



Yes, It's True - You can direct your state tax dollars to support the work of local charities!

In Arizona, you choose where your money goes!



Find information on dozens of Qualified Charitable Organizations at:

**GiveLocal
KeepLocal.org**

Arizona Charitable Tax Credit Coalition

1

Visit givelocalkeeplocal.org to learn about the work of qualifying charitable organizations.

2

Choose one or more charities and follow the link to make a one-time donation, or set up recurring donations.

3

Claim your credit when you file your taxes!

The Details: The Arizona Charitable Tax Credit allows you to donate to Qualifying Charitable Organizations (QCO's) and Qualifying Foster Care Charitable Organization (QFCO's)



Arizona Daily Star

THURSDAY - SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23-25, 2021 | tucson.com



ANA BELTRAN, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Andrew Claus cleans up debris from the Bighorn Fire along the Butterfly Trail in the Santa Catalina Mountains during the Arizona Trail Association's cleanup day Saturday.

More miles of trails reopen in Catalinas

CINDY COFFER CHOJNACKY
Special to the Arizona Daily Star

About 20 miles of trails — closed for more than a year due to damage from the 2020 Bighorn Fire — have reopened in the Santa Catalina mountains north of Tucson.

After Bighorn burned almost 120,000 acres between June 5 and July 23, 2020, the Forest Service closed the burn scar area to

the public including almost 207 miles of trails. A combination of nonprofit group work, grant-funded conservation corps, and Forest Service staff work has steadily opened more trail sections over the past year.

The newest “closure order” issued Dec. 15 by the Coronado National Forest, actually opens most of the popular Arizona Trail Wilderness Bypass

mountain bike trail system including Butterfly and the rest of Green Mountain Trail. Of that system, only Crystal Springs Trail remains closed; although volunteers and crews have been working on this trail, which should be usable soon. Brush Corral Trail, connecting Green Mountain Trail to the Redington

Please see **CATALINAS**, Page A4

Trail system of the future

The Forest Service is seeking public input on the “recreational trail system of the future” — with an interactive public comment map available until Jan. 31 at tinyurl.com/trailplanning.

Holiday edition

Editor's note: Due to the weekend holiday, this newspaper serves as a combined edition for today, Friday and Saturday. You will find comics, puzzles and TV listings for all three days inside as well as a two-page mega crossword puzzle.

We will publish electronic editions each day as well as another expanded holiday print edition on Dec. 30.

Our editorial staff will report every day as usual and update [Tucson.com](https://tucson.com) throughout the day every day.

Voter maps for next decade are OK'd

HOWARD FISCHER
Capitol Media Services

PHOENIX — The Independent Redistricting Commission voted unanimously Wednesday to approve new lines for Arizona congressional races through the 2030 election, even though its members complained the final result was not what they wanted.

Commission members said the approved compromise plan was the only real option for a membership that has two Republicans, two Democrats and a political independent.

Wednesday's vote, however, may not be the last word.

Attorney Marc Elias, who has filed election-related lawsuits across the country on behalf of Democrats, sent a Twitter message shortly before the vote saying he has been watching what is happening here.

“I expect litigation if these

Please see **DISTRICTS**, Page A9

US approves home COVID treatment pill

MATTHEW PERRONE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. health regulators on Wednesday authorized the first pill against COVID-19, a Pfizer drug that Americans will be able to take at home to head off the worst effects of the virus.

The long-awaited milestone comes as U.S. cases, hospitalizations and deaths are all rising and health officials warn of a tsunami of new infections from the omicron variant that could overwhelm hospitals.

The drug, Paxlovid, is a faster way

to treat early COVID-19 infections, though initial supplies will be extremely limited. All of the previously authorized drugs against the disease require an IV or an injection.

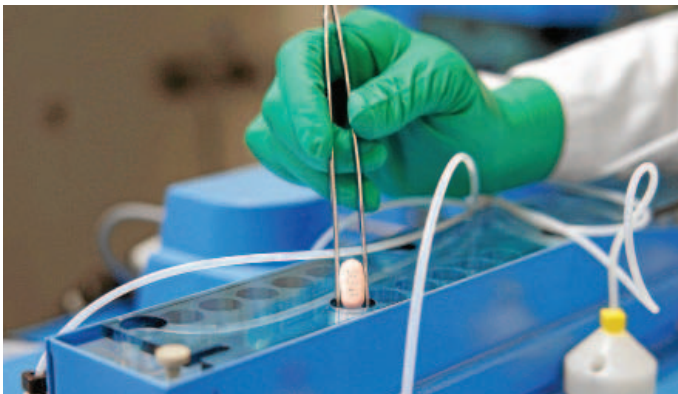
An antiviral pill from Merck also is expected to soon win authorization. Pfizer's drug is all but certain to be the preferred option because of its mild side effects and superior effectiveness, including a nearly 90% reduction in hospitalizations and deaths among patients most likely to get severe disease.

“The efficacy is high, the side effects are low and it's oral. It checks

all the boxes,” said Dr. Gregory Poland of the Mayo Clinic. “You're looking at a 90% decreased risk of hospitalization and death in a high-risk group — that's stunning.”

The Food and Drug Administration authorized Pfizer's drug for adults and children ages 12 and older with a positive COVID-19 test and early symptoms who face the highest risks of hospitalization. That includes older people and those with conditions like obesity and heart disease, though the drug is

Please see **PILL**, Page A2



PFIZER VIA AP

Pfizer's Paxlovid is a fast, noninjectable way to treat early COVID-19 infections, though initial supplies will be extremely limited. The drugmaker says it expects to have 250,000 treatment courses available in the U.S. by the end of January.

'Get back'

Tucson woman appears in the new Beatles documentary series. **Sunday**



INSIDE TODAY'S STAR

BRIDGE	B2	OPINION	B7-9
CROSSWORDS	C6-7	TV	C5, 9, 11
OBITUARIES	B3	WEATHER	D10

LEE ENTERPRISES

For home delivery, call 1-800-695-4492
email: circulation@tucson.com



Catalinas

From A1

Pass area, also is open. Also newly reopened are more miles on Pima Canyon, Finger Rock and Esperero trails in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness. One could now hike Ventana Canyon all the way to the “window” and continue to the top of Esperero Canyon.

Of the 225 miles of designated trail on the Santa Catalina Ranger District, more than 50 miles remain closed. For specific trails still closed see “Santa Catalina Ranger District Mt. Lemmon Bighorn Fire Closure” on the Coronado National Forest website (at tinyurl.com/coronadonotices).

Major ridge trails such as Samaniego, Sutherland and Canada del Oro remain closed although Red Ridge Trail, popular with mountain bikes, is open thanks to work from Tucson Off-Road Cycling Association (TORCA). TORCA has also done and obtained grant funding for work to reopen Green Mountain Trail including heavy rock reconstruction work to stabilize drainage crossings.

Priorities for reopening include Mount Lemmon and Esperero trails, said Adam Milnor, recreation staff officer for the Coronado National Forest. Other trails such as Romero Canyon above Romero Pools, which remains closed, would require totally rebuilding miles of washed-out gullies. It costs about \$10,000 per mile to reestablish higher elevation trails, Milnor added.

The Forest Service was initially concerned about burned dead trees that might fall (“hazard trees”) and trails that could severely wash out in steep rocky terrain where stabilizing vegetation had burned off. Many hazard trees were removed, and a dry 2020 winter and spring did not produce flooding. However, this summer’s monsoon rains resulted in washouts and trail damage.

“The main hazard now is eroded hill slopes with little or no tread” such as side slope trails on upper Pima and Finger Rock canyons, said Charles “CJ” Woodward, Catalina district ranger. “These are highly erosive soils, and we have to completely rebuild the trails.”

Volunteer cleanup events work well on accessible trails like the first miles of canyon trails or trails right off Mount Lemmon Highway. Trails far out in backcountry like Cathedral Rock and Samaniego are a logistical challenge, according to Milnor. The area has little water, and it is difficult to support a crew on a ridge trail for several days.

Last March, major sections of Arizona Trail through the Catalinas



ANA BELTRAN, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The Green Mountain Trail in the Santa Catalina Mountains has been getting extra maintenance since the Bighorn Fire in 2020.



ANA BELTRAN, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Kimberly McElroy cleans up burned debris at the Butterfly Trailhead in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

were reopened: 18.5-mile Passage 11a, including West Fork Sabino and Wilderness of Rocks Trail, and 15.5-mile Passage 12 Oracle Ridge Trail. Before reopening, Arizona Trail Association volunteers documented all hazardous trees in the burn; an Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) crew hired by the Forest Service and certified sawyer volunteers cleared hazards so the trail could reopen for the 2021 thru-hiking season. Several volunteer events also helped restore parts of these trails.

Community affair

Trail rework has been a public-government effort. The Forest Service has invested about \$100,000 to fund AZCC crews on Ventana, Butterfly, Green Mountain, Wilderness of Rocks and West Fork Sabino trails. TORCA secured grants for two more weeks of AZCC work on Green Mountain. Another AZCC crew worked on Crystal Springs.

National Forest Foundation’s Southern Arizona Forest Fund raised about \$40,000 for Bighorn Fire restoration. This funded post-fire restoration work as part of an

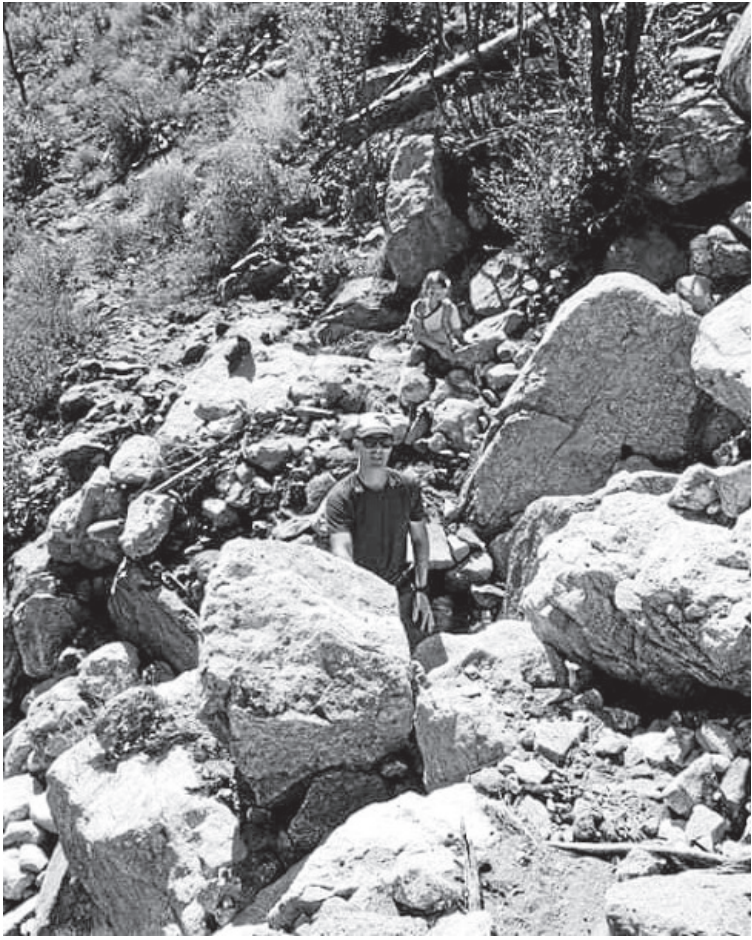
ongoing Earth Camp program with Tucson high school students, Arizona Sonora Desert Museum and AZCC. Students camped in Molino Basin and pulled highly flammable exotic buffelgrass, replanted native species, and did trail work in the burn area. AZCC crew members, all young adults, enjoyed being mentors to the high school students, said Rebecca Davidson, NFF Southwest Region director.

She said the remainder funded a contractor to document major trail damage and organize volunteer projects on Marshall Gulch, Brush Corals and Romero Canyon trails.

Arizona Trail Association has hosted multiple volunteer events to clear downfall, reestablish trail tread, and improve drainage on Butterfly, Wilderness of Rocks, Oracle Ridge, West Fork of Sabino and Crystal Springs trails, Milnor said. Climbing Association of Southern Arizona has hosted volunteer events on Finger Rock and Brush Corral trails.

Looking ahead

Now Forest Service officials seek



BRANNON MAMULA, TORCA

The loss of ground cover in the Bighorn Fire allowed runoff to flow unimpeded, creating holes like this one in the Green Mountain Trail.

public help planning the future trail system, Milnor said.

“Our trail system is a major community asset,” Milnor said. “A lot of people live in Southern Arizona for access to the mountains.”

Trail use is different than the past with more trail runners and mountain bikers.

“We have planned developed sites, interpretive sites and scenic byways on the (Mount Lemmon) highway, but we’ve had no real planning for the trail system,” Milnor added.

The trail comment process is informal, not under National Environmental Policy Act processes required for work with environmental impact.

“After we get the comments we will have a series of meetings, and perhaps focus groups with partners. We will let the feedback inform the rest of the process,” Milnor said.

The next step will be to create a conceptual map of a future desired trail system by midsummer.

Milnor foresees rerouting some trails, making new connections, improving trailheads and parking in some areas, and even choosing not to maintain certain trails.

“We will be referring to these comments for years to come,” Milnor said. He is the main contact for the project, and comments can be

sent to him by email (adam.milnor@usda.gov).

Of comments submitted so far, some offer extremely specific knowledge and advice for certain areas, potential connections and modifications to reduce conflicts. Others are quite general.

Mountain bikers so far have offered the most comments, requesting more moderate and connector trails, downhill alternatives to reduce user conflicts, and nonmotorized trails utilizing or supplementing existing jeep road areas such as Redington Pass and Oracle Ridge.

Dog walkers would like more lower trails open for leashed dogs while others maintain no dogs should be allowed in the Catalinas. Commenters also called for a bigger Forest Service field staff and mention concerns beyond the scope of the trails system: garbage, unauthorized shooting, drones and rude hikers with poor trail etiquette.

“Reopen all the trails,” said one commenter. “A year of trail closure is unacceptable.”

Ranger Woodward said many recreationists now better understand the closures and even warn others of unsafe areas. His message to the public: “Be patient with us as we work to reopen the trails and try to balance all kinds of recreation users and interests.”

Give the gift of *Tucson!*

Exclusive gear from

This is Tucson

Get a t-shirt, mug or water bottle and support local journalism.

Available at <http://tuc.life/shop>

Order your *Tucson* gifts Today!

New designs

now available!