



**September 2009**  
**Friends Maintain Sedona Trails**  
By Mike Ward

Perhaps one of the greatest attractions that Sedona has to offer its residents and visitors alike, are the many opportunities to easily access the stunning beauty of the Red Rock Country on Forest Service system trails. There are approximately 77 system trails in and around Sedona providing nearly 200 miles of well maintained trails for hiking, biking and equestrian use.

Mother Nature has a way of reclaiming her land. Growing vegetation obscures the trails, monsoon rains wash away portions of the trails, and flooding in our many canyons completely removes wash and creek trail crossings. Every wind storm brings down trees, large and small, damaged by fire and the bark beetle completely blocking trails.

Those of us who hike, bike, or ride the trails appreciate how well maintained they are but give little thought as to how that all happens. It takes hundreds of laborious man-hours every year to maintain the trails around Sedona. Nearly 75% of all of the maintenance performed on Sedona area trails is done by the volunteers of the Friends of the Forest Trail Crew.

Of the Friends' 24,000 volunteer hours in 2008, 1,514 hours were volunteered by the Friends' Trail Crew. Every Friday morning, 3 to 14 members meet at a designated trail head to spend 4 to 5 hours working on the trail. The trails to be worked on each week are identified by the Forest Service and there is an attempt to visit every trail at least once a year.

The Trail Crew leader is Rick Zabor, who makes everything happen. He provides the administrative leadership for the committee and on the trail he leads by example. Rick is an excellent teacher with a good eye for what needs to be done on the trail and supervises it being done correctly.

Safety is always our first concern. Every work meeting begins with a "tailgate safety meeting". Trail work is very physical and crew members are reminded to listen to their body and only perform the level of activity that you are comfortable with.

Tool safety is always a discussion topic. Swinging picks and axes require people to always be aware of who and what is around them. Bow saws and two man saws, with inch and half long teeth, need to be used with care. There is always the danger of falling or of something falling on you, so safety helmets are required when circumstances merit it.

Moving 100 to 1,000 pound rocks requires specialized equipment used with precision and care. Cutting fallen trees crossing the trail is always dangerous. These activities require an understanding of the proper use of equipment and tools. The construction of trail erosion features, rock steps and trail reinforcement features is a skilled trade. Many of the members of the Trail Crew are graduates of the Forest Service's "Trail Boss"

program. The Trail Boss courses teach people how to correctly construct trail features that are efficient, effective and durable enough to survive horse hooves.

A seasonal subgroup of the Trail Crew is a group self-named the "Hot Shots" co-lead by Gene Rector and Kevin Harding. Although their primary focus is the removal of trees that fall on the trails, they also repair many problems on the trail. Since the Brins Fire, the Hot Shots have frequently returned to the Sterling Pass, Vultee Arch and North Wilson trails to remove fallen trees from the trails. Since January, a total of 341 trees have been cut to remove them from hiking trails. Some of the trees are easy cuts, two to six inches in diameter, but others have required six-foot crosscut saw. The largest diameter tree was a green 36-inch ponderosa.

The entire Trail Crew also gets involved in special projects. The Trail Crew is often called in to assist with the removal of discarded appliances, furniture and the like illegally dumped in the National Forest. Recently they were asked to assist in cleaning up five illegal squatter campsites. The Trail Crew filled 1-1/2 dumpsters putting in 47 hours of labor to clean the area.

The Trail Crew installed barriers to prevent ATVs from destroying the John Heath Indian Ruin near FR 618 and SR 260. To block a ridge below the ruin from ATV access, twelve 5 foot long 6 inch lengths of pipe were cemented into the ground and then filled with concrete. Then "T" posts were pounded into the rocky ground to support barbed wire fencing that extended the barrier into the washes on either side of the ridge.

The Trail Crew was also asked to assist Al Gilson, the Friends' Construction Crew foreman to help with the foundation and base for the new Ranger District sign on SR 179 south of the Village of Oak Creek. The crew assisted with building concrete forms, pouring concrete and helping Gilson with the stone work. The Construction and Trail Crew finished the rock facing of the base and the sign was mounted on July 9.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Friends of the Forest Trail Committee, or one of the less physically demanding Friends' groups, contact the Red Rock Ranger Station at 928-203-2900 or visit [www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org](http://www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org).

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