EAGLE SCOUT CANDIDATE, SCOUT TROOP HONORED FOR PROJECT

Written by
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Mountain bikers are enjoying improvements on a northeastern California trail, and an important meadow area is protected from biking impacts, thanks to the efforts of a Surprise Valley Eagle Scout candidate and members of his Boy Scout troop. Aaron Gelhaus, who is working to achieve Scouting's highest honor, worked with the Bureau of Land Management's Alturas Field Office to design and build a new segment of the 10-mile Likely Mountain Challenge Trail, which takes mountain bikers on a loop route from Highway 395 to the Nelson Corral reservoir and back. He and other members of Surprise Valley Boy Scout Troop 48 recently received appreciation awards from BLM Alturas Field Manager Tim Burke.

"We were very pleased with the completed project, and we thank Aaron and his fellow scouts for a job well done," Burke said.

"The scout's community service project rerouted part of the trail out of a wet meadow and onto a terrace above an intermittent creek, explained Claude Singleton of the BLM's Alturas staff.

"This protects the meadow's wildlife habitat from bike damage, and provides a more clearly defined route for bike riders," Singleton explained. "It keeps the riders out of the mud."

Singleton said Aaron approached the BLM about an Eagle Scout project in the summer of 1999.

"We visited the area, studied the vegetation, topography and soils, and discussed options for a new trail segment," Singleton said. "The scouts came up with a good idea for a new route, then they put in the hard work to build it."

Aaron, his father Mark Gelhaus (the troop advisor) and fellow scouts Mitch Small, Scott Soletti and Korey Gibson cleared large rocks, brush and other vegetation in three-foot-wide swath for more than a quarter mile. Rocks removed from the new segment were placed on the downhill side to help delineate the trail's path, even after vegetation regrows, Singleton explained.

"They did a fine job," Singleton said. "We've monitored the trail, and it has held up well against weather and use. The project was an excellent addition to our trail system."