

1st leg of trail system ready

Eventually, county's parks will be linked

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CAVE CREEK - The first segment of a Maricopa County regional trail system will be dedicated Thursday at the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.

Thursday's 8:30 a.m. dedication of the first leg of the Maricopa Regional Trail System is also the first step in eventually linking all county's regional parks.

The goal is for a county-wide 1,521-mile trail system that would create recreation corridors for hikers, cyclists, runners, in-line skaters, horseback riders and other non-motorized users.

The first segment in the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area is roughly 3.5 miles, said John Gunn, Spur Cross supervisor.

Construction began in mid-December and ended in late March.

The new route will create two loop paths using old cowboy trails, Gunn said. Eventually the trail will connect Spur Cross and the Cave Creek Regional Park, Gunn added.

Gunn said he is delighted that Spur Cross is the site of the trail systems' first segment and park officials take some credit for that.

An archaeological study was done for the trail as part of the Spur Cross master plan, so that was one less study to for the trail's construction.

"We laid that trail out to protect the archaeological sites," Gunn said.

In February 2000, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors formed the Maricopa County Trails Commission and unveiled plans to develop a regional trail system.

The goal of the project is threefold:

- Provide a shared-use, non-motorized trail system to connect the regional parks.
- Link metropolitan areas, municipal trails, communities and neighborhoods.

- Provide open-space corridors to protect natural and cultural resources from development.

The regional trail system will be 1,521 miles, with the Maricopa Trail, the county's portion of the system, about 320 miles.