

## Beclabito Community Trail System:

*A grassroots trail model on the Navajo Nation*

The Beclabito Community Trail System is a 12-mile network of trails in the Beclabito community. The network, which was initiated in 2019, is unique in many ways and serves as a model of grassroots, low-cost trail development on the Navajo Nation.

The project was initiated by local residents, the Beclabito chapter and the nonprofit NavajoYES, all of whom saw the benefits of a trail system in the community. The concept was taken to the chapter officials, CLUP Committee and to the full chapter, where the effort was overwhelmingly supported. The trail team worked with an archaeologist to do a Navajo cultural resources inventory, consulted with Navajo Fish & Wildlife and met with trail design experts. The project was developed under the guidance of the Navajo Trails Task Force, and in alignment with the Navajo Trails Template (a document developed by the Division of Natural Resources and the nonprofit NavajoYES in 2015.) In summer 2019, the dreams came to reality and trail work commenced on the first phase of the Beclabito Community Trail System.



The Beclabito Community Trail System is currently comprised of four segments. The route is very scenic, and includes some iconic landmarks among its sites: Carrizo Mountains, Shiprock Pinnacle, Beclabito Dome, Sleeping Ute Mountain, Mesa Verde, Chuska Mountains and the San Juan Mountains/Tsisnajiini. The four segments are:

- Named for a local wartime hero, the *Sgt. Troy O. Tom Trail* is a singletrack route from Beclabito Baptist Church to the Beclabito Sinclair gas station.
- The *Bobcat Trail* runs from the store to the Beclabito Day School, paralleling Hwy 64.
- *Wild Horse Loop* is a 3.5 mile trail loop between two valleys that slices through a narrow cut in a ridge that divides them.

- The Zah Trail is 3-mile rugged segment of trail that spurs off of Wild Horse Loop, onto a rocky outcrop and along a stunningly scenic ridge. It has some of the most dramatic views and extreme biking in the entire system.
- There are other routes being studied for future construction.

The route has some very distinguishing features that make it a stellar and popular trail, but also a good site to visit to learn about various elements of trail development, design and construction. Consider these features:

- The route is primarily singletrack or old doubletrack/wagon roads, suitable for trail running, hiking and mountain biking.
- One segment is a Safe Route to School pathway, essentially a natural surface sidewalk from the local NHA housing neighborhood to the Beclabito Day School.
- A unique feature is a trail segment that is on an NTUA waterline right-of-way. (Chapter officials and trail crew met with NTUA staff to insure that this was a viable option and to learn of how NTUA wanted this trail section to be completed.)
- Events are often held on the trails, including a competitive 10K, bike race, community fun run, Christmas luminaria walk, and more.
- Beclabito Day School and Beclabito Baptist Church are each located at trailheads of the system, and both entities utilize the trail in a variety of activities and events.
- The trail is a good example of some of the various features that can be included on a trail. For example, the system includes several ramadas/shade structures, grills, picnic tables, numerous benches, pedestals with trail maps, trail signage/posts, and much more.



The community has plans to extend the trail network in the near future and to host more community-based events and activities on various segments of the trail. For communities interested in developing trails in their community, Beclabito Community Trail System is a good place to visit and study. There are a variety of trail elements that are well represented on this system and the chapter and NavajoYES folks are most willing to give you a good look at the trail.

You can contact chapter manager Lenora Robinson at (928) 656-3265 or Tom with NavajoYES at (928) 429-0345 or at [chuskaman@yahoo.com](mailto:chuskaman@yahoo.com) if you are interested in a site visit.