

Arizona Trail Association Executive Director Report – Summer 2021

Fundraising

- Please see Development Report – over \$1.1 million secured since January!

Wildfires

- [Telegraph Fire](#) – 177,295+ acres; burned all of Passage 17 and has impacted gateway communities nearby. Passage 17 is closed, and Passage 18 is unsafe.
- [Slate Fire](#) – 11,435+ acres; burned a portion of Passage 34 and portions of the new Maverick Singletrack project area. Portions of Passage 34 and 35 remain closed.

ATA staff and volunteers will conduct conditions assessments and support agency staff in securing BAER funds as soon as it's safe to enter the burn zones.

Administration

- Updated [COVID protocols](#) for programs, projects and volunteer opportunities.
- Form 990 is in the hands of our CPA, and expected any day now. Audit & Finance Committee will review and provide recommendations to the Board so we can get this finished and published.
- Contract Bookkeeper (Heather Thompson, Everything Counts LLC) and is working on monthly financials, reconciling books, and other duties defined within their Scope of Work.
- Work Comp Audit will begin next month, and will be finished by August.
- Reinstating Special Event Insurance and Commercial Auto coverage for Ford Transit van.

Land Acquisition

- State Land, Pima County – I recommend we pursue purchase of State Trust Lands south of Vail to support construction of Sahuarita Road Trailhead. Being a property owner elevates the ATA from an interested party to a stakeholder, which is an advantageous position for long-term engagement in the management of a National Scenic Trail. The process would also allow the ATA to navigate the real estate purchase process with ASLD – which may inform how to proceed with larger land acquisition projects to preserve the trail and corridor. Grant funding is available for some costs associated with the purchase application (@\$10,000), and numerous funding sources exist should the ATA decide to put the resource into the public trust (example: apply for Land and Water Conservation Funds to transfer ownership to Pima County NRPR).
- BLM, Pinal County – The BLM will be acquiring private land near the Gila River at the historic Coke Ovens, recently approved through Dept. of Interior LWCF request. This will make an interesting side trip along Passage 16 for those interested in the historic beehive-shaped ovens.

Tribal Engagement

- Yavapai Apache Nation – currently working with the Apache Cultural Affairs Director on a trailhead sign project north of Sunflower (Passage 22), and development of smartphone app-compatible layer for traditional place names and stories from Apache history.
- Southern Paiute & Hopi – initial outreach to two tribes to help develop a cultural history and traditional place names panel for trailhead on the Kaibab Plateau (Passages 40-42).
- Hopi – meeting scheduled for July to review Anderson Mesa and Maverick reroute projects, before those alignments are submitted to the Coconino National Forest (Passages 30 and 34).
- Tohono O'odham – ongoing communications about the Santa Rita Mountains (a traditional cultural property) and Temporal Gulch Reroute project; and engagement in development of information for a trailhead kiosk panel at Oak Tree Canyon or Casa Blanca Canyon.

USFS Comprehensive Plan

Brian Poturalski's detail as AZNST Administrator ended in May, and he has returned to the Coconino National Forest. The position has been advertised, numerous qualified candidates applied, and the position has been

offered to an individual. If they accept the position, the onboarding process should wrap up sometime in July. We will plan a virtual meet and greet with the new Administrator after that time.

The draft version of the USFS's Comprehensive Plan for the Arizona National Scenic Trail should be released to the public this summer. ATA should be prepared to read thoroughly and comment comprehensively, and share with our members to encourage their participation in the public comment process. The Plan has tremendous potential to be an effective conservation tool for the trail and corridor (as intended by National Trails System Act legislation). We should expect opposition from industry groups.

Special Events

ATA will be hosting special events again in 2021—with COVID protocols in place—beginning with the Flagstaff to Grand Canyon Stagecoach Ultra on September 18-19. We will resume our regular schedule of Endurance Events, and Arizona Trail Day-Flagstaff in 2022. This will help generate unrestricted revenue to support ATA programs and operations.

State Funding

- A \$250,000 appropriation into the Arizona Trail State Fund is in the draft State Budget. We expect it to survive any budget negotiations.
- Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund may be cut from \$10M to \$5M. ATA will be able to apply for grants through this Fund, if it is refunded by the State Legislature.
- RTP Full Funding Act ([HR 1864](#)) recently introduced, and ATA is advocating for its support in the House. This will at least triple the amount of funding available through the Recreational Trails Program, funded by Off Highway Vehicle gas tax.

Media

Please check out the recent articles, podcasts, television coverage and other news about the Arizona Trail here: <https://aztrail.org/category/in-the-news/>