



The Nation Trails Task Force was formally launched in fall 2015 as a joint effort of the NavajoYES, the Office of President and Vice President (OPVP), Navajo Parks & Recreation and Division of Natural Resources (DNR) with the support and involvement of IHS Health Promotion, Engineers Without Borders, Southwest Conservation Corps, along with various tribal entities and local communities. Since its creation, the Task Force has taken many steps to promote and support trail efforts on the reservation. The work of the Task Force has continued in a modified yet effective, and even somewhat amplified form during COVID.

While much of the country lay dormant in the early months of the pandemic, the Task Force ramped up its planning work and began to look toward trails projects of the post-COVID rez. The discussions at our **monthly task force meetings** centered around the development of the Navajo Nation Trail Guide, the preparation of the Chuska Mountain Bike Project and planning for the 2021 Navajo Trails & Outdoor Rec Conference. We had broad participation from tribal programs, communities, non-profit partners and volunteers from across the Nation.

The long-awaited **Navajo Nation Trails Guide** – and its digital counterpart – was published in 2020 as a guide to the trails, parks and natural wonders of the Nation. The well-received document was achieved through the partnership of NavajoYES Director Tom Riggerbach and Tiis Nazbas-based graphic artist Anthony Kady. The 25,000 copies are now being shared in communities, schools/college, wellness centers, tribal parks, businesses, chapter houses and border towns. You can access the digital version of the Trail Guide at:



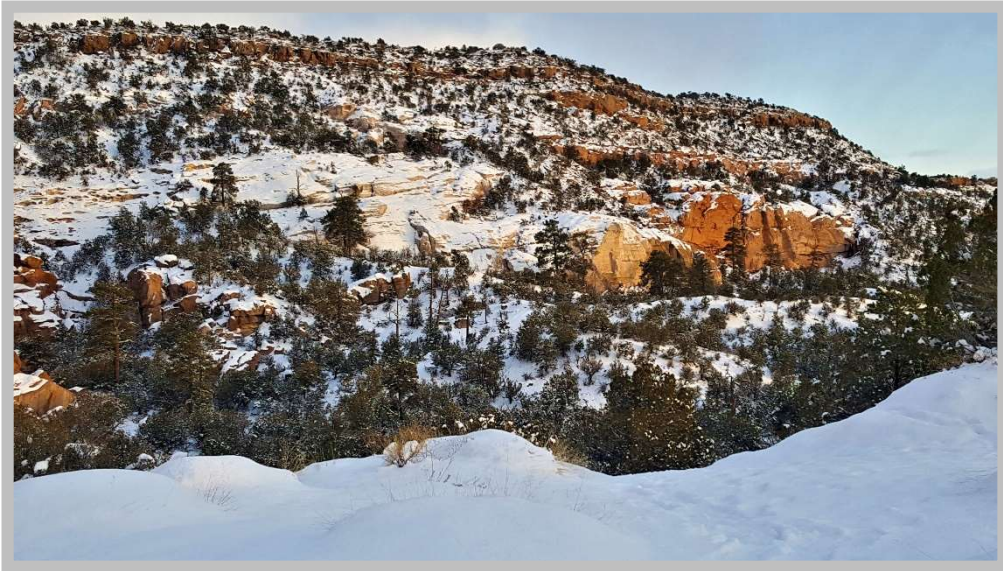
On the Rainbow Trail near Navajo Mountain; Little Colorado River at the base of Salt Trail

During the latter six months of 2020, the Task Force has put significant planning time in to the development of the **Chuska Mountain Bike Route**. The established bike route will be anchored in the north by the Cove chapter, and in the south by Mexican Springs chapter, with 80 miles of stunning country in between. We have worked diligently during the pandemic to garner the support and involvement of the 12 affiliated chapters, and to build/acquire the trail infrastructure (ramadas, interpretive signage, picnic tables, trail posts, compost toilets, benches, etc.) that will be needed for the effort. In addition to the planning and infrastructure work, the task force is working to create a Chuska trail guide, that will provide an overview of the route, its communities, people and history

The NavajoYES trails team and the local Beclabito community put in hundreds of manhours during the spring and summer 2020 in creating new routes and trail infrastructure as part of the developing **“Beclabito Community Trail System”**. The 12-mile network of trails is currently the most extensive and well-developed system on the Nation and, in many ways, can provide some examples of how to go about the trail development process on a reservation community.

Although the tribal parks have been closed since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, NavajoYES and the task force have been engaged in conversations with tribal officials with Navajo Parks on various aspects of **Trails in the Parks**. A Mitchell Mesa Trail in Monument Valley, creation of a pedestrian walkway on the roadbed of old Highway 64 in LRC Tribal Park, installation of compost toilets on the Rainbow Trail and improvements to the Code Talker Trail are among the topics that we have broached with Parks folks in recent months. With the fading of COVID in coming months, we hope to be able to initiate work on some of these projects.

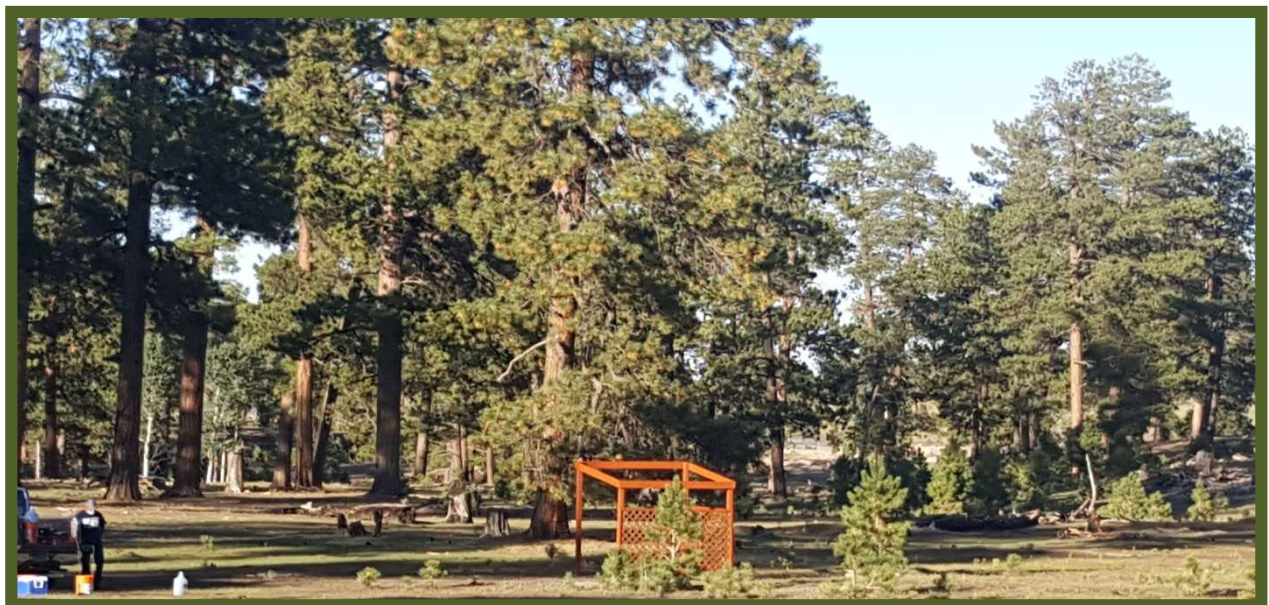
In fall 2020, we began coordinated planning with the Navajo Office of First lady & Second Lady along with the Office of President & Vice President (OPVP) on the 2021 **Navajo Trails & Outdoor Rec Conference**. The discussion covered not only the logistics of the event, but the nuances of a litany of trails topics that will be relevant for ongoing discussion. Naturally, the ongoing impact of the COVID pandemic and the adjustments being made on the Nation as a result (trails, events, etc.), were major topics of discussion. We look forward to continuing this trails dynamic partnership with the OPVP team for the foreseeable future.



On Code Talker Trail in Window Rock during the Navajo Trails & Outdoor Rec Conference.

In the weeks leading up to the arrival of COVID in March 2020, we had productive conversations with the OPVP team and the folks at the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in regard to the potential conversation of the abandoned Black Mesa & Lake Powell rail line to a **Rail-Trail route**. While the pandemic altered the pace and priority of these discussions, there have been ongoing talks on this matter and NavajoYES anticipates raising it again in earnest in the post-COVID rez.

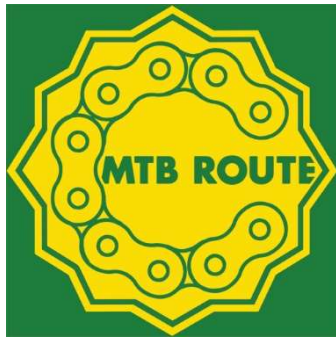
We have also engaged in conversations with the Navajo Mountain chapter regarding a potentially epic **trail linking Navajo Mountain with Monument Valley**. This route would be one of the great wilderness routes anywhere, and discussions are ongoing with various partners, local families and the chapter about the next steps.



Trail efforts were more socially-distanced in 2020, as evidenced by this project on the Chuska Mountain Bike Route near Whiskey Lake

The Task Force maintains **a large cache of trail tools** that was purchased through the Navajo Division of Natural Resources and are available for check-out through Navajo Parks & Recreation. Although the tools were not as active during the pandemic as normal, we anticipate an active summer and fall for the equipment in 2021. We have macleods, saws, picks, shovels and more that are ready for your use.

With the COVID pandemic waning as the new year 2021 dawns, NavajoYES and the Navajo Trails Task Force look forward to an exciting future of trail development across the Navajo Nation. With the Trails Task Force strengthened, funding sources identified and long-term planning coordinated, much groundwork for the trails movement has been laid during the pandemic year that is anticipated to bring positive outcomes for the Nation in the months and years ahead.



Graphic artist Anthony Kady of T'iis Nazbas has developed the Chuska MTB Route logo that will be utilized throughout 80 miles