

## Veteran Program Report (March—May 2021)

prepared by Michael “Chappy” Chappell, Veteran Outreach Coordinator

Since assuming the position, the **VETS** (Veteran Engagement & Trail Stewardship) Program has achieved the following:



- Successfully facilitated 2 Veteran Volunteer Work Weekends in Tonto NF (Pigeon Spring) & Coconino NF (Bismarck Lake)
  - 12 participants
  - Over 260+ volunteer hours
  - Approx. 5 miles of impacted trail
- Supported 2 AZT thru-hikers sponsored by Warrior Expeditions
- Strengthening online presence re: future VVWW events through social media channels:
  - Creation of new engagement opportunities through platforms on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook (Group & Page), Nextdoor & Instagram
- Active/ongoing engagement with Southern AZ veteran sponsored communities such as:
  - Tucson Vet Center
  - Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (VA Clinic/Main Hospital)
  - Team RWB (Tucson Chapter)
  - Boulder Crest AZ
- Currently vetting national veteran-specific & federal organizations/businesses:
  - Wounded Warrior Project
  - Team Rubicon
  - Stop Soldier Suicide
  - Combat Flags
  - USPS
- Identified local veteran-owned/employer business sponsorship opportunities:
  - REI Tucson
  - Summit Hut
  - Desert Rat Tucson
  - Ben’s Bikes
- Received donation of 100 custom made patches worth over \$2600; currently exploring ways to use for program fundraising & participant SWAG.
- Began conversations w/ tribal reps from northern AZ VA re: potential collaboration on future events on reservation lands with local veteran communities.
- Scouted & secured ~1 mile section of the Temporal Gulch Reroute project for the Veteran Program, scheduled October 2021 (currently live through volunteer portal).

Although the summer months won’t provide much in the way of volunteer opportunities in Southern AZ this year, we will continue to look for ways to engage with our vets through social media, in-person meet-ups, third-party events and fundraisers, and ceremonial occasions (July 4<sup>th</sup>).