



## 2021 Priorities

COMPLETED NOT COMPLETED

### Administration

- Encourage a healthy work environment where all staff feel valued, appreciated, informed, consulted and supported
- Support CPA, Bookkeeper and Administration Director to complete financial audit for 2020
- Thoroughly review the draft USFS Comprehensive Plan, encourage public review and comment, and comment on behalf of the ATA with input from Staff and Board<sup>1</sup>
- Finalize Challenge Cost Share Agreements with federal agencies
- Secure Great American Outdoors Act funding for FY2022 to support maintenance and trail improvement priorities
- Maintain a diversity of funding sources to support organizational annual budget
- Cost benefit analysis of a dedicated Arizona Trail Crew to support Trail Operations program, especially if funding increases due to GAOA and State funding
- Identify opportunities to purchase land and/or easements using the Land & Water Conservation Fund<sup>2</sup>
- Provide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training opportunities for Staff and Board<sup>3</sup>
- Develop an ATA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group and hold at least three roundtable meetings or virtual discussions annually<sup>4</sup>
- Continue Gateway Community outreach and hold at least two meetings annually<sup>5</sup>
- Actively participate in the Partnership for the National Trails System's Policy & Advocacy Committee, Great American Outdoors Act Working Group, and Trail Leaders Council
- Support development of an updated Strategic Plan (2022-2026) with Board, Staff, members and consultants
- As part of the NEPA process, respond to requests for comments on all projects that may affect the Arizona Trail and its resources, nature and purpose for which the Arizona Trail was designated a National Scenic Trail, and ATA mission and vision during public comment periods, with input from Trail Operations Committee, Board and Staff

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<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive Plan not yet released by the USFS

<sup>2</sup> LWCF is limited to private property purchase, which is rare along the AZT corridor

<sup>3</sup> Could not schedule an in-person meeting in 2021 due to trainer's schedules and travel restrictions, but it has been scheduled for 2022

<sup>4</sup> This will occur after Staff/Board training in Spring 2022

<sup>5</sup> There was not much interest for in-person meetings among Gateway Community representatives. Instead, the Executive Director met with each by phone/email/Zoom as needed throughout the year

## Trail Operations

- Wildfire Rehabilitation on passages and segments affected by recent wildfires:
  - o Bighorn (Coronado NF)
  - o Woodbury (Tonto NF)
  - o Bush (Tonto NF)
  - o Mangum (Kaibab NF)
- Southern Terminus Restoration
  - o Restore access to the AZT's southernmost mile of trail, and rehabilitate area surrounding southern terminus
- Study and Finalize Proposed Alignments for seven high-priority road segments:
  - o Santa Rita Mountains (Coronado NF)
  - o Summerhaven (Coronado NF)
  - o Big Dip (Tonto NF) Clear Creek (Coconino NF)
  - o Anderson Mesa (Coconino NF)
  - o Walnut Canyon (Coconino NF)
  - o Maverick (Coconino NF) Temporal Gulch Reroute Construction (Coronado NF)
- Temporal Gulch Reroute Project
  - o Complete at least 10 miles of new trail construction utilizing machines, conservation corps and volunteers
- Alder Ridge Reroute Construction (Tonto NF)
  - o Complete trail construction to remove AZT from powerline road
- Oak Tree Canyon Trailhead (Coronado NF)<sup>6</sup>
  - o Develop primitive trailhead to provide access to AZT Passages 5/6
- Spring Restoration & Water Source Enhancements
  - o Pigeon Spring restoration (Tonto NF)<sup>7</sup>
  - o Identify locations for future rainwater collectors
- Vehicle Barriers (BLM-Tucson)
  - o Install steel vehicle barriers where motorized trespass is damaging trail resources
- Sign Removal and Upgrades
  - o Engage volunteers to remove non-essential signage from trail corridor
  - o Replace fiberglass posts with steel or wood signs
- Safe Highway Crossings<sup>8</sup>
  - o Work with Departments of Transportation to make highway crossings safer for Arizona Trail users at high-priority locations

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<sup>6</sup> Coronado NF delayed NEPA and approval of this project. It will occur in Spring 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Pigeon Spring restoration will be completed in 2022, with funding from the Great American Outdoors Act (this funding was not available in 2021).

<sup>8</sup> ADOT has been reluctant to engage, and very slow to respond to requests.

## **Volunteer Program**

- Provide safe and rewarding volunteer opportunities to maintain the AZT and increase total volunteers and volunteer hours statewide by at least 10% from 2020
- Fill vacant Segment Steward and **Regional Steward**<sup>9</sup> positions
- Develop a total of **10**<sup>10</sup> Trail Skills Institute Videos and make available to stewards, partner organizations, state and federal agencies
- Facilitate at least 25 volunteer trail work opportunities statewide annually
- Organize at least two Volunteer Vacations

## **Veterans Program**

- Engage more veterans in ATA programs and operations
- Provide at least four Veterans Volunteer Work Weekends on **four**<sup>11</sup> forests
- Organize at least two multi-day backpacking/backcountry trail work events for veterans
- **Facilitate a women's only veterans trail day opportunity**<sup>12</sup>
- Support the Warrior Hike program on the AZT

## **Tribal Engagement**

- Include land acknowledgements on social media posts and at public meetings and special events
- Communicate with Arizona tribes about Arizona Trail programs, projects and initiatives, and invite participation and input
- Support Ancestral Lands Crews working on the AZT whenever possible
- Invite indigenous individuals to be ATA ambassadors on social media
- Work with tribes to develop cultural history educational information for trailhead signs
- Begin development of an indigenous place name map as an AZT resource
- **Invite indigenous individuals and tribal representatives to participate in ATA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group**<sup>13</sup>

## **Youth Outreach & Education**

- Continue to offer experiential, educational and stewardship opportunities for youth throughout Arizona
- Increase awareness about the Seeds of Stewardship, Gear Girls and Youth Ambassador programs
- Secure funding sources to support youth programs

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<sup>9</sup> Regional Steward positions remain very difficult to fill. We are looking at retooling this aspect of the Trail Steward program.

<sup>10</sup> A total of 7 videos were produced.

<sup>11</sup> Projects occurred on three forests.

<sup>12</sup> Have yet to identify female veteran leadership for this, but it's in the works.

<sup>13</sup> Need to develop the Working Group after DEI training in 2022.

## **Government Affairs**

- Participate (virtually) in annual Hike the Hill and advocate for priorities identified by the Partnership for the National Trails System
- Engage lawmakers at the state and federal level to increase awareness of the Arizona Trail and ATA, advocate for increased funding, and support for new legislation that will have a net gain to the trail, trail corridor, and ATA mission and vision
- Outreach to ATA members to support proposed legislation that is beneficial to the AZT and ATA, and opposition to legislation that is detrimental
- Advocate for a non-lapsing annual appropriation for the Arizona Trail State Fund
- Advocate for refunding the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund
- Advocate for the Grand Canyon Protection Act being signed into law

## **Land Acquisition & Protection**

- Identify all Arizona State Trust Land parcels crossed by the AZT perceived to be at increased risk of sale and development
- Identify opportunities for land acquisition to protect the AZT and its associated resources in collaboration with Trust for Public Land, Arizona Land and Water Trust, Conservation Alliance, and private investors
- Begin monitoring effort to document impacts of ranching on trail resources

## **Public Education**

- Increase efforts to educate the trail community on the importance of resource protection (Leave No Trace), sharing the trail, and recreating responsibly through ATA outreach platforms and in partnership with other organizations and agencies
- **Make opportunities available for dialogue with ATA members through seasonal virtual meetings<sup>14</sup>**
- Work with Trail Angels, stewards and others to reinforce water cache protocols

## **Wildlife Monitoring**

- Continue multi-year study in species occurrences and recreational use on the AZT
- Engage volunteers in photo sorting and data checking
- Produce quarterly reports for all land management agencies
- **Secure multi-year funding for Arizona Trail CAM project<sup>15</sup>**

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<sup>14</sup> An ideal format for “dialogue” through a virtual platform has yet to be determined

<sup>15</sup> Multi-year funding grant application completed with the Bureau of Land Management, but without a federal budget no funds have yet been made available. We are hopeful for Spring of 2022!