

## Ridge Trail Project Begins in Hogbacks Restoration Project

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Cañon Exploratory School seventh-grader Matthew Katchmar assists Mile High Youth Corps workers Valerie Montoya and Valentine Malone on Wednesday, as they begin work on a new ridge trail in the Hogbacks area. (Carie Canterbury / Daily Record)

It won't be completed until spring 2015, but work has begun on the new ridge trail in the Hogbacks Open Space Park.

The Mile High Youth Corps partnered with the City of Cañon City to expand the trail system in the 500-acre Hogbacks Open Space Park after the City was awarded two significant grants earlier this year.

Between a National Fish and Wildlife Federation grant (partially funded by the Bureau of Land Management), a Great Outdoors Colorado Mini Grant, matching funds and contributions from other individuals and groups, more than \$250,000 has been garnered for the project that now officially has begun.



Cañon Exploratory School seventh-graders Seth Hansen, Dusty Emig and Joe Canzanora listen to Jacob Gentry, alumni/mentor for the Mile High Youth Corps, as he talks about creating a new trail near Skyline Drive in the Hogbacks area on Wednesday. (Carie Canterbury / Daily Record)

A crew with the MHYC began work on the new three-quarter mile ridge trail, just past the dinosaur footprint on Skyline Drive on Tuesday. The crew will work on the project for two weeks, and then another crew will return for four weeks in the spring to complete it.

Gerry Buser, parks foreman for the City of Cañon City, said the new trail will begin at the "Old Skyline Drive" and extend to Washington Street, connecting to a core trail. He said both local residents and visitors to the area are likely to take advantage of the trail.

"This is an activity for our citizens, and we also would like to increase tourism and give visitors something to do so we can increase our tourism dollars," he said.

Crew leader Dave Dombach and Cañon City Director of Parks and Facilities Rex Brady flagged the trail site Monday. Dombach said his crew has fortified the trail and they plan to build a retaining wall and steps in some of the places to prevent erosion.

Valentine Malone, 21, and Valerie Montoya, 20, both from Texas, are two of the workers assigned to the trail project. They said the MHYC season is about 12 weeks, and this is the last project of their session until spring.

"We've been on Iron Mountain and Waldo Canyon, so everything we've done over the season, we are doing in this project," Malone said.

Cañon Exploratory School instructor Kelly Albrecht brought her seventh-grade class to the worksite Wednesday where they learned about trail building and lent a hand.

"Part of what we are doing is community service, so this was the perfect opportunity for us," she said. "We also are doing a fossil project with Dan Grenard, so we are coming back and starting to explore and look for the fossils that are here."

Monica McGowan, director of the Hogbacks Preservation Society, and Kristyn Econome, assistant director of the Lower Arkansas Mountain Bicycling Association, spearheaded the effort to garner funds to get the project off the ground. They both showed up at the site Wednesday to take a look at the progress.

"It's wonderful to finally see all the hard work we put into the grants come into fruition," Econome said.

"It has taken a long time to see it all come together," McGowan said, "but with persistence, with the community, and with the city, and all the different organizations, we can move forward. We'd also like to pull people from the community who have occupations that they can share with (the MHYC workers) what they've done with their lives. It's a real good fit."