



Maricopa County

Parks & Recreation Department

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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 13, 2019
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 **January and February 2019**.

From the Office of the Director

- 2019 Prickly Pedal Race:** The fourth annual Prickly Pedal Mountain Bike Race and Ride was held on January 19 with 400 riders completing the 40-mile trek from the Town of Cave Creek to Lake Pleasant Regional Park. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4raVVzJI14>
- Wet 'n Wild is now Six Flags Hurricane Harbor:** Six Flags invested in new theming and other park enhancements to offer guests a bigger, better, wetter, island-getaway experience. Additionally, all member and season pass holders will have free, unlimited visits to Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix, Six Flags Magic Mountain and all Six Flags theme parks across the country. Channel 3 is doing a drone broadcast of the improvements and new theming on March 14. The park will be open to the public on March 16.
- Vulture Mountain Recreation Area Update:** The 60% - 100% final design work has begun with EPS and is on track for completion in early 2020. Maricopa County Department of Transportation has moved up construction of the County Park roadway system and associated utilities to coincide with completion of the final construction documents. Funding requests for fiscal year 2021 have been submitted and additional funding for the park day-use, campground, and OHV areas will follow in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 respectively.
- Hassayampa River Preserve:** The Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce presented the "2018 Ambassador of the Year" award to the staff and volunteers of the Preserve for "outstanding service to [the] community through communication and interaction with the public."

Board of Supervisors Agenda Items:

Date/Status	Tracking Number	Summary
1/9/2019 Approved	C-30-19-009-D-00	Park Donations: Accept restricted donations for memorial benches, monetary donation for White Tank Park and non-cash donation of app for 100 Mile Challenge.
1/16/2019 Approved	C-30-19-010-M-00	Non-Binding MOU for Conceptual Design of the El Rio Lake at the Confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers: Approve and execute the Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Flood Control District, Maricopa County and other partners for the Conceptual Design of the El Rio Lake at the Confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers. This MOU authorizes the District to fund and manage consultants' efforts in the preparation of preliminary concept schematics to include river stabilizing structures, subject to the availability of funding to the District.

Date/Status	Tracking Number	Summary
1/30/2019 Approved	C-78-19-007-3-00	Grant of Utility Easement for APS Easement at Estrella Regional Park: This easement will provide electrical service for Estrella in accordance with the Park Land Disposal Policy and Procedure (Policy A2610, Section II, C.2).
1/30/2019 Approved	C-06-19-294-7-00	Park Commissioner Reappointment: Isabel Chavez (District 5) reappointed for a two-year term.
2/13/2019 Approved	C-30-19-011-M-00	Competition Impracticable to EPS Group for Design Services: Approved a single source competition impractical for design services to complete the 100% design documents for the Vulture Mountain Recreation Area including the park nature center and day use facilities, campground area, Off Highway Vehicle staging area, park amenities, maintenance yard, parking lots and park staging area.
2/27/2019 Approved	C-06-19-323-7-00	Donation Report for December 2018 and January 2019: Cash value of \$1,221.69

Administration

The purpose of the Administrative Division is to provide strategic direction, leadership, administrative and financial support to the Director and employees of the department so they can produce the results necessary to achieve the departmental mission and vision. The following information is provided as a high-level overview of the activities of the Administrative Division:

Financial/Budget Status through February 2019:

FEBRUARY			YTD	YTD
Fund Name	Fund	Type	Actual	Budget
General Fund	100	Expenditures	\$579,975.00	\$579,975.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	\$0
			Budget to Actual Percentage	0.00%
Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Fund	225	Revenue	\$202,319.76	\$196,307.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	-\$6,012.76
			Budget to Actual Percentage	-3.06%
	225	Expenditures	\$192,158.64	\$174,688.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	-\$17,470.64
			Budget to Actual Percentage	-10.00%
Lake Fund	240	Revenue	\$2,122,465.24	\$2,031,688.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	-\$90,777.24
			Budget to Actual Percentage	-4.47%
	240	Expenditures	\$1,921,652.90	\$2,123,718.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	\$202,065.10
			Budget to Actual Percentage	9.51%
Enhancement Fund	241	Revenue	\$4,272,388.43	\$3,839,190.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	-\$433,198.43
			Budget to Actual Percentage	-11.28%
	241	Expenditures	\$3,506,452.51	\$3,812,936.00
			Budget to Actual Amount	\$306,483.49
			Budget to Actual Percentage	8.04%

GREEN Positive variance, no concern
 RED Negative/under budget - watch

Contracts:

- **Adobe:**
 - Special Use Permits Issued:
 - Sahuaro Railroad/Maricopa Live Steamers
 - January 17-20 Maricopa Live Steamers Annual Train Meet
 - March 14-17 Maricopa Live Steams Annual Spring Train Meet

Human Resources:

- Welcome New Employees:
 - No new hires in January & February
- Promotions/Transfers:
 - Jeanine O'Reilly, Office Assistant Specialize/McDowell to Park Asset & Inventory Control Coordinator/HQ – 1/28/19
- Departing Employees:
 - Marcus Castro, Park Maintenance, Estrella
 - Trevor Prenovost, Trades Specialist
 - Jason Rodenkirk, Navigational Aide Technician, Lake Pleasant
- Open positions and recruitments:
 - Park Office Assistant Specialized, Lake Pleasant – Candidate selected, scheduled to begin 3/11
 - Park Supervisor, McDowell – Position reposted, second interview scheduled for finalist
 - Park Office Assistant, McDowell – Candidate selected, offer pending
 - Contact Station Assistant, Temp Estrella – Candidate selected, offer pending
 - Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant – Scheduled to post
 - Navigational Aide Technician, Lake Pleasant – Recruitment closed, awaiting applications
 - Trades Specialist – First round of interviews scheduled 3/27
 - Park Maintenance Worker, Estrella – Candidate selected, scheduled to begin 3/25

Volunteer Program:

- FY19 Year-to-Date Volunteer Hours:

	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	FY19 YTD Total
FY19 Total Dept. Hours	2754	2824	2968	4373	9230	10390	10847	13141	56528
Financial Savings	\$67,996	\$69,725	\$73,280	\$107,969	\$227,889	\$256,529	\$267,812	\$324,451	\$1,395,652
Financial Savings YTD	\$67,996	\$137,721	\$211,001	\$318,970	\$546,859	\$803,388	\$1,071,200	\$1,395,651	\$4,552,786
% Diff comparison/prev. FYTD	-2%	-4%	-20%	-23%	-15%	-11%	-12%	-7%	
# of Volunteers-current month	95	75	94	105	136	191	217	177	1090
# of Park Hosts	23	26	25	45	84	105	119	115	542
Park Host Hours	2140	2216	2217	3565	8328	9507	9978	10551	48502
# of Community Volunteers	34	33	38	49	44	67	40	62	367
Community Volunteer Hours	485	547	610	712	844	779	623	2547	7147
# of Episodic Volunteers	36	16	31	10	7	19	57	4	180
Episodic Volunteers Hours	129	61	141	96	59	104	246	43	879
MCSO Prisoner Service Hours	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FY18 Month Total Hours	3506	4936	4911.5	6682	11841	12353	13804	12148	99374.5
FY18 Financial Monthly Savings	\$69,384	\$143,504	\$263,966	\$411,994	\$645,238	\$903,738	\$1,216,473	\$1,498,416	\$2,250,828
Current Value-\$24.69		\$212,888	\$476,854	\$888,848	\$1,534,086	\$2,437,824	\$3,654,297	\$5,152,713	\$14,357,511
Previous Value-\$24.14									

Planning and Development Division

Project Management

- Estrella Park renovations are moving forward; phase II of ramada construction is almost complete, electrical work is wrapping up, grill stations and new tables have been installed, and new concrete sidewalks are installed. Irrigation, landscape and granite work is underway, the water line installation to the new ramadas is starting, and the new super playground parking lot is underway. MCDOT will be starting construction of the new Super Playground roadway this spring.
- The Maricopa Trail and Parks Foundation hosted a group of Eagle Scout candidates at the *Andy Kunasek Trailhead* on March 9, 2019 to repair trailhead surfacing and amenities. The group repaired a damaged hitching post, repaired a section of the trailhead drive, and repaired numerous eroded areas in the decomposed granite. Below are some photos of the project.



Natural Resource Management

- The Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) has visited all Parks (exception of San Tan), met our park supervisors and interpretive rangers, attended ranger-led programs and hiked many trails. She also met with staff from our partner agencies: AZGFD (Arizona Game and Fish Department), Maricopa County Flood Control, CAZCA (Central Arizona Conservation Alliance), MSC (McDowell Sonoran Conservancy), WTMC (White Tank Mountain Conservancy), and ASU, etc. The NRS has attended meetings related to ongoing projects: Restore-net, invasive species information, Native Plant Society, and CAZCA.
- The NRS has begun a database to house all biological resource data retrieved thus far and is in the process of creating a master list of all wildlife and plant species within Maricopa County, adding important information as to their habitats, listings and other relative information. This is ongoing and will take some time, but once the master species list is complete, staff will be able to add park species lists and monitored species by park.
- The NRS began collecting data from the interpretive rangers about invasive species from each of the parks. The NRS is working on creating an invasive species collector app in conjunction with McDowell Sonoran Conservancy. A pilot program using the collector app will be rolled out to the White Tank Mountain Conservancy.
- A Natural Resource Plan rough outline has been drafted. Additional meetings and information gathering has begun for the development of the natural resource plan.
- The NRS assisted AZGFD with Mule deer captures at White Tank and Vulture Mountain Regional Parks.
- NRS is working with Park staff and collaborating with United States Fish and Wildlife Service to better understand the Southwest Willow Fly Catcher and Yellow Billed Cuckoo listed species at Hassayampa and other sites where these birds nest.

Park and Open Space Planning

- The Park and Open Space Planner is working on archeological resource clearances for two projects in the park system. Archeological clearances are required by law prior to ground disturbing activities for projects that are located in previously undisturbed or areas not previously cleared of potential resources. One clearance is at Usery Mountain Regional Park for the new tent camping sites and the other is the new improved Goldmine trailhead at San Tan Mountain Regional Park.
- The Parks and Recreation Director and Park and Open Space Planner delivered a presentation on the Sun Corridor Trail for the County Supervisors Association of Arizona in February to provide County Managers information and ways the association could help promote the trail. The Department will also present the information to County Supervisors from across the state in March

Trades Crew

- The Trades and Trails Crew completed work on the pipe rail fencing at the Hassayampa River Preserve. The new steel pipe rail fence replaces the aged split rail cedar fence that was in need of replacement.
- The Trades Crew assisted Estrella Park to assemble new picnic tables for the Park. Staff continues to assemble tables and move them into the west side ramadas as they are completed.
- Park Trades staff met at White Tank Park to plan for and begin constructing improvement at the Willow camping area. Coinciding with the new shower building install this Spring, the new camp sites will feature small trailer spots and tent camping pads. Staff is expecting to start work on the new sites this month.
- Trades Crew Electricians replaced lighting at the campground host sites and restroom building at White Tank Regional Park. The new LED lighting is more energy efficient and provides better lighting than the previous light fixtures. In addition, Park Electricians continue with the annual electrical preventative maintenance program at McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

Trails Crew

- The Trails Crew was fortunate to receive a pro bono visit from an American Conservation Experience (ACE) trail crew at the Hassayampa River Preserve. Maricopa Trail Manager, John Rose, received a call from ACE looking for a snowed out crew from Flagstaff to work as the mountain areas were waist deep in snow. This exemplifies the importance of relationships and collaboration as Maricopa County Parks and Recreation was the first agency to have a shovel ready project for the crew to work on.

Maricopa Trail, Sun Circle and Trailhead Facilities:

- The following trail segments are currently in progress – 11, 12, 18, 27, 29, 32, 33, 35, 77, and 78.
- Agreement preparation/negotiations:
 - Estrella Community – Segment 33, new route. Re-wrote Agreement and sent to Community 2/28/19.
 - Bureau of Land Management – Waiting for the Travel Management Plan completion on the proposed route between Estrella Mountain Park and Buckeye Hills Park. The federal government has put this on hold.
 - Queen Creek – Re-route of trail to existing trail systems. Received permit October 2018; waiting for post placement and direction by Town of Queen Creek personnel.
 - City of Phoenix – Met and developed IGA under review by County Attorney.
 - Maricopa Water District (MWD) – Trailhead on Segment 35 at Northern Avenue. Approved by MWD in October 2018, waiting on MCDOT and developer NW of site.
- Construction
 - Segment 30 – Placed signs on new route January 2019.
- Maintenance
 - The following segments had maintenance completed this period. This includes grooming the tread, brushing and signage:
 - Segment 14 – Lake Pleasant to I-17.
 - Segment 15 – Anthem – I-17 to 7th Avenue.
 - Segment 16 – 7th Avenue to intersection with Segment 18 (Cave Creek).
 - Segment 18 – Intersection with Segment 16 to Spur Cross.
 - Segment 22 – Scottsdale Preserve to Cave Creek Ranger Station.
- Trailheads
 - Segment 35 – Northern Avenue – waiting for MCDOT & developer.
 - Segment 11 – Sun Valley Parkway – waiting on Flood Control District.
- Sign Installation, Inventory and Mapping
 - Completed the following Segments: Completed the following Segments: 6, 29 and 30.
- Route Determination – Developing alternate routes for Segment 77 Vulture Mountain to Lake Pleasant and Segment 76 White Tank to Vulture Mountain.

Parks Operations Report

Cave Creek

- The park hosted 20 interpretive programs with 672 participants in January. The highlighted programs for the month were the two (2) *Clay Mine Adventure* programs with 398 attendees.
- In February, the park hosted 19 interpretive programs with 1,416 attendees.
- The *Rattle Snake Festival* was the highlighted program hosted at Cave Creek Park on February 16. This event was coordinated with the Arizona Herpetological Association, Rattlesnake Solutions, and Rattlesnake Ready. Throughout the day, we had a steady stream of guests come in to get a close-up look at more than 60 rattlesnakes (all safely contained) which included every species found in Arizona (14), most of the species found in the US, as well as some specimens from Mexico and Central America. There were guest speakers every hour offering presentations on various rattlesnake related topics including medicinal uses of venom, how we attract them to our homes, a kids program, and a variety of fun activities, games and prizes for the kids. This event is meant to reduce the fear and fiction related to these very interesting animals and educate folks on how they benefit people and environment. By the time we wrapped things up at 5pm, we had a count of 1,255 folks come through the event, doubling the numbers from last year! We plan to continue building on the success of this event next year.
- The park also hosted the Annual Aravaipa Elephant Mountain Run. The 405 participants had the choice to run a 50 Kilometer, 35 Km, 22 Km, or 12Km course. The racecourse incorporates Go John, Slate, Quartz, Maricopa Trail and Spur Cross.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC)

- In January, we offered 42 programs that were attended by 1,056 students from grades 3-6. The DOC facility also hosted three church retreats for St. Thomas Moore Church and the high school students of Notre Dame

Preparatory. Staff is working on a marketing plan to increase non-programming usage of the facility, such as those just mentioned.

- In February, 1,179 students attended 75 programs, which included seven overnight stays in our dormitory facilities. The staff continues to work on updating the facility and establishing both short and long-term improvement plans for a variety of projects, including installation of a new septic pump, resurfacing the barrier-free trail, addressing a few structural concerns, and general drainage issues around the facility.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park

- Estrella's CIP construction projects continue to press forward. Six new Ramadas were constructed and underground wires pulled to the remaining constructed Ramadas. Additional tons of crushed granite was delivered and placed by the ramadas in preparation for spreading and grooming; mow curbs were poured to separate the grass from the granite.
- Estrella Park had 20 programs with 398 participants. School and community outreaches are beginning to pick up with the warm spring weather. Wildflowers hikes are popular after the abundant fall and winter rains. The archery programs and homeschool classes were the most successful. The interpretive ranger continues to focus on family programming that would bring in locals with their travelling families. All programs have increased attendance from 2018.
- Park staff placed additional markers and signs along north park property boundaries prohibiting shooting and OHV activities. Staff continues to partner with MCSO who is doing additional enforcement in the area. Illegal roads will be barricaded after MSCO completes their enforcement days.

Hassayampa River Preserve

- The year began with a good start, with post-holiday visitation of almost 1,600 people for the month (up approximately 50% from last year and double the visitation for January 2017). The Interpretive Ranger and volunteers presented nine interpretive programs. In addition, the Interpretive Ranger provided one off-site outreach and three on-site programs to various groups/clubs. The new year launched several new interpretive projects and programs including a new *Citizen Science* series of workshops focusing on how the public can contribute their observations of nature to databases that can be shared and even used by scientists.
- One of our trail cameras caught a bobcat walking through a wash with a ringtail in its mouth – not so great for the ringtail, but this video provided a glimpse into the natural world that we rarely see.
- Park staff continue various cross-training opportunities to share and expand their knowledge to increase operational efficiency.
- Heavy rain during the month (over 3" in some parts of the watershed to the north and west) created some river flooding causing some of the river trails to be closed for a few days. At the end of the month, Wickenburg Fire responded quickly to a small wildfire (several logs) of unknown cause to the south of the main public part of the Preserve. Their quick response prevented spreading of the fire and did not impact operations at the Preserve.
- February's visitation declined slightly from the previous month due to periodic rain and cold temperatures. The Preserve saw approximately 2.5 inches of rain for the month. Added to an already wet January, the rain total for the year is already almost 5 inches. Rain, combined with snowmelt from higher elevations in the Hassayampa watershed, contributed to increased river flow and some river flooding. Sunny days and warmer temperatures, especially when occurring on weekends, drew many visitors out to the Preserve. Overall for the month, the Preserve saw 1,223 visitors.
- Despite fickle weather, the Interpretive Ranger, volunteers, and guest presenters presented 16 interpretive programs to the public (171 participants). The Interpretive Ranger and volunteers also presented two outreach programs for 42 people. The Preserve continued its *Citizen Science* workshop series, including participation in the *Great Backyard Bird Count*. The Preserve also partnered with Wickenburg's Desert Caballeros Western Museum to provide joint programming on pollinators. Guests to the museum's lecture on the importance of pollinators were invited to stop by the Preserve to see an example of a pollinator and wildlife-friendly garden and learn gardening tips from local Master Gardeners stationed in the Preserve's interpretive garden.
- The Wickenburg Youth Commission completed a service project at the Preserve by assisting Preserve volunteers in removing fallen palm fronds and pulling invasive weeds. An ACE (American Conservation Experience) crew completed trail work on the Lyke's Lookout trail. A crew from the Gila River Indian

Community (GRIC) completed field work under a scientific research project led by Dr. Russell Benford, Environmental Program Manager for GRIC. Their fieldwork included harvesting a select number of cottonwood and willow cuttings that will be planted on GRIC lands as part of a riparian area restoration project.

- The Preserve park supervisor completed an oral history workshop as part of a partnership program with the Friends of Hassayampa to collect relevant oral histories from the community regarding the Preserve. Planning continued for upcoming historic building repairs at the Preserve. Preserve and management staff met with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff to discuss moving forward with action items and research identified in the Preserve's approved Conservation Plan.

Lake Pleasant

- Lake Pleasant offered 43 interpretive programs during the months of January and February to 638 program attendees. Highlights for the months included *Lake Pleasant and Its History*, *Archery 101*, *Hiking in a Desert Forest*, and *Lake Pleasant and the CAP Connection*.
- The rainfall and snowmelt within the Lake Pleasant watershed area has had a huge impact on the water levels at the park. Lake Pleasant is currently 8 ft. above where the projected water level for this time of year was supposed to be, as we currently are sitting at 1,695 ft. for the water elevation (about 92.5% full).



Photo by Dawna Taylor, Parks PIO

- The bald eagles at Lake Pleasant have had a rough start in the new year. Three egg laying attempts have been thwarted by pesky ravens and a ringtail devouring the eggs, and an immature papa eagle not understanding his role in protecting the egg and nest. The good news is papa eagle appears to have learned his lesson quickly as a new egg was produced on February 24 and mama and papa have been facilitating their incubating roles. For more information and a glimpse at these magnificent creatures, please visit the parks webpage and click on the link to the Live Bald Eagle Cam at <https://www.maricopacountyparks.net/park-locator/lake-pleasant-regional-park/>.
- Lake Pleasant continues to work with the various agencies and entities involved to establish a universal procedure plan for oil and contaminant spill response with the goal that all parties will speak the same spill language and respond accordingly should any incidents occur.
- Work has begun at the Discovery Center to prep the grounds for the new playground to be installed. We hope to see the new playground in place by the end of March/early April.
- The maintenance team has been displaying their talents at the Discovery Center as they continue to add enhancements to the building to include renovations to the amphitheater, garden bed, bike rack, privacy wall (prep to become a monument sign) and building. Great job, team!

McDowell

- In January, the park hosted 17 interpretive programs with 189 people in attendance. Program highlights included a collaborative program called "Hiking Fountain Hills and Beyond" conducted with members of the Fountain Hills Conservancy and the McDowell Sonoran Preserve at the Fountain Hills Community Center with 44 people in attendance. Other highlights included the ever-popular reptile feedings, a presentation of the geology of the McDowell Mountains by a professional geologist, and a volunteer work project with 14 volunteers assisting with trail repair caused from storm damage.

- Three special events took place during the month of January:
 - MBAA McDowell Meltdown with 984 participants plus nearly 500 spectators in attendance.
 - TPK Endurance with 50 participants running through a series of obstacles via a trail run.
 - IMBA Bike Instructor Certification program offered with 10 participants.
- During the month of February, 13 interpretive programs were scheduled, but 4 of those were cancelled due to rain and even snow! On February 22, McDowell Mountain Regional Park received approximately 6" of snow. Seventy-five people attended programs such as Beginner Desert Birding, Fitness Hikes, and a presentation on Bites and Stings.
- The winter storms have had little to no impact on camping at McDowell. As with previous years, the campground has been continuously full and even the overflow camping area has reached capacity.
- Four special events took place during the month of February:
 - AZ Powerman Duathlon with 120 participants and approximately 100 spectators.
 - Xterra (Trail Run) had 268 participants and approximately 150 spectators in attendance.
 - Pemberton 50K with 142 runners along with approximately 100 spectators in attendance.
 - Rim Tours hosted a three night camping trip along with Mountain Bike tours for 15 participants staying in our Tent Camping area.
 - Western Spirit Cycling hosted two 4-night camping trips in February, along with Mountain Bike tours with 10 participants.

San Tan

- In January, San Tan hosted 22 programs with 426 participants. A highlight for the month was a special Desert Edibles and Medicinals walk and talk with guest speaker, Dave Morris, a noted botanist in the area. His program brought in 104 people. Sunset Yoga at the end of the month brought in an all-time high number of participants with 33.
- The interpretive ranger provided an outreach program to 55 residents at the nearby Solera retirement community. The program focused on local wildlife and how to stay safe in a development that borders on open desert area.
- San Tan also partnered with the Town of Queen Creek's Parks and Recreation Department to offer an on-site critter talk by the Ranger to 16 Boy Scouts, parents and Queen Creek Park Rangers.
- In February, San Tan served as the host site for Aravaipa Running's annual San Tan Scramble trail running race. That event brought in 480 runners and volunteers.
- The park scheduled 19 programs with 481 participants during the month of February. Due to cloudy, windy, cold and/or wet weather, the park cancelled four programs.
- The full moon hike that took place on a Wednesday evening in February, (the night before the storm) brought in 143 guests. Five park volunteers assisted the ranger by serving as trail monitors along the guided route.
- Trail Etiquette Day was very successful in reaching over 50 people. Along with the interpretive ranger, a park volunteer brought her horse, Rocky, to serve as an ambassador. Rocky helped to pique visitor interest in learning proper interaction techniques with other trail users.
- The park's partnership with the San Tan Valley Master Gardeners continues to be strong as shown with their drop-in Soils of Arizona, North America and Beyond program. Sixty participants, ranging from children to seniors, examined soils from around the world and "painted" a picture using different soil colors.
- To connect with the local school district, the ranger participated in Barney Middle School's Career Day expo. Over the course of the day, she talked with 75 students about what it is like to be an Interpretive Ranger.

Spur Cross

- In January, the park hosted 17 interpretive programs for 188 participants. The highlighted program for the month: Maricopa Trail Hike with 29 attendees.
- Spur Cross and Cave Creek staff also helped in the coordination of the Annual Prickly Pedal Bike Race held on January 19, which had approximately 400 riders.
- On January 26, an Eagle Scout painted the rear and side of the Mobile Mini unit to match the new ATV gate and fence.
- Trail volunteers continue to help with restoring rain-damaged trails and other regular maintenance tasks.
- The park hosted 15 interpretive programs with 142 participants in February. The highlighted program for the month: Dragonfly Hike with 28 attendees.

- Two Eagle Scout projects were completed in February: a shade structure was constructed and installed behind the Mobil Mini Unit and six new foot bridges were constructed for the creek crossings. Desert Foothills Land Trust purchased the materials for the footbridges.

Usery

- The park offered 17 interpretive programs in January totaling 1,305 participants and 23 interpretive programs in February totaling 872 participants.
- January's (Total Eclipse) *Full Moon Hike* had **560** participants who came out and enjoyed a night hike. That is the most participants we have ever had for this program! Hikers were treated to a campfire marshmallow roast after the hike to cap off the evening.
- 286 archers from around the state competed in the Cactus Classic Archery Tournament hosted by the Usery Mountain Archers. The tournament was held on the walking courses at the archery range and showcased archers of all ages ranging from pee-wee to seniors. The Cactus Classic is the first of a four leg archery series held in Arizona.
- Forty-seven riders participated in the *Tonto Twist 50 Mile Endurance Ride*. This horse ride started in Apache Junction, passing through Tonto National Forest to the Maricopa Trail and entering the park on Pass Mountain Trail. Riders used the Trailhead Staging area as a stop to water their horses and then headed out of the park back to their starting point.
- The Army National Guard participated in a service project at Usery Park; Approximately 60 volunteers participated in various clean-up projects throughout the park.
- The park set up a booth at the Apache Junction Parks & Recreation Outdoor Expo promoting upcoming educational programs and hiking trails.
- The Buckhorn Campground was 98.6% full during the month of January with 222 camping units in overflow. The campground was 99.8% full during the month of February with 448 camping units in overflow.
- The park received four new memorial bench requests.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park

- In January, White Tank Mountain Regional Park offered 22 interpretive programs with 1,155 guests attending. *Outdoor Adventure Day* was a success with over 500 people attending the various educational stations set up throughout the park. A huge thanks to the Westside Interpretive Rangers for their assistance and to REI for coming out and supporting the event.
- XTerra hosted their trail run on January 6, which was a cold and rainy morning, but still brought out 240 runners.
- The incredibly wet fall and winter has made the park explode in plant life this month and wildflowers already have begun to bloom. With the increase in plant life, staff has also seen an increase in invasive species such as Sahara Mustard. One park volunteer, Cindy Smith, has spearheaded the war on these invasive species; through her efforts, volunteers have pulled over 25,000 plants! Park staff trained with the Natural Resource Specialist to become familiar with the invasive species mapping app "Collector" and were able to mark the exact locations with GPS in which these plants were removed.
- White Tank saw an increase of almost 10,000 visitors compared to December's numbers!
- Unfortunately, the start of the new year also brought an increase in vehicle break-ins at many of the trailheads in the park. The unusual trend about these break-ins is that they were all in the middle of the day and some at very busy trailheads such as Area 7. Every reported incident involved a broken window and some type of valuable that was visible in the victim's vehicle. Park Supervisor Luidhardt worked with Public Information Officer Taylor to create "Trailhead Safety Tips" to encourage visitors to avoid making their vehicles a target for this illegal activity.
- White Tank's Interpretive Ranger and Office Assistant were fortunate to be able to fill a couple of last minute open spots in the free Wilderness First Aid course hosted by Arizona Conservation Corp at Estrella Regional Park. This was an intense two-day course full of important first aid information, which will be very helpful in assessing medical situations in the park and aiding first responders.
- January brought heavy hearts to the White Tank family with the loss of long time park host Chris Higgins, son of camp hosts Terry and Jeanne Higgins. Chris always had a huge smile on his face and loved to collect the aluminum cans out of the trash bins in the campground and smash and recycle them. He will be deeply missed by many.

- In February, White Tank offered 21 interpretive programs with 491 visitors attending. Wildflower walks were very popular with an average of 30 park guests each program enjoying the beautiful and colorful spread over the desert floor.
- The Friends of White Tank and White Tank Mountains Conservancy hosted their *9th Annual Arts Festival* over the President's Day weekend. This year was their largest vendor turn out yet, with almost 80 vendors and 3,294 visitors attending over Saturday and Sunday. With such an influx of visitation, the event ran smoothly and both festival attendees and vendors alike were happy with the event.
- The last full week of February brought unusual weather to the White Tank Mountains including a visible dusting (or dump in some areas) of snow over the highest trails and peaks. The rain and snowmelt started the waterfall flowing again; once the rain stopped and the sun came back out, the crowds flocked to this area. One of our volunteer trail stewards spent 4 hours on the Waterfall Trail one day and counted 1,100 people in this short amount of time. A typical visitor count for a Saturday with the water flowing has been around 3,000 people.
- White Tank Mountain Regional Park hosted the Urban Area Security Initiative's Deployment Drill from February 26-28th. The objective of this drill was to test regional communication equipment and procedures. Emergency Responder divisions were deployed to the park, checking in at a communications center located behind the Trailhead Staging Area. After running through communications, divisions would then move on to the "Base Camp" staged in the Group Campground where they would run through an exercise scenario. The drill brought out over 300 first responder personnel from over 20 different agencies throughout the Phoenix area including SWAT teams, bomb squads, fire departments, and MCSO deputies. Drill coordinators did a great job working with Park Supervisor Luidhardt to create the least amount of impact to the park resources and visitors.