



Maricopa County

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: January 20, 2016

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 during November and December 2015.

From the Office of the Director

- Over the last decade, Parks has been working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to allow third-party concessions on BLM Patented land under the Recreation & Public Purposes Act (RPPA). Parks would like to engage in public/private partnerships or third party concession agreements to expand recreation and tourism opportunities. Unfortunately, BLM is unable or unwilling to allow these types of agreements on park lands that were grants under the act. This equates to missed opportunities to generate revenue that will be used to enhance recreational opportunities within the respective park in addition to help offset maintenance and future capital improvements. Working with the County Government Affairs to develop specific legislative action, Senator Flake's office has introduced the "RPPA Commercial Recreation Concessions Pilot Program Act of 2015" bill for presentation at the 114th Congress 1st Session (both Senator Flake and Senator McCain are listed on the bill). This bill will establish a pilot program for commercial recreation concessions on certain land managed by BLM with the authority for patentees to enter into third party agreements for the concessions.
- The Use Management Agreement for Estrella Youth Sports (EYS) has been executed by the Board of Supervisors on December 7th. EYS is a non-profit concessionaire and is currently acquiring the funding necessary for Phase One, which includes the upgrade and expansion of our existing baseball fields.
- The Board of Supervisors approved a Temporary Access License, Indemnification and Hold Harmless Agreement between Maricopa County and the City of Goodyear (City) and attached Consent to Temporary Access License, Indemnification and Hold Harmless Agreement with Tres Rios Golf, LLC. This will allow the City to conduct site investigations and collection of data at Estrella Mountain Regional Park for development of a Design Concept Report for a potential wetlands project. It is expected that creating wetlands and a blending pond at the Park will provide a habitat for additional wildlife, provide interpretative and environmental education, and allow for additional passive recreational opportunities. It is also expected that the blending pond will return some water flows back into the Gila River or El Rio project.
- Staff continues to work with various entities in preparation of the inaugural Prickly Pedal Bike Race event scheduled for Saturday, January 23, 2016. The mountain bike ride event will begin at Lake Pleasant and utilize the Maricopa Trail to connect to Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. Festivities will end within downtown Cave Creek. The event is a wonderful way to connect park users to various parks within the County system as well as promote the beauty of the Maricopa Trail.

Administration

Budget Status (through December 2015 close):

- Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenues 3% or \$57,567 under the YTD budget of \$2,264,010.
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures of 11% or \$259,608 under the YTD operating budget of \$2,357,482.
- Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:
 - Lake Fund reported revenues of 10% or \$125,307 under the YTD budget of \$1,287,065.
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures at 16% or \$222,230 under the YTD budget of \$1,351,307.
- Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:
 - Spur Cross reported revenues at 15% or \$18,320 over the YTD budget of \$122,130.
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures at 3% or \$4,557 under the YTD budget of \$135,726.

Finance Program:

- Significant work continues on the FY17 budget submission.
- A significant error was identified in reported revenue for November. The revenue report is a multipage document and two reports (or two weeks' revenue) was not recorded properly by the Department of Finance. Apparently, only the first page of the document was recorded, creating a shortfall for reported revenue in November. Staff worked with the Department of Finance to correct the error and as of 1/8/16, it appears to be rectified.

Contracts:

- **Adobe Dam Regional Park:** Legacy Sports is finalizing a development agreement for the funding necessary to develop the improvements and expansion of Victory Lane Sports Complex. As per our pending Use Management Agreement, this funding must be in place prior to submitting to the Board of Supervisors for approval.

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) has approved the 500 Club's concept plans for the expansion and new banquet facility. With this conceptual approval, the 500 Club will now be able to complete the permits set of plans with reviews at 30%, 60% and 90% by the Flood Control District (FCD) and ACOE. Upon plan approval, the 500 Club will apply for permits through the City of Phoenix and other various authorities. The 500 Club is anticipating to have construction completed by October 1, 2016.

Sahuaro Railroad Preservation Society and Maricopa Live Steamers received approval from ACOE and FCD to replace their gravel driveways with asphalt. They are now working on permits with MCDOT and MC Environmental Services (for dust control). They anticipate construction of the new driveways in February.

Wet 'N Wild consultants met with Parks and FCD in December regarding two new slide attractions to be added within the footprint of the existing facility. Wet 'N Wild anticipated a quick approval as the specific site plan for the new attraction was previously approved in 2009 for administrative offices. FCD representatives informed the consultants this may not be practicable as the 2009 permit did not account for the new ACOE 408 permit regulations. Wet 'N Wild consultants submitted the ACOE 408 application and associated backup for the conceptual plans to FCD at the end of December in which FCD sent to ACOE. FCD has advised that the conceptual plans were approved. Wet 'N Wild will be expediting the permit process with the City of Phoenix and other various authorities. Upon ACOE/FCD plan approval, their anticipated start of construction will be February 1, 2016.

- **Maricopa Trails (MT):** Agreements are necessary to provide the formal basis for linking existing and proposed new trails in a cooperative effort between the County and various city, governmental agencies and communities. The purpose of the agreements are to provide improved natural resources management (including specific trail responsibilities) and additional opportunities for members of the public to use the areas for a recreational trail. The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the City of Goodyear (MT Segment 35) was approved by the Board of Supervisors at its January 13th meeting. IGAs have been

drafted for the City of Buckeye (MT Segment 33 & 35), City of Avondale (MT Segment 9 and Sun Circle Trail Segment 1), and the City of Phoenix (MT Segment 9). A Memorandum of Agreement (MA) has been drafted for Verrado Community Association (MT Segment 35).

- **Lake Pleasant Regional Park:** In the fall of 2015, Dillon's restaurant signed a lease with Maricopa Water District to operate a second restaurant at Pleasant Harbor Marina. On December 31, Scorpion Bay Holdings, LLC (SBH) released Dillon's from their current agreement for operating the existing restaurant at Scorpion Bay Marina. SBH is completing renovations of the existing boat store and restaurant with plans to re-open the facilities by the end of January. Initially, SBH will utilize the relationship with Troon Golf to manage, operate and employ the personnel necessary to operate the store and restaurant. Upon Parks approval, SBH intends to have these businesses operated by a wholly owned subsidiary with the concessionaire entity under the Use Management Agreement.

Human Resources:

- **New Hires :**
 - Welcome Kenneth Vonderscher, Planning and Development Division Manager
 - Welcome William (Trevor) Askew, Electrician (Trades)
 - Welcome Amber Gore, Interpretive Ranger (Part-time/Temporary at the DOC)
- **Farewells:**
 - None
- **Open positions and recruitments:**
 - Trades Specialist – Recruitment Reposted
 - Contact Station Assistant, White Tank (Temp) – Selection made, starts 1/4/2016

Information Technology:

- Lake Pleasant Discovery Center computers were set up and staff has moved into the offices.
- Work continues to purchase computer replacements for the POS units throughout the system (originally purchased in 2010).

Volunteer Program:

- The Conservation Alliance assisted in a rehabilitation project near the well-site at San Tan on December 12th. A Boy Scout troop and volunteers from *Hands On Greater Phoenix* came out to assist in planting the new vegetation. The plants were all donated by the Conservation Alliance, who also supplied extra tools, gloves, and snacks for the event.

• **Year-to-Date Volunteer Hours:**

	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15
Total Dept. Hours	3,739	2,949	4,568	6,828	11,319	11,966
Financial Savings	\$86,264	\$68,022	\$105,383	\$157,510	\$261,135	\$276,066
YTD Hours	3,739	6,688	11,256	18,083	29,402	41,369
YTD Savings	\$86,264	\$154,286	\$259,669	\$417,179	\$678,314	\$954,380
Prev. Year Month Total Hours	2,708	3,304	3,083	6,102	9,726	12,287
Prev. Year YTD Hours	2,708	6,012	9,094	15,196	24,922	37,209
Prev. Year Financial Savings	\$61,065	\$74,494	\$69,516	\$137,596	\$219,321	\$ 277,072
Number of Volunteers-current month	78	71	414	361	480	235

Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights

- **Estrella Master Plan:** Staff is fine tuning the draft master plan chapters and recommendations. The draft master plan and its recommendations will be presented to the public on January 30, 2016 to gauge their level of support. A public comment period will remain open for thirty days after the meeting, concluding February 29, 2016, so that those unable to attend the meeting may still provide input. Staff will present these findings and the final draft master plan at the March 2016 Parks Commission meeting and seek its approval recommendation.
- **Vulture Mountain Update:** Staff is working with MCDOT engineers on roadway designs. Progress is moving slowly on both the Environmental Assessment (EA) as well as the land lease application due to unforeseen procedures internal to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- **System Wide:**
 - The refurbishment of all 75 restrooms (RRs) for all the parks began in January 2014. The project is expected to take four years and cost ~\$4 million. With the help of "Job Order Contracts" (JOC) contractors, staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system.

Current Status:

Estrella:

2 of 11 completed
#5 completed this year
4 and #7 in progress

Lake Pleasant:

5 of 18 completed
Roadrunner water side completed
Pallet Loop 80% complete
Bajada Loop 80% complete
Scute Loop #1 & #2 in progress
Visitor Center bathroom completed
this year

Cave Creek:

7 of 9 completed

McDowell:

7 of 13 completed

White Tank:

11 of 13 completed

Usery:

4 of 11 completed
C & D complete this year
Archery completed this year

- **Trades Crew:**
 - In November, Trades staff installed a new water line, poured four concrete slabs for the new host sites, and graded and spread granite around the pads at Cave Creek Park. Trade staff also replaced all the faulty water heaters and mixing valves in the host campground restrooms at Cave Creek Park.
 - Trade staff completed installing water lines at White Tanks Park for camp hosts. Several sites were graded so they are now level. Staff also repaired the access road to the bicycle track parking lot.
 - Trade staff has been assisting maintenance staff with the irrigation system programming and repairs at Estrella Park.
 - The department welcomed Parks Trade Specialist Electrician Trevor Askew. The electrician position is critical to the department to provide excellent customer service to our visitors and park facilities.
- **Trails Crew:**
 - The Trails crew worked with Arizona Conservation Corps Crew (AZCC) in November at Estrella Park completing reroutes on the Toothaker and Butterfield Trails. The crew also completed approximately 3 miles of heavy maintenance on the Coldwater Trail repairing storm damage.
 - In December, the Trails crew and the AZCC crew worked together to layout and complete construction of the new Fairy Duster loop Trail at Spur Cross. This trail is about three quarters of a mile long and has nice views of the park and surrounding areas.
 - The trail crew has been preparing the Maricopa County Trail between Lake Pleasant and Spur Cross Recreation area for the inaugural Prickly Pedal Race on January 23rd.

- **Maricopa Trail and Trail Facilities:**

- The following trail segments are currently being worked on: 9, 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35 and 78.
- The following portion of the Maricopa Trail has begun an Environmental Assessment:
 - Segment 22 – Tonto National Forest – Bronco Trailhead to Scottsdale City Limits – 14.4 miles
 - The biological survey was completed in early November and the archeological survey completed 12/22/15. Multiple sites in conflict with alignment.
- The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are in process for purchase from the Arizona State Land Department:
 - Segment 35 – North and south of I-10 on the Tuthill Road alignment
 - Segment 12 – North of SR303 on Lake Pleasant Road.
 - Segment 11 – East of SR303 on Happy Valley Parkway.
- Construction preparation: the Waddell Canal, on the Central Arizona Project – south of Lake Pleasant Park, El Rio, Tres Rios and Verrado.
- Agreement preparation/negotiations:
 - City of Phoenix – Segment 9
 - City of Goodyear – Segment 35
 - City of Scottsdale – Segments 23, 24 25 and 26.
 - Verrado – Segment 35
 - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation – Segment 27 – Received 10/6/2015
 - City of Buckeye – Segment 35
 - City of Avondale – Segment 9 and Segment 1
- Installing additional signage
- Performing maintenance in preparation for the Prickly Pedal Race in January 2016
 - Segments 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 45.
 - Arizona Conservation Corps completed two weeks of trail repair on Segment 13 in November.
 - Maricopa Trail volunteers working on Segment 14
 - Contractor will work on segments 14 & 16 repairs
 - Trail grooming completed on Segments 13, 14, 15 & 16.

Park Operations Report

Cave Creek Regional Park:

- In November, the park hosted 11 interpretive programs with 20 participants attending, which included 8 repeat attendees.
- In December, the park hosted 9 interpretive programs with 70 participants attending, which included repeat of 39 attendees. Five docent led programs were also conducted with 26 attendees
- The highlighted programs for the months: *Feeding Frenzy* with 23 attendees, *Cave Creek Park to Spur Cross Hike* with 13 attendees.
- The Park also hosted one event in November: *The Annual Cactus Classic* with a total of 262 bikers participated in racing along the Cave Creek Trails, Maricopa County Trail and the Spur Cross Trail.

Desert Outdoor Center:

- The Desert Outdoor Center recently filled a part-time interpretive ranger position. The new hire is an ASU student in their Parks & Recreation program. The Parks' Volunteer Coordinator developed an agreement with ASU to engage internship students as volunteers within Maricopa County Parks as a means of giving students a taste of actual work experience in the field, while affording staff a preview of potential hires. Amber Gore had been selected as an intern last fall and turned out to be an exceptional fit for our school programming. Amber was selected to fill the vacancy through a competitive open recruitment process. Staff is looking forward to having other student intern volunteers in the future.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- NASCAR races were held at the PIR race track in mid-November. A large number of camping rigs stayed on park property during the race week. Park staff counted a total of 4,533 camping units staying throughout race week! A one night record high of 807 camping units was recorded.
- On November 21st Race Timers had a successful run on the Coldwater Trail.
- The Estrella Park turf sprinkler system continues to have its ups and downs. The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (MCPRD) attended irrigation software and scheduling training in November.
- Estrella Park staff and hosts performed tree trimming in the park in the month of November. Trees around the front entry of the park were trimmed heavily to allow for safer visibility up and down Vineyard and to create a more noticeable park entry for visitors arriving at the park.
- The rain and nice weather this fall has refreshed the desert and has park users out enjoying the park trails.
- Estrella Park had 27 public programs in December with 325 people in attendance. A new "Believe it or Not!" program was well received by kids and adults alike. The Passport Estrella challengers are enjoying the program series and building new friendships. Several have commented that they have an improved fitness level since the beginning of the program. A number of local families with relatives visiting for the holidays attended the *Desert Play Day and River Hike* programs.
- Race Timers held another running event on the Coldwater Trail on December 5th. Several runners reported positively to recent trail improvements.
- Estrella attendance slowed in December due to the holidays.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant offered 17 interpretive programs during the month of December to the delight of 228 program attendees. The highlights of the months included the Agua Fria Long Paddle (Pleasant Paddlers Program), Archery 101, and Exploring the Cottonwood Trail.
- The annual bald eagle closure of a portion of the Agua Fria River arm was implemented on December 15. The closure will remain in effect through June 15. Last year, two baby bald eagles fledged their way into this world and we hope for a duplicate season. A recent report from US Fish and Wildlife Services is showing a decline in bald eagle populations since 1986 in the Southwest – possibly due to climate change. The Park is dedicated to bald eagle support and conservation through the eagle closure and by providing education to the public.
- The Discovery Center project is still underway. The interpretive ranger and park supervisor offices were finished and they have since moved in to the new building. Efforts are still on-going to complete the interpretive exhibit portion of the project and we hope to have the building open and operational by the summer of 2016.
- Park staff and hosts attended the annual safety training for the Department.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- During the month of November, McDowell provided 14 interpretive programs with 180 program participants. The highlight program for the month was *Desert Holes & Animal Tracks* which attracted 35 participants.
- During the month of December, McDowell provided 14 interpretive programs with 161 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the presentation by Liberty Wildlife which attracted 50 participants.
- November has evolved into one of the busier months for special events. This November epitomized that fact with not only an event every weekend, but also the biggest event of the season.
- *The 13th Annual Javelina Jundred* had a crowd of 601 participants taking on runs of either a 100 miles or 100 kilometers.
- Only in its 3rd year, the *Ragnar Trail Run* had 3,072 participants take to the trails.
- *Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way* turned to equestrians with endurance rides of 25, 50 or 75 miles. 105 horses competed while carefully being monitored by on-site veterinarians.
- *12-Hours of Fury* had 314 participants racing around the 10.2 mile single track racing circuit.
- December continued the special event schedule with the *McDowell Mountain Frenzy* with 422 runners having a beautiful day to run through the desert.
- Park staff, park hosts, and McDowell Park Association volunteers all helped staff a booth at the Fountain Hills Fall Arts and Craft Fair. Beautiful weather prompted big crowds for each of the three fair days.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- During the month of November, San Tan provided 25 interpretive programs with 537 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the *Full Frost Moon Hike* which attracted over 110 participants and *Cub Day Camp* where the staff led multiple archery 101 classes to help over 173 scouts earn their badges.
- San Tan hosted their second *Xterra Trail Run Competition* which included a 7k run and half marathon. The event was a huge success with over 301 participants.
- San Tan hosted Equine Trail Sports (ETS) on November 22, 2015. This is a non-speed event in which riders and horses competed as a team with an emphasis on horsemanship. Judges and a veterinarian were on hand to establish guidelines for a safe and enjoyable ride. The event brought in over 32 participants.
- During the month of December, San Tan provided 25 interpretive programs with 285 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the *Full Frost Moon Hike* which attracted over 110 participants.
- We recently worked with the Conservation Alliance and approximately 30 volunteers to help revegetate and repair the construction site around the recently installed well. The goal is to return the area to its natural state.
- Four Eagle Scout projects and one conservation project was completed in the last two months. The Eagle Scout projects consisted of installing a replica Hohokam pit house to help promote education of our archaeological resources, revegetating the construction site with native plants and an unauthorized trail closure. The conservation project consisted of cleaning, raking and picking up trash along our trail system as well as cleaning up dump sites along the roadways leading to the park. The projects brought in well over 450 volunteer hours.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The Park hosted 19 interpretive programs in November with 333 participants attending and 10 docent led program with 87 attendees.
- The highlighted programs for the month were the *Desert Discovery Day* with 185 participants and *Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike* with 23 attendees.
- The Park hosted ten interpretive programs in December with 199 participants attending and 5 docent led programs with 47 attendees.
- The highlighted programs for the month were the *Moonlight Hike* with 39 attendees and the *Elephant Mountain Hike* with 36 attendees.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- Usery Mountain Regional Park offered 14 interpretive ranger programs in November totaling 644 participants and 21 docent lead programs totaling 399 participants. In December, the park offered 12 interpretive ranger programs totaling 411 participants and 22 docent lead programs totaling 334 participants.
- Aravaipa Running hosted the *Pass Mountain Trail Run* as part of the *Desert Runner Trail Series*. 344 runners participated in the event.
- The park received and installed two Memorial Bench donations which were placed on the Wind Cave Trail.
- A TV pilot focusing on eight elite athletes who compete in the *BattleFrog Obstacle Race Series* was filmed in the park using the iconic "Phoenix" sign as their backdrop. BattleFrog was the title sponsor of the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe this year

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- The park ranger provided 25 programs and 2 outreaches in November with 744 attending and 22 programs and 2 outreaches in December with 741 attending total. Our biggest event was our annual Black Rock Luminary Walk. The Friends of White Tank Park and volunteers served 350 people with a fire, a luminary lined trail, hot cocoa, and cookies. Everyone had a nice evening.
- Both entrance-free days offered by the Parks Department (Veterans Day and National Take A Hike day) were successful in getting people out into the parks and on the trails. 245 people stopped by the table at Waterfall to speak with the ranger, Friends of WTP and the White Tank Conservancy.

- On December 19th, over a hundred runners came out for a quick 7-km run around the lower trails for the *Cactus Flower Sassy White Tanks Run*.
- The entry station was hit by a car on December 1st, causing substantial damage. Fortunately, it was in the evening when the entry station was empty and no staff was injured. This made for some operational challenges, but the Parks Department was efficient at getting a contractor to immediately start repairs and set a temporary pod. The building was functional and the pod removed by New Year's Day.
- The Christmas break was busy as usual and we had lots of visitors enjoying the trails, learning about the Sonoran Desert and purchasing souvenirs. Our new penny press machine made \$79.50 in less than 2 weeks.