

# NOHVCC Newsletter - February 2016 edition

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## 14-Club Partnership Working To Create 750-Mile Arizona Peace Trail

by Dave Halsey, NOHVCC Contributing Writer

The Arizona Peace Trail, when completed, will be one of the longest signed and mapped trail systems in the country for off-highway vehicles (OHVs). It's a work in progress. But considering its scope, and the fact that 14 OHV clubs have been working on it for just 2 years, the key word is "progress."



"The clubs are going to be the glue that keeps this project together and makes it work," said John Strong, a member of the Arizona Peace Trail Committee, and past president of the Lake Havasu 4 Wheelers. "It's going to take time. We formed a 501(c)(3) group last year. Our next grant will go toward a Master Plan for the whole trail system, so that we can work with the city, county, State and Federal agencies."

The proposed route is a 750-mile loop, traveling on city, county, state and federal lands as it crosses Mojave, La Paz and Yuma Counties. It includes roads and trails between Bullhead City on the north end and Yuma on the south, currently open to all OHVs, but unsigned. In January, a group of riders gathered near Bouse, AZ, to witness the installation of the first of what will be hundreds of Arizona Peace Trail signs. "This loop trail will connect to almost endless side trails," said J.C. Sanders, 2016 Trail Committee

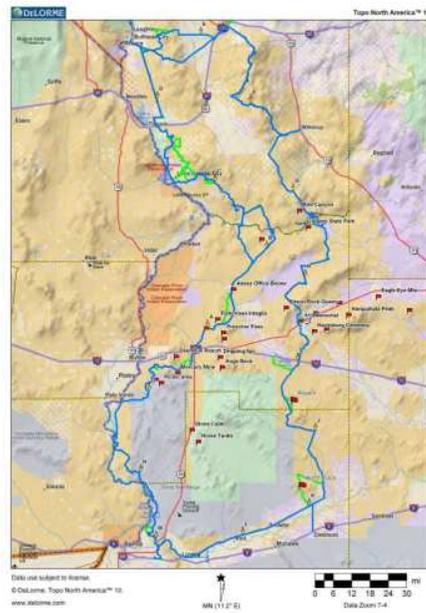
chairman. "Once completed, the trail system will provide the ultimate adventure recreation system in western Arizona."

The trail name was chosen by the three counties involved, reports Sanders. "La Paz" is Spanish for "peace." To date, La Paz County has applied for and received two grants for the project. One is a Yamaha OHV Access Initiative Grant, just under \$5,000, for signage. A second grant for \$74,414 was provided by the Arizona State Parks OHV Advisory Group (OHVAG), to develop a staging area in Cibola.

The Arizona Peace Trail website shows the impressive progress the Committee has made since it was officially organized in 2014. It features a map of the proposed route, which members have ridden. It lists the 14 "Support Partners" -- 4-wheel drive truck, ATV and side-by-side clubs. And it has a clear Mission Statement:

- To develop a loop trail system utilizing existing trails and roads in Western Arizona connecting Bullhead City to Yuma, and assist the land managers in maintaining the trail system.
- Work with City, County, State and Federal Agencies.
- Keep the desert roads and trails open for public use.
- Work on projects for our community, our highways and our public lands.
- Promote the sport of OHV riding safety, with awareness and respect for the environment.

As they work with government agencies at all levels to turn the proposed route into a designated trail, club members are using GPS to track the way, as well as Points of Interest (POI) along the way. The Arizona Peace Trail website lists 10 POIs found on the trail -- including petroglyphs, ghost towns, historic mines and scenic stops -- complete with their GPS coordinates. The trail varies in elevation from 170 ft. to 7070 ft. above sea level, with a wide variety of terrain and picturesque landscapes.



The Arizona Peace Trail Committee is working with the BLM Field Offices as they develop their Travel Management Plans and designate

which roads and trails are open to OHVs. “There’s a Travel Management Plan that has been completed by Lake Havasu BLM, but the rest of them still have to be completed between Yuma and Bullhead City,” said Strong. “Our guesstimate is the year 2020, to get all the Travel Management Plans completed by the BLM. Hopefully, the entire trail will be approved after that. But we don’t like to put a timeline on it.”

As the clubs continue to work on the trail designation process, they are also partnering with the BLM and State agencies on cleanup projects. “Havasu 4 Wheelers have been around for about 25 years,” said John Geyer, president of the Havasu Side-by-Side Trail Association. “They’ve been gracious enough to invite us to one of their desert cleanups that they put on every year. Our club brought in another 50 members and helped clean up the desert. We collected 11,000 lb. of trash in one day.”

It only makes sense for all OHV clubs to work together on the Arizona Peace Trail, adds Strong. The plan is for it to be open to all OHVs. And some side-by-side rock crawlers are larger than his truck. “I have a 2002 (Jeep) TJ with 35-inch tires. You look at the Red Dot Engineering Polaris (RZR XP 1000 Rock Crawler), and it’s actually wider and longer than my vehicle. The industry is changing and they’re blending together.”

Strong, a retired school teacher from Wisconsin, puts the same philosophy to work building the Arizona Peace Trail that he did teaching, and coaching wrestling, football and track. “When I was a teacher and coach, my message was ‘listen, learn, and serve’. I’m still trying to give that message today. The goals of the Arizona Peace Trail are education, giving back to the community, keeping the riders safe, and keeping the trails open.”

*To learn more about the Arizona Peace Trail, the proposed route and the 14 OHV clubs working on it, visit [www.arizonapeacetrail.com](http://www.arizonapeacetrail.com).*