



234 N. Central Avenue  
Suite 6400  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2187  
Phone: 602-506-2930  
Fax: 602-506-4692  
www.maricopa.gov/parks

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** May 9, 2013  
**To:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
**From:** R.J. Cardin, Director  
**Re:** Director's Summary of Current Events

Listed below are activities the department has been involved with since the April 2, 2013, Director's Summary Report.

### **From the Office of the Director**

***Lake Pleasant Commercial Development:*** With our diligent efforts in negotiating the scope of work and pricing, we awarded the Request for Proposal (RFP) to C.H.M. to assist, advise, and develop a concessionaire/developer agreement with Red Rock LLC.

A productive meeting with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) was held May 7th in regards to the Resort and Commercial Development. Red Rock LLC provided BOR with an update of activities, phasing and details for the Commercial Development. BOR has recommended that the entire 564 acres of commercial property be included in the Amendment, with a designation of 30 acres within that boundary be Commercial. The agreement with Red Rock LLC must be in place prior to issuance of an amendment to our Management Agreement with BOR.

***Lake Pleasant Nature Center:*** The nature center remodeling project will be released for competitive bid in late May or early June. The project will be a major redesign and reconstruction to include expanding the size of the facility and improving the services offered.

***Conservation Alliance:*** The Conservation Alliance has begun in earnest its efforts to Study, Restore and Promote the Mountain Parks and Preserves in the great metropolitan area. Maricopa County Parks is excited to be a part of this effort being headed by the Desert Botanical Garden. Beginning this month, three research projects conducted by various departments of Arizona State University will commence in Utery and McDowell Mountain Parks. This research will help us in being better stewards of our resources and assist in providing quality recreation experiences while protecting the resources for future generations.

***Vulture Mountain Recreation Area:*** The department continues to press ahead with planning efforts for the future recreation area. MRT Design has been retained to assist in defining the future development at the Hassayampa River Preserve site. The Nature Conservancy has requested a site concept plan be developed and incorporated into a conservation easement prior to donating the land to the County. Specifically, MRT will provide a site development concept plan (with conceptual level drawings) for the future development of the preserve site to include: new education/nature center; historic ranch and buildings; roadway(s) and parking; upgrades to existing picnic areas and facilities; ADA accessible restroom facilities; potential group use site; improved pathways (with a major trails plan to be completed by MCPRD) ensuring connection to major trails; wildlife blinds and/or pier; and maintain and complement existing historic integrity of site.

## **Administration**

April has come and gone and it appears our cooler weather is moving out as well. We are quickly approaching the end of the fiscal year and Administration is gearing up to close FY13 and has started work for FY14. Here is the activity for April 2013:

### ***Budget Status (through March close):***

- General Fund (100) – Agency 300:
  - Revenues – No revenues collected within the General Fund.
  - Expenditures - under budget by \$78,039 or 10% under the year to date (YTD) budget.
- Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:
  - Revenues - 14% or \$406,829 over the YTD budget.
  - Expenditures 8% or \$238,014 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures.
- Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:
  - Revenues - 16% or \$200,958 over the YTD budget.
  - Expenditures - over budget at 1% or \$17,523.
- Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:
  - Revenues - 1% under the YTD budget or \$1,625.
  - Expenditures - under budget at 9% or \$15,665.

### ***Contracts:***

- **Lake Pleasant Captain Zipline:** Captain Zipline is looking to see if he can move his zipline out of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) withdrawal area. If not, he has agreed to amend his agreement for termination to coincide with the BLM withdrawal of 4/20/2019, if withdrawal is not extended. We received a letter from BOR indicating they do not anticipate any problems obtaining that renewal and it is their intent to request this parcel of land be transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation in perpetuity, although there is no guarantee that would occur.
- **Paradise Valley (Bowtie):** Parks, Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center's (AAEC) and Paradise Valley Golf Course (PVGC) have agreed to provide AAEC with access to the well water for irrigation purposes. AAEC will share in the cost of: electrical; routine/preventative maintenance; rates for water usage based on Central Arizona Project's (CAP); the Arizona Department of Water Resources Annual withdrawal fee; and a penalty clause if water is not delivered to the PVGC site. AAEC will receive a maximum of 20 acre feet per year.
- **Commercial Management Concessions Agreement (CMCA):** There is one new CMCA on the Board of Supervisors' Agenda for May 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is anticipated that there will be four more added during the month of June. Some of the new CMCA's include a very luxurious pontoon boat rental for weddings, birthdays and overnight excursions; a food concession with smoked meats (brisket, pork chicken); and a boat cleaning service that will be set up at the 10-lane boat ramp for the removal of mussels and other invasive aquatic species.

### ***Central Reservations:***

- Easter weekend proved to be as busy as always with the phones lighting up with questions and camping reservations.
- The first year anniversary of the Maricopa County Employee Annual Pass Discount Program was in April. Pass renewal was the focus and verification to ensure employee payroll deductions match the number of employee passes currently issued. In addition, new hang tags were sent to pass holders reflecting the new expiration date.

### ***Finance Program:***

- Paperless revenue reporting is progressing with all parks actively using the new system except for Estrella and Lake Pleasant. By the end of May they will also be functional in the new system.
- Electronic bill payment is also being tested with all parks now able to scan their packing slips and invoices directly to Headquarters (HQ). This procedure will create staffing efficiency and save approximately 4 hours a week in travel and organization time for park staff and 1 to 2 hours a week for HQ staff by improving organization and work flow.
- A new chemical toilet contract has been awarded to Cactus Industries. A considerable amount of work was done to try and meet the needs of park patrons as well as find an organization that is able to respond to urgent matters.
- Work continues on a new contract for trash service.

**Human Resources:**

Open positions and recruitments:

- Four seasonal/temporary Contact Station Assistants have been hired and started at Lake Pleasant. Welcome Ruth Blanford, Darlene (Dee) Hoisington, Kurt Keller, and Amber Contant.
- Welcome to Dawn Silvernale, our new Procurement Specialist. Dawn comes to us from Human Services where she worked with the Head Start Program on purchasing and payment processing.
- One of our Navigational Aide positions will be vacant due to an upcoming retirement at the end of May. The Department has started recruitment and currently eight applicants have applied for the position.

**Information Technology:**

- Work flow processes continue to be improved within the department. A new forms folder has been created and shortcuts installed on all employee desktops. The concept is that all forms and/or hyperlinks to the forms used by staff will be located in a central location, ensuring the most up-to-date form is available.
- Work continues on investigating Wi-Fi and mobile fee collection for the parks. This effort includes information collection from Element (our credit card vendor), Panasonic/PCS Mobile (device supplier), and Verizon for possible service with hand held device(s).

**Souvenir Fund:**

- The souvenir program is winding down for the fiscal year with a definite slowdown in orders noted during March. The parks are fully stocked with product and as the season begins to wind down, reduced inventory is carried over during the summer.
- Work is underway for the FY14 product line. Bids for park logo shirts and other items are out and the search for new and exciting products is underway.

**Volunteer Program:**

- The Adopt-A-Trail and Maricopa Trails Operations Plan were completed and approved for use by the management team. The first official adopting group is the Maricopa Trail and Parks Foundation. They have adopted Segment 10, the first segment built. Foundation chair, Joe Marvin, has signed the agreement and is excited to get started. They are working to schedule their first inspection and maintenance day sometime soon.
- Most of our Park Hosts have left for their home states, but some have decided to stay on for the summer months or extended their stay longer than usual. Both Host couples at San Tan have extended and several couples at Estrella are staying through the summer.
- Thank you cards and Otter Pops were delivered to our remaining hosts and community volunteers in recognition of Volunteer Appreciation Week (April 21 – 27). They seemed grateful for the gratitude as well as the treats.
- The Volunteer Manual is under construction to update and add some missing components. It will include some training on the POS system as well as a quick guide to FAQ's.
- Several large corporate groups have provided volunteers to work in the parks this last month including Cox Communications.
- Meetings with MYRA (Maricopa Youth Resource Alliance) have been on-going and a list of volunteer coordinators and community outreach organizers within the county was provided for the Collaborative Communication Methodology committee.
- Our Volunteer Coordinator also assisted our Planning and Development Division by gathering the required documents for the White Tank Electrical Upgrade litigation claim. With the Project Manager position vacant, this assistance was needed with multiple documents to gather, organize, notarize, and submit to the American Safety Insurance Services, Inc.

**Planning and Development**

**Maricopa Trail & Trailhead Facilities:**

- The following trail segments are currently under construction: 1, 9, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34 and 35.
- Staff is currently planning new trails in the Tonto National Forest-Cave Creek and Mesa, the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, on the Central Arizona Project-south of Lake Pleasant Park and a trailhead for Segment 9 at Tres Rios 115th Avenue.
- Segments 16, 20, 21 and 24 were scheduled to be completed this spring. The Tres Rios trailhead is scheduled to begin construction the fall of 2013 and completed by June 1, 2014.

## **Operations**

### ***Cave Creek Regional Park***

- The park hosted 25 interpretive programs with 542 participants, including 69 repeat attendees. The *Clay Mine Hike* continues to be one of our most popular programs with 212 in attendance this month.
- An Eagle Scout project was completed this month with approximately 15+ volunteers working for two days enhancing the look of our fire pit at the Nature Center. They applied mortar and native rocks to the sides of the pit and stained the top section a rust color to blend in with the metal beams on the Nature Center building and Desert Tortoise Habitat wall. They also landscaped the area surrounding the pit with 5½ tons of decomposed granite.

### ***The Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):***

- The Arizona Envirothon was once again held at the Desert Outdoor Center. The Arizona Envirothon is Arizona's premier environmental science competition for high school students. It encourages students to explore our state's natural resources in a fun, interactive way. Every spring, students in grades 9 - 12 form teams from across the state to apply their knowledge, critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities to engage natural resource management scenarios. This year, twelve 5-member teams were involved in the competition. The 2-day event was Envirothon's 16th year with the DOC hosting the competition once before - during its 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

### ***Estrella Mountain Regional Park:***

- Ramada rentals were steady in April with reservations occurring each weekend.
- Hiking and Nature Center visitation has slowed some, yet steady in the mornings and evenings.
- The managers for the horse operations had more horse rentals in early April, but attendance has decreased as the month progressed.
- Due to winter visitors leaving the Valley, the interpretive programs attendance has slowed. There were a total of 14 park programs with approximately 50 attendees to date. The interpretive ranger has been busy planning activities and programs for the summer months, as well as cleaning and maintaining the park's exhibit animal habitats.
- The Interpretive Ranger conducted an overhaul of the critter exhibit. Customers and staff have all commented on how nice the animal exhibits look. The critters all seem happier to have more space.
- Partnering with park staff, scout and church groups have completed painting and clean-up projects through the month of April.
- The Centennial Trail Committee Chair, Denise Bates, and Director Cardin met in the month of April to discuss the Centennial Trail progress, funding and project concepts.
- The Director and Park Operations Manager visited the park at the end of the month for a walk-through of the facilities and grounds.

### ***Lake Pleasant Regional Park***

- Lake Pleasant increased the size of the team/family with the introduction of four new temporary/seasonal Contact Station Assistants. The rookies have stepped up to the plate and already made a significant impact for the Park.
- During the month of April, Lake Pleasant Regional Park provided 8 interpretive programs to the delight of 367 program participants. The highlight programs for the month included the *Full Moon Paddle*, *Adaptive Kayaking for People with Disabilities*, *Archery 101* and *The Pipeline Canyon Wildflower Hike*.
- The park hosted the annual *Dam Good Run Walk Hike* with roughly 100 participants in attendance. The park has been working with Central Arizona Project (CAP) in an effort to permit persons with disabilities requiring specialized equipment (i.e. wheelchairs, hand bikes, etc.) to gain access to the event; staff hopes to have this finalized for next year. Despite not getting the approval in time, we were able to assist the first person in the event's history with vision impairment (blind) across the dam and hope this is just the first step to creating a more diverse experience and event for all parties interested in participating. Special thanks to River of Dreams and Adobe Mountain Wildlife Center for their assistance with helping to put on the event.
- Lake Pleasant also hosted another annual event, *Paddfest*, during the month of April. With roughly 1,000 people in attendance, *Paddfest* was a huge success. Over 800 waivers were filled out for people wanting to participate in an opportunity to try out or be introduced to various paddling recreation equipment such as kayaks, canoes and stand up paddleboards.

**(Lake Pleasant Regional Park continued)**

- April was a busy month for the park with regards to events and activities, with four additional events conducted through Special Use Permits including the return of the *Crown King Scramble* (marathon with approximately 200 participants), *Valle Luna Fishing Derby* (tournament supporting Hospice of the Valley with approximately 50 participants), *Arizona Yacht Club Regatta* (sailboat pleasure race with approximately 150 participants), and the *AZ Seaplane Group* (landings for two planes). Special thanks to the navigational aide crew for moving the portable dock for the fishing tournament.
- The Park Supervisor and Maintenance Supervisor met with the Maricopa Water District (MWD), City of Peoria Fire and a few others to discuss the upcoming Fireworks Show scheduled for July 3.
- The Desert Outdoor Center Park Supervisor, Lake Pleasant Park Supervisor, and Parks Planner conducted the Agua Fria Monitoring Survey on April 17 to inspect and record changes to the landscape within the Agua Fria Conservation Area.
- The 7-Crew, park staff, Operations Manager and Planning & Development Manager have conducted several meetings to discuss and address septic related issues for the park. The Wild Burro Day Use Area has had the septic lines pumped and cleared of road and other debris that has built up over the years, which should help prolong the life of the tank. In addition, the maintenance team at Lake Pleasant has been working diligently to remove excessive vegetation built up within the Evapotranspiration (ET) Bed at Wild Burro. Additional septic and ET Bed locations are currently being reviewed for needs.
- Three different volunteer groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Cox Communications) provided approximately 150 volunteers for a much needed shoreline cleanup project. The shoreline can become very polluted this time of year with trash and debris. If it weren't for groups like this, we would not be able to maintain the high standards of service and cleanliness we strive to provide.

**McDowell Mountain Regional Park**

- The Interpretive Ranger conducted 22 interpretive programs with 301 participants.
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park hosted two on-site mobile workshops for the American Trail Symposium that was held at the Fort McDowell Radisson Resort and Park Supervisor, Rand Hubbell served as Chairman of the 19 mobile workshops.
- The sheriff's chain gang came out the first week of April and assisted with the construction of an adobe wall project that had been planned for nearly 2 years in Minks Camp, our group primitive camp area.
- With over 4" of rain this spring, the dirt parking lot at the Visitor's Center became very muddy and rutted; it received a makeover with 130 tons of decomposed granite.

**San Tan Mountain Regional Park:**

- San Tan provided 17 interpretive programs with 700 program participants. The highlight program was *Stargazing for Everyone*, which attracted 180 participants. The first *Scorpion Scavenger Hunt* of the season attracted 135 people. The Interpretive Ranger's home school series continues to grow, attracting 48 participants, 35 of which were returning home-schoolers.
- During the month of April, the park had four Scout projects completed with over 1,300 volunteer. Projects included illegal route closures, re-vegetation of disturbed areas, trash collection and trail improvement work.

**Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:**

- The park hosted 20 interpretive programs with 115 participants. A few of the programs included: *Sunset/Moonrise Hike*, *Dixie Mine Hike*, *Dragonfly Hike*, *Sonoran Desert 101*, *Fitness Series*, *Rock Art of Spur Cross*, *Ruins of Spur Cross*, *Exploring Spur Cross*, *Wildflower Walk* and *Cacti of Spur Cross*.
- Revenue generated by park entry fees for this month totaled \$6,575.00. This is a significant increase in comparison to last year's monthly total of \$4,840.00.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:**

- The park offered 15 interpretive programs in April totaling 883 participants and 11 docent lead programs with 168 participants. Highlights of the month were the *All About Roadrunners* lecture (108) and the *Animal Flashlight Walk* (167) around Merkle Trail. The *Archery 101* class (74) and the *Archery 202* class (37) continue to be popular with local park users who are interested in archery.

**(Usery Mountain Regional Park continued)**

- The *1st Annual Hike for Hunger* event was held with 141 participants benefitting the United Food Bank and was sponsored by the Mesa Baseline Rotary Club. Participants of all ages hit the trails hiking distances between 1 and 5 miles. Many families with kids attended the event and enjoyed a beautiful day interacting with nature.
- The Spring Desert FITA Archery Tournament was held on the field walking course at the archery range. Eighteen archers competed in this two-day tournament featuring marked and unmarked target distances. Despite hot temperatures and annoying gnats, the archers scored high and enjoyed the competition.
- A non-profit youth leadership organization called Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF) volunteered for a painting project in the Buckhorn Campground. Park maintenance staff helped guide this group of 40 plus high school students from New Mexico as they sanded and painted several electrical boxes that had weathered over the years.

**White Tank Mountain Regional Park:**

- March 2013 was one the best revenue months the park has ever experienced.
- The White Tank ranger and volunteers provided 18 programs and one outreach with 870 attendees.
- On Earth Day, White Tank Park partnered with the White Tank Branch Library for a celebration. Park staff presented a Gila monster program featuring a live Gila monster and ended the day with a *Moonlight Hike*. A park volunteer provided an *edible plants* presentation. All programs were very popular and well attended.
- In spite of construction challenges, the family campground opened on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Most weekends, the campground was filled to capacity and overflow was utilized. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, the campground was closed to finish improvements for next year. It was decided that the cost would be minimum to add water to each site. The department's construction crew has started leveling some sites and trenching to add water lines to each site.
- Public comment for the updating of the park's Master Plan closed on April 27<sup>th</sup>. During the 30-day period, public comments were received in addition to the input from a stakeholders group.
- *Hands On* volunteers came out for the second time on April 13<sup>th</sup>. The group worked hard hauling dirt in wheelbarrows for a quarter mile for trail improvements on the Black Rock Long Loop. They are scheduled to be back in May before taking a break for the summer.
- The problematic restroom septic systems required attention when the roots invaded the septic line at Restroom #1 and needed to be dug up and eradicated. Restroom #3 backed up as well. The park maintenance team and the construction crew have both facilities functioning again.
- Paint striping individual parking spaces throughout the park has been completed in Areas 8, 9, and 10.
- The wildlife viewing pond continues to be a battle for the maintenance team with the bulrushes growing back as fast as they are removed. The water level in the pond has been lowered to get a more effective handle on the issue.
- Buffel grass eradication has been completed on the Waterfall trail, the areas of Willow Road, and the main road.

**Vulture Mountains Cooperative Recreation Management Area:**

- Staff met with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Nature Conservancy on recommended trail routes via the Hassayampa River Preserve and BLM lands. We are waiting for the Nature Conservancy to discuss with staff and groups on the recommended routes. Once the recommendations have been received, we will forward to BLM so they may finish their travel management plan.
- In addition, staff will be working with the Nature Conservancy to start creating a management plan for the area and simultaneously, a consultant will be developing conceptual layouts.