

On Thursday December 8th, thirteen FOSM volunteers, along with Cibola Assistant Trails and Wilderness Manager Russell Berman, SRD Trails Foreman Joseph Jaffa-Martinez, and SRD trail crew member Jeff Cervantes, headed to Placitas for a special project. Along the Chalk Dust Trail in the Placitas Area Trail System, a footbridge spanning a deep arroyo had reached a state where supporting a horse would be iffy, and it was even a potential hazard for bike traffic. The ambitious goal for the day was fourfold: **1)** to relocate the severely trenched-out trails on either side of the arroyo (i.e. to build new trail, pre-pin-flagged by the SRD on Wednesday), **2)** to build 2 gabions (cages full of rocks) to help support the new tread across the arroyo, **3)** to remove and, if time, dismantle the bridge, and **4)** to pile up enough large rocks and dirt to raise the tread across the arroyo, high enough to make it navigable for bikers and other users coming from either direction. The SRD was able to bring the skid steer in to help with some of the heavier tasks. Just before lunch, once the reroutes were finished, rock-gathering became the main focus for the afternoon. Only a fairly narrow corridor through the area had been archaeologically cleared for this project, so volunteers were limited to the arroyo when finding rocks, resulting in longer trips as rocks were gathered. Meanwhile the FS crew focused on moving and staging larger rocks for the tread base (using the skid steer), and building the cages for the gabions, which volunteers then filled with the gathered rocks. Once built, each gabion was roughly 2.5 ft high, and maybe 5x5 ft in area. Eric Russell focused on building new tread near the steep bank on the south side of the arroyo; Jeff Huser and others, including Tim Garner from PATA (Placitas Area Trails Association), focused on building and banking a sharp turn leading into the arroyo from the other side. Jeff H. and the FS crew stayed late after the FOSM crew had left, to remove the bridge (left intact for now), take down the steep banks where the trail now crosses, use that dirt to raise the tread through the arroyo, and obliterate the old trail south of the arroyo (north of the arroyo check dams will be built on the long steep trenched-out sections – a task for another day). Several bikes easily navigated the new trail through the arroyo as the guys were finishing up.

The volunteers were Tayo Basquiat, Joe Beman, David Bernstein, Jenny Blackmore, Sim Cook, Luis Cuadros, Byron Garner, Jim Houle, Jeff Huser, Larry Larrichio, Eric Russell, Roland Stumpf and Scott Sunde.

Photos by Jenny Blackmore. Second lunch photo by Jeff Huser :)



The sideslope above the north side of the arroyo Joe, David (Jim up top)



Farther north on the flats Roland, Larry, Tayo



Larry works near the old trenched-out trail. The new trail will cross it.



Luis plays in the sand box



The views! Scott works on another crossing with the old trail.
(Byron, Jim, Sim)



Byron starts a construction project across a drainage (behind him)
(Scott, Tayo)



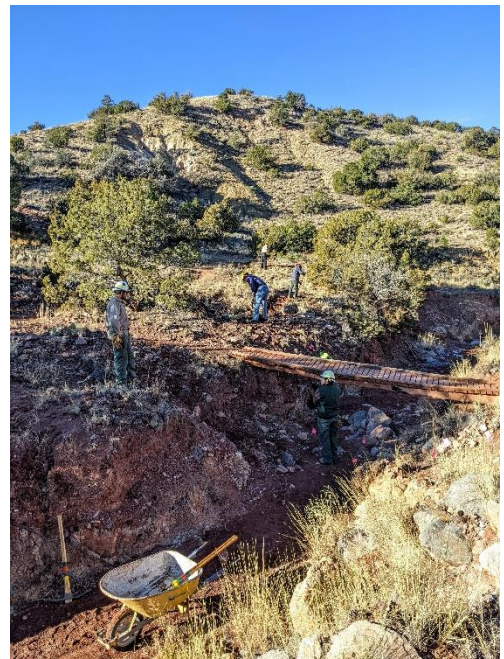
Jeff C, Russell, and Larry carry an unused piece of the bridge up to the old trenched trail. Jeff C then cut it into pieces which will be used as check-dams to slow down water crossing the new trail sections. Sim tamps a section of new trail.



Jeff H and Tim gather rocks to bank the turn. We don't need no stinking skid steer...



The south bank. Note the line of pin flags marking where the trail will go. Trail users continue to come through throughout the workday, so bridge removal needs to wait until new tread construction is complete.



Eric, Tayo and Roland build new tread on the south side early in the day.



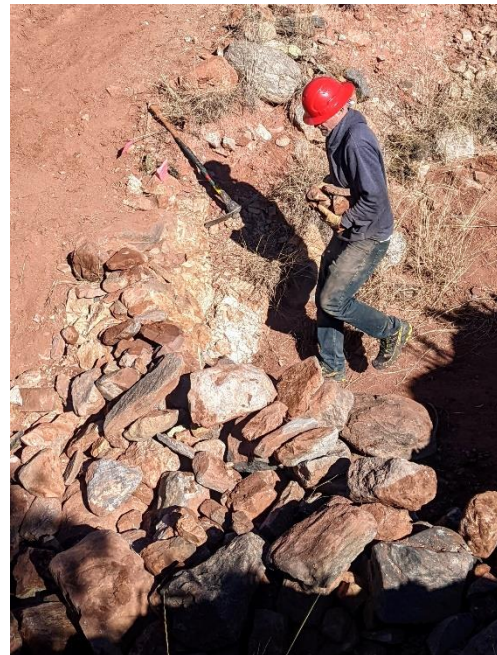
Russell, Jeff C and Joseph start assembling a cage for the first gabion. Eric observes from the perch which he later transforms.



Eric works on his rock collection. Joseph runs the skid steer.



Reroutes complete, the crew switches to finding rocks in the arroyo, opting to hand-transport them instead of using the wheelbarrow, given the terrain.



The staging area. Jeff, Sim, Tayo.....



Lunchtime! A beautiful bluebird day.



Volunteers used a bucket brigade, tossing large and small rocks into the (well-placed) cage to build the first gabion. Eric kept plugging away...
(Eric, Roland, Joe, Russell)



The FS crew closes the cage



With the second gabion in place the bridge can be removed! Go Russell! We'll just set it over here for now...



Now for the fun part, loads and loads of rock and dirt to build up the new tread behind the gabions.



Before, in the AM, and After (close to completion) in the PM. Rideable!