comprehensive plan to apply this guidance. There are some considerations involving the use and registration of the service mark (trail logo), however, that must still be sorted out and I have new information about this.
- We do not have the national trails budget yet but notwithstanding the continuing resolution situation, indications are the funding will remain the same as last year. We are being encouraged at the regional level to obligate funds soon and with a new master challenge cost-share agreement in place, we should be able get the ball rolling so we do not run into the bottleneck that delayed processing of the agreement in fiscal year 2018. The master agreement is good for five years and funds can be obligated by a forest or by the regional office with a supplemental agreement.
- The planned closure date for the Temporal Gulch Road on the Nogales Ranger District, Passage 4, is not final but is expected to occur about November 4 and last through spring while mine reclamation work is being conducted. I expect the Nogales Ranger

District to support the route scouted by Zach and Lee. As always, the ATA's quick response in helping to find a solution to this challenge is greatly appreciated!

- The Forest Service is rolling out a draft 10 Year Sustainable Trail Stewardship Challenge and has just completed a series of webinar meetings with partners to collect input. The challenge incorporates elements of the [National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System](#), which was published in 2017. This is a collective challenge that focuses on what changes and improvements can be made to 1) improve the Forest Service's ability to manage and maintain trails over the long-term and 2) directly increase on-the-ground results. The collective community that supports trails managed by the Forest Service is being challenged, including all levels and many other program areas, and trail partners (including trail organizations, individual and group volunteers, local communities, tribes and tribal organizations, and outdoor recreation economy stakeholders). The national trails non-profit organizations, including the ATA, provide an excellent model and we hope this will create a conduit for the broader trails community to benefit from the long history of cooperation and stewardship that has created and sustained our national trails system. One of the points made during the discussion was the need to eliminate barriers that partners face when trying to work with the Forest Service, such as inconsistent application of NEPA and the agreements process.
- Next week is the 2018 National Trails Conference in Vancouver, WA where the focus will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act. Happy Anniversary national trails!