

TRAIL OPERATIONS REPORT – SUMMER 2020

Passage 1, Southern Terminus and Huachuca Mountains – Two miles of AZT have been closed by Customs & Border Protection beginning July 13 for border barrier and road construction. The southern terminus will now be Montezuma Pass into the foreseeable future. Volunteer Vacation rescheduled due to COVID-19 to perform routine maintenance and corridor clearing at the Crest Trail from Sunnyside Canyon to the Crest Trail between Bathtub Spring and Miller Peak.

Passages 3-4, Temporal Gulch Reroute Project – ATA signed recreational access agreement at Wildlife Corridors property and an encroachment permit from ADOT to cross through Big Casa Blanca Canyon culvert, allowing Forest approval for the entire 32-mile project. ATA completed the first 3 miles of new trail construction south and east of Highway 82 in May, 2020. State funding paid for an ACE Crew of four crew leaders and Rob Bauer to complete this first half of the first 6.1-mile segment. ATA will complete the additional 3.1 miles to connect to AZT and begin construction of the next 6-9 mile segment north of Highway 82 beginning this Fall if state funding is approved for carryover to FY2021.

Passage 4, Temporal Gulch – Temporal Gulch Road is finally open after one year of closure for the Mansfield Mine Reclamation Project. ATA Stewards updated signage throughout and have completed general maintenance on the singletrack segment from Walker Basin to Apache Spring TH. Wilderness signs have been added at north and south boundaries.

Passage 5, Santa Rita Mountains – Project proposals have been submitted to the Coronado National Forest for improved access and increased trail user safety, and are currently under review. Development of Oak Tree Canyon Trailhead is planned for Q4, and informational signs informing recreational shooters of the trail's location nearby are being discussed. Two shooting areas located within close proximity to the AZT will be closed before the shooting closure is lifted this season. Addressing recreational shooting impacts and public safety issues are long overdue in this area.

Passage 7, Las Cienegas – Signage and wayfinding aids updated throughout passage.

Passage 9D, Italian Trap – ATA was awarded a National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance grant for rehabilitation of 7.1 miles of trail between Redington Road and Saguaro National Park boundary. Work to be completed with volunteers October – November.

Passage 10, 11, 11C - Pusch Ridge Wilderness and Bypass, and Passage 12 – Fire and restoration crews are working to rehabilitate areas impacted by heavy equipment, mostly at the lower segments of Passage 12 (Oracle Ridge). Going forward, 56 miles of trail within the Santa Catalina District and the Bighorn Fire area are subject to restoration and stabilization evaluation, Burned Area Emergency Relief funding, mitigation prior to flooding, and post-fire repair and subsequent flooding. District staff, along with ATA, and hardy volunteers will complete assessment as soon as we are allowed access.

Passage 14, Black Hills – ATA working with Pinal County to seek approval from Arizona State Land Dept. to upgrade wire gates at two remote locations.

Passage 15, Tortilla Mountains – Asarco recently announced that construction of the 6-mile Ripsey Wash Reroute will need to be delayed until Winter of 2021 due to their own internal delays in being able to develop Ripsey Wash as a tailings storage facility. For now, the current AZT remains open and scenic.

Passage 16, Gila River Canyons – BLM has funding available to install additional vehicle barriers where OHV incursion is occurring. ATA and Rob Bauer will complete site visit this month to prepare a plan and bid to complete installation this Fall.

Passage 17, Alamo Canyon – ATA has the traditional wooden signs for the LOST connector trail to Superior completed and ready for installation, likely when temperatures subside this fall. New trailhead sign developed and installed at Picketpost Trailhead.

Passage 19, Superstition Wilderness Woodbury Fire – Roger Smith has scheduled to replace the spring box at Walnut Spring at the beginning of September in anticipation of two additional AZCC crews scheduled to complete stabilization at the Big Dip, between Walnut Spring and Two Bar Ridge, starting later in September or early October.

Passages 20, Four Peaks and 21, Pine Mountain – The Bush Fire burned over most of these two passages, much of it at a high intensity. We have coordinated with the BAER team on what preventative measures are necessary to stabilize the trail on steep slopes and across drainages, suggesting eight conservation corps hitches with pack support. Until we are allowed in the burned area we don't know much else, but anticipate a need to replace most of the trail signs and kiosks.

Passage 22, Saddle Mountain – Grant funding is available to grade and surface the road within the Cross F access location and add road signs and an interpretive kiosk. We will also add a sign at Bushnell Tanks near Sunflower to direct users to the Cross F location. Mesa Ranger District's authorization to proceed is expected when impacts of the Bush Fire are better understood.

Volunteers scouted and mapped a 2.5-mile reroute to move the AZT off dirt road north of Sunflower. Mesa Ranger District staff will complete the archaeological field work and the project will be joined with the larger NEPA effort for the Highline/Pine area trails. Being proximate to the Phoenix Metro area, this is an ideal volunteer project.

Passages 23, Mazatzal Divide and 24, Red Hills – Four conservation corps hitches scheduled for this spring have been rescheduled to this fall if state funding is approved for carryover to FY2021. They will perform routine maintenance and repair two problem areas.

Passage 25, White Rock Mesa – As of July 7 the Polles Fire had burned less than a mile of the AZT. While the fire appears to be contained, crews are working northeast of the fire to be ready to protect Pine and Strawberry if needed. This work will likely improve area road access, greatly benefitting the Alder Ridge project.

ATA received \$115,000 in Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding for the Alder Ridge project to build 6.7 miles of trail across the NE corner of the Mazatzal Wilderness, replacing 8 miles of road and 2 miles of trail. Volunteers accompanied Angie Abel, FS Recreation Officer from the Payson Ranger District on a hike of the project in March. ACE and volunteers will build the trail this fall/next spring.

ATA also received \$50,000 in RTP funding for four Conservation Corps hitches to complete 6.5 miles of maintenance between the East Verde River and the Alder Ridge connection point

Passage 26, Highline – Planning and preparations continue on the comprehensive improvements to the Highline Trail. Volunteers scouted and mapped approximately 9 miles of numerous AZT realignments, ranging from a few yards to a few miles in length. ATA will join with Pine-Strawberry Fuels Reduction and Volunteers for Outdoor Arizona to lead a multi-task order contract for the archaeological surveys for this and considerable other trail work in the area.

A small ACE crew and ATA contractor Rob Bauer removed the washed-out culvert at Geronimo Spring and built a rock-reinforced crossing to replace it. Boulders, which had been dumped at Washington Park for unknown purposes, were used in the project, removing an eyesore from one of our other project areas.

ATA volunteers installed a two-rail zig-zag fence around the Pine TH. A new trailhead kiosk with navigational sign and Share the Trail message are forthcoming.

Passage 28, Happy Jack Singletrack Project – An Eagle Scout candidate organized a large crew to remove the excess carsonite signs on over 5 miles of the passage that were not part of the HJST project. Volunteers plan to install five bike rollovers when fire restrictions lift. Brady Vandragt, Mogollon Rim Ranger District Recreation Planner, reports he will close out the State Parks grant for this project this quarter.

Passages 30, Anderson Mesa and 31, Walnut Canyon – Volunteers installed two donor-funded gates near Marshall Lake TH. An effort is underway to remove the AZT from the rutted doubletrack across Anderson Mesa and replace with a sustainable singletrack alignment. This project was identified as a priority within the Flagstaff Trails Initiative comprehensive planning effort, and is being studied by northern Arizona stewards and Matt Roberts from Flagline Trails.

Passage 32, Elden Mountain – Realignment of the Little Elden Trail is complete (a volunteer effort led by Flagstaff Biking Organization), signed and open. This is a massive improvement over the former alignment. Three trailhead kiosk panel covers were recently replaced near Schultz Tank due to recreational shooting vandalism last summer.

Passage 33, Flagstaff – A minor realignment to remove the AZT from a short segment of Schultz Pass Road was identified as a priority project within the Flagstaff Trails initiative and is currently underway (a volunteer effort led by Flagstaff Biking Organization).

Passage 34, Maverick Singletrack Project – ATA staff and stewards designed and walked a 22-mile singletrack alignment with amazing views of the Peaks to the south, Painted Desert to the east, and North Rim of the Grand Canyon to the north. This project will remove the existing AZT from dirt roads to connect singletrack directly to the Babbitt Ranch Singletrack project near Babbitt Lake. Proposal will be presented to the Coconino National Forest in August.

Passage 35, Babbitt Ranch Singletrack Project – ATA staff and volunteers, working with Flagline Trails have completed, signed, and are opening the 15 miles of new trail this month. A small completion celebration is planned for August 1. An additional 3 miles of trail are being planned to connect to the Maverick Singletrack project near Babbitt Lake, pending National Forest approval.

Passage 37, Kaibab Reroute – Since the Kaibab National Forest and National Parks recently opened dirt roads to motorized use, and some of those roads comprise the current AZT alignment between Grandview Lookout Tower and the Town of Tusayan, the ATA and Kaibab NF staff have been exploring a potential re-route. A proposed 14-mile singletrack alignment to connect from where the existing AZT joins doubletrack heading north near Watson Tank to Grand Canyon National Park, rejoining the existing AZT at the Rim Road near Yaki Point Road, is being studied on the ground. This alignment will be submitted to the USFS and GCNP for review this summer. In addition to removing the AZT from dirt roads on the Forest, this project would also remove the AZT from the paved Tusayan Greenway Path within GCNP. Matt will meet with Park leadership this summer to discuss the viability of singletrack construction within Grand Canyon NP.

Passages 40, 41, 42, Kaibab Plateau – Laura White secured \$10,000 in funding for the North Kaibab

Ranger District. We have scheduled a small crew for late August to complete miscellaneous tasks, including construction log fencing around two trailheads, installing four sign panels (on hand) for kiosks at two locations, and installing steel emblem signs. Time permitting, we will scout and design a possible half-mile reroute and explore possible conversion of 3.5 miles of road to singletrack.

Seven miles of the AZT was burned at high intensity during the Mangum Fire this summer. ATA is in communication with the USFS and plans to conduct an on-the-ground assessment as soon as the area is open to administrative use. ATA will work with the BAER team to develop a treatment and stabilization plan. For now, the Arizona Trail is closed from Hwy 89A (Orderville Trailhead) to the National Forest boundary.