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Comments: Utilize volunteers for the restoration, reconstruction, and ongoing maintenance of the Hanging Lake Trail.

In a recent quote in the Post Independent about partners "who help us with Hanging Lake", a prominent group was omitted - volunteers. For at least the past two decades, volunteers have spent thousands of hours maintaining and improving the Hanging Lake Trail. Using volunteers fosters a sense of stewardship with the local community. Hiring paid contractors for certain aspects of trail work - such as a technical bridge construction - definitely make sense. Volunteers are capable of performing much of the needed work, though, with lower cost and quality results. I know from personal experience that a crew of volunteers with little to no experience still can complete work to a professional level with the right leadership.

Volunteer utilization is not only aspirational, it is a Congressional mandate. The National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act signed in 2016 aimed to double trail maintenance by volunteers within 5 years. Although we are now a couple years past the 5-year window, the message from Congress to the Forest Service is clear: Use volunteers as much as possible.

Please be a leader in the local community by allowing local volunteers to continue their long history of stewarding the Hanging Lake Trail through trail construction and maintenance.