

# Partnering with OHV Clubs



Photos by Tony Boone

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*Arrowhead Trails Inc.*

In the fall of '09, Arrowhead Trails Inc [www.arrowheadtrails.com](http://www.arrowheadtrails.com) turned a new leaf and was fortunate to partner with the Creede OHV Club and the Divide Ranger District of the Rio Grande National Forest to reconstruct the Fern Creek Trail and the Lost Trail Creek Trail. Support from Colorado State Parks – Recreational Trails Program and the Great Outdoors Colorado - Lottery Grant Program was also instrumental in the success of this project.

With over 500 miles of trails built, Arrowhead Trail's crews had rarely worked on ATV trails with OHV clubs. Ironically, our focus on machine built trails for mountain bicyclist had evolved over the years to rely on our three trusty ATV's and a motorcycle to get to and from our daily locations on the trail. Transporting heavy tools, crew, fuel, and water is so easy and fun with ATV's, and helps us keep our crew/equipment mobilization costs low. We love our daily commute!

The Fern Creek Trail (#815) is located in the beautiful Rio Grande National Forest. From the Fern Creek Trailhead, on Fern Creek Road #522, the trail ascends 1500 feet in elevation in barely four miles. The trail ranges from easy to difficult including a dozen switchbacks and a gnarly ride through an ancient lava field before reaching Big Ruby Lake, on the border of the famed Weminuche Wilderness. It's truly an awesome place and we were stoked to be working in this area of Colorado for the first time in our 17-year history.

The trail had been originally built in the 1980's by the USFS to give outfitters and wilderness visitors easier access to the Weminuche. Except for a handful of short unsustainable grades, the USFS had done an amazing job designing the trail.

Past use has included equestrians, hunters and motorcyclists, and over the years new, wider modes of recreation, first the All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and more recently the Utility Type Vehicle (UTV). While most ATV's are less than 50" wide, UTV's often weigh twice as much, pushing 1200 pounds and are 60" wide or more. This trail was limited to 50" wide to discourage use of the larger UTV's.

This inherent mannerism of motorized trail users, to expand the original trail tread and the evolution of wider, more powerful, off-road vehicles has created new challenges for our nation's land managers. Widening, rutting and excessive berm formation, common even on well designed and constructed ATV trails, can significantly change the drainage patterns, allowing the elements of nature to erode the trail. Creede OHV Club volunteers have frequently struggled with routine maintenance issues, and numerous trail users have been injured in accidents, literally rolling off the narrow, outsloped bedrock sections. The trail was simply not maintainable by hand tools and volunteer efforts.

Our partnership's goals for the Fern Creek Trail were to enhance its sustainability, and improve user safety in the dangerous areas.



Crews were extremely effective in utilizing the SWECO 480 trail dozer and the IHI NX-15 mini-excavator. Removing endless berms, adding large rolling grade dips, harrowing the tread, and armoring the wet areas significantly enhanced the trail's sustainability, and the ability to shed water in the long run.

To improve safety, we added passing zones, widened switchback platforms, and removed hundreds of hazard trees along the trail. Most of the danger zones were rocky areas on very steep side slopes. Widening these areas was accomplished by various sized hydraulic breakers. After hydraulic



tool work and a tremendous amount of hand labor, the troublesome spots were sculpted into a nice, safe 50" wide bench cut trail.

After our final, relatively effortless ride up the improved Fern Creek Trail, it was obvious that our clients were extremely satisfied with our completed work. Creede OHV Club has a safe, sustainable trail that does not require constant maintenance. The Club's ability to maintain the reconstructed trail will be exponentially easier than before the heavy machine work and breaking were done. Hand tools will now be adequate to perform the routine trail



work ensuring this trail resource will last for many generations to come.

In the summer of 2010, our team is rebuilding the classic, nine-mile Lost Trail Creek (#821) route. If you or your OHV club would like Arrowhead Trails to revitalize an old favorite trail of yours, or perhaps create a new favorite, please contact us at anytime. Feel free to come by and see us "diggin' in the dirt" in 2010; we'll be back in the Headwaters of the Rio Grande when the snow melts.



For more testimonials and our extensive portfolio with photographs please visit us at [www.arrowheadtrails.com](http://www.arrowheadtrails.com). ♦