

Backcountry Horsemen Support Arizona Wilderness Trail Reclamation Effort

By Spike Hicks and Lon Willoughby, BCH of Central Arizona

In April and May 2005, members of the Arizona Trails Association and Backcountry Horsemen of Central Arizona (BCHCAZ) volunteered to support trail work in the Mazatzal wilderness. Under the direction of District Ranger, Walt Thole, of the Payson Ranger District, United States Forest Service, BCHCAZ packed youth trail crew equipment and supplies into remote camps in the wilderness. BCHCAZ is steward of the Red Hills Section of the Arizona Trail which runs through the Mazatzal wilderness.



Youth Trail Crew

The Mazatzal Wilderness embraces the north end of the Mazatzal Range, and consists predominantly of rough desert mountains, sometimes broken by narrow, vertical-walled canyons. Further west below the brush-covered foothills, the Verde River flows through the Sonoran Desert found there. This river was designated by Congress in 1984 as Arizona's only Wild & Scenic River.



Elevations range from 1,600 feet along the Verde River to 7,903 feet on Mazatzal Peak. There is an extensive system of trails and their condition varies from very good to poor.

The Mazatzal Wilderness now contains over 252,500 acres of the Tonto and Coconino national forests. Established in 1940 and expanded to its present size in 1984, its name is from an old Indian culture in Mexico, and is correctly pronounced "Mah-zaht-zahle," meaning "Land of the Deer".

An extensive wildfire in 2004 followed by heavy rains caused extensive damage to the Mazatzal trail system.

Backcountry Horsemen in conjunction with Wilderness Ranger, Craig Eckstein, used six pack animals and a variety of packing styles and equipment to transport the supplies and equipment. The project started April 27th and involved three separate move-in and move-out of crews through May 18, 2005.



Statistics

Skilled Labor (Packing) Hours	162
Travel & Preparation Time Hours	156
Personal Vehicle Miles	250
Stock Hauling Miles	2,902
Number of Pack/Saddle Animals Used	25
Number of Stock Days	26
Total Contribution Value	\$10,629

This portion of the project proved to be so valuable to the trail reclamation effort that District Ranger, Walt Thole, has asked BCHCAZ to provide the same type of support for four dates in October 2005 and four dates in April 2006.

