



Maricopa County PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 9, 2018
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 **March and April 2018**.

From the Office of the Director

- **Hassayampa River Preserve Grand Re-Opening** was held on March 24th. The Boy Scout Troop 299 from Wickenburg kicked off the ceremony with a flag presentation and the National Anthem. Opening remarks by Director Cardin, Patrick Graham, The Nature Conservancy Director, and Everett Sickles, Mayor of Wickenburg, were followed with a ribbon-cutting. Visitors were then invited to explore the Preserve on a guided walk or to enjoy the various "Discovery Stations" set up around the trails by the interpretive rangers, partner organizations, and volunteers. The Friends of Hassayampa highlighted the various projects they provide support for at the Preserve. The Wickenburg Conservation Foundation debuted a citizen science activity as a partner project with the Preserve. The Wickenburg High School culinary class provided 20 dozen cookies for the event, which were handed out by the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce. Visitors received free aluminum water bottles with the new Preserve logo provided by the Central Arizona Conservation Alliance. Over 100 visitors attended the Re-Grand Opening event. The success of the event, as well as the preparation for it, was made possible by the hard work of everyone involved.
- **Arizona Game and Fish Partnership:** An Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) was approved by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors on May 9, 2018. The agreement will allow the two departments to work in collaboration to develop and enhance programs and facilities related to outdoor recreation, wildlife resources and public education.
- **Paddlefest at Lake Pleasant Continues Growth:** In April, *Paddlefest* was a huge success this year – reaching over 1,100 event participants. Folks were introduced to and explored the wonderful world of non-motorized watercrafts trying out all of the latest and greatest equipment/tools within Fireman's Cove at Lake Pleasant.
- **Gem of a Park:** USA Today listed McDowell Mountain Regional Park as one of the top 10 hidden-gem parks and campgrounds around the country!
- **Congratulations:** The Maricopa Trail + Park Foundation has been awarded a \$20,000 grant from REI to help in support of increased trail access through segment repair, trailhead development, signage installation, tool acquirement, and stewardship via training and software on the Maricopa Trail
- **Buckeye Hills (Joe Foss Shooting Range):** Arizona State Rifle and Pistol Association has made wonderful progress in expanding the use of the range for the public. They reported attendance in March at 489 shooters and April at approximately 510 shooters.

- **Paradise Valley:** Soccer 5 was the selected respondent for the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) that was issued to promote, manage, operate, maintain and improve the existing sports complex, or provide an alternate recreation facility, at Paradise Valley Urban Park. Soccer 5 is proposing short-sided soccer at the facility and will be negotiating with the current concessionaire to either be a partner in the existing concession operations or possibly seek an assignment of the current rights to the agreement.

Board of Supervisors Agenda Items:

Date/Status	Tracking Number	Summary
3/7/2018 Approved	C-06-18-357-7-00	Donation Report for January 2018: Cash value of \$1,066.36
3/21/2018 Approved	C-06-18-372-7-00	Donation Report for February 2018: Cash value of \$629.49
3/21/2018 Approved	C-30-18-015-D-00	Donation for Parks Memorial Bench: Accept the restricted monetary donation for a memorial bench to be placed within Spur Cross Conservation Area.
3/21/2018 Approved	C-30-18-016-M-00	Resolution to Delegate to the Director of Parks and Recreation the Authority to Execute Commercial Management Concessionaire Agreements: Adopt a Resolution to Delegate to the Director of Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (Director) the authority to enter into Commercial Management Concessionaire Agreements, on behalf of Maricopa County, that are approved "as to form" by the County Attorney's Office, with properly licensed and insured entities.
4/11/2018 Approved	C-30-15-004-M-04	Amendment to Monopole Use Management Agreement with Crown Castle: Approve and authorize the Chairman to execute a Consent Request for the approval of modifications to the Crown Castle monopole communications tower at Lake Pleasant Park.
4/11/2018 Approved	C-30-18-019-M-00	Notice of Appraisal for Arizona Land Department Right of Way for Maricopa Trail Segments 11, 12, 14, 33, 35: Approve the Notice of Appraisal for Arizona State Land Department for Right of Way necessary for the completion of Maricopa Trail Segments 11, 12, 14, 33 and 35 that have been appraised and are essential links to the completion of the main loop of the Maricopa Trail.
4/11/2018 Approved	C-30-18-017-D-00	Donation for Parks and Recreation: Accept the restricted monetary donations for a memorial bench to be placed within San Tan Mountain Regional Park, Cave Creek Regional Park and McDowell Mountain Regional Park and a restricted monetary donation for Waterfall Trail located in White Tank Regional Park.
4/11/2018 Approved	C-06-18-399-7-00	Donation Report for March 2018: Cash value of \$755.26
4/11/2018 Approved	C-30-18-018-M-00	IGA with City of Buckeye and City of Surprise for White Tank Regional Park: Approve the IGA with the Cities of Buckeye and Surprise related to the Park, prohibition against future annexation of the Park and the inclusion of portions of the Park in the planning areas of both Cities.
4/25/2018 Approved	C-64-18-118-M-00	Resolution for Maricopa County Park Road Design, Construction and Maintenance: Adopt a Resolution to rescind and replace the February 21, 1984 Resolution for Maricopa County Park Road Design, Construction and Maintenance. The new Resolution identifies the roads as Class I, II, III and IV and will be designed, constructed and maintained by Maricopa County Department of Transportation in accordance with Standards for Maricopa County Park's Roadway System 2017.

5/9/2018 Approved	C-30-185-020M-00	IGA with the Arizona Game and Fish Commission Related to Maricopa County Parks: Approve an IGA that will allow the County and AGFD to work collaboratively for the common purpose of maintaining, improving and managing outdoor recreation opportunities, wildlife resources and their habitat, and educating the public.
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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:

- **FY18 Budget Status:** Due to a new system in the Treasurer's Department and CGI's report errors, the budget status report is not available for this report.
- **FY19 Budget Submittal:**
 - Tentative Adoption by BOS: May 23, 2018
 - Final Budget Adoption by BOS: June 25, 2018

Contracts:

- **Adobe:**
 Special Use Permits Issued:
 - Arizona Karting Association:
 - March 2-4, Flat Track Racking
 - November 2-4, Flat Track Racing
 - Phoenix Kart Racing Association:
 - April 30 – May 9, SKUSA Spring Nationals
 - Wet N Wild
 - April 30 – Oct 14, Overflow Parking at 4-acre parcel

On March 20, 2018, the solicitation for an invitation to negotiate to promote, manage, maintain and improve the existing PKRA and AKA complexes or provide an alternate facility was published. The responses can be for the complexes independently or as a combined complex as well an option to provide a response for an alternate facility to expand the recreational opportunities available to the recreating public. There were 24 people in attendance at the mandatory pre-proposal meeting held on April 5, 2018. Response due date is June 26, 2018.

- **Buckeye Hills (Joe Foss Shooting Range):** Arizona State Rifle and Pistol Association reported attendance in March at 489 shooters and April at approximately 510 shooters.
- **Paradise Valley:** Soccer 5 was the selected respondent for the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) that was issued to promote, manage, operate, maintain and improve the existing sports complex, or provide an alternate recreation facility, at Paradise Valley Urban Park. Soccer 5 is proposing short-sided soccer at the facility and will be negotiating with the current concessionaire to either be a partner in the existing concession operations or possible assignment of the current rights to the agreement.
- **Commercial Management Concession Agreements (CMCA's):** There have been 16 applications issued under the new CMCA process; only 3 have been returned completed with the application fee. New CMCA's are: 1) Civana Carefree Resort (hiking/biking); 2) Juice Town (food); and 3) Ninja Mountain Bike Performance (bike clinics).
- **Cave Creek:** Cave Creek Trail Rides, the horseback riding concessionaire at Cave Creek, had an outstanding season (November through April) with 7,438 participants.

Human Resources:

- Welcome New Employees:
 - Jeff Strom, Electrician, Trades Crew - 4/9/18

- Promotions/Transfers:
 - Natalie Harper, Promoted to Parks Education Supervisor, DOC
 - Laura Jo Boyd, Park Office Assistant transferred to White Tank Park
 - Departing Employees:
 - John Hansen, Park Maintenance, Lake Pleasant
 - Charles Ritchey, Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant
 - Open positions and recruitments:
 - Interpretive Ranger, DOC – Hiring Manager reviewing candidates
 - Park Maintenance, Lake – Interviews scheduled
 - Park Office Assistant Specialized, Lake – Hiring Manager reviewing applications
 - Navigational Aide Technician, Lake – Interviews scheduled
 - Contact Station Assistant, Lake – Hiring manager reviewing applications
 - Contact Station Assistant, Usery – Request to review temporary to full time status.
 - Contact Station Assistant, White Tank – Open*
 - Park Maintenance (T), Hassayampa – Open*
 - Park Maintenance (T), Spur Cross – Open*
 - Interpretive Ranger (T), Lake – Open*
- * Pending FY19 budget approval for submittal requests to full-time positions

Volunteer Program:

- FY18 Year-to-date volunteer hours:

	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	FY18 YTD Total
FY18 Total Dept. Hours	3,506	4,936	4,912	6,682	11,841	12,353	13,804	12,148	13,250	8,708	92,140
Financial Savings	\$84,635	\$116,292	\$115,715	\$157,428	\$278,974	\$291,037	\$325,222	\$286,207	\$312,170	\$205,160	\$2,172,887
% Diff comparison/prev. FYTD						12%					7%
# of Volunteers-current month	102	115	406	181	573	372	342	236	335	183	
# of Park Hosts	24	21	32	63	108	113	121	113	116	99	
Park Host Hours	2,490	2,085	2,610	4,900	9,527	10,088	11,511	9,286	11,051	7,114	
# of Community Volunteers	31	31	40	41	48	49	44	50	64	56	
Community Volunteer Hours	757	611	828	856	798	809	860	809	1,220	984	
# of Episodic Volunteers	46	61	334	62	397	187	156	52	153	28	
Episodic Volunteers Hours	252	2,234	1,472	389	1,044	948	1,127	317	609	211	
MCSO Prisoner Service Hours				500	260	500	300	400	370	300	
FY17 Month Total Hours	2945	3146	5113	6283	9900	10972	13274	11967	13168	9120	
FY17 Year YTD Hours	3739.25	6687.75	11255.7	18083.2	29402.43	41368.86	55608.86	67505.86	80778.86	88630.86	
FY17 Financial YTD Savings	\$69,384	\$143,504	\$263,966	\$411,994	\$645,238	\$903,738	\$1,216,473	\$1,498,416	\$1,808,654	\$2,023,521	
Current Value-\$24.14											
Previous Value-\$23.56											

Planning and Development Division

Vulture Mountain Recreation Area Update

- Staff is continuing 60% design work with EPS on park amenities as MCDOT continues design with EPS on 60% plans for Vulture Mine Rd. Department staff has updated the Plan of Development with construction and travel route information requested by the BLM (Bureau of Land Management). The Plan of Development (POD) has now been accepted by the BLM as the “Gold Standard” for POD’s at the BLM. The NEPA (National Environmental Protection Act) process has now begun and the Department completed the initial review of chapters one and two.

Project Management

- The Department Project Manager has been busy the past couple of months. The Lake Pleasant Discovery Center deck project construction is now complete. Final site design elements are underway for the new restroom buildings for McDowell and Usery Mountain Regional Parks as well as the shower building at White Tank Mountain Regional Park. Work continues at Hassayampa River Preserve with electrical, water, and septic system improvements.
- Estrella Park renovations are moving forward: picnic ramada construction is progressing and the water system improvements are under way including back flow preventer installation and replacement, potable

water isolation valves, and turf area and irrigation system renovations. Major electrical renovations include new electrical runs to all the ramadas being constructed from the recently installed service sections in the park.

- The Lake Pleasant Evapotranspiration (ET) bed testing project has begun at the lake. Required by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), the department's consultant is measuring evaporation from the beds as they are filled to capacity. The intent is to test for leaks and any required repairs in preparation for an entire site individual permit in lieu of 17 separate permits currently issued by ADEQ.

Park and Open Space Planning

- The Department has recently met with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to re-start the North Lake Pleasant planning process. Staff has engaged with the BOR and BLM to kick off the process to refine the problem statement, update mappings and exhibits, and discuss the NEPA process.
- The McDowell Mountain Regional Park Master Planning process is currently underway. To date, there have been six internal meetings two public/partner staff/volunteer meetings, and a second stakeholder meeting is scheduled for June 2018. In the overall planning process, we are currently in the public input stage and approximately 25% of the way through the planning process.
- The Park and Open Space Planner is currently working on the Sun Corridor Trail planning efforts including updating the website and branding and scheduling the next working group meeting on June 8th in Flagstaff.

Trades Crew

- Trades Crew staff fabricated a new steel screen Kiosk for the Hassayampa River Preserve. Staff have also been working with the Trails Crew to install pipe rail fencing along the road at the preserve. This internal fabrication and installation is saving valuable capital improvement funding for the department.
- The Trades staff electricians have started replacing electrical fixtures throughout the park system as part of the annual preventative maintenance program. Old, worn out, or broken outlets and breakers are replaced creating a more reliable electrical system for the park campgrounds and facilities.
- The Trades Crew welcomed a new employee. Park Electrician, Jeffrey Strom, started on April 9, 2018. Jeff came to Parks and Recreation from a private electrical contracting business. Jeff will be concentrating on learning the parks and facilities as well as performing electrical PM work on numerous parks. Welcome Jeff.

Trails Crew

- During March and April, the Trails Crew has been working with the Trades Crew installing the metal rail fence at Hassayampa River Preserve. This significant project, while a large investment in time, is saving the department capital funding by completing the project in house. The Trails Crew has been completing general trail maintenance and clean up on trails at both Estrella Mountain and Utery Mountain Regional Parks.

Maricopa Trail and Trail Facilities:

- Description: The following trail segments are currently in progress – 9, 11, 12, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32 33 and 35.
- The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are in review by the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). They have given us a tentative auction date of August 2018. The appraisals have been completed and we have paid for them and the advertising fee.
 - 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.
 - Segment 33 – Rainbow Valley – BLM land to Estrella Community
- Agreement preparation/negotiations:
 - Estrella Community – Segment 33, new route.

- Bureau of Land Management – Submitted plan of proposed route between Estrella Mountain Park and Buckeye Hills Park. We are a participating agency and the public comment period ended May 9, 2018.
- Goodyear – Sign maintenance and Rainbow Valley route.
- Queen Creek – Re-route of trail to existing trail systems.
- Gilbert - Re-route of trail to existing trail systems.
- Chandler - Re-route of trail to existing trail systems.
- Sun Corridor Trail connecting Pinal County to the Maricopa Trail via the Spook Hill Flood Retarding Structure.
- Construction
 - Segment 15 – Contractor re-routing trail around new construction of EPOCOR water facility.
- Maintenance
 - The following segment had maintenance completed this period. This includes grooming the tread, brushing and signage: Segment 11 – White Tank Mountain Park to Happy Valley Parkway at SR303 – Replaced 25 signs that were weathered or shot.
- Trailheads
 - Segment 35 – Northern Avenue – Proposed location will allow user access due to weekend closures of the gate to the Case/New Holland Proving Grounds. Waiting for Maricopa Water District approval.
 - Segment 11 – Sun Valley Parkway - Proposed location will allow users access due to the Maricopa Water District cutting off access on Greenway Road. MCDOT and MCFCD are working together to secure access and build the facility.
 - Kiosks – The Maricopa Trail + Parks Foundation has secured grants from the RTP and REI to purchase eleven kiosks for trailhead placement. Locations still to be determined. Parks will be assisting with the installations this spring.

Parks Operations Report

Parks would like to congratulate and welcome Natalie Harper as our new Park Education Supervisor at the Desert Outdoor Center. Natalie has been promoted from an Interpretive Ranger and we are very excited to see the future of the Center and the development she can bring to our ranger program.

Cave Creek

- In March, the park hosted 24 interpretive programs with 181 participants attending. The highlighted program for the month: *Feeding Frenzy* with 31 attendees.
- In April, the park hosted 15 interpretive programs with 158 participants attending. The highlighted program for the month: *Feeding Frenzy* 31 attendees.
- The interpretive ranger and park supervisor has submitted the specifications and design for custom critter displays. The bid has been awarded and the new displays will be delivered by June 30.

Desert Outdoor Center:

- In March, the Interpretive Rangers presented 115 programs to 22 schools with a total of 1,684 youth and adult attendees.
- In April, the Interpretive Rangers presented 75 programs to 16 schools with a total of 1,532 youth and adult attendees.
- One of only two annual Stargazings were held on April 7th which had 225 attendees. Included was a group of girl scouts who led a solar system hike before the presentation began.
- The DOC facility hosted two separate retreats for 75 students from Notre Dame Preparatory High school.
- Three beautiful ceremonies and/or receptions were held at the DOC during March and April, which were attended by over 250 guests.
- Two Interpretive Rangers were able to help at the Hassayampa Grand Opening on March 24th by leading educational tables about survival and desert reptiles.
- The Center is now approximately 20 years old, so the maintenance staff is beginning to repair, refurbish or replace many of the features around the facility.

- Interviews were held and most of the camp staff positions have been filled for the Lake Pleasant Summer Camp in partnership with the Boy Scouts of America. Lifeguard Training was held in March and Staff Orientation was a great success on April 21st.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park

- In March, Estrella Park had 25 public programs with a total attendance of 429 people. Archery continues to be a great success with every class filling within a few days of opening. Many of the participants at the archery programs are first time visitors to the park and have never attended a public program. For the first time, *Rattlesnake Solutions* visited the park to educate 67 visitors about rattlesnakes found in Arizona.
- The interpretive ranger, hosts, and volunteers staffed an information booth at the Tres Rios Nature Festival in early March. Hundreds of people stopped by the booth to learn more about the park and the animals on display in the booth.
- The *100 Mile in 100 Days Challenge* celebration party was held on March 10th for the hearty hikers and riders who completed the Challenge. Along with staff, the gathering was enjoyed by 38 participants while sipping on lemonade and eating cake. Outside games were played and photos of the season scrolled on the big screen.
- The park had a great Host Appreciation party for the 18 hosts and 4 community volunteers that support the park and help keep things running all year. Tribute was paid to all, with a special recognition to Gayland Lockridge for his 23 years of service in Estrella Park! The food and festivities extended outside where some games and conversation carried on the fun.
- The maintenance team continues to stay ahead of the contractors' work for the CIP projects at Estrella Park. The new upgrades to the facilities affect large areas of the turf irrigation system so the maintenance team has been working diligently to make modifications to minimize damage and keep the system running.
- April started off with a bang as Easter was April 1st this year. Even with most of the ramadas under construction making them unavailable for visitor use, the park experienced increased revenue of close to \$1,500 over last year. Park staff took advantage of the increased attendance by walking around to all the picnicking groups telling them about the construction improvements including the 1-mile looping sidewalk. Many people were seen enjoying walks or biking the mile loop with their kids throughout the weekend.
- Estrella Park had 22 public programs in April with a total attendance of 368 people. As days become warmer, hikers are coming out a bit earlier or enjoying the nighttime programs offered by the ranger. Night hikes are seeing 20 or more people at each program. *Stargazing for Everyone* with Tony LaConte occurred on April 28th with 65 people in attendance.
- Exciting news for picnickers! The new ramadas are being constructed this month. Park staff, volunteers, and visitors alike are enjoying watching the steel beams pierce the sky and peaked roofs mirror the surrounding mountains. The maintenance team has increased efforts of keeping the irrigation water off of the new ramadas and concrete pads to prevent long term water damage.
- The Maricopa County Library in Goodyear partnered with Estrella Park to hold the 2^{ne} Annual Hunger Games in the Park. The interpretive ranger and park host, Cecil Kirkendall, led an archery competition for 43 participants and spectators around and near the Nature Center. The library staff and participants enjoyed the facility and location for the event. Plans are already in the making for the 3rd annual event.
- The park supervisor arranged for the female State Wildland Fire Crew to do crew training on a number of dead trees around the turf area of Estrella Park. The Fire Crew removed several large trees and a number of small and medium trees. This work not only saved the park a substantial amount of money and labor, but also helped to train the Fire Crew for the season ahead. Park staff assisted with the removal of logs and limbs.
- Race Timers held a foot race on April 21st for 85 participants. Runners enjoyed a morning run in the Sonoran Desert on the Coldwater Trail.

Lake Pleasant

- Lake Pleasant offered 49 interpretive programs during the months of March and April to the excitement of 2,078 program participants. The highlights of the months included *Looking for Wild Burros Hike*, *Beginning Kayaking 101*, and *Native Fish Exploring Hike*.
- In March, Lake Pleasant was pleased to team up with the Bureau of Reclamation, C.A.S.T. (Catch A Special Thrill) for Kids Foundation and amateur/professional fisherman to provide approximately 50

underserved, underprivileged, or disabled youth a day of fun at Lake Pleasant. The event is recognized as the park's annual community event. Kids and their families are treated to a fun fishing excursion on a boat, along with fun games and delicious food for them to enjoy. For many of these youth, an opportunity of this nature would not otherwise be possible.

- In April, *Paddfest* was a huge success this year – reaching over 1,100 event participants. Folks were able to be introduced to and explore the wonderful world of non-motorized watercrafts trying out all of the latest and greatest equipment/tools within Fireman's Cove at Lake Pleasant. Special thanks to the amazing volunteers, concessionaires and guests, that helped make this event possible.
- Also in April, *The Dam Good Run* was a thrilling event with 489 running participants. Event attendees were treated to a delightful day of physical fitness and a deepened connection to nature with this unique opportunity to run across the dam (only day of the year people are permitted on the dam) and other areas of the park. Along the journey, folks learned fascinating facts about the dam and the history behind its construction. Runners were able to choose their own adventure from a 2-mile, 4-mile, 13K, 26K, and 40K race course winding thru a majority of the park trails and portions of the Maricopa Trail.
- And lastly in April, a group of local Boy Scouts came out to host their annual *Build A Boat Challenge* at Lake Pleasant – within the area of One Cow Cove. Scouts participate in a challenge to build a boat within each group followed by racing the boats across the cove to see which one was the fastest. The group of approximately 130 then spent a couple hours after the event picking up trash in the surrounding areas to help support the park and follow the "Leave No Trace" philosophy.
- An Eagle Scout and ten fellow supporters/volunteers helped successfully paint the fire lane curbing around the 10-Lane parking lot. This will be a huge help with the upcoming season to ensure traffic lanes and emergency access points remain open and free from illegal vehicle parking.
- During the past two months, the Maricopa County Chain Gang crew has been out on several occasions to lend assistance around the park to include painting fire lane curbs, picking up trash, and trimming trees within the campgrounds and other areas.
- The implementation of the ADA sidewalk pathway and lower patio deck at the Discovery Center is nearing completion. Park visitors are eagerly awaiting the chance to try out the new amenities.
- Electrical upgrades to the Bajada Loop within the Desert Tortoise Campground are currently underway to improve and enhance the function for campers and park operations. Park staff anticipates the repairs shall be completed prior to Memorial Weekend. Special thanks to the Facilities Management Division of Maricopa County for their assistance and funding support for the project.
- The 10-Lane Restrooms are currently receiving a second round of renovations. The renovation components will include new toilets, partitions, sinks, lighting components, and flooring upgrades. The renovations are expected to be finished prior to Memorial Weekend.
- The two baby bald eagles (a boy and a girl) have successfully made it to the banding phase. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), along with 15 school teachers from around the Valley and several members of the press, were able to take part in the banding of the baby eagles. The eagles are considered to be in great health, and we hope to see them fledge (begin to take flight) in the coming weeks. The bald eagle closure will remain in effect until we receive notification from AGFD to lift the closure. We anticipate the closure removal will be lifted some time near the middle of June.

McDowell

- During the month of March, 18 interpretive programs were offered at the park with 219 people in attendance. The two most popular programs were the *Trailside Ranger* program with 25 people in attendance and *Bird Walk* with 23 people in attendance.
- On Saturday, March 4, Red Mountain Community College provided a live animal presentation, *Reptiles of Arizona*, 22 people were in attendance.
- Five special events took place during the month of March:
 - *Hike for the Homeless* took place on Saturday, March 3rd; approximately 400 people participated plus nearly 150 spectators were in attendance.
 - *Mountain to Fountain* took place on Sunday, March 4th; nearly 650 people participated in this 15K endurance run.
 - *The Cactus Cup* event took place Friday – Sunday, March 9th – 11th; one competition took place each day including the *Fat Tire 40* which took place on Saturday. 550 people participated in this 3-day event.

- *Snakebite 30K* took place on Sunday, March 11th with 35 runners participating.
- *Bike MS* took place March 23-25; cyclists had a choice of six different routes, ranging from 36 miles to 104 miles. Routes took participants from MMRP and throughout the east valley. A total of 149 people participated.
- On Saturday March 10th, McDowell Park hosted the *100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge* celebration with a shirt giveaway presentation plus appetizers and sweet treats, 27 people joined the celebration.
- On Thursday, March 21st, McDowell staff, along with various department staff, hosted the annual Park Host celebration; lunch was served along with several prize giveaways. 18 hosts were in attendance.
- Western Spirit Cycling hosted a guided mountain bike tour March 15 – 17, eight people participated. On March 17th, Rocky Mountain Cycles provided a bike demonstration at the Competitive Track area and Ram Trucks hosted a photo shoot on March 4th utilizing our main park road for their shoot.
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park Campground continued to be at capacity during the month of March and in addition, the overflow camp area was also at capacity several times with 12+ camping units. The tent camping area also continually remained full during the month of March.
- USA Today listed McDowell Mountain Regional Park as one of the top 10 hidden-gem parks and campgrounds around the country!
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/10greatplaces/2018/03/09/hidden-gem-parks-and-campgrounds/407171002/>
- During the month of April, eleven interpretive programs were offered at the park with 223 people in attendance. The most popular single programs were *Goodies on the Ground – Tracks and Scat* presentation with 20 people in attendance and *Lunch with the Locals – Reptile Feeding* with 20 in attendance.
- The Town of Fountain Hills was awarded the rare distinction of being designated as an International Dark Sky Community; Ranger Amy attended the Dark Sky Festival held in Fountain Hills on April 21st, she provided park information, critter displays, etc. 157 people visited our booth.
- One special event took place during the month of April:
 - ETS (Equine Trail Sports) took place on Saturday, April 28th. This is competitive/non-speed event where riders and horses compete as a team emphasizing horsemanship in accordance with National Guidelines. Approximately 40 people participated.
- Gear Hungry.com listed McDowell Mountain Regional Park as one of the best hidden hikes around the world! (Referencing our Dixie Mine Trail.)
<https://www.gearhungry.com/best-hidden-hikes-around-world/>

San Tan

- San Tan had a busy month in March with 31 programs and a total of 927 participants. Popular programs for the month were *Breakfast with the Critters* (60 participants), *Make a Wildflower Seedball* (a collaboration with San Tan Valley Master Gardeners with 51 participants) and a *Full Moon Hike* (a record 350 participants). Also, approximately 150 people came out for Tony LaConte's *Stargazing for Everyone* presentation and telescope viewing.
- Our March 11th celebration for *100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge* brought in 50 Challenge participants and their family members. Everyone enjoyed meeting and sharing stories with fellow participants, chatting with our staff and volunteers, receiving their t-shirts and, of course, snacking on cake and veggies.
- In April San Tan hosted 21 programs with a total of 326 participants. Our popular *Archery 101* class had 28 students for the last session of the season. One enthusiastic family of five was back to take the class for the third time. The park delved into a different manner of enjoying nature with a new volunteer that led Sunset Yoga at the trailhead. This class was enjoyed by 14 people and we look forward to another class in May. The month ended on a high note with 115 people attending our *Moonlight Walk*.
- Also taking place this month was Aravaipa Running's *Sinister Runs Series* 54K, 27K and 9K trail runs. Approximately 330 runners, personnel and volunteers were present for this epic overnight race.

Spur Cross

- In March, the park hosted interpretive programs with 898 participants in attendance. The highlighted program for the month: *Spur Cross Archaeology Fair* with 402 participants. The park staff, as well as members of the Arizona Archaeological Society and the Cave Creek Museum, coordinated this annual

event. The day is filled with guided hikes to archaeological sites. Booths with crafts, such as pottery and flint –knapping demonstrations and hands on children activities are featured throughout the day.

- In April, the park hosted 10 interpretive programs with 89 participants in attendance. The highlighted program for the month: *Moonlight Hike* 32 participants.

Usery

- Usery Park offered 59 interpretive programs in March totaling 2,131 participants and 23 interpretive programs in April totaling 1,252 participants.
- April's *Stargazing for Everyone* program had 375 participants who came out and enjoyed an evening under the stars.
- The Buckhorn Campground was 100% full during the month of March.
- The park supervisor set a booth at the County's Annual Bike to Work Day in Phoenix promoting annual pass discounts for Maricopa County employees and providing information on county parks.
- The park ranger gave a presentation on Nature Based Programming at the Great Outdoors Maintenance and Trails Workshop in Phoenix. The workshop, sponsored by Arizona Parks and Recreation Association was geared for park rangers and trail maintenance staff around the state and had several different municipalities participate.
- The park ranger helped out at the 2018 AZ Game & Fish Outdoor Expo at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility. Maricopa County Parks and Recreation set up a booth at the event and gave out information on county parks to over 200 people.
- The Usery State FITA Field Championship was held at the archery range with 57 of the best archers from around the state participating in this competition.
- Park hosts were treated to a BBQ Host Appreciation Lunch at the park. Staff cooked hamburgers and hotdogs for the hosts in attendance. Director Cardin and Operations Manager, Jenn Waller, dropped by to thank the hosts for all they do for our department and encouraged them to continue volunteering next season.
- The park congratulated the *100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge* finishers and treated them to cake at their celebration party. 25 finishers attended the party to talk about their experiences during the 100 days and to pick up their official t-shirt for completing.

Vulture Mountains Recreation Area and Hassayampa River Preserve

- In March, spring was in full swing at the Preserve, with many activities and projects. The Preserve saw 3,138 visitors over the course of the month, and over 150 people attended the 11 programs presented by the interpretive ranger and guest presenters. Park staff and volunteers also led field trips for a few local school groups. Several AZ Project WET groups, sponsored by University of Arizona, visited the Preserve as part of their annual field investigations.
- Park staff and volunteers finalized the gift shop displays in the Visitor Center. Souvenir items have proven to be quite popular, with several park logo items, including t-shirts and mugs, selling out quickly. The Friends of Hassayampa created a bird feeding station outside the Interpretive Garden and visitors are enjoying the opportunity to birdwatch in the peaceful surroundings of the garden.
- The interpretive ranger installed wildlife cameras in several locations around the Preserve, and Facebook followers have enjoyed seeing photos and video of the diverse wildlife of the Preserve. Mule deer, javelina, skunks, and raccoons are some of the wildlife caught on camera so far.
- The big event for the month was the Grand Re-opening on March 24th. A flurry of activity occurred at the Preserve in the weeks before preparing for the big event. The Visitor Center and Sanger Building were pressure washed, a fresh coat of stain was put on the doors of the Sanger Building, the Interpretive Garden was trimmed and tidied, new picnic tables and benches were installed, new fence panels designed to match the garden fencing were installed around the perimeter of the picnic area, and trail surface smoothing was completed along the Palm Lake Trail, making the trail more wheelchair and stroller-friendly. Installation of the new pipe rail fence was also started along the driveway into the Preserve. It was an "all hands on deck" kind of month, with Preserve staff, staff from HQ and other parks, and Preserve volunteers all working together.
- For the month as a whole, volunteers contributed over 700 volunteer hours at the Preserve, with 29 volunteers assisting with the Grand Re-opening event alone.

- The busy season continued into April at the Preserve, with 2,047 visitors for the month. The interpretive ranger and guest presenters offered 17 programs to the public with 343 people attending. Several new programs and program formats were offered. Highlights included *Birding Musical Chairs* for beginning and advanced birders and the interpretive ranger had several tabletop displays along the trails to reach a larger audience in a more informal way. These tabletop displays or stations focused on various themes such as Aquatic Life in the Hassayampa River and Biomimicry. The interpretive ranger and volunteers also provided an outreach program to a local continuing education program for seniors as well as led field trips for several local school groups.
- Preserve staff and volunteers also engaged the community through hosting a table at the Wickenburg Literary Festival. In addition to providing visitors with general information about the Preserve, Preserve staff and volunteers connected the themes of nature and literature by creating a matching game for visitors to play by matching up famous nature quotes with who said them. The literature theme continued throughout the month at the Preserve as Preserve staff celebrated National Poetry Month by placing nature poems and quotes on temporary signs along the trails for visitors to read and ponder during their visit. Many positive comments were received from visitors.
- The Preserve wrapped up the month by celebrating both Earth Day and Arbor Day with various interpretive programs. The Preserve also partnered with the Wickenburg Conservation Foundation to host a citizen science phenology project training to approximately 20 local teachers during April.
- Spring bird migration was in full swing in April. In addition to birds, visitors were treated with other wildlife sightings including a gila monster who sauntered through the parking lot, a desert tortoise up on Lyke's Lookout and mating rattlesnakes outside the Visitor Center.
- Projects and project planning also continued at the Preserve during April. The Trades Crew is making great progress on the pipe rail fencing along the driveway. Planning has begun for construction of our host RV sites and overall site electrical upgrades. The Parks' volunteer coordinator conducted annual safety training for a number of volunteers at the Preserve. Maintenance staff and a volunteer from White Tank have been helping out with cleaning and maintenance at the Preserve once a week. Park volunteers cleaned a section of our Adopt-a-Highway stretch. The Friends of Hassayampa sponsored a project to have the trees in the Interpretive Garden trimmed by a local tree trimmer adding to the beauty of the garden which is in full bloom.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park

- March Madness! White Tank offered 28 programs in March to 1,054 attendees. This includes two popular outreaches to 130 4th graders and 150 1st – 8th graders on two separate school field trips held in the park. The interpretive ranger and his wonderful group of community volunteers rotated small groups of the students through learning stations and educating them on topics of ecosystems, snakes, bugs, and plant identification. These field trips not only exposed the younger generations to the natural world, but also brought in over 50 parent chaperones, many of whom enjoyed their first park experience.
- "Merrell Magic" chose White Tank Park as one of the desired locations for a special partnership between Backpacker Magazine and outdoor gear retailer Merrell. Two employees set up a free-of-charge lemonade stand at the end of the Waterfall Trail to surprise hot hikers. The purpose was to show support and appreciation for the hiking community. This is a national campaign also occurring in national parks, and it was an exciting opportunity for our lower-profile county park.
- March was also a busy special event month at White Tank bringing in participants from all over the state. On March 17th, Aravaipa Running held a trail running race for 372 participants. The Mountain Bike Association of Arizona (MBAA) Mountain Bike Race was held on March 24th for a record-setting 629 cyclists. RaceTimers held a 7K trail running race for a smaller crowd of less experienced trail runners.
- The park continued to benefit from volunteer trail days including time spent improving Waterfall Trail with the Happy Trails Hiking Club. MBAA and West Valley Trail Alliance also recruited 25 volunteers to work on the Competitive Track trails in preparation for the mountain bike race on March 24th.
- White Tank's Family Campground was fully booked all but two nights in March with overflow numbers ranging up to 15 additional campers a night. The youth and group campgrounds were booked every weekend and a large Airstream Rally reported to the park that "this group campground is the cleanest campground we have ever stayed in!"

- In April, White Tank Mountain Regional Park offered 23 interpretive programs with 682 participants. Night hikes were the most popular with 188 people attending the *Scorpion Hike* and 148 attending the *Full Moon Hike*.
- Easter continues to be a very busy day in the park! Every ramada that could be reserved was booked for the day and any picnic site with shade was snatched up in the early hours. Total attendance for the day was 2,715. Due to the high volume of picnickers, there was a large amount of trash leftover from the day of festivities. The Friends of White Tank Park and the White Tank Mountains Conservancy sponsored a park clean-up event following Easter which greatly helped in mitigating the trash issue and restoring the park to its natural beauty.
- MBAA sponsored a free event (with park admission) on April 7th called "Take a Kid Mountain Biking" at the White Tank Competitive Track. This event brought out over 30 families, introducing young children to beginner mountain biking and the Maricopa County Park System. The park hopes to provide future similar programs with MBAA guest instructors.
- Warmer temperatures in April brought the departure of many seasonal park hosts. White Tank staffing went from 15 host couples to 4 who will stay throughout the summer months. Local community volunteers continue to provide valuable support and volunteer hours to the park in the Nature Center, out on the trails, and helping with park interpretative programs.