

# **Arizona Trail Association 2022-2026 Strategic Plan**



**A National Scenic Trail (2009)  
A State Scenic Trail (2007)**



## VISION

The vision of the Arizona Trail Association community is to secure and protect an 800+ mile continuous non-motorized trail across Arizona from Mexico to Utah, linking deserts, mountains, canyons, forests, communities and diverse peoples. The purpose is to provide access to a wilderness experience through the work of an organization committed to the values of inclusion, fairness, and protection of the natural environment.

## MISSION

The mission of the Arizona Trail Association is to protect, maintain, enhance, promote and sustain the Arizona Trail as a unique encounter with the land.

The Arizona Trail Association should:

### Protect

*By working to protect the physical trail and its corridor through engagement with managing agencies, policymakers, and the general public; and acquire threatened lands within the trail corridor.*

### Maintain

*By collaborating with volunteers, private and governmental organizations to repair the trail through routine maintenance, and attempt to avert damage from natural disasters.*

### Enhance

*By improving trail signage, moving trails off roads, enhancing water resources, increasing access, and improving trail passages.*

### Promote

*By reaching out to the public to increase awareness, building community support, and raising funds to support our mission.*

### Sustain

*By engaging youth, students, trail communities and others so they learn how to safely use the trail and make it a valued part of their lives.*

## Ongoing Priorities

The following are suggested strategies of how these goals might be accomplished. The Executive Director's annual priorities document is incorporated, with Board approval, by reference as a quantitative measure of goals. Rapidly changing circumstances may necessitate adaptation and prioritization of these activities.

**Protect**, including:

**Strategic Goal:** Protect the primarily remote, wilderness experiences for all non-motorized forms of recreation and the biodiversity that defines the Arizona Trail experience.

- Unless the trail can be protected against extrinsic threats to its very existence, the trail may fail in its objectives or, worse yet, be physically compromised by changes in land use or agency priorities. Protecting the Arizona Trail from these types of threats is the unique responsibility of the ATA.
- The ATA should protect the physical trail by working with state and federal agencies, local communities and volunteers to maintain a safe pathway across public lands, and when possible to provide access across public and private lands, removed from roads, through conservation easements or purchase of lands to protect the trail corridor and access.
- Develop a Board of Directors with diversity in age, ethnicity, talent, geography and experience who will actively engage in fundraising.
- Increase partnerships with other nonprofit organizations that have shared values and ethics.
- Remain engaged in political advocacy so all elected officials are legislating with the best interests of the trail and trail community in mind.
- Remain involved and engaged in public comment processes (and encourage members to participate) to protect the resources for which the Arizona Trail was designated a National Scenic Trail.
- Study impacts on wildlife from the trail and recreation, and be proactive in preserving wildlife corridors and habitats.
- Collaborate with land managers to complete forest thinning within the trail corridor in high-risk areas to reduce negative wildfire impacts.
- Keep up with advances in sustainability techniques and address climate change issues.

- Continue efforts to acquire lands within the trail corridor not currently preserved within the public domain.

## **Maintain**, including:

### **Strategic Goal:** Strengthen partnerships

- Maintain a strong working relationship with the USDA Forest Service in their role as Administering Agency of the Arizona National Scenic Trail.
- Work closely with Gateway Communities to promote the trail and encourage local pride in their role as an integral part of the Arizona Trail experience.
- Strengthen partnerships with county, state and federal agencies.

### **Strategic Goal:** Develop and allocate financial and organizational resources to maintain the trail and its unique features

- Develop a financial strategy to build an Endowment Fund to provide legacy funding for all the needs of the trail and organization.
- Direct resources toward professional trail builders when priority projects are beyond the ability of staff and volunteers.

### **Strategic Goal:** Continue the GIS program to support trail users with maps and apps to provide safe access to and along the trail.

### **Strategic Goal:** Provide ongoing opportunities to support volunteerism; engaging repeat volunteers in more intensive stewardship projects; and diversifying volunteer opportunities to keep the organization strong.

- Increase the diversity of the volunteer population through intentional and respectful outreach to less-traditional communities including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and differently-abled groups and individuals.
- Continually improve the standard of volunteer training offerings through increase in both quantity and quality of opportunities, diversity of delivery, and expanded accessibility.
- Increase the quality and quantity of opportunities within the volunteer program.
- Develop a crew dedicated to Arizona Trail maintenance and construction – independently or through a conservation corps partnership.

## **Enhance**, including:

### **Strategic Goal:** Develop water resources in the interest of trail user safety.

- Work toward improving or developing water sources throughout the trail. Anticipate changes to climate and specific sources to be enhanced before they disappear.
- Expand rainwater collection facilities through installation of new collectors, renovate existing tanks, work with range staff, AZGFD, and ranching permittees to manage cattle at or below approved levels, maintain existing water sources, and maintain fences and enforce exclosures for natural water sources.

**Strategic Goal:** Continue to develop Wilderness bypass routes for mountain bikers.

- Where the trail passes through designated wilderness, identify and promote viable routes for mountain bikers.

**Strategic Goal:** Enhance signage.

- Replace temporary fiberglass posts with permanent steel posts. Remove any extraneous signage.
- Update sign kiosk art to highlight historic and cultural significance along the trail and within the trail corridor

**Promote**, including:

**Strategic Goal:** Promote the trail and the unique lands through which it passes to outdoor enthusiasts, local communities and the general public.

- Engage with communities on social issues as they relate to the stewardship of the trail.
- Build and support ATA membership and encourage members to support the trail.
- Develop opportunities for thru-hikers to celebrate their accomplishment and give back to the trail through personal donations, membership, volunteerism, or other means.
- Support an ever-expanding presence on social media platforms.

**Sustain**, including:

**Strategic Goal:** Raise awareness of the Arizona Trail – locally, nationally and internationally.

- Establish a strong presence in Central Arizona - specifically in the Phoenix area for outreach programs and fundraising. Organize at least one major fundraising event annually in Phoenix with specific fundraising goals.

- Continue and expand youth outreach and education programs.
- Recruit, train and encourage volunteers to monitor, maintain and enhance portions of the trail.
- Provide training, education and technological tools to encourage stewardship of the trail.
- Educate the public on the trail's proper use and the importance of stewardship.

**Strategic Goal:** Provide diversity, equity and inclusion training to staff, members, Board, volunteers and trail users.

- Encourage and support a more diverse trail community.
- Acknowledge ancestral lands and the historical sites within the trail corridor as well as the unique botanical and geologic interests.
- Engage youth to experience the trail and participate as its stewards, as members, and on the Board of Directors

**Strategic Goal:** Provide outreach and education surrounding Leave-No-Trace, Recreate Responsibly, Share the Trail, and other initiatives that support the mission and vision.

- Address user conflicts with education and communication.