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## MEMORANDUM

Date: March 31, 2010  
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners  
From: R.J. Cardin, Director  
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.J. Cardin".

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the March 9, 2010 Director's Summary.

### **Budget**

**General Fund (100) – Agency 300:** On the expenditure side, the General Fund (Fund 100, Agency 300) is currently reporting expenditures 9.1% or \$41,702 under the year to date (YTD) budget through February.

There are no revenues collected within the General Fund.

**Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:** Enhancement Fund (Fund 241, Agency 305) is currently reporting revenue at 12.9% or \$255,974 over the YTD budget through February.

Enhancement Fund is currently 3.7% or \$81,715 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures through February.

**Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:** Lake Fund (Fund 240, Agency 302) is currently reporting revenues at 18.7% or \$167,003 over the YTD budget through February.

Lake Fund is reporting operating expenditures under budget at 3.3% or \$35,803 through February.

### **Superintendent Report**

**Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA):** There were 32 interpretive programs offered provided for the month of March with more than 400 happy hikers in attendance.

The park interpretive ranger facilitated a fund raising special event at the park that benefited the open space initiative by the Town of Cave Creek.

Staff completed the first cycle of star-thistle weed control program in the back country of the conservation area.

Arizona Archeology Day was well attended and our support is appreciated by the Arizona Archeology Society.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:** There were 85 interpretive programs offered in March with a total of 2563 participants including 822 repeat attendees. The programming hits of the month included special guest speakers on Saturday nights: Dr. John Alcock from Arizona State University on the Usery Mountains; Dr. AJ Lombard from Red Mountain Community College on Geology; Cale Morris

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from the Phoenix Herpetological Society on Venomous Critters; and Dr. Dennis Miller doing a walk/talk about Mammals.

Sunland Village Bus Tours from Mesa cruised into Usery Park with local senior residents and their box lunches for a Brown-bag talk about Birds Songs with a park host.

Revenue has increased significantly over March 2009 from \$88,000 to \$121,000; this includes souvenir sales at \$8,000 for the month. Sales in the Nature Center have been excellent and Usery is the second highest center for souvenir sales in the system behind Lake Pleasant. Camping has had consistent overflow since the end of January.

And as a reminder, the May issue of Sunset Magazine will include an article on Yoga in Usery Mountain Regional Park.

**McDowell Mountain Regional Park:** Revenues increased last month by 239% over the same month in 2009. The fees for use of that area did not change in the recent fee review so these figures are truly an apple-to-apple comparison.

The American Competitive Trail Horse Association turned out in force to participate in the Trails event. The turnout increased by 41% from 2009. The event saw 103 competitors staged in the Four Peaks Staging Area and the competition occurred on the Shallmo Wash Trail.

The 2010 March Madness for Mammaries was held and those who participated raised over \$19,000 for cancer research and to promote early detection of breast cancer.

The campground remained in overflow condition all month. The one-year-old primitive tent sites created in the Ironwood Picnic area were again very popular and particularly so with local residents who made last minute decisions to go tent camping and had sites open for them.

The last big piece to the upgrading of the Visitor Center was completed in March with approximately 50 tons of stabilized decomposed granite delivered, spread, and rolled by hosts and staff members.

The McDowell Park Association (MPA) had its 1<sup>st</sup> annual Member Appreciation Day and it included a ribbon cutting officially recognizing the renovated Visitor Center. A great response was received from members who had not seen the upgrades.

**San Tan Mountain Regional Park:** There were 10 programs offered during the month of March with 586 participants. Lucky the Leprechauns scavenger hunt was a huge success attracting 305 participants. Other highlights for the month included the desert photography wildflower hike, full moon hike and stargazing for everyone.

The park has teamed up with one local elementary school to help establish a tortoise habitat and to create other interactive desert exhibits at the school to help youth connect with nature. The park is working with representatives from local high schools to establish opportunities at the park to engage youth in scientific studies and other nature related learning activities. The park also welcomed a field trip of 70 students from another Elementary school to take part in a variety of activities to learn about the wildlife, vegetation, responsible stewardship and other important desert topics.

**Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** The park offered 51 programs with a total attendance of 2605. The weather was perfect for Stargazing with more than 125 participants.

The major program for the month was "Day of the Spanish Horse". A variety of Spanish breed horses entertained over 600 spectators. The event also included flamenco dancers and guitar as well as some food tastings. The Citizens for Estrella Mountain Park (CEMP) also sold hot dogs, hamburgers and soft drinks.

A second horse event was a Trail Horse competition where participants went through an obstacle course in a timed event to win prizes. The event was sponsored by the CEMP group. Proceeds will be used to enhance the park.

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The Tres Rios Earth and Nature Festival, which has been held across the road from Phoenix International Raceway for the last two years, was held at the park this year on March 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. The event was moved into the park due to the wet weather and flooding that occurred at the former site. The decision to host the event was made less than 3 weeks prior to the festival. Park hosts operated the "KIDZ ZONE" area where children painted and assembled sun visors, made kites, snakes and animals, and owl puppets. Although fishing and canoeing in the river were not possible, Cabella's provided a 25 foot pond for the event stocked with fish so children could try their hand with a pole.

Also on March 6<sup>th</sup>, the park hosted St. Joseph the Worker 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Hike for the Homeless. Over 1,300 individuals came out to hike and show support for this program. The hike generated \$65,500 for the job development, placement and retention program of St. Joseph the Worker.

The Eagle Scout sign project for the Nature Center is almost complete and is awaiting the arrival of the lettering.

**White Tank Mountain Regional Park:** There were 21 Interpretive Ranger programs for the month of March, with 11 outreach programs and 6 in-park programs with approximately 2,000 participants.

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, Aravaipa Running LLC held their 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Mesquite Canyon Run. The courses consisted of several distances: 50 Kilometer, 25 Kilometer, 10 Mile, and 5 Mile. There were 277 runners which was a great success. Aravaipa already scheduled their second and third annual events for 2011 and 2012.

**Lake Pleasant Regional Park:** For March, the park conducted 34 programs, with 811 participants. Overall revenue is holding its own with February increasing from last year and March a little down from last year. Annual pass sales increased \$15,000.00 for this March compared to last March.

Planning for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Lake Pleasant Scuba Adventure Day (May 1) is in full swing with the word getting out to both divers and non-divers. Dive shops and divers across the valley are eager once again to make this park event unique for Arizona.

Star gazing night saw 157 visitors enjoying the evening at the Lake Pleasant Nature Center Amphitheater.

The Lake Pleasant Bald Eagle Nest Watchers had a successful banding operation of the 2 female nestlings.

A renter was found for the renovated tiki hut. Arizona Outdoor Fun Rentals will be renting jet skis to public and is expected to begin operations this month.

**Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):** Revenue continues to be ahead of last year's numbers. After a slow start to the school season, school administrators apparently gave the go-ahead for field trips and teachers began scheduling their visits. Weekdays are essentially are booked through May and only a few weekends remain open.

Staff voted on the name of our new patio, which will forever more be known as "Sunset Terrace". Having the patio named facilitates description of this significant and popular use area of the DOC when conversing with wedding parties, church groups, and others interested in booking the facility.

Maintenance staff made improvements to the back patio area by adding a railroad tie barrier to delineate the path into the classroom area and the desert area next to the building.

Interviews were held on March 13 at the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Service Center for the Lake Pleasant Camp. Nine counselors-in-training (age 14-15) were interviewed and hired. Also, 13 counselors (16 and over) applied for camp positions, but have not been hired as of yet. All staff will be hired for Lake Pleasant Camp by March 31.

Website Update for Lake Pleasant Camp – An interpretive ranger has been given access to the BSA's Double Knot webpage in order to update the summer camp's information, which was completed on March 10. Currently, the merit badge classes are being updated in the system so registration can begin by the end of March.

**Cave Creek Regional Park:** Programs in March were enjoyed by 579 visitors, compared with 287 visitors in March 2009. The most popular programs were Stargazing, with 152 participants, and "Did you say Wildflowers?" with 28 attendees.

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A Scout project was completed that planted ten trees around the Nature Center. This was done to help re-vegetate the area and eventually provide shade for visitors and vehicles in the Nature Center parking lot.

Modifications were made to the horse step-over at the Southeast entrance to the Park in response to a local equestrian who had safety concerns.

Cave Creek as well as other parks are contributing to the Desert Botanical Garden's weekly wildflower hotline website. See the most recent entries at: <http://www.dbg.org/wildflowers>

### **Contract Updates**

**Cave Creek Regional Park:** The Board of Supervisors approved a 10-year Use Management Agreement between the County and Northside Horse Outfitters, LLC for continued operation of Cave Creek Trailrides, the equestrian concession.

**Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** The department received one (1) proposal for the Recreational Vehicle Park – evaluation and fact finding continue; no formal recommendation was made to the Director.

**Paradise Valley:** The review process continues for golf course management, operation and maintenance.

**All Parks:** The Pre-Proposal Conference was held 2/18/10 for Zip Line Concession – 1 proposal was received; evaluation process continues.

### **Coming and Going in Human Resources**

The Park Maintenance Worker position at Lake Pleasant was filled effective March 8, 2010.

The Parks Intern position for Headquarters was filled effective March 8, 2010.

The Events Coordinator position at Lake Pleasant was filled effective March 22, 2010.