

## Arizona Trail Association Volunteer Program Report

08/2020 – 10/2020

**Volunteer Hours Reported: 2,449**

**Volunteers Engaged: 258**

### Key Events and Programs:

**Trail Skills Institute Video Series Update:** In spite of funding still not being awarded for the Safety & Environmental Education Grant for the Trail Skills video series, we have soldiered on with production of the first 3 videos. The series is intended to supplement the in-person Trail Skills Institute and make training available to first time and novice volunteers. The universal accessibility and free-to-user cost of streaming video will help move forward our goal of increasing the diversity of our volunteer corps. The videos are being produced by Outdoor Evolution's Darwin Rakestraw, content is being developed with Matt Roberts of Flagline Trails and Mark Loeth of American Conservation Experience. A challenge in the schedule has meant that rather than having a single on-screen instructor, we'll have different instructors across the series. We moved beyond feeling frustrated by these challenges and embraced the opportunity to introduce even more diversity into the project. Mark Loeth delivered the first video and for the second two we worked with Nate Peters of Arizona Conservation Corps. Our plan is to bring in some female instructors as well as representatives from diversity communities. Ultimately, we hope to produce 10 videos of no more than 6 minutes in length to maximize attention span and engagement. Using a variety of filming techniques and modern social media cues, we hope to establish a film series which will be fun to watch as well as informative. They will be made available on the ATA's YouTube channel and a quiz interface will also be created to confirm that people have watched them so that we may provide simple certifications.

Filming began in early June in Flagstaff. A second filming session happened on a blistering and punishing Labor Day weekend in Superior and Tucson. The first 3 videos are available for pre-viewing (they are currently hosted on my personal channel while I continue to figure out some of the finer points of YouTube publishing before going live on the ATA channel):

[Why Do We Build and Maintain Trails?](#)

[Desert Brushing](#)

[Evaluating Erosion](#)

### **New Stewards:**

Derald Cox, 35b Babbitt Ranches; Scott MacComb, 32b Elden Mountain; Michael Spahle, 29b Mormon Lake; John Yazzie, 31c Walnut Canyon; Patrick Kohonen, 34a San Francisco Peaks; David Loeffler, 26d Highline; Josh Mortenson, 19b Superstition Wilderness.

I'm also thrilled to welcome TWO new Regional Stewards. Sarah Baxter has been a steward in the Huachuca Mountains since 2018 and she has agreed to step in as the Regional Steward for the Borderlands Region which includes passages 1-6. She spends large portions of her summers in Montana or somewhere cool like that, so Zach MacDonald will continue to have a leadership role in that area as well. After we lost Daniel Snyder as Regional Steward for the Lower Colorado Plateau, we split the area into two new regions of more manageable size. Bill Sandercock, a long standing steward on the Mormon Lake Passage, has agreed to become Regional Steward of the Mogollon Region which includes passages 27-31. We are still recruiting for the Flagstaff Region, Passages 32-37. Hint hint!

### **Resuming Events**

Small scale events resumed this summer, and demand for opportunities to get involved has been overwhelming and inspiring. If we can maintain even a fraction of this energy once we're able to resume more normal operations, we will have more labor than we can shake a McLeod at.

In some cases, we are able to run two crews simultaneously on the same passage but in different work locations. In this way we can have larger groups engaged but still maintain adherence to our own COVID protocols.

August 8: Mormon Lake Two groups of 8 volunteers worked to rehabilitate the historic railroad bed that has been negatively impacted by motorized incursion.

August 15: Babbitt Ranches 9 volunteers completed finishing work on the singletrack alignment near Tub Ranch.

August 22: Walnut Canyon 9 volunteers worked on the final stretch of a short reroute on the climb out of Walnut Canyon near the end of passage 31.

September 5-7: Huachuca Mountains 9 Volunteers did a two-night backpacking event to clear along the Crest Trail on Passage 1.

September 18-20: Walnut Canyon Veteran's Work Event. 9 Veterans gathered for a weekend of camping and trail work to complete the Sandy's Canyon reroute at the end of Passage 31.

September 24-28: North Rim Shawn lead a group to accomplish fence building, steel trail sign installation, trail maintenance and trailhead sign installation for this annual event.

September 26: Anderson Mesa Two groups of 9 volunteers gathered for a much needed routine maintenance event hosted by stewards Marlene and Melvin Betani.

October 2-4: Mazatzal Wilderness 9 volunteers backpacked into the Mazatzal Divide to perform maintenance. Hosted by co-stewards Sandy Fortner and Merianne Brittan. This event is fondly been titled "Raz the Haz on the Maz."

October 3: Rincon Mountains Part of the "Clear the Trap" project funded by a grant from the NFF, volunteers were driven in to Italian Trap using rented UTVs to perform maintenance on a remote portion of the AZT near the Rincon Wilderness Boundary. 8 volunteers worked at the remote spot and 3 more worked from the trailhead at Redington Road.

### **Upcoming Events**

Nearly every event listed has a wait list, in many cases that waitlist is double the size of the group we can accommodate.

**Trail Skills Institute Modules 4 and 5:** October 17-18 and October 31-Nov 1. These sessions concentrate on trail layout, design and construction. We'll be using the northern end of the Temporal Gulch route as our classroom.

**Trail Skills Institute Modules 1&2:** Taught as a single two-day session Nov 14-15 near Oracle.

**Clear the Trap** events: Oct 24, Nov 13-15. One more event supported by UTVs and a longer backpacking weekend to continue to clear vegetation and tread between Italian Trap and the Wilderness Boundary.

**Raz the Haz on the Maz:** They're taking a second trip to beat back the bush with 20 volunteers backpacking in (as separate groups) over Halloween. Oct 20-Nov 2.

**2020 Steward Conference:** Exploring the options for a combination of in-person and virtual gatherings for steward training and community building November 21<sup>st</sup>.



Filming video in Whitford Canyon



The ATA loaded to bear!