

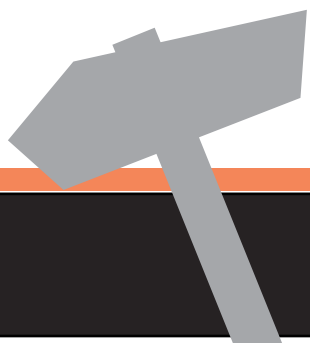
Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy

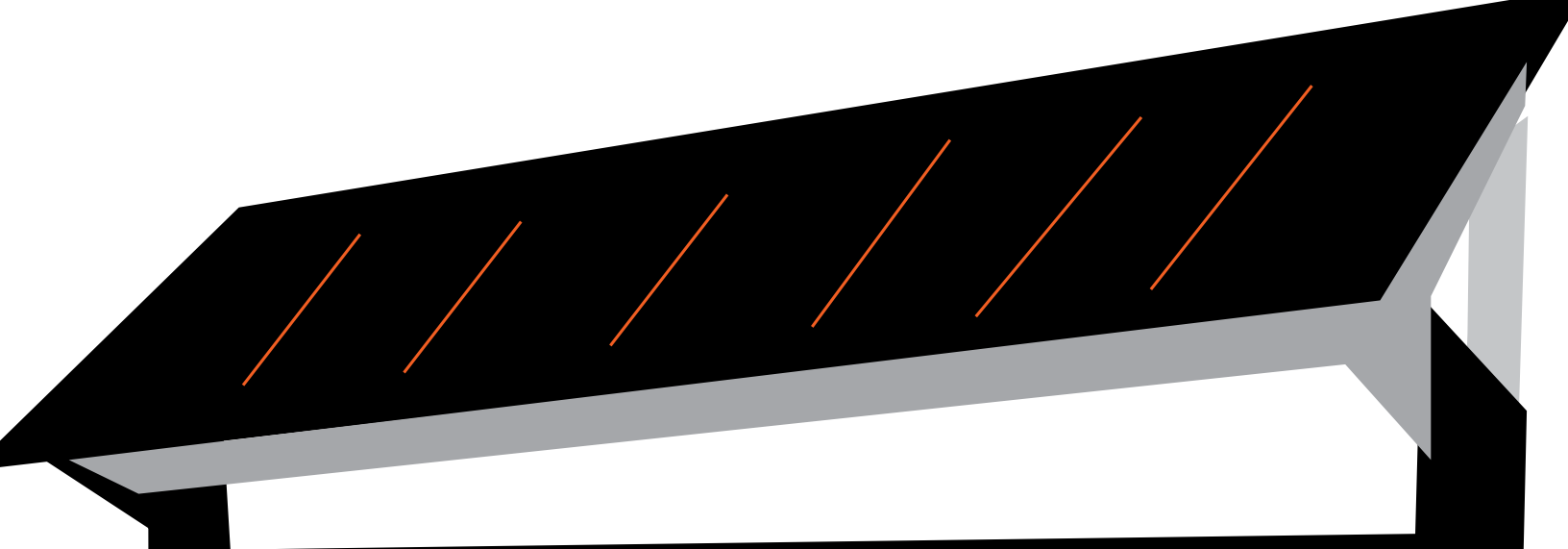


Final - April 2020



FLAGSTAFF
TRAILS
INITIATIVE





Especially in times of crisis, trails are part of what make Flagstaff what it is.

Trail providers, users, conservation advocates and other stakeholders have come together to prepare the *Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy*, a plan for the region's recreational trail system and a set of actions to get there. The Flagstaff Trails Initiative (FTI) represents the most sustained, broad-based attempt to bring together everyone who cares about trails to answer the question: how can we elevate our trails from good to extraordinary?

The completion of this phase of FTI comes during a time of significant crisis. This will mean substantial changes ahead that cannot be predicted. One thing we can predict is that people will seek out places to peddle, ride, run and walk for their physical and mental health.

Our hope is that through collaboration, good faith and a vision for the future, trails and open space can be part of what gets people through a difficult time.

- the Flagstaff Trails Initiative Team

Letters of support from all FTI core team organizations can be found at the end of the document.

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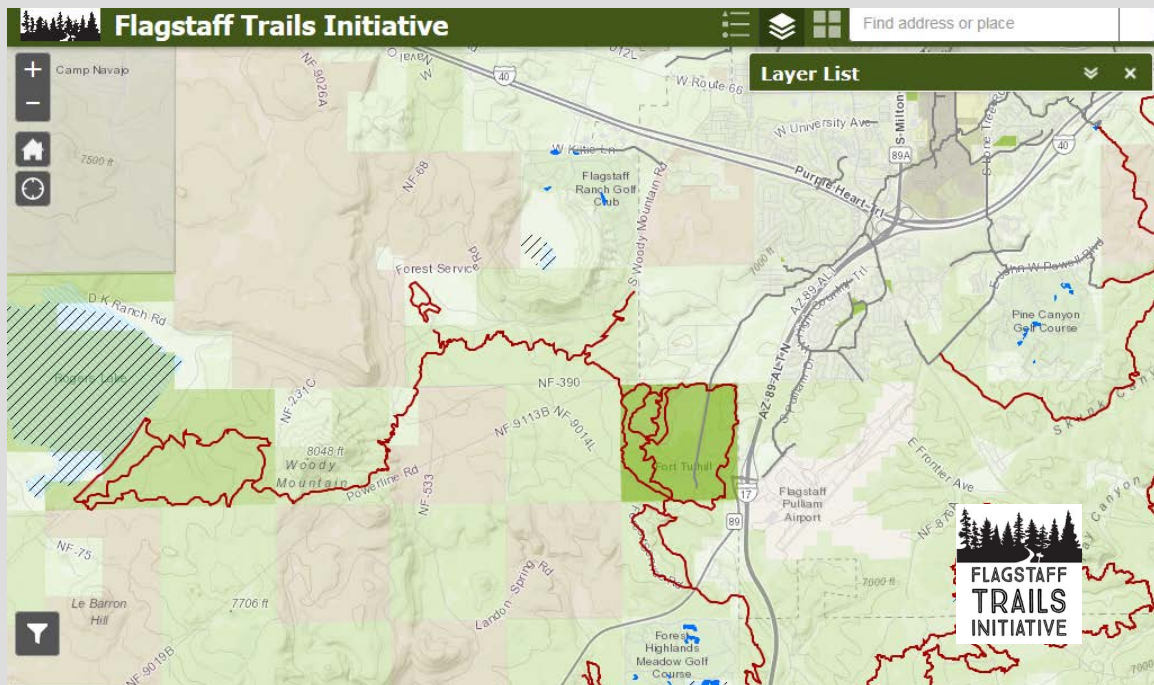
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NAVIGATING THE TRAIL STRATEGY

Head to flagstafftrailsinitiative.org for more information, including the Flagstaff Interactive Trail Map. This easy-to-navigate map includes all the trails in the region, recommended projects included in our plan, and a summary of public ideas received throughout the planning process.



Updates from the November 2019 Draft

The final Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy includes several improvements since the November 2019 draft. The draft version was made available for 65 days, garnering nearly 550 comments from 80 unique commenters. During this time it was also presented to a variety of elected officials and citizen commissions. The input we received led to the following revisions:

- Added the Schultz Creek Trailhead (known as the “Schultz Y”) project as an important near term FTI collaborative priority
- Added a new Trail Ambassadors program to provide on-trail education
- Added new strategies that recognize the link between trails and public transportation, law enforcement and wildlife fire
- Provided additional information about the process for consideration of unauthorized trails
- Provided additional guidelines for [sustainable trail design, construction and maintenance](#)
- Dropped low priority trail construction projects #89 and #90 near Walnut Canyon, reducing the total proposed trail miles by 15%
- Dropped project #214, a trail re-route near Fisher Point
- Incorporated a variety of formatting suggestions
- Included letters of support from all FTI Core Team organizational members

WHAT IS THE FLAGSTAFF TRAILS INITIATIVE?

The Flagstaff Trails Initiative (FTI) is a community building project that's looking to take Flagstaff's trails from good to extraordinary. The diverse organizations that make up the FTI team have come together as partners to lay out a shared vision for the region's recreational trails.

Our Purpose

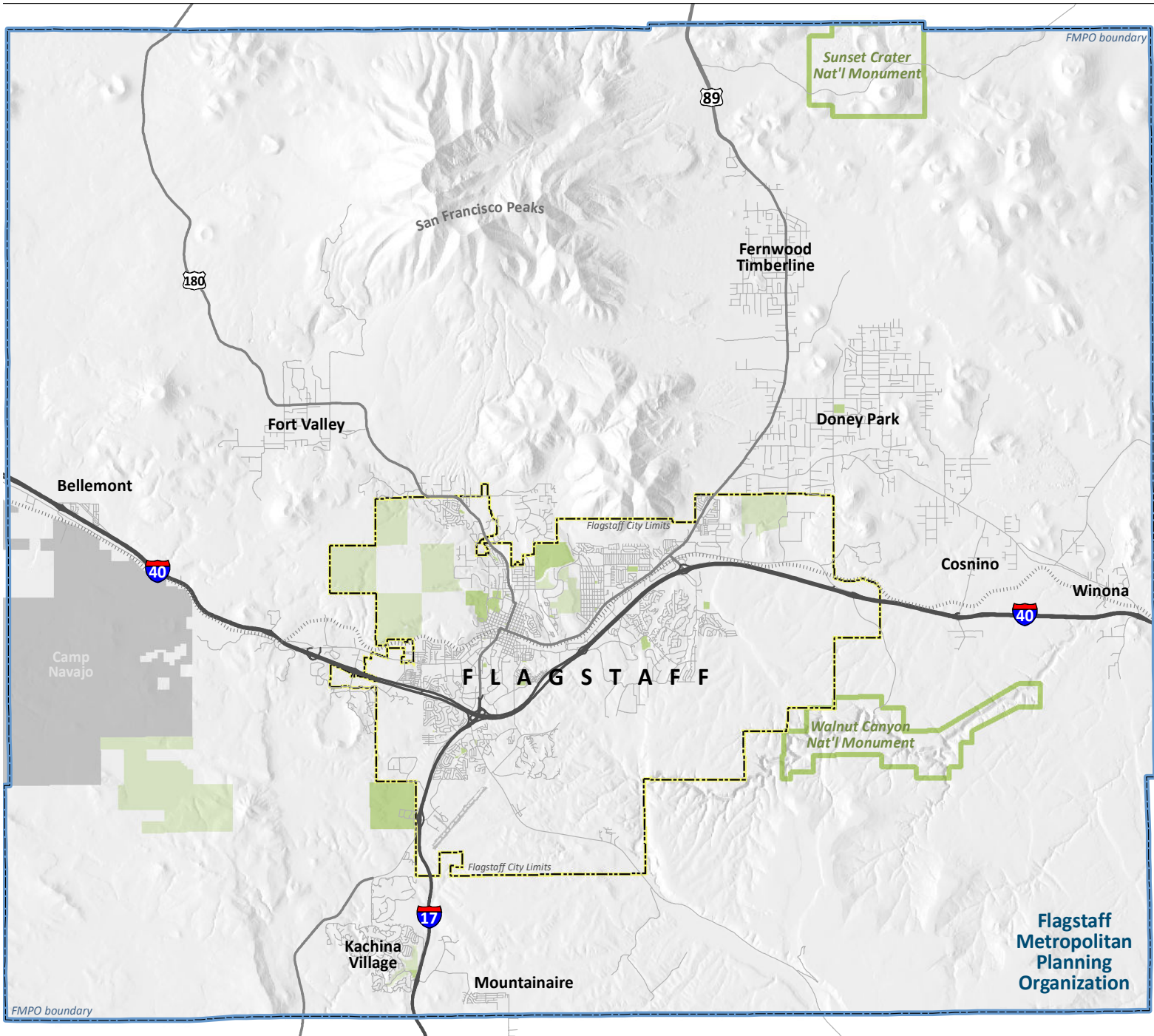
Develop and implement a collaborative, cross-jurisdictional **Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy**. The strategy will improve the quality, connectivity and community support for a sustainable trail system that balances the demand for recreation with the community's vision for conservation, development, and health.



“The word I think of is adaptive...the strategy should be a living document that changes to reflect what the community wants” - FTI Core Team Member

Scope

The Strategy contains proposals for the trails in and around Flagstaff, Arizona. Our study area includes the area of Coconino County inside the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization boundary, which extends from Belmont to the west, Winona to the east, Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument to the north and Mountainaire to the south. It includes trails managed by the City of Flagstaff, Coconino National Forest, National Park Service and Coconino County Parks and Recreation.



Partners

Flagstaff Trails Initiative Core Team



Anyone and everyone who cares about trails in Flagstaff can be part of FTI.

The FTI core team includes a diverse mix of public and nonprofit organizations: City of Flagstaff, Coconino National Forest, Coconino County, Flagstaff Biking Organization, Coconino Trail Riders, R2R Hiking Club, American Conservation Experience, National Park Service Flagstaff Area National Monuments, and Sierra Club. The project was launched in fall 2017 after securing technical assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program.

STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

Overall Goal

Elevate Flagstaff's trail system from good to extraordinary

- ✓ Use the *Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy* to consolidate trail plans, proposals and concepts into a single regional document and conceptual map
- ✓ Prioritize a set of shared actions and investments for the next 5 years
- ✓ Take a collaborative and integrative approach to trail development - "Plan+Build=Balance"



Our Ten Goals

Trail Planning

- A** Improve trail quality and sustainability
- B** Address the current and future demand for non-motorized and motorized trail activities
- C** Improve connectivity between Flagstaff and the Flagstaff Urban Trails System (FUTS), regional open space and outlying Coconino County communities

Conservation and Restoration

- D** Balance trail development and management with community conservation and natural resource goals with an emphasis on restoration
- E** Ensure historic and prehistoric sites, including known American Indian sacred places and traditional cultural properties, are preserved and protected for their cultural importance

Education and Outreach

- F** Create a safe and fun experience for all trail users
- G** Educate, inform and involve the community in trail stewardship
- H** Use trails to build the next generation of youth stewards

Financial Sustainability

- I** Improve the financial sustainability of trail management
- J** Integrate trail planning and management with tourism and economic goals

what comes first

Our Near-Term Priorities

- ✓ Complete the trail projects and plans currently in the works
- ✓ Use the new Flagstaff Trail Fund and 501c3 organization to raise funding and resources
- ✓ Focus on elevating trail quality by launching three projects that realign unsustainable trail segments: Humphrey's Trail; Arizona National Scenic Trail on Anderson Mesa, and Rocky Moto Trail
- ✓ Put the pieces together to build a new Schultz Creek Trailhead
- ✓ Launch a trail etiquette, "share the trails" and Leave No Trace education campaign that is delivered online, on-site and through face to face contact with a new Trail Ambassadors program
- ✓ Establish a volunteer restoration program and hold several events in 2020 to rehabilitate closed and unauthorized trails, clean up graffiti, and remove trash, litter and old fencing
- ✓ Launch formal planning processes for the top two areas in need:
Mount Elden/Dry Lake Hills and Observatory Mesa

All projects contained in the Regional Trail Strategy are subject to available resources including staff, volunteers and funding.



HISTORY, BACKGROUND & CONTEXT



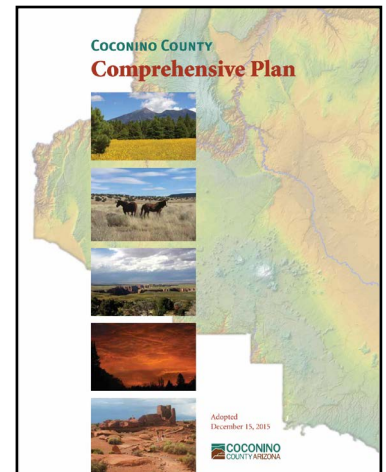
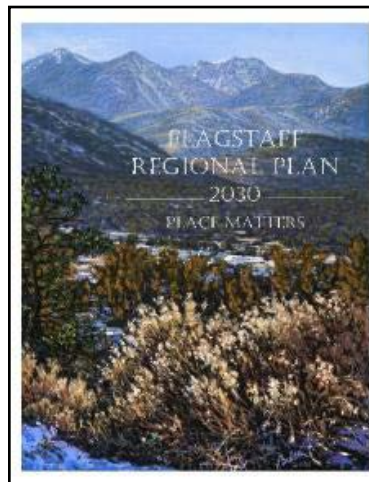
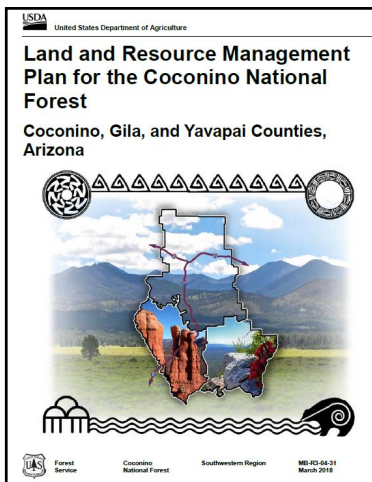
Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

Planning Foundation

The Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy is built directly on a foundation of approved, formal plans such as the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030, Flagstaff Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, Coconino County Comprehensive Plan and Land and Resource Management Plan for the Coconino National Forest.



Outlines concrete steps and projects to implement these broad visions.



Why Trails?

Trails help make Flagstaff a better place to live and visit. Every regional plan for the Flagstaff area including the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 and the Coconino National Forest Management Plan highlights trails as an asset that should be enhanced. Despite their value, there hasn't been a holistic effort specific to trails for over 20 years.

Connection with Nature. Trails allow young and old to indulge in the discovery of the beauty of nature. They allow us to traverse landscapes free from development and experience adventure, exploration or relaxation. Out-the-back door access from Flagstaff and outlying communities to the forest is prized among residents and visitors alike. Four out of five respondents to a [fall 2018 FTI survey](#) said they value the feeling of solitude and peace trails offer. Trails can serve as more than a way to spend a few hours in the woods; they inspire a lifelong connection to nature and a forum for meaningful education. We believe these connections are stronger and more likely when "every doorstep is a trailhead".

Physical and Mental Health. Trails improve our quality of life and personal wellness. A whopping 92% of survey respondents cited exercise as a reason to value to trails. Trails provide healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, accessible and environmentally sustainable places to cycle, walk, hike, run, or ride a horse. They help people of

all ages incorporate exercise into their daily routines. The benefits are measurable: over 100 studies have found a link between improved mental health and time spent outside, often decreasing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Communities that encourage residents to use trails and engage in physical activity often report substantial health benefits.

Want to learn more?

[Headwaters Institute](#) maintains an excellent reference library of studies on the positive impacts of trails on businesses, public health, and quality of life.

Photo Courtesy of WH Waters



Why Trails?

A Strong Economy. The economic effects of trails and urban pathways such as the FUTS are obvious at a business that depends directly on recreation. The effects can be more subtle, like when an employer moves to a community because of amenities like trails. An inviting trail network has helped countless communities across America undergo an economic revitalization. Tourists are increasingly coming to Flagstaff and Northern Arizona to experience nature and spend time outside. According to a recent NAU/Discover Flagstaff study, over 40% of visitors identified trails and recreating on the national forest as an important reason for their visit. Studies have also shown that neighborhoods that are physically connected by urban pathways see increased rates of use for commuting and transportation, reducing traffic and the strain on the road system.

Conserving Open Space and Wild Places. Trail users know landscapes need to be protected to safeguard the experience and preserve natural resource character. Urban systems like FUTS help preserve linear open space and create needed links between fragmented habitats. More people on trails with an associated decrease in cars on roads leads to the improvement of air and water quality. Trails help protect plant and animal species and can also help wetland preservation by keeping people out of sensitive areas. In addition, they can allow humans to experience nature with minimal environmental impact.

[Check out our FTI survey report](#) to see what hundreds of users said they value about trails.



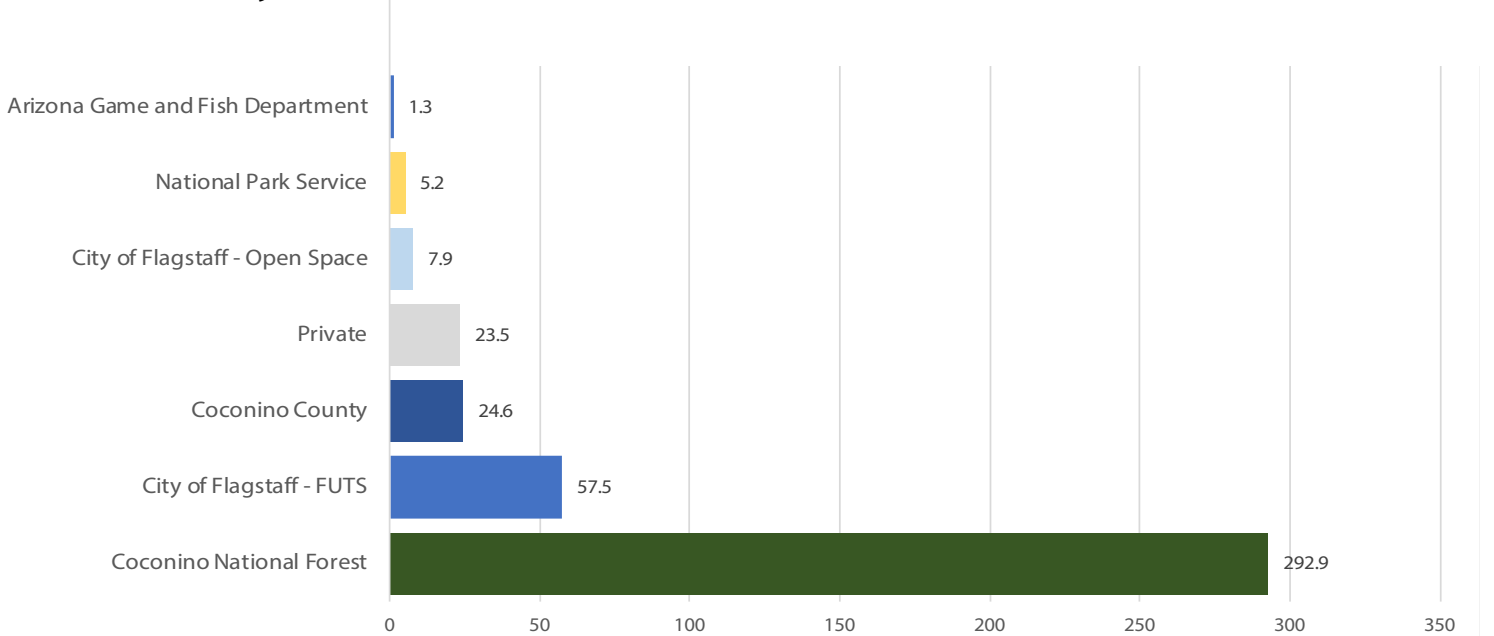
Photo Courtesy of Northern Arizona Trail Runners Association

“One of the reasons I moved back to Flagstaff was because of the ability to interact almost immediately with nature. I can leave my house on foot and within ten minutes be on a trail and then out in nature for hours.” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

“It needs to be recognized that Flagstaff is a destination for millions of people from across the state and out of it.” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

The Current System

Trail Miles by Provider



Total System Trails: 413 Miles

A Diversity of Trail Types



Wider, surfaced trails that link destinations via the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS)



Narrower singletrack available for multiple uses



Trails in designated Wilderness available only for non-mechanized use

Photos Courtesy of WH Waters

Unauthorized Trails

What is an “unauthorized trail”?

Unauthorized trails are purposefully or incidentally created by users without the approval of the land manager or owner. They can be the result of purposeful construction or through incidental regular use that creates a visible travel route for others to follow. Also referred to as “user-created”, “wildcat”, “non-system” or “social” trails.

Unlike system trails, unauthorized trails do not receive regular, formal maintenance from the land manager and are not listed on formal trail maps because they are not part of the authorized trail system. However, unauthorized trails are often included in user-generated or third party maps, leading to confusion among users about the acceptability of their use.

The presence of an unauthorized trail often reflects a past or present demand for recreation use or access. An unauthorized trail or system of trails often serves a recreational function that authorized trails do not.

Potential Effects of Unauthorized Trails

A variety of resource impacts have been tied to use or presence of recreational trails of any kind. These include vegetation loss, soil erosion/loss, wildlife disturbance, water quality impacts and the spread of invasive species. Unauthorized trails do not receive the same level of design and analysis as authorized trails, which make these unintended impacts more likely.

Legality

The purposeful construction of trails without prior authorization is prohibited on all land ownerships in the Flagstaff area including city, county and federal lands. However, it is generally true for non-motorized users that subsequent use of an unauthorized trail by non-motorized users is not prohibited unless there is a site-specific regulation or closure. Similarly, off-trail incidental and repeated use that creates a visible travel route, but that does not involve purposeful construction, is not prohibited. Many appropriate and desirable recreation activities such as nature study, fishing or hunting necessitate off-trail travel that may create unauthorized trails. For motorized use, users are required to stay on designated routes and use of an unauthorized trail could constitute a violation.

Estimated unauthorized trail mileage in the FTI planning area is approximate based on multiple data sources including the tracking app Strava and several inventories that are several years old. This estimate has not been fully field checked.

Unauthorized Trail Type	Miles
Major trails/high levels of use	93
Minor trails/lower levels of use	241
Total	334

The Current System (contd)

Options for Addressing Unauthorized Trails

- ★ *No action*
- ★ *Adoption in place*
- ★ *Adoption with modifications or re-routes*
- ★ *Closure and naturalization*

Considerations and Decision Process for Unauthorized Trails

There is no standard formula or set of criteria for making decisions about unauthorized trails. Trail managers or planning process participants should carefully weigh a variety of factors before making the value-laden decision about unauthorized trails.

- Does the location or condition of the trail pose a public safety hazard?
- What are the management objectives and resource conditions of the area where the trail is located?
- What natural resource impacts are occurring or likely to occur?
- What cultural resource impacts are occurring or likely to occur?
- What is the quality of the recreational experience offered by the trail?
- Does the trail duplicate other available options, either geographically or terms of user experience?
- Does the presence of the unauthorized trail(s) negatively impact the experience of other users?

These factors should be studied and analyzed holistically based on the best available information. Often, planning about unauthorized trails is better undertaken on the trail system scale, rather than trail-by-trail basis.



Users often don't know whether the trail they are using is an official authorized trail or not.

Brief History of Flagstaff Trails

The trail system that surrounds Flagstaff was born for reasons much different than outdoor recreation. Trails were blazed by generations of people connecting places of significance or utility. Later, after the establishment of what is now the Coconino National Forest, they become critical transportation links for forest management. Much of the trail system on forest lands is made up of pack and saddle routes or closed roads, many of which simply represented the shortest route between two points, rather than a system of sustainably designed and constructed trails.

The Flagstaff Urban Trails System (or FUTS) is a point of pride that grew from modest beginnings. A report prepared by a group of forward-looking citizens in 1988 saw the "... great potential to enhance the recreational opportunities and alternative transportation options for Flagstaff citizens and visitors." They proposed a 3.2 mile system of trails on city land. Their vision has expanded into a nearly 60- mile system of trails that connect everyday destinations like neighborhoods, shopping, jobs, schools and parks. A long-term vision for FUTS envisions a 130 mile network that will ultimately comprise a pleasant melding of recreation and transportation.

The trail system on the National Forest seen a number of important events, including the designation of the San Francisco Peaks Wilderness in 1984. The nonmotorized Mount Elden-Dry Lake Hills system was dedicated soon after in 1987. Little Elden Spring Horse Camp, created in 2009 with 15 campsites, now allows easy access for vehicles pulling horse

trailers. The approval of the Fort Valley system in 2000 and the Kelly Trail system in 2012 marked major steps in providing close-to-home access for motorized users.

The Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan, finalized in 1998, captured a recognition of the intertwined nature of open space conservation, trails and public access. Successes like the acquisition of Picture Canyon and subsequent trail development endure as a legacy of this effort.

The Flagstaff Loop Trail represents another ambitious vision that became a reality. Nearly complete at 44 miles, the trail is the "outer wheel" that circumnavigates Flagstaff by using city, county and forest trails. Connecting trails acting as spokes entering the city and extending to the forest beyond.

More recent projects like the formal designation of the Arizona National Scenic Trail, development of trails and a bike park at Fort Tuthill and new trail construction at Sunset Crater National Monument represent yet more chapters in the history of trails in the area. These projects help meet the demand for increasing specialization in trail use, from long distance backpacking to riding on full suspension mountain bikes, all while immersing visitors in the unique landscape of Northern Arizona.

Trail Use

Understanding how people use recreational trails helps provide one piece of the puzzle for decision making - what types of trail activities do residents and visitors enjoy in Coconino County? How many people participate and how frequently do they do so?

This information – when combined with strong community engagement and common sense - allows providers and users to make more informed decisions about community needs and equitable access in times of scarce resources.

FTI took two primary steps to better understand trail use in the area: preparation of a white paper, [Recreation Trail Use in Flagstaff](#) (March 2018) that reviewed existing regional surveys and the implementation of a [trail survey specific to FTI](#) that drew approximately 550 responses (October-December 2018).

Our Key Findings:

- Flagstaff is a community of dedicated trail users. Nearly two thirds of survey respondents use trails more than twice per week.
- Over 58% of Coconino County residents report hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, and horseback riding at least once each year. Hiking is the most popular trail activity, accounting for more than half of all trips.
- Over 20% of County residents participate in motorized trail activities, including driving a 4x4 vehicle, side-by-side, dirt bike or quad/ATV each year. The vast majority of motorized users also participate in non-motorized activities.
- Different trail users - from backpackers to dirt bike riders - place value on different aspects of the trail experience.
- Over 40% of respondents to a 2018 Flagstaff Visitor Survey reported that hiking, biking and recreating on national forest lands was a reason for their visit to Flagstaff.
- Over 40% of County residents do not utilize recreational trails.
- The five most commonly used trails according to users are the Arizona National Scenic Trail, Schultz Creek Trail, Sunset Trail, Flagstaff Loop Trail and the Nate Avery Trail.



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

Trends and Challenges

FTI partners undertook an extensive effort to better understand the current situation and its driving factors. Using a mix of trail surveys, partnership meetings and public open houses, the team identified some key trends and challenges for the strategy to address.

Recreation & Trail Trends

- Increasing popularity of trail events like races and organized walks
- Growing diversity and specialization in trail uses and technology are leading to a desire for new trails intended for certain uses, such as technical mountain biking
- Flagstaff has grown into a trail running “mecca”
- Conflict between users can be acute in certain locations, but conflict and crowding weren’t rated as major barriers to trail use
- Upsurge in social media and online information related to trails and recreation
- New organizations like Latino Outdoors have formed to expand participation and promote inclusion
- Capacity to manage recreation is declining at the federal level, encouraging a move towards more partnership-based efforts like the [National Strategy for a Sustainable Trail System](#)

Challenges for the Trail Community

- > Ensuring equitable use of and access to the trails by geographic area and socioeconomic status
- > Ensuring a diversity of trail experiences is available - options for the mobility impaired were rated the least adequate in the FTI trail survey
- > Tackling the trail maintenance backlog
- > Resolving conflicts and misunderstandings between user groups
- > Limiting displacement of regular users by trail events
- > Ensuring accurate trail information is available
- > Providing adequate infrastructure like signs, trailheads and restrooms
- > Protecting user safety

Trends and Challenges (contd)

Environmental Trends

- Climate change and its associated effects on temperature, precipitation, soils and vegetation
- Concern over wildlife impacts including habitat fragmentation and displacement due to development, recreation and other forest activities
- Increase in forest wildfire activity
- Rising investment in forest treatment and restoration
- Pressures on threatened, endangered and rare species

Challenges for the Trail Community

- > Understanding and addressing the proliferation of unauthorized trails (nearly equal to the total authorized trail miles) and associated impacts
- > Wildfire leading to limited forest access and ongoing loss of trails
- > Keeping a minimum impact and Leave No Trace ethos alive
- > Effectively coordinating with thinning and forest management projects
- > Stopping the impacts of trail widening and rutting

Community and Economic Trends

- Growth and urbanization of Flagstaff along with development in outlying communities like Bellemont
- Increase in visitors, especially international, many of whom are less centralized due to a rise in alternative lodging like AirBnb
- Increasing racial and ethnic diversity
- Growth in enrollment and the physical footprint of Northern Arizona University
- Influx of new residents motivated by lifestyle factors like recreation
- Increasing competition for limited public funds from sources like the Bed, Board and Beverage tax

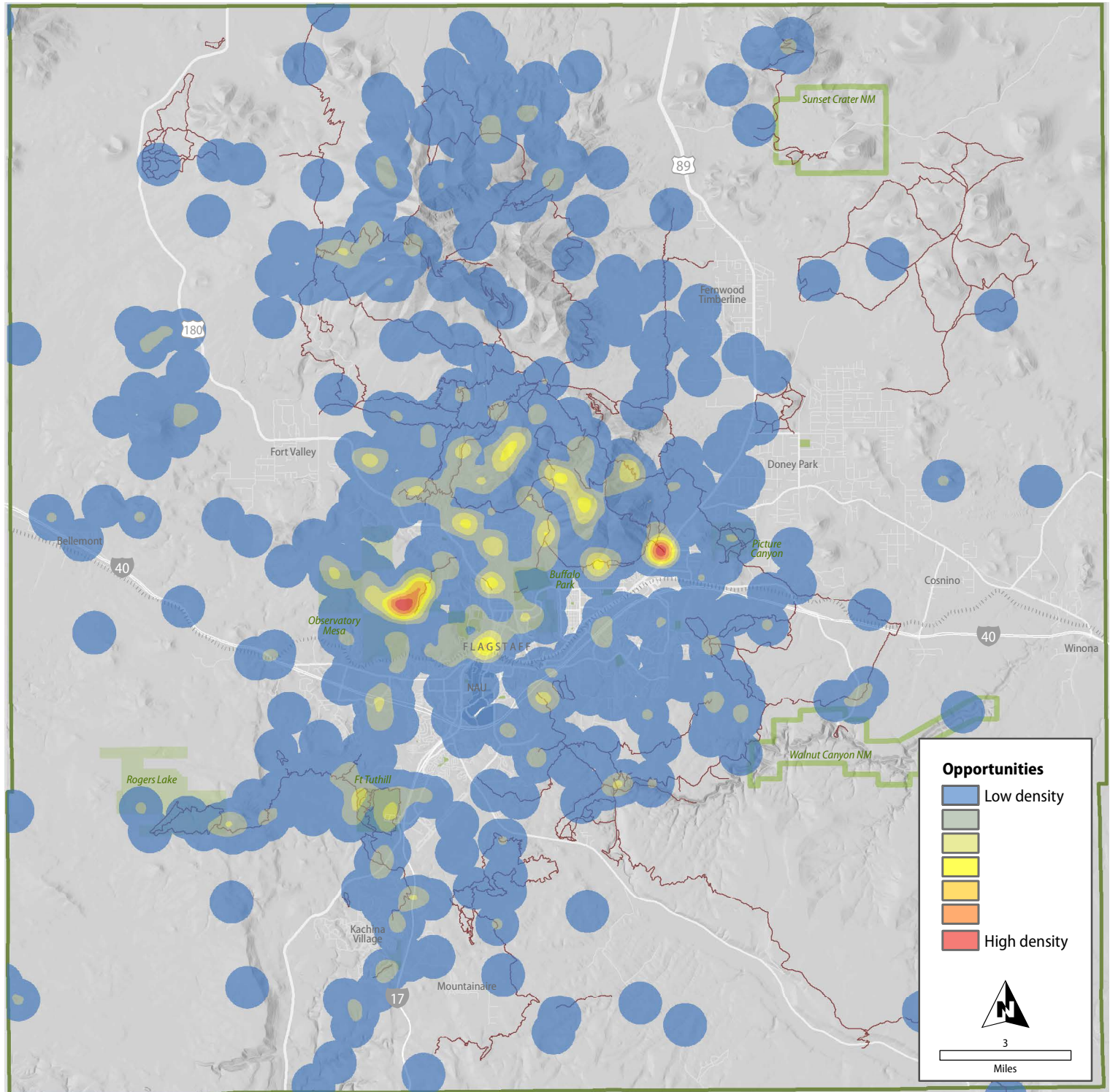
Challenges for the Trail Community

- > Overcoming jurisdictional challenges between city, county and federal lands
- > Finding reliable funding for maintenance, construction, and education
- > Recruiting sufficient volunteers, especially among students and new arrivals
- > Ensuring active community engagement and dialogue
- > Responding to uncertainty surrounding the future of State Trust lands

Ideas from the Trail Community

We asked the community: where do you see opportunity for improvement in the Flagstaff area?

The map below indicates the density of opportunities identified by trail survey and public meeting participants in 2018. These findings were used to help inform the recommendations contained in this plan.



FLAGSTAFF REGIONAL TRAIL PLAN



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

“The Kelly system has been a great start to answer motorized needs. The only two options for dirt biking in the area for single track is part of the Fort Valley system and the Kelly system. Fort Valley is packed on the weekends and is not safe for motorized use. That leaves dirt bikers the option for Kelly or illegal social trails on the weekend.” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

“The primary objective should be to distribute use throughout the forest. Areas south of I-40 are underutilized, in part because of access, but also because they lack technically challenging trails.” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

“...locals and regular users seeking a more peaceful experience will turn elsewhere...the key to success here is diversity.” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

Trail Planning Goals and Strategies



Below are a series of trail development and management goals meant to provide a well-balanced, high quality trail system that offers opportunities for short meanders or long treks, trails that connect important sites and multi-use corridors to accommodate diverse ways of moving through nature so that all can connect to the great outdoors.

A

Improve trail quality and sustainability

Strategies

- Ensure that modern, sustainable trail planning and building techniques are applied to all trail projects to reduce future maintenance needs
- Prioritize maintenance and realignment efforts based on known backlogs or up-to-date inventories, increasing the percentage of trails in the system identified as in good condition
- Re-route, decommission, restore or replace unsustainable trails

Head to the [FTI Interactive Trail Map](#) for an inventory of current maintenance needs

Photos Courtesy of WH Waters



Trail Planning Goals and Strategies (contd)

B

Address the current and future demand for non-motorized and motorized trail activities

Strategies

- Develop an inclusive, user friendly trail system that provides valued experiences for multiple uses and varying skill levels
- Address unauthorized trails through closure and restoration, replacement or adoption
- Identify the areas or trail systems most in need of comprehensive site-specific planning
- Minimize the potential for ongoing unauthorized trail creation through targeted trail development and improvements to trail quality
- Provide a range of trail experiences through trail modification or development and address gaps in the current system: mobility-impaired/accessible; hiker intended, multi-use trails that provide opportunities for solitude; technical and flow mountain biking trails and motorized singletrack
- Consider adaptive management strategies - such as dispersal and segregation of uses, alternating days for various users, non-exclusive "preferred use" designations and trail directionality - where appropriate to minimize conflict and address overcrowding while keeping the vast majority of trails multi-use

C

Improve connectivity between Flagstaff and the Flagstaff Urban Trails System (FUTS), regional open space and outlying Coconino County communities

Strategies

- Complete the Flagstaff Loop Trail
- Connect the regional trail system by working on the connections listed in the recommendations below
- Implement needed enhancements to existing trailheads, staging areas and less formal public access points around the perimeter of Flagstaff and other communities, listed below
- Prevent loss of public access by pursuing legal access to important, legally unsecured trail access points as development occurs or opportunities arise
- Advocate for public transportation connections to trail access points

What's in the Works Right Now (as of Spring 2020)

The following projects are being led by FTI organizations:

Name	Status	Scope	Trail Provider
Heart Trail and Little Elden Re-route	Planning and environmental compliance completed 2018. Re-route underway. Expected completion mid 2020.	7.5 miles realigned, 3 miles decommissioned	Coconino National Forest
Fort Tuthill Bike Park	Completed Fall 2019	7 acre park with pump tracks and skill development areas	Coconino County
Mount Elden-Dry Lake Hills Planning	Scoping completed 2013; to re-initiate 2020.	Mt. Elden-Dry Lake Hills (MEDL) area	Coconino National Forest
Kelly Trail System Completion	Approved and construction progressing through Coconino Trail Riders/USFS partnership	95 miles of motorized singletrack planned	Coconino National Forest
FUTS Master Plan/ Active Transportation Plan	Expected completion early 2020	Total of 130 miles	City of Flagstaff

Related Trail Projects

Arizona Snowbowl operates under a Special Use Permit with the Coconino National Forest. The resort announced in 2019 it would propose a variety of infrastructure enhancements that promote year round use including new trails for mountain biking. Since the project is not being undertaken by an FTI core team member, the collaborative does not take a position for or against the proposed developments. However, Snowbowl was identified by some FTI meeting and survey participants as a place to meet demand for advanced mountain biking. The proposals will be evaluated by the US Forest Service through the Master Development Plan process.

The **Sun Corridor Trail** is new statewide nonmotorized trail proposed by a variety of local government agencies. The trail seeks to connect the US/Mexico border to Las Vegas through Flagstaff and the FTI planning area. A specific alignment has not been identified. Coconino County Parks and Recreation is the primary point of contact for the region.

Regional Trail Recommendations

Flagstaff's Trail System in 2020 and beyond

The full list of recommendations can be seen on the FTI Interactive Trail Map. Use the filter feature to sort based on project type and priority level.

How do these recommendations fit in formal agency planning and compliance?

The list below serves as a guide for future trail development and planning across jurisdictions. Each project requires additional planning, environmental analysis and on-the-ground design to ensure the projects are appropriate given the area's cultural and natural resources and recreational uses. Inclusion on this list does not imply formal approval for any of the individual projects. Instead, the list of recommendations represents the view of FTI partners on where the region should move next as a trail community.

It's important to note that this does *not* include projects within the FUTS or the Mount Elden Dry Lake Hills area. Each of these areas have their own, site-specific formal planning process underway. Both are expected to be completed in 2020. As these and other future plans are completed, projects identified within them may be compared with established priorities as part of an annual, collaborative review process.

While the list is prioritized, it doesn't preclude lower priority projects from occurring if the right opportunity presents itself. Based on what we know now, they all have value and would

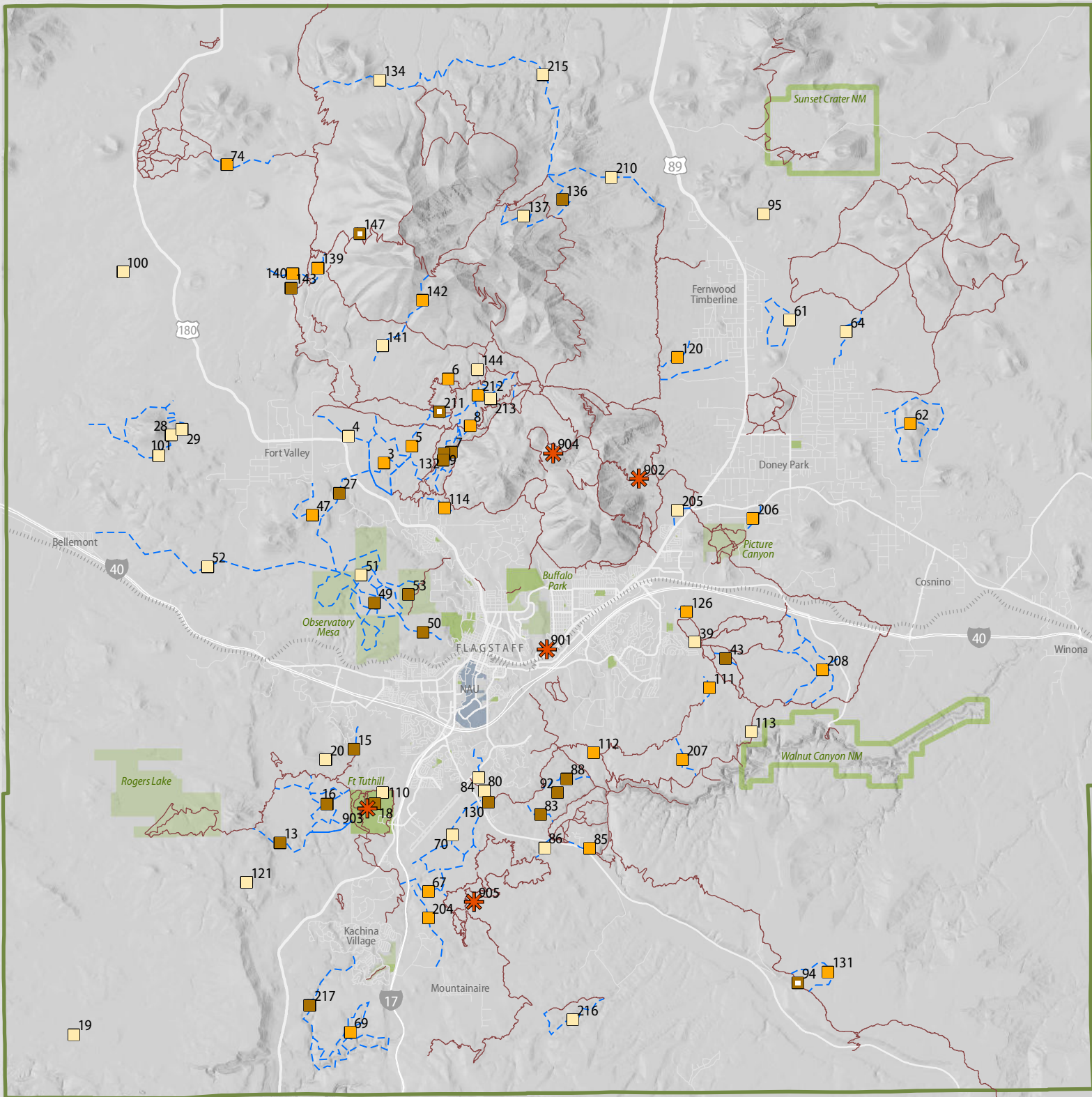
help elevate the region's trail system. A handful of the recommendations did not receive consensus from the teams who participated, primarily in the Observatory Mesa and Fort Valley areas. These projects are indicated as such below and received reduced scores as a result.

How this list was developed?

The recommendations in the following tables and displayed on the interactive trail map were crafted by a voluntary subcommittee of "citizen planners", volunteers and agency staff. Head to the "How We Produced This" for a full description of the FTI planning process, the hundreds of trail users who weighed in the research that went into crafting ideas.

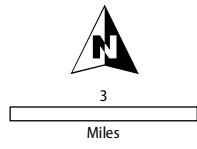
Each of the recommendations was weighted using a set of criteria that reflect FTI's overall purpose and goals. [Head here for a full explanation of the trail scoring criteria.](#)

Criteria	Weight
Network and Connectivity	12
Environmental Sensitivity and Beneficial Resource Effects	10
Level of Public Support	8
Demonstrated Demand or Expected Popularity	8
Unique or Destination Trail Experience	6
Cost and Complexity	6
POSSIBLE SCORE	50



Trail development and connectivity recommendations

- Trail projects - priority
-  In progress
 -  First projects
 -  High priority
 -  Medium priority
 -  Low priority
 -  Proposed trails
 -  Existing trails



April 2020

Trail Development and Connectivity Recommendations

This category includes 74 recommendations for new trails, realignments, connections between existing trails and adoption or restoration of unauthorized trails

Notes: 1) Projects that did not receive consensus from the planning team for that area are indicated by an asterisk*. 2) Estimated trail miles per priority level are entirely conceptual. If projects move forward additional on-the-ground design and evaluation are needed.

Priority	ID#	Trail Recommendation Description
HIGH	16	Construct a new stacked loop system of directional, mountain bike-preferred trails west of Fort Tuthill to meet regional need and bolster the site as an event venue
	18	Construct a new accessible trail in Fort Tuthill County Park to address a regional shortcoming
	49	Construct a new stacked loop system on Observatory Mesa accessible from downtown Flagstaff and Thorpe Park to help address local demand and unauthorized trails
	13	Construct a new shared use trail connection from Fort Tuthill/Soldiers Trail to Rogers Lake to create longer loop opportunities
	15	Connect Woody Mountain Road/Forest Road 532 trailhead and south end of planned FUTS as part of Loop Trail
	27	Connect Fort Valley and Observatory Mesa to help link two popular areas
	83	Connect Loop Trail and Fay Canyon trail to provide loop opportunities and enhance usability of in area south of town
	130	Connect the Loop Trail and existing, de facto trailhead on Lake Mary Road recommended for development
	136	Connect Inner Basin, Lockett Meadow, and Waterline Road to help enable an "around the peaks" loop opportunity as well as improve access to Lockett Meadow
	9	Evaluate unauthorized trails in upper Fort Valley for closure and restoration to reduce impacts
	94	Realign the Arizona Trail from the top of Anderson Mesa to just below the rim to improve sustainability
	147	Realign Humphreys Trail where grades and conditions are unsustainable to reduce erosion and accommodate visitor use
	211	Realign Rocky Moto Trail off of pipeline between Moto and Secret Trails to improve sustainability
7	Adopt Dogfood Engineer as a shared use nonmotorized system trail to help disperse use in the Schultz/Fort Valley	

Trail Development and Connectivity Recommendations (pg 2 of 4)

Priority	ID#	Trail Recommendation Description
HIGH	43	Adopt a short segment of unauthorized trail between Sinagua and Walnut Meadows Loop to improve the overall Campbell Mesa network
	50	Encourage Lowell Observatory to consider adoption of unauthorized trails on their property as part of Observatory Mesa system improvement
	88	Adopt Skunk Canyon as a system trail to provide loop opportunities and enhance usability in area south of town
	132	Adopt Easter Island as a directional, mountain-bike preferred system trail to provide technical mountain biking opportunities and disperse use
	217	Adopt Pumphouse Wash as a system trail and improve sustainability where needed
	53	Evaluate unauthorized trails on Observatory Mesa for closure and restoration to reduce impacts and reduce redundancy
	92	Evaluate unauthorized trails in the Walnut Canyon area for closure and restoration to reduce impacts and redundancy
	<i>Estimated Mileage of High Priority Trail Recommendations: 51 miles</i>	
MEDIUM	3	Construct new shared use, stacked loops north and west of the Fort Valley Trailhead to easy to access beginner opportunities
	131	Construct new trail around Vail Lake primarily though adopting existing road
	5	Connect Secret Trail and Fort Valley Trailead to allow more motorized loop opportunities*
	6	Connect Secret Trail and Friedlein Prarie Road to allow more motorized loop opportunities*
	67	Connect Highland Trail and the Kelly Trail System with a nonmotorized trail under Interstate 17
	74	Connect the Nordic Village and Bismark Lake Trail to link two high elevation systems
	85	Connect Hitchin Post Trails with Sandys Canyon Trail to provide loops and enhance usability in area south of town
	114	Connect Schultz Creek and Chimney Trail to help disperse use in the Schultz/Fort Valley system
	139	Connect Aspen Corner directly to Humphreys Trail to allow for loops
	8	Realign the Arizona Trail off of an unsustainable old road bed just west of Schultz Creek Trail
	140	Connect Arizona Trail near Aspen Corner and Hart Prairie Road to allow for loops
	142	Connect Kachina Trail with Weatherford Trail at Doyle Saddle to improve access and allow for loops

Trail Development and Connectivity Recommendations (pg 3 of 4)

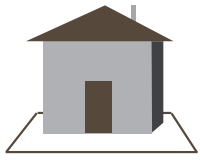
Priority	ID#	Trail Recommendation Description
MEDIUM	207	Connect Arizona Trail and Loop Trail near Walnut Canyon to provide loops and enhance usability of easily access southside area
	62	Construct new loop trails east of Doney Park to provide close-to-home access
	120	Construct and/or adopt connections from Timberline to Deer Hill Trail to provide close-to-home access
	47	Connect Fort Valley to FUTS with a commuter route on Observatory Mesa that partially uses existing roads
	204	Connect Mountainire Rd to planned FUTS extension with a commuter route that partially uses existing roads
	206	Connect Doney Park at Townsend-Winona Road to Picture Canyon with a planned FUTS extension
	111	Realign Loop Trail north of Walnut Canyon away from old road onto national forest
	112	Realign Loop Trail north of Fisher Point off of old roads to enhance user experience
	69	Adopt existing unauthorized trails in and near Kelly Canyon as part of a new shared use system to manage existing and expected demand
	126	Adopt unauthorized trail from Campbell Mesa to planned Peaceful Valley FUTS trail to improve neighborhood access
	208	Adopt unauthorized trails on eastern Campbell Mesa to expand and improve the system
	212	Consider adoption of unauthorized trails such La Bamba to allow for loops and disperse use
	143	Evaluate unuathorized trails west of Aspen Corner and the Arizona Trail for closure and restoration to reduce impacts
	<i>Estimated Mileage of Medium Priority Trail Recommendations: 84 miles</i>	
LOW	19	Consider trail construction parallel to the road to Casner Mountain to allow for motorized loops
	51	Construct a new FUTS-standard multi use trail along the perimeter of Observatory Mesa*
	89	Construct shared use loop trails south of Walnut Canyon to provide new, longer and more remote opportunities
	90	Construct a new loop trail around Walnut Canyon to provice new, longer and more remote opportunities
	100	Construct a new motorized trail around the perimeter of the Peaks, referred to as the Pines to Prairies project, to expand destination motorized opportunities*
	137	Construct loop trails in the wilderness near the Inner Basin Trailhead to create new loops and disperse use in the popular area
	4	Connect Fort Valley Trailhead and Rocky Moto Trail with a motorized connection and create new loops*
	64	Formalize OHV access from Doney Park to the Cinder Hills
	86	Connect Fay Canyon and the Kelly Trail System across Lake Mary Rd to link two existing systems
	95	Connect Timberline and Cinder Hills to improve neighborhood access

Trail Development and Connectivity Recommendations (pg 4 of 4)

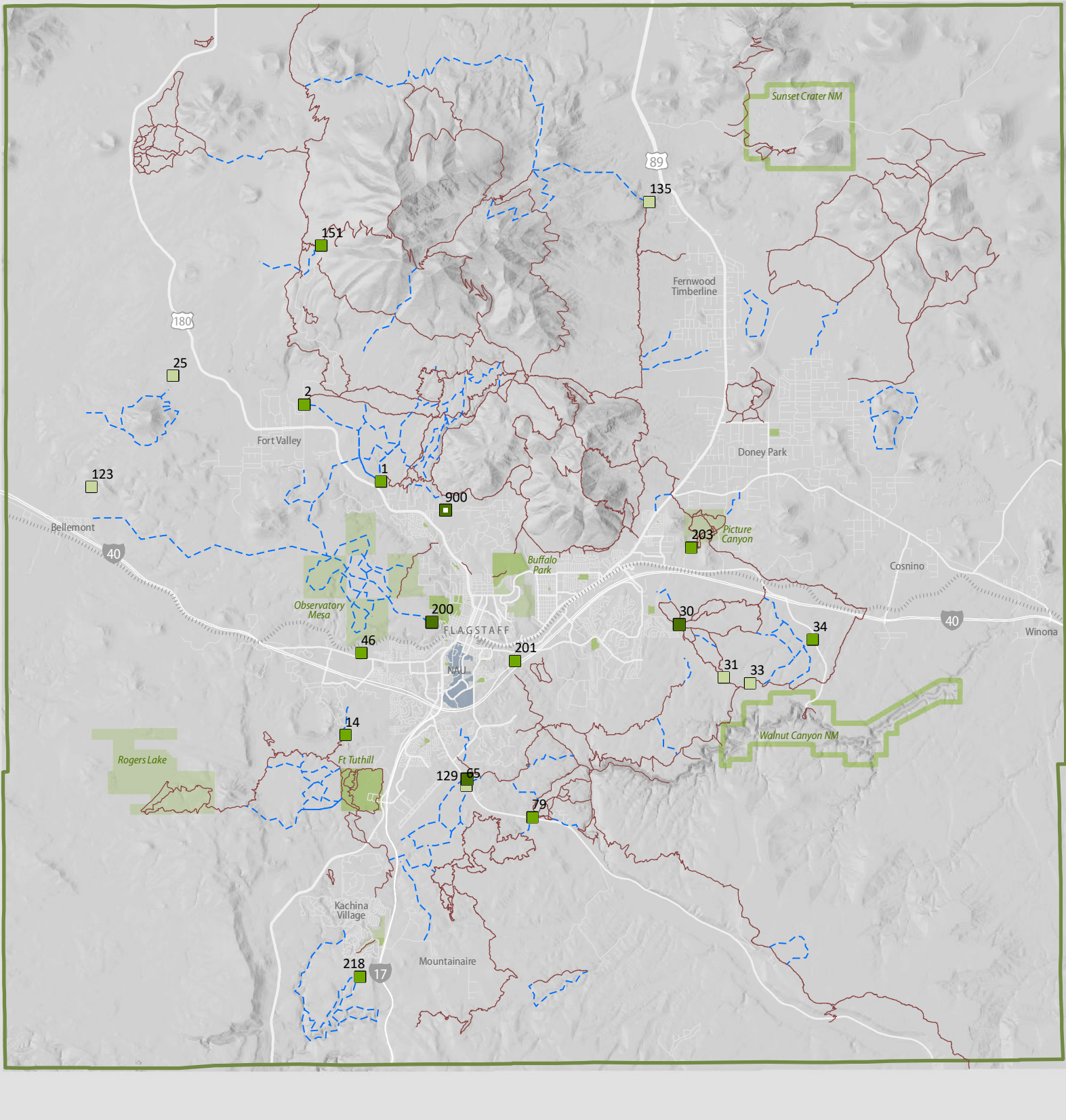
Priority	ID#	Trail Recommendation Description
LOW	134	Connect the Arizona Trail with the Abineau/Bear Jaw Trailhead through the White Horse Hills
	210	Connect Deer Hill Trail and Lockett Meadow to create an additional way to access Inner Basin
	215	Connect Inner Basin Trailhead/Lockett Meadow with Bear Jaw/Abineau Trailhead to enable an "Around the Peaks" nonmotorized opportunity
	61	Construct neighborhood loop trails east of Timberline and north of Doney park
	84	Construct a neighborhood connection to the Loop near JW Powell Blvd
	52	Connect Bellemont to Flagstaff with a commuter route that partially uses existing roads
	205	Connect Timberline to North 89 FUTS trail
	80	Realign the Loop Trail off of old roads near Walnut Canyon to improve user experience
	113	Realign the Arizona Trail off of old roads near Walnut Canyon to improve user experience
	28	Adopt Wing Mountain shooting pit as a hill climb challenge for motorized users
	70	Adopt unauthorized trails south of airport to create new shared use nonmotorized system
	101	Adopt Wing Mountain unauthorized trails to create a designated motorized system
	141	Adopt and realign unauthorized connection from Friedlein Prairie Road to Kachina Trail to create new way to access high elevation system
	216	Adopt unauthorized trail in Howard Draw to recognize ongoing access to this popular climbing area
	20	Close and restore unauthorized trail on rim of Dry Lake to reduce impacts and discourage further use
	29	Evaluate unauthorized trails at Wing Mountain for closure and restoration to reduce impact
	39	Evaluate unauthorized trails on Campbell Mesa for closure and restoration to reduce impacts
121	Evaluate unauthorized trails at Woody Ridge for closure and restoration to reduce impacts	
144	Evaluate unauthorized trails in the area of Secret Trail for closure and restoration to reduce impacts	
<i>Estimated Mileage of Low Priority Trail Recommendations: 74 miles</i>		

Trailheads and Trail Access

This category includes improvement of existing trailheads and construction of new ones.



Priority	ID#	Trailhead and Access Recommendation Description
HIGH	30	Enhance and expand existing Campbell Mesa Trailhead on Old Walnut Canyon Rd and/or consider nearby alternatives to help accommodate current and expected demand
	900	Construct a trailhead at the "Y" intersection of Schultz Pass Road and Elden Lookout Road to access the popular Schultz Creek area trail system
	129	Construct a new trailhead for the Loop Trail along Lake Mary Road immediately south of the water treatment plant to accommodate current and expected demand
	200	Encourage Lowell Observatory to consider trailhead construction to access improved Observatory Mesa trails
MEDIUM	1	Enhance Fort Valley Trailhead with toilets and trash service
	14	Enhance existing Woody Mountain Rd/Forest Road 532 trailhead with toilets and trash service
	151	Enhance existing Humpreys Trailhead with toilets and trash service
	203	Enhance existing Picture Canyon Trailhead with additional parking
	2	Construct new trailhead for Rocky Moto Trail along Snowbowl Rd
	34	Construct new trailhead for Arizona Trail/Cambell Mesa along Monument Rd
	46	Construct new trailhead at the City's Core Services Facility to access the southside of Observatory Mesa and Tunnel Springs Trail
	79	Construct new trailhead for Fay Canyon Trail access along Lake Mary Rd to improve southside access
	201	Construct new trailhead at the end of Babbit Dr to improve Fisher Point access
	218	Construct new trailhead at Kelly Pocket along FR 237 to improve access if system is adopted
LOW	25	Construct a new trailhead at Wing Mountain to access proposed new trails
	33	Enhance and enlarge existing Arizona Trail trailhead just north of Walnut Canyon National Monument
	31	Construct a new trailhead along Old Walnut Canyon Road to improve access to Campbell Mesa system
	65	Construct a new trailhead on the east side of Lake Mary Road east of the airport to improve access in conjunction with a proposed new trail system (#70)
	123	Construct a new trailhead north of Bellemont to improve access in this growing area
	135	Construct a new trailhead along Schultz Creek Road at the north end of Deer Hill Trail to improve access



Trailheads and trail access recommendations

- Trailheads - priority
- First projects
 - High priority
 - Medium priority
 - Low priority
 - - - Proposed trails
 - Existing trails



April 2020

Signs and Wayfinding



These areas were identified as priority needs for signs and wayfinding improvements.

Area	Signs and Wayfinding Recommendation
Doney Park	Better wayfinding on Old Caves Crater Trail and the Dan Moody Trail through cinder sections
Fort Tuthill - Woody Mountain	Improved trailheads and wayfinding at Fort Tuthill and connections with Soldiers Trail and FUTS
San Francisco Peaks	More signs are needed for education on Wilderness Act and Leave No Trace
Fort Valley	Improved signing for Fort Valley Trails - combination map and wayfinding signs
Kachina - Mountaineer	Better wayfinding on Highland Trail through Kachina Wetlands
Observatory Mesa	Improved wayfinding and additional interpretive signs
Walnut Canyon	Information kiosks with maps and trail signs at junctions
Hochderfer Hills	Better wayfinding for trails outside of Nordic Village

Future Planning Needs

These areas were identified as trail systems most in need of site-specific and formal planning.

Area	Managing Agency	Rationale
Observatory Mesa	City of Flagstaff Open Space	Proximity to city center; high density of unauthorized trails
Fort Valley	Coconino National Forest	Potential to meet regional demand and disperse use from high sensitivity areas; high density of unauthorized trails
San Francisco Peaks	Coconino National Forest	Regional and statewide importance; high natural and cultural resources values

Sustainable Trail Design and Construction

Trail design and construction best practices

Many older and historic trail alignments were built without utilizing best practices like proper run-to-rise, grade reversals and tread hardening. Some older alignments are along old road beds that were never intended for recreational trail use and therefore lack the utilization of these design elements and often fail to provide the best user experience.

Management policy limits the placement of realignments without the appropriate analysis. In order to make old trail alignments meet the above-mentioned criteria, tread will often need to be substantially adjusted outside currently approved corridors.

The lack of best-practice design elements contributes to erosion, a large maintenance backlog and lack of user satisfaction with these trails. Better focus on the guidelines and practices available through the below resources will ensure success with the fundamental goal to elevate Flagstaff's trail system from good to extraordinary.

[US Forest Service Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook](#)

[US Forest Service Standard Trail Plans and Specifications](#)

[US Forest Service National Trails Strategy](#)

[Bureau of Land Management Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience](#)

[National Off-Highway Vehicle Coordination Council Great Trails Guidebook](#)

[Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads and Campgrounds](#)

[International Mountain Bicycling Association's Trail Solutions Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack](#)

[Planning Trails With Wildlife in Mind](#)

[American Trails Resources](#)

When designing new trails:

- Use current standards and best practices as defined by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, NOHVCC, IMBA, American Trails and other trail experts to best align new trails on the landscape.
- Enlist the best available local experts to flag corridors for analysis, and pin flag alignments for construction.
- Use capable leadership in both volunteer and professional trail building projects to ensure the best practices are employed during new construction. Train trail builders to become future crew leaders.
- Adjust recently built trails after a couple of seasons as necessary to address erosion issues before they become substantial

Sustainable Trail Design and Construction (contd)



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters


When maintaining and realigning existing trails:


- Consider in-corridor realignments wherever possible rather than less effective tread/drainage repair strategies.
- Create a process to catalog needs for out-of-corridor realignment analysis and approval to create a more sustainable, lower-maintenance trail system. Fast-track this approval process with Categorical Exclusions wherever possible.
- Grow a volunteer workforce that is enabled to do standard maintenance work on an at-will basis in order to reduce the substantial maintenance backlog.
- Use current standards and best practices as defined by the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, NOHVCC, IMBA and other trail experts to best maintain and realign existing problem areas in the trail system.


Benefits of the Trail Plan

Projects recommended in the trail plan benefit.....


...**All trail users** by moving towards a more cohesive and connected system that enhances access from neighborhoods to the forest. It will help consolidate a sometimes confusing system by adopting certain unauthorized trails and restoring others. An emphasis on maintenance and realignment will help ensure trails are in reliably good condition.


 ...**Hikers** by creating an improved system of connections and trail linkages that allow for loops of varying lengths and difficulty levels, often in areas of relative quiet and solitude. Several recommended projects are relatively short segments that form missing links in the existing system. One the state's top hiking destinations will be improved by projects within and near the San Francisco Peaks Wilderness including a more sustainable alignment for Humphrey's Trail and bolstered options from the Inner Basin Trailhead. The trail plan also looks to mitigate conflicts between hikers and mountain bikers by dispersing and distributing use.


**Trail Runners** by ensuring that access from Flagstaff and other communities is as seamless as possible, allowing runners a myriad of choices of loops and training routes. Proposed enhancements to Observatory Mesa and the forest areas along Lake Mary Road will improve already popular destinations.

 ...**Mountain Bikers** by improving the existing inventory of quality beginner to intermediate cross country riding,

especially on the relatively underutilized southside, and developing trails to meet the substantial demand for mountain bike-specific experiences while limiting impacts to other users. It reinforces the role of Fort Tuthill as a riding and event hub to complement the Dry Lake Hills by adding longer connections and creating some of the only flow trails in Arizona. Adoption and realignment of trails in Fort Valley allow for a more technical and challenging riding experience.

 ...**Motorized Dirt Bikers** by increasing the number of loop opportunities in areas like Fort Valley and beginning the process of planning and evaluating the Pines to Prairies concept, a destination-level motorized singletrack project.

 ...**Equestrians** by protecting and expanding system access in areas like Timberline and Doney Park where horse ownership is common. The equestrian enjoyment of the Fort Tuthill area will also be enriched through the creation of a longer loop that incorporates the Rogers Lake connector.

**the Environment** by reducing erosion through sustainable maintenance and construction techniques, including realignment of poorly located trails. The chronic issue of unauthorized trails will be addressed by pairing any trail improvements or construction with the restoration of nearby unauthorized trails. Diverting recreational use to more resilient, lower sensitivity areas will help reduce effects on wildlife in important activity centers and movement corridors.

CONSERVATION & RESTORATION



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

“While recreation opportunities are important, it’s also really important to keep certain areas more pristine and without trails...natural value is degraded when biota has no refuge from human impact.” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

“We need to recognize right off the bat that the landscape is not just a playground.” - FTI Meeting Participant

Conservation & Restoration Goals and Strategies

D

Balance trail development and management with community conservation and natural resource goals with an emphasis on restoration

Strategies

- Focus unauthorized trail closure and restoration efforts in the areas with the highest resource and cultural sensitivity, setting annual targets for miles of trail restored
- Evaluate the use of site specific and limited seasonal closures to reduce wildlife disturbance
- Use new trail development, improved access and trail information to disperse heavy recreation use from areas of high resource sensitivity to areas of lower resource sensitivity
- Seek out opportunities to integrate trail planning, maintenance and construction with wildlife fire activities

E

Ensure historic and prehistoric sites, including known American Indian sacred places and traditional cultural properties, are preserved and protected for their cultural importance

Strategies

- Interpret locations of cultural or historical significance, using trails as a means to connect people to the land and its history
- Take action to protect site stability and integrity where trail use is a threat
- Proactively work with American Indian tribes on trail and outdoor recreation projects
- Deepen trail-related partnership with organizations like the Ancestral Lands Program and NAU Native American Center

Conservation Considerations

Members of the FTI trail planning subcommittee were asked to evaluate natural and cultural resources before crafting trail recommendations. Large swaths of the planning area – from Anderson Mesa to portions of the San Francisco volcanic field – were identified as not being suitable for new trails.

Additionally, a number of conservation measures and considerations were raised during the preparation of FTI trail recommendations. These measures reinforce existing formal guidance in city, county, state and USFS and US Fish and Wildlife Service policy to protect natural vegetation, wildlife and soil resources:

- Be mindful of important wildlife corridors during trail planning and avoid where possible
- Assess the potential effects of various recreational uses, and minimize those effects through trail closure, trail use restrictions, and other measures as needed.
- Monitor recreation-related resource impacts
- Avoid sensitive locations such as springs, highly erodible soils and riparian areas
- Avoid Mexican Spotted Owl habitat and Northern Goshawk post-fledgling areas, while updating these locations based on the best available data

- Seek out and implement opportunities to restore old roads

Recommendations for Future Work

The Strategy recommends that a working group of conservationists, professional biologists, cultural resource specialists and trail users be formed to help guide the implementation of the Regional Trail Strategy and ensure dissemination of the best available science. Areas of potential collaborative work include:

- **Identify locations of high educational potential.** Dynamic forest processes along trails make for excellent open air educational opportunities. As the climate changes and the landscape evolves, areas of high recreation use are well suited to help tell the unfolding story.
- **Gather data to help inform trail planning and management.** Adequate data about recreation use is limited. A program to collect information would help inform trail layout and management measures intended to help wildlife management like seasonal closures to avoid breeding, nesting or important foraging locations for important species.
- **Develop a Field Guidebook for Restoring Unauthorized Trails.** A simple how-to guide would assist in completing unauthorized trail restoration projects. The guide would address re-establishing cross slopes, decompacting soils, blocking ongoing use and reestablishing native vegetation.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

“It would also be good to see more folks volunteering to protect these special resources...to give back by assisting with trail maintenance days, and helping to spread the word about how these places are there for us to enjoy and respect” - FTI Trail Survey Respondent

“Although most trail users are courteous and have good intentions, it is difficult to share trails between mountain biking and hiking due to the disparity in speed” - FTI Survey Respondent

The Role of Education & Outreach

Urban trails provide entry to spaces that may be difficult to see or access otherwise. These areas are special to many residents and often inspire stewardship efforts from people who live in nearby neighborhoods, members of local outdoor clubs and organizations. We hope that, through focused education and outreach programs, we can build a community of trail stewards who will take on the responsibility of building and maintaining the trails they use on a day-to-day basis.

Engaging the Community

Once a trail system is in place, there is still more to be done: on-going trail maintenance, construction of new trails and promoting the use of trail systems through community events. Trail-related events and celebrations are particularly important to the community. These functions bring residents together not only for fund-raisers such as the annual Climb the Mountain to Conquer Cancer, but also through a variety of bicycle and foot races, man versus horse competitions, and much more. Other highlights including the Native Americans for Community Action hiking series and Picture Canyon tours offered by Willow Bend Environmental Education Center.

Volunteerism is already strong in Flagstaff, thanks to organizations like Flagstaff Biking Organization and Coconino Trail Riders who host regular trail work days. The Arizona Trail Association's well respected Trail Stewards program leverages partnerships with REI, the Coconino National Forest and others help make sure our own statewide gem stays in good shape.

Flagstaff is a hotbed for youth corps programs. Both American Conservation Experience and the Arizona Conservation Corps have local offices that connect youth and adults with stewardship opportunities statewide and beyond.

Getting the Word Out

The way trail users get information is rapidly evolving. There's a competitive marketplace that includes user-specific apps, agency websites and online and printed maps. Old fashioned word of mouth still reigns, though – it was rated as the most common way people get their trail information in our online survey.

All in all, Flagstaff isn't doing too badly in this arena – 95% of survey respondents rated the quality and accuracy of trail information either high or medium. That didn't stop nearly 90% from saying they would use a Flagstaff-specific trail system website if it were available. Yet more remains to be done. Education was repeatedly identified as a top priority throughout the FTI engagement process. Numerous commenters complained of feeling unsafe due to interactions with bikers and hikers. Others pointed out confusing trail systems that could be improved.

Photo Courtesy of WH Waters



Education & Outreach Goals and Strategies

F

Create a safe and fun experience for trail users

Strategies

- Launch a new trail user etiquette campaign to promote awareness of “share the trail” principles and low impact recreation behavior
- Improve visitor information and wayfinding by adopting shared or complimentary sign standards between trail providers
- Work with organizations like Latino Outdoors to ensure that Flagstaff-area trail systems are welcoming to all people, regardless of cultural background or ability
- Encourage appropriate law enforcement personnel are available to ensure public safety and environmental quality at trailheads and on trail

G

Educate, inform and involve the community in trail stewardship

Strategies

- Launch a volunteer Trail Ambassadors program to deliver on-trail information to users
- Promote shared stewardship by offering trail-related volunteer opportunities
- Increase the number of trail volunteers and hours contributed to trail stewardship, encouraging all user groups to volunteer for monthly trail maintenance and construction events
- Launch the Flagstaff Trail Academy, a new trail skills training program to teach skills of trail design, building and maintenance to cultivate a cadre of dedicated trail stewards able to work across systems and jurisdictions through “adopt-a-trail” programs
- Increase the number of trail and recreation-related educational programs to reach all members of the Flagstaff community
- Elevate understanding of trail opportunities, issues and accomplishments among local leaders, stakeholders, policy makers and elected officials

H

Use trails to build the next generation of youth stewards

Strategies

- Work with organizations like Alpine Leadership Academy and Flagstaff Youth Riders (FLYRS) to identify meaningful trail stewardship and education service projects for youth

Education & Outreach (contd)

Program Spotlight: Trail Etiquette Campaign

Nearly all of Flagstaff's trails are shared by multiple users. Different but related sets of trail ethics and user guidelines have been adopted across the country to help ease conflicts and encourage low impact recreation behavior. Tips like "yield to climbing bike traffic" or "ask how the person on the horse would like you to pass" might seem intuitive but often aren't well understood.

A trail etiquette campaign will package these tips - along with encouragement to follow Leave No Trace principles - in a fresh, easy to understand format that reaches all users.

Kiosks, signs, videos and social media content will help amplify and reinforce the messages. Funding sources like the Arizona State Parks and Trails Safety and Education grants exist for just this purpose. The Durango Shares the Trail campaign and Bend, Oregon's Trail Love video series are excellent examples to follow.



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY



Photo Courtesy of WH Waters

What Do Trails Cost?

Trail costs will vary depending on soil type, side slope grade, density of vegetation, need for structures and other factors.

Maintenance includes removing downed trees, improving trail tread, clearing and brushing vegetation in the trail corridor, and improving drainage features. Estimates are based on a 5 person crew.

Construction includes design and layout, trail corridor clearing and tread establishment using hand and machine mixed construction for natural surface trails. FUTS trail are constructed with heavy machinery.



**Natural Surface
Singletrack Trail**



**Aggregate Surface
Flagstaff Urban Trail**



**Paved Surface
Flagstaff Urban Trail**

Construction
per mile

\$25,000 to
\$56,000

\$350,000 to
\$500,000

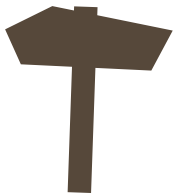
\$1,000,000 to
\$1,200,000

Maintenance
per mile

\$2,500 to \$5,000
(each time,
completed every 5
years)

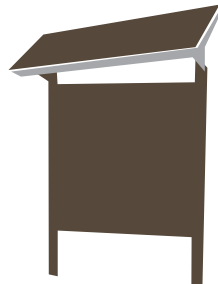
\$4,200
(per year)

\$2,800
(per year)



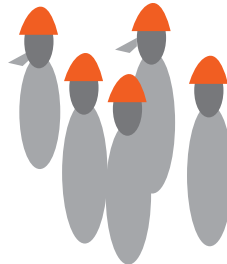
Trail Sign

\$75 to \$250
each



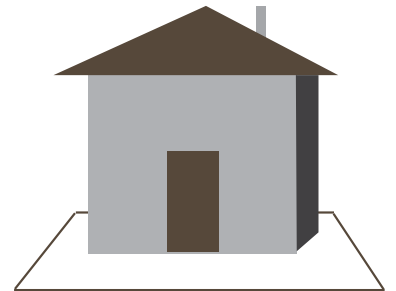
Kiosk

\$4,000 to \$9,500
each



**5 Member
Trail Crew**

\$4,500 per week



Vault Restroom

\$50,000 to
\$100,000 each

The Financial Side of Trails

The Asset

Replacement Value of All Natural Surface Trails in Planning Area (355 miles)*:
\$8.9 to \$14.2 million

The Impact

Average Spending of Visitors Using Trails
\$203 to \$278 per day

Share of Flagstaff visitors who report coming for outdoor recreation and trails:
40+%

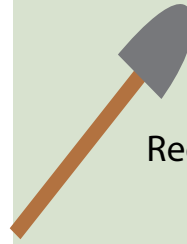
*based on per mile construction and maintenance estimates

How much is spent on trails now?

Expenditures for trail management vary year to year. The largest shortfall is on federal forest lands. The average budget annual allocation from 2010 to 2019 for trail maintenance on the Flagstaff Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest is approximately \$45,000. This covers personnel, vehicles, materials, supplies, and trail volunteer support. The District employs one staff member with a part time responsibility for several hundred miles of trail.

The City of Flagstaff has responsibility for maintenance of FUTS and trails on City-managed open space. The average annual FUTS maintenance budget, allocated and overseen by the Parks Section, is \$200,000. The City's Open Space program does not have dedicated trail funding or staff.

The Issue



Annual Maintenance Funding Required for 293 miles of Coconino National Forest trails (up to standard, 5 year maintenance cycle):



\$146,500 to \$199,000

Existing Annual Maintenance Shortfall:

\$101,500 to \$144,000

Estimated Cost of High Priority Trail Development Recommendations**:

\$1.4 to \$3.0 million

** based on conceptual mileage totals and per mile estimates

Coconino County Parks and Recreation has responsibility for maintenance of trails at Fort Tuthill, Rogers Lake and Pumphouse Wash. The County's trail budget is grant dependent. The County employs one Trades II worker that oversees trails and numerous other facilities.

How do trail costs compare to other projects in the community?

Constructing the Lone Tree Railroad Overpass project is equivalent to building 400 miles of new natural surface trail and maintaining them for the next 330 years.

Constructing the Aquaplex is equivalent to adding 40 miles of FUTS trails with aggregate surfacing, or 15 miles of paved trail, to the system.

Financial Sustainability Goals and Strategies

Realizing the system of sustainable trails envisioned in this strategy will require raising the bar of community support for trails.

Proper stewardship takes resources: money, people and equipment. A shortage of resources can be traced to several of the identified challenges including a backlog of trail maintenance, proliferation of unauthorized trails and inadequate wayfinding.

Much of the shortfall is on the Coconino National Forest; no surprise, as the agency is struggling with a \$300 million trail maintenance backlog nationwide. Resources are also limited for trail development and management on the City's newly acquired open space and for development of FUTS.



Photo Courtesy of M. Loseth



Improve the financial sustainability of trail management Strategies

- Create a new Flagstaff Trail Fund to collect and distribute funds – utilize the United Way of Northern Arizona as an interim fiscal agent while transitioning to a new 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
- Pursue suitable federal, state and private grant opportunities
- Cultivate new sources of funding and in-kind resources for trail maintenance, education, planning, and development
- Establish a partnership mechanism that allows agencies and organizations to share funding, personnel and other resources
- Actively seek out opportunities for trail providers to pool investment, such as a shared Flagstaff Trails Corps
- Develop a trail system that is within the capacity of the community and providers to manage

Financial Sustainability Goals and Strategies (contd)

H

Integrate trail planning and management with tourism and economic goals

Strategies

- Encourage suitable locations, or construct new ones, for trail events
- Develop, enhance and promote certain trails within the system as destination trails for visitors
- Increase the engagement of local businesses. the Chamber of Commerce and Discover Flagstaff in trail promotion and management
- Leverage marketing efforts like Pledge the Wild to educate visiting trail users on low impact and safe recreation practices

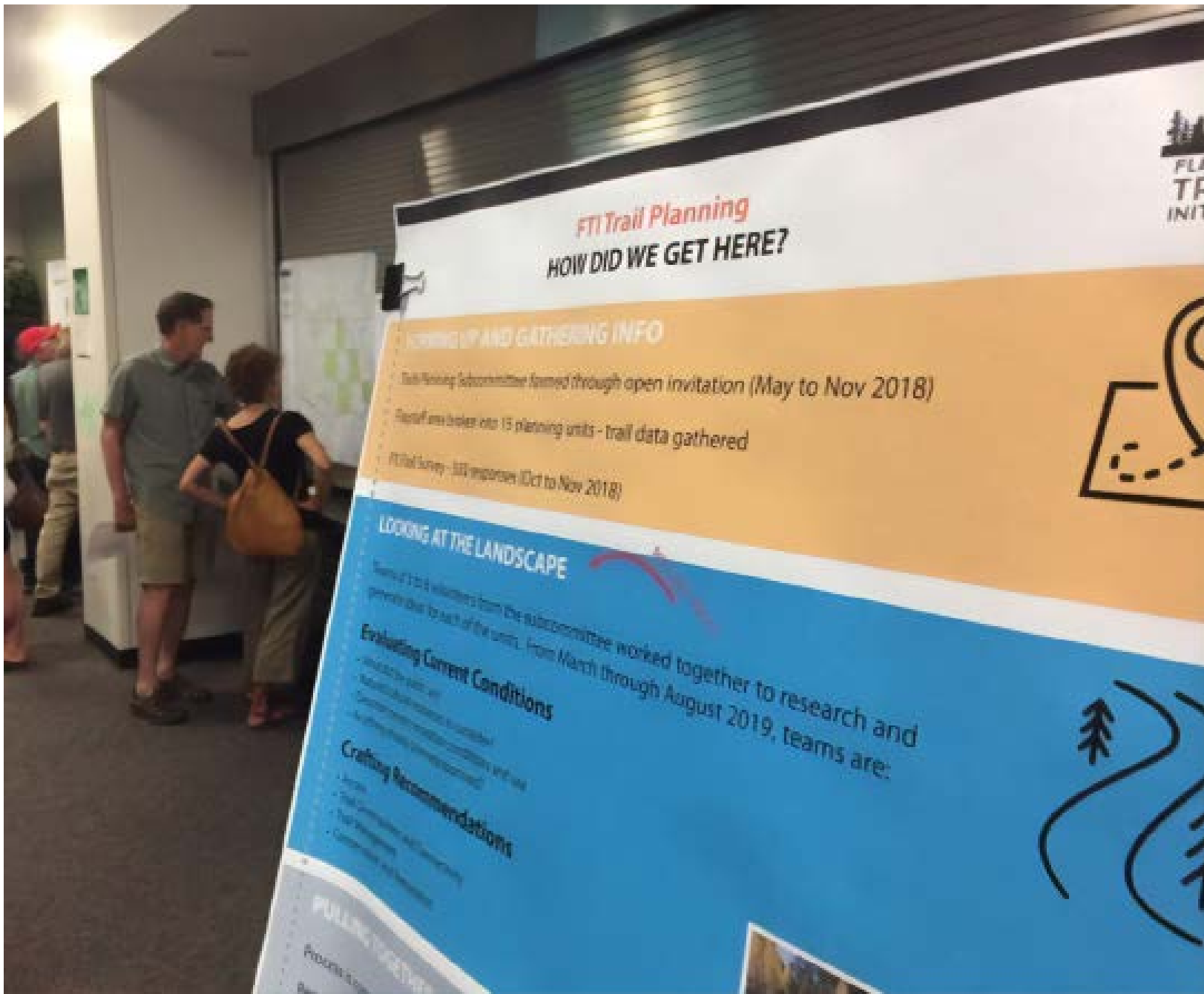
Program Spotlight: A new non-profit for Flagstaff trails

The new 501c3 nonprofit organization is a key part of tackling identified financial needs. The proposed organization would use an organizational membership model, composed of FTI core team members and other partner governmental and nonprofit groups in the region. These member organizations would elect a five to ten member board of directors to oversee the operations of the new Flagstaff Trails Initiative 501c3 and a part-time paid coordinator.



The initial emphasis of the new organization would be on fundraising. Use of these funds would be guided by the Regional Trail Strategy for use on restoration, education, planning, construction and maintenance projects. The intent of the organization is to complement and elevate, rather than compete with, existing FTI partners.

HOW WE PRODUCED THE STRATEGY



Forming Up

FTI is a voluntary, partnership-driven effort rather than a formal public body.

It operates under a collaborative work plan mutually agreed to by all parties available for public review at flagstafftrailsinitiative.org. The effort relies on a structure of a representative core team that included the organizations most committed to and affected by the Initiative including trail providers, users and conservation advocates. Several organizations were added to the core team throughout the project in an effort to ensure representation and diverse perspectives.

The project was officially launched in 2017 when a subset of what is now the FTI core team submitted an application to the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. RTCA staff based in Arizona provided facilitation, technical assistance and process design on behalf of core team members. Southwest Decision Resources, a consulting firm based in Arizona, served as co-facilitator throughout the development of the Regional Trail Strategy.

A group of three subcommittees (also referred to as focus teams) were formed by open invitation during

workshops and public meetings. These subcommittees (Trail Planning, Education and Outreach, and Financial Sustainability) often included core team members and received support from the facilitation team.

Decision Making

The FTI core team adopted a consensus-based decision making process, which was defined as the willingness of team members to support a particular outcome, even if the outcome is not wholly satisfactory. When seeking consensus, four levels of support outlined in the collaborative work plan were utilized.

Each of FTI core team organizations was provided a single vote at important junctures. For release of the Draft Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy, consensus was ambitiously defined by the core team as 100% of organizations indicating they support the contents of the document.

NOTE: The Sierra Club has been a member of the FTI core team since December 2017 and helped with the development of the Strategy and organization of the planning process. They have requested their members review the draft Strategy during the public feedback period (December 2019 to February 2020) before taking a final position on the goals, strategies and recommendations contained within.



Engagement and Outreach

Repeated public and stakeholder engagement was central to the development of the Regional Trail Strategy.

These efforts began in February 2018 when FTI members briefed elected officials on the Flagstaff City Council and Coconino County Board of Supervisors about the intent of the project during open sessions.

A project website (flagstafftrailsinitiative.org) was established soon to serve as accessible location for all project documents such as meeting notes and public meeting summaries. An email list serve was built to distribute quarterly updates and meeting notifications.

Two workshops held in the spring of 2018 engaged interested organizations and agencies. Dozens of organizations were invited to attend and shape the goals, approach and outcome of the process. Approximately 50 participants at the first workshop completed a context mapping exercise that helped inform the “Trends and Challenges” portion of the Strategy. Those present offered general support and constructive criticism for the goals of FTI; many original attendees would go on to volunteer on one of the three subcommittees.

Broader public engagement took place from the fall of 2018 through the summer of 2019. The first public meeting took place in October 2018 and was attended by 125 people. Participants took part in an exercise to identify successful

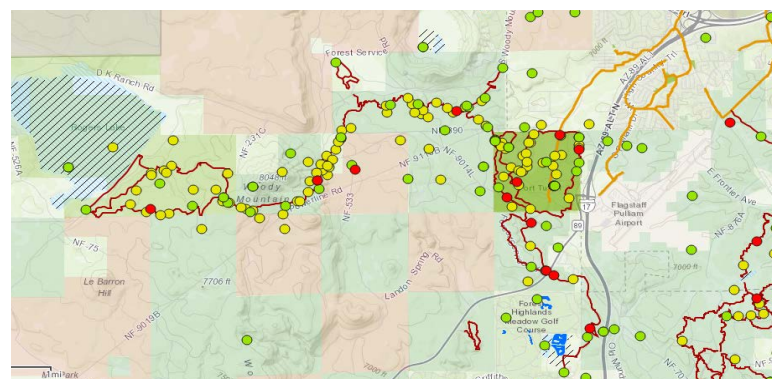
outcomes of a collaborative strategy, as well as outline pressing challenges and possible solutions. The second public meeting was held in June 2019 to provide a check-in on FTI progress and an opportunity for the public to shape the priorities contained in the Strategy.

The various Councils and Commissions in the area also served as important conduit to the community. FTI representatives presented to the Coconino Inter-tribal Advisory Council, Coconino County Tri-Diversity Council, Open Spaces Commission and Bicycle Advisory Committee.

A Flagstaff Trails Initiative Facebook page was created in June 2019, primarily as a means to distribute information about upcoming meetings and FTI events.

Two open-invitation “Walk and Talk” events were held to educate the public on the topics of trail erosion and user experience.

The Draft Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy was made available to the public from November 27, 2019 through February 7, 2020. During this time, it was presented to numerous formal and citizen committees and councils. In total, approximately 540 comments were received from 80 unique commenters.



Successes, opportunities and concerns identified in the Fort Tuthill/Rogers Lake area

Information Gathering

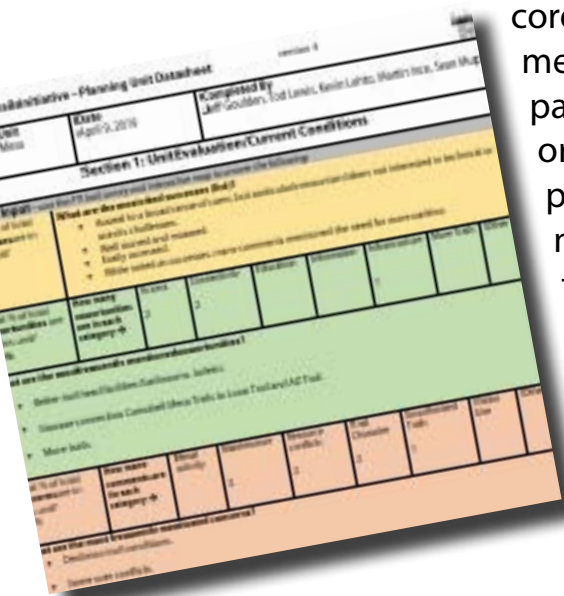
The FTI survey was hosted on the Flagstaff Community Forum on the City of Flagstaff website (www.flagstaff.az.gov/FCF) during October and November of 2018. A total of 570 responses were received. The survey instrument included a mapping exercise that allowed participants to place dots on an online map to indicate locations where we have achieved successes in the trail system, where we have opportunities to enhance the trail system, and where there are concerns about trails. The mapping dot exercise was also conducted via paper maps at three of the public and partner meetings. Results from these paper mapping exercises – which included 141 comments from the partner meetings and 243 comments from the public open house – were folded into the online survey results.

Trail Planning

The trail planning process represented the deepest and most sustained citizen involvement in FTI. A Trails Planning Subcommittee was formed through open invitation from the first partner meeting. In total, over 30

people including core team members took part in one or more trail planning meetings or field visits.

A planning sheet used by trail planning volunteers



To organize the effort of evaluating conditions and crafting recommendations, the area within the FMPO boundary was broken into 15 planning units. From March to September 2019 following an initial meeting and information sharing session, teams of two to six “citizen planners”, volunteers and agency staff from the subcommittee worked together to understand the situation on the ground.

These teams used a common form to review public input, access several reports and review geospatial information to agree on and document current resource and recreational conditions before crafting recommendations.

Using this foundation, each team identified the unique “niche” each of the planning units should play in the region and crafted recommendations related to access, trail development and connectivity, and restoration. The teams aimed for full consensus on each recommendation. While consensus was achieved for 95% of the trail recommendations, that was not possible in all cases. The areas of disagreement were noted. These projects are indicated with an asterick* in the trail plan and received a lower score as a result.

The recommendations were then reviewed by planners on the core team and facilitation team to ensure feasibility and limit duplication. They were consolidated, organized and then scored by some of the trail planning subcommittee members. Trail scoring criteria were developed collaboratively and used to prioritize projects based on their merit to establish the high, medium and low priority tiers in the trail plan.

Trail Weighting Criteria

The following criteria were developed by the FTI Core Team and facilitators with input from the trail planning subcommittee. **The system includes six criteria and possible score of 50. Members of the trail planning subcommittee scored each individual project. The resulting scores were used to categorize the projects based on priority level.**

Photo Courtesy of WH Waters



A. Network & Connectivity (up to 12 pts)

- Helps connect existing trail systems (including FUTS, Flagstaff Loop Trail or Arizona Trail), neighborhoods, parks and/or community centers.
- A high degree of integration is indicated by frequent points of connection to other trails or access points.
- Special consideration should be given to those that are accessible from current or expected residences by foot, bike or other mode of travel that are not currently well served by trails.

(0=no connections or network to 12=connects significant locations and forms a key part of the trail network)

B. Environmental Sensitivity and Beneficial Resource Effects (up to 10 pts)

- Located in an area of low environmental sensitivity, as indicated by the Flagstaff Regional Plan map.
- Expected to improve natural or cultural resource conditions by fixing an environmental impact such as trail erosion.
- Expected to draw use from a sensitive area, for example by dispersing use away from overtaxed areas to less used, but suitable areas for recreation.

(0=project is in a highly sensitive area and impacts are known to 10=project is in a low sensitivity area or has known beneficial effects)

C. Level of Public Support (up to 8 pts)

- Has strong support from the public, as evidenced by the FTI trail survey (specifically “opportunities” identified) and comments during public forums.
- Recommendations that did not get consensus of the Trails Planning Subcommittee should be reduced by 4 points.

(0=project is not mentioned in the FTI survey to 8=one of the most frequently mentioned)

D. Demonstrated Demand or Expected Popularity (up to 8 pts)

- A demand for the trail or facility is demonstrated by observation of frequent use.
- New projects or trails are expected to be highly popular or well used should also score high.

(0=little evidence of recreational demand to 8=expected frequent and heavy use)

E. Unique or Destination Trail Experience (up to 6 pts)

- Fills an important role by providing a unique trail experience for one or more uses that may not be currently available. May be indicated by residents and visitors going of their way to use it.

(0=project is similar to existing opportunities to 6=fills an important gap and does not duplicate existing opportunities)

F. Cost & Complexity (6 pts)

- The overall level of resources needed to complete the project including direct funding, staff time, planning and permitting.
- Existing approval in a planning document lowers complexity.

(0=project is highly complex and costly and no planning and has been completed to 6=project is planned and cost/complexity is well known and reasonable for the scope of the project)

Preparers and Participants

FTI Core Team

Mark Loseth (American Conservation Experience)
Justin Inglis (Flagstaff resident)
Matthew Roberts (Flagline Trails Inc)
Debbie McMahon (R2R Hiking Club)
Kenny Schipper (Coconino Trail Riders)
Anthony Quintile (Flagstaff Biking Organization)
Joe Hazel (Flagstaff Biking Organization)
Mike Popejoy (Sierra Club)
Brian Grube (Coconino County Parks and Recreation)
Keith Chamberlain (City of Flagstaff)
Sara Dechter (City of Flagstaff)
Stacey Brechler-Knaggs (City of Flagstaff)
Martin Ince (Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization)
Carlton Johnson (City of Flagstaff)
Robert Wallace (City of Flagstaff Open Space)
Kevin Lehto (Coconino National Forest, Flagstaff Ranger District)
Brian Poturalski (Coconino National Forest)
Jonathan Hardes (National Park Service, Flagstaff Area National Monuments)

Facilitation Team

Adam Milnor (National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance)
Andi Rogers (Southwest Decision Resources)
Carrie Eberly (Southwest Decision Resources)

Trail Planning Subcommittee Contributors

Jeff Goulden
Bruce Belman
Jenny Blue
Maria Bowling
Artec Durham
Tod Lewis
Lauri Patrick
Vance Peterson
Eric Pitcher
Cory Quackenbush
Evan Reimondo
Joe Shannon
Jackie Thomas
Jack Welch
Nat White
Mary Williams
Tyler Williams
Travis Woolley

Financial Sustainability

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Bill Sandercock
Lee Gault

Education and Outreach

Bruce Belman
Cassandra Roberts
Sabrina Carlson
Afton McKusick
Lori Pappas



Written and produced with technical support from Adam Milnor, Community Planner National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program

File Code: 2350
Date: April 9, 2020

Justin Inglis
Coordinator
Flagstaff Trails Initiative
info@FlagstaffTrailsInitiative.org
Flagstaff, Arizona

Dear Mr. Inglis,

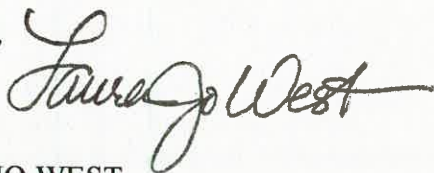
The Coconino National Forest is pleased to support the Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy (the strategy), which FTI released in draft form in December of 2019.

As you know, our staff has been intimately involved in the development of this strategy. In 2017 the forest assisted the City of Flagstaff with a grant application to the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program to develop a community driven collaboration project which evolved into FTI. We applaud the efforts of FTI and the entire Flagstaff community to clearly articulate trail needs into the future. The Coconino National Forest will use this strategy to plan and prioritize future projects.

After reviewing the strategy, our staff believes that the conceptual projects and concepts contained in it meet Forest Plan goals and objectives. The Coconino National Forest's support for the strategy does not imply authorization to proceed with construction or implementation of any proposed projects. Specific projects proposed in the strategy will require a more in-depth, site-specific environmental review and/or analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act before they can be implemented.

If you have any questions concerning the implementation of the Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy on the Coconino National Forest or partnerships through FTI, please contact Patrick McGervey, Flagstaff Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer, at (928) 526-0866 or via email to patrick.mcgervey@usda.gov

Sincerely,



LAURA JO WEST
Forest Supervisor





United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WUPATKI – SUNSET CRATER VOLCANO – WALNUT
CANYON
NATIONAL MONUMENTS
6400 North Highway 89
Flagstaff, Arizona 86004



IN REPLY REFER TO:

H4217

April 13, 2020

RE: Flagstaff Area National Monuments (Sunset Crater Volcano, Walnut Canyon and Wupatki National Monument) support for the Flagstaff Trails Initiative Regional Trail Strategy

To Whom it May Concern:

The Flagstaff Area National Monuments (FLAG) are a cluster of three National Monuments which, collectively, comprise more than 42,000 acres of National Park Service-administered lands in the greater Flagstaff area, within Coconino County, Arizona. Two of these Monuments, Sunset Crater Volcano and Walnut Canyon, are located within the Flagstaff Trails Initiative's project scope, which is represented by the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization or "MetroPlan" boundary.

The purpose of FLAG is to preserve and protect local natural and cultural resources, including varied landscapes and archaeological sites, as well as an abundance of other resources of great ethnographic, scientific, and education importance, that provide public inspiration and enjoyment. In addition to being important community assets, trails also allow members of the public direct access to some of these resources, which is central to meeting the visitor use and enjoyment portion of the FLAG mission. Through this highly collaborative regional document, FLAG believes the Flagstaff Trails Initiative can reach the shared goals of improving quality, connectivity, and support for trails in the region.

FLAG is proud to be a part of this multi-jurisdictional partnership and offer our full support of the Flagstaff Trails Initiative and this Regional Trails Strategy.

Kayci Cook Collins
Superintendent



Flagstaff Biking Organization
PO Box 23851
Flagstaff, AZ 86002
trails@flagstaffbiking.org

April 7, 2020

Dear Flagstaff Trails Initiative-

The Board of Flagstaff Biking Organization would like to offer our wholehearted support for the Flagstaff Trails Initiative Regional Trails Strategy.

Frankly, we feel that this effort is long overdue, and, as a participant in the initiation of this process and a founding core team member, we are ecstatic to see the Strategy finalized.

In the long term we are hopeful that agency and government decision makers will take the direction provided by this document into consideration with the highest level of respect for the comprehensive community input and support that is incorporated therein. It is imperative to our communities that trails be given their rightful place at the table with the other issues and challenges in the decision-making matrices in northern Arizona.

The public engagement process has shone a bright light on the fact that Flagstaff residents overwhelmingly value their trails. The vast majority of comments were supportive of trails that are both authorized and unauthorized. This bolsters our long-held assertion that there is a need greatly unmet by the current sanctioned trail system. Hopefully this position will be embraced by area land managers and decision makers, and the appropriate actions will be taken to expand the system of authorized trails in an environmentally, culturally, and **socially** sustainable way.

Trails are a key component of the health, culture and lifestyle of the citizens of northern Arizona. We are pleased that those values have been captured by this process.

Sincerely-

For the Board of Flagstaff Biking Organization

Anthony Quintile and Joe Hazel



AMERICAN CONSERVATION EXPERIENCE
2900 N Fort Valley Rd, Flagstaff
AZ 86001, USA

March 19, 2020

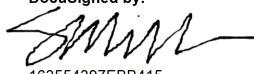
Flagstaff Trails Initiative,

I write on behalf of the American Conservation Experience (ACE) in support of the Flagstaff Trails Initiative's regional trail strategy. The ACE board of directors believe that the regional strategy will improve our quality of life, promote our local business community and play an important role in conservation efforts throughout the region.

By actively including local environmental non-profits and members of the public throughout the planning process, the Flagstaff Trails Initiative has shown a dedication to our community that will be a source of pride for years to come. The holistic and inclusive approach to this document is a testament of what we can achieve by working together for the greater good of our landscape and those who enjoy and care for our natural environment.

ACE is grounded in the philosophy that cooperative labor on meaningful conservation projects foster understanding and operates on the belief that challenging volunteer service unites people of all backgrounds in a common cause. Headquartered in Flagstaff, but with a national reach, we have participated in a variety of community minded efforts to improve landscapes on local and regional scales. We believe that the Flagstaff Trails Initiative is a model for future efforts of this nature and are honored to have participated in this process.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

163554397EBB415...

Shayne Miller

Board Chair
American Conservation Experience

March 24, 2020

Justin Ingles
Flagstaff Trails Initiative –Interim Coordinator

On behalf of R2R please accept this letter of support.

The R2R hiking club began more than 40 years with a handful of women. Our membership roster now has over 100 members. R2R members plan and lead weekly hikes exploring numerous trails in and around Flagstaff. We provide quality hiking and outdoor adventure experiences at various levels for all its members. We share hiking experiences while respecting and preserving our natural environment.

R2R fully supports the Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy Plan and its goals. Trail planning which includes improving our trail quality and sustainability is extremely important to achieve a regional trail system [goal A]. FTI focuses is not building new trails but elevating trail quality and ensuring the trails we have are sustainable for ALL USERS. The area around Flagstaff has numerous sacred and traditional properties, preserving and protecting these cultural area for future generations is extremely important to all partners. FTI with their Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy Plan will help preserve and restore these cultural sites [goals D, E].

R2R encourages FTI to emphasize its proposed Education and Outreach Goals, especially in regard to trail etiquette and safety strategies [goal F]. As an active group of hikers, we are aware of the need to educate ALL trail users to exercise trail courtesy, especially on routes with a high volume of mountain bikers. We would like to see more education and signage about the need for bikers to warn hikers and equestrians about their approach by using voice or bell warnings.

As a FTI partner and supporter, we commit to doing monthly trail restoration and maintenance projects to be monitored by FTI. Some of our members are stewards on sections of the AZT near Flagstaff. R2R takes trail stewardship seriously and will become stewards of trails around Flagstaff. R2R supports FTI and the goals of the Flagstaff Regional Trail Strategy Plan and will be here to help FTI to reach its goals.

Sincerely,

Debra McMahon & Sarah King

R2R Hiking Club



Flagstaff N AZ Group Joe Shannon Chair - 318 W. Birch Ave. #8 Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Phone: (928) 380-9537 Email: jshannon278@gmail.com

April 10 2020

Memorandum

To: Justin Inglis Interim Director of Flagstaff Trails Initiative
From: Flagstaff Northern AZ Group Executive Committee – Sierra Club
Subject: Support for implementation of the Flagstaff Trail Initiative – Regional Strategy

On behalf of Sierra Club Grand Canyon Chapter's Flagstaff Northern Arizona Group please accept this letter of support for the Flagstaff Trail Initiative - Regional Trail Strategy, with qualifications.

The Grand Canyon Chapter of Sierra Club has long been committed to protection of Arizona's lands, forest, wildlife, and national parks.

Our mission: To explore, enjoy and protect the planet. To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.

Sierra Club supports the Regional Strategy and many of its goals. Goal A, improving trail quality, with regular maintenance, will create a sustainable trail system while preserving ecosystems. Trails should avoid wildlife corridors and sensitive areas such as breeding territories for Northern Goshawk, Mexican Spotted Owl, Peregrine Falcon, and all areas with springs and wetlands, which are biologically significant. The San Francisco Peaks are a vital sky island that is currently realizing climate crisis migration from both wildlife and humans; we can assume this migration to cooler terrain will increase over time. In addition, it should be noted that the entirety of the land subsumed under the Regional Strategy and FTI is historically Native American territory. Therefore, any trail planning, construction or re-construction should be done with the full knowledge of, and in partnership with, representatives of indigenous communities in order to protect and preserve culturally significant areas and artifacts.

We are very concerned with Goal B, which addresses motorcycle trails. We oppose any additional construction of motorized trails on or around the San Francisco Peaks. The Kelly trail system was designed for motorized recreation, as is Cinder Hill and areas on the nearby Kaibab Forest. We consider current approved-system locations to be sufficient already and constructing to "meet demand" is not sustainable for any type of recreation. In addition, we do not explicitly support any site-specific trail plans, such as the proposed Walnut Canyon and Anderson Mesa Trails. These plans were developed with little serious consideration of potential ecological effects, and without the proper vetting by specialists. As an example, in spite of extensive research showing that the Fort Valley area is the primary wildlife corridor linking the San Francisco Peaks to the Mogollon Rim, as well as, research outlining the significant ecological effects of motorized vehicle use, the expansion of motorized trails was proposed for this area. We believe such considerations must be taken seriously, and measures taken to reduce the negative ecological impacts of motorized recreation. For example, motorized trails should not be located in or around a significant wildlife corridor. We suggest that the Regional Strategy take a stronger stand on not compromising the ecological integrity of these areas where we recreate.

We strongly recommend that the Regional Strategy include a catastrophic wildfire protocol that would ensure all recreationists could safely evacuate. We suggest this idea be part of sustainable trail planning in coordination with education and outreach efforts. Wildfire evacuation planning should include the safe removal of domesticated animals in coordination with the Sheriff's office and other agencies.



FLAGSTAFF
TRAILS
INITIATIVE

**We need your help and support.
Join us and learn more at:
flagstafftrailsinitiative.org**