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MEMORANDUM

Date: January 29, 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.C.", positioned to the right of the "From" field.

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the January 12, 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% or \$31,342 under the year to date (YTD) budget through 50% of FY2009-10.

There are no revenues collected within the General Fund.

Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305: Enhancement Fund (Fund 241, Agency 305) is currently reporting expenditures 2% or \$34,558 under the YTD budget through 50% of FY2009-10.

Enhancement Fund is currently 4% or \$47,664 under the YTD budget for revenue through 50% of FY2009-10.

Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302: Lake Fund (Fund 240, Agency 302) is currently reporting expenditures at 6.4% or \$54,832 under the YTD budget through 50% of FY2009-10.

Lake Fund is reporting revenue over budget at 10% or \$84,257 through 50% of FY2009-10.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Record rainfall of more than 6" rendered the park inaccessible and the creek crossing dangerous to staff and the public.

There were 22 interpretive programs conducted with over 150 participants.

The interpretive ranger coordinated a first aid and CPR training for staff, docents and several Cave Creek park staff.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: There were 86 interpretive programs offered in the January revenue month with 1,810 participants and 528 repeat visitors. Seven programs were canceled due to the big weather event. Geology and Venomous Reptiles were big hits this month.

Brown-bags talks are proving to be very popular in the Nature Center, the bread and butter. Each month the ranger has a new topic along with a few of the standby for park visitors. The Center was chirping with All About Birds bringing in 45 noon-time listeners.

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Director's Summary

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Yoga with Inner Vision Yoga studio is stretching successfully each month in attendance. 15-17 participants are consistently returning every Tuesday/Thursday for more. A new Monday night class was added from requests by annual pass holders. Saturday is continuing to grow with weekend campers.

Sales in the Nature Center have been very good placing Usery as the second highest center for souvenir sales in the system behind Lake Pleasant. Staff is offering impromptu building tours and handing out information about the park, programs and the park system.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: The first race in the state championship series for the Mountain Bike Association of Arizona was held over a weekend, with more than 100 racers on Saturday and well over 500 for the Sunday event.

A first time event was held in the park called the McDowell Mountain Frenzy. It was promoted by the race director of the Javelina Jundred and was such a success it will become another among the many annual events. The turnout exceeded expectations with more than 150 runners competing on the Competitive Track.

One of the many programs offered by the interpretive ranger was a discovery hike on the new Verde Trail with over 100 participants hiking the new trail. A rare blue moon offered an opportunity for two Full Moon Hikes in December.

A donation of \$5,000 was received from the Javelina Jundred in late December.

January rains delivered more than 7" of rain to the park and the strong winds brought down a confirmed 11 Saguaro cacti in the park. None of the fallen cacti, 6 within the campground loops damaged RV or camping units or any structures in the park.

The Eagle Scout project that was under construction behind the Nature Center is complete. Park wildlife now has a new watering hole from which to drink located within view of the Nature Center.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: Despite the recent week of drenching and much needed rain, San Tan ended the fiscal month of January on a high note, as it reached last year's January revenue mark (\$20,000) with one-week still remaining in the fiscal month. The final totals for the month were not available at the time of this report.

The park offered 13 thrilling programs during the month of January to the delight of 278 program participants. Stargazing for Everyone turned out to be a beautiful night and attracted 125 park visitors. Dedicated to connecting and educating youths about nature, the park hosted a local pre-school class of 16 rambunctious future leaders of tomorrow and showed off our critter displays and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) bone box.

The Park conducted its park theme focus group discussion on Thursday, January 14. The park welcomed a nice blend of 16 community members and park users to offer insight for the discussion.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: A real highlight for the month was the delivery of the professional displays that highlight the rivers of the Sonoran Desert, Flooding and Flood Control in Maricopa County, and the El-Rio – the Plan to Heal the Gila River. This project was possible by the Maricopa County Flood Control District.

During the month of January 34 programs were conducted that attracted 622 participants. More than 168 park visitors attended the Bald Eagle Appreciation day. On the same day, the Gold Mine Hike attracted 90 hikers of all ages.

Estrella Park visitors have started receiving the park program schedule via e-mail. In addition, park staff has been marketing to our neighborhoods with door to door visits.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: There were 17 interpretive programs for the month of January, with two outreach programs and 15 in park programs scheduled with a projected 783 participants.

Due to heavy rains and the washes flowing, the Park was closed to the public from January 21, at 4:00pm through January 22 at 11:00 am. On January 22, Olive was closed as MCDOT was removing a sand bar and a tree from the road just a half mile outside the park. The only damage from the storms that occurred was to a couple of sections of trails which washed out.

The following Eagle Scout projects were completed for 2009: a water trough installed in area 1; signs installed at Black Rock Trail (small loop); the tortoise pen was revamped; and a fire ring has been installed in the Willow group use area.

A Focus Group meeting was held on January 20, the group of 12 participants was tasked to engage in a brainstorming session to assist park staff in developing a recommendation for a Park Theme and potentially a slogan or tag line.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Lake Pleasant saw 24 interpretive ranger park programs conducted for a total of 293 participants. Winter visitors have been enjoying the "Birding with the Ranger" program, 24 birders participated in our last outing. Two new Nature Center programs have been offered by one of our hard working volunteers, Talkin' Fishing with Frank and Talkin' Hiking with Frank.

Lake Pleasant and the AZGFD Adobe Mountain Wildlife Center have been teaming up for years to bring park visitors many special live animal programs, which supply a wealth of education and fun. On January 9, the "Birds of Arizona, Live!" program was presented at the Nature Center with about 100 people in attendance.

Hiking season is in full swing, and the two most popular guided hikes at Lake Pleasant are the Morgan City Wash Exploring Hike and the Cottonwood Petroglyph Hike.

A new guided orienteering program has been offered and the first two groups did well and had a blast. The program now will be expanded to include small and large portable courses in an area conducive to such activity.

On February 5 the Nest Watchers will start their monitoring of the Agua Fria Bald Eagle closure area. With the right conditions we might just see another baby bald eagle flying over Lake Pleasant this summer.

On February 14 Lake Pleasant Regional Park will be the last stop on the AZGFD Adobe Mountain Wildlife Center Bikers for the Wildlife Poker Run. The Lake Pleasant Nature Center has always been a stop on this fun motor event before, but this year the final ending of the event will be at Scorpion Bay Marina after leaving the Nature Center.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC): DOC and the Lake staff have met three times to brainstorm cooperative programming opportunities for the public. One meeting consisted of the park supervisors for the Lake and DOC and involved the managers of Scorpion Bay Marina and Dillon's Restaurant. All parties are very interested in combining individual assets (marketing, programs, equipment, services, etc.) to afford the public quality experiences at Lake Pleasant. A successful joint program involved Cabela's; which introduced paddling (kayaking and canoeing) to the public. Topics discussed for future events include more aquatics programs with Cabela's, incorporating more of the Lake programs with the DOC's Boy Scout aquatics summer camp and the Aqua Fria Conservation Area in scout events, pontoon boat lake tours that include a dinner package, the Dam Run event that includes an overnight/visit to the DOC, and engaging the dive community in instructive and recreational ways. Four themes threaded the conversations: enhance awareness of past and potential future joint programming at County facilities at Lake Pleasant, involve other entities (SB Marina, Dillon's, Cabela's, etc.) in programming, enhance instructional opportunities at the DOC, and start the public on its recreational adventure at the Lake with quality instruction at the DOC.

Primitive Living Skill Curriculum and Owl Pellet Investigation Curriculum – These have been completed and will be ready for implementation this spring after supplies are acquired.

An interpretive ranger met with some AZGFD staff on December 15 and January 6 to discuss a partnership between Ben Avery Shooting Facility, Boy Scouts of America, and the County Parks in order to add shooting sports merit badges to Lake Pleasant Summer Camp. AZGFD is very open to the idea of bringing youth to their facility during the less busy summer months and discussions will continue to figure out logistics such as educational aspects, scheduling, roles in the partnership (i.e. staffing), training, equipment, finances, etc.

The department is currently in the process of renewing their annual AZGFD and United States Fish and Wildlife (USFW) permits. We currently hold two AZGFD permits: Wildlife Holding/ Education and Scientific Collecting. Through the USFWS we have a Migratory Bird Special Purpose – Possession for Education/ Salvage permit. As the Department's animal curator, Sarah Steele has initiated the renewal process and the participation and compliance of each park.

Creature Feature is scheduled for February 4. A new marketing approach for students is being used to hopefully draw their parents/families to the event. Staff are also distributing flyers to libraries, sending emails to DOC's contact list and blasting emails to various media groups in coordination with the Parks Public Information Officer. This marketing effort is quantified so we can assess our results with knowledge of the effort put forth, and thus determine if Creature Feature is something that works at the DOC.

Maintenance staff have been working with the 7-Crew to reprogram the HVAC system which has been operating inefficiently, and wasting significant energy.

Cave Creek Regional Park: For the month of January the park offered 22 programs which brought in 519 visitors to the park. This is a 72% increase from January of 2009 ending in an average increase of 10 people per program!

The Clay Mine hikes, Critter programs and Stargazing were the most popular with attendance of 91, 56 and 59.

The collaboration with the Cave Creek Trailrides is a definite benefit for both; this included programs for girl scouts and the general public such as "Ride with the Ranger" which received a great response.

Another program with the Desert Botanical Gardens will be at the park on the Go John Trail. It will be a Geology Hike with geologist Richard Allen being offered through the Botanical Gardens on January 31, this program does have a sign up and registration fee.

The New Year Fitness Series Hikes will begin this month which received coverage from 3 separate valley publications and is expected to have a great turnout.

Contract Updates

Cave Creek Regional Park: Agreement discussions on-going for Equestrian Concession (long-term) at Cave Creek Regional Park – currently operating under a 1-year Special Use Permit.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: Agreement discussions on-going for Equestrian Concession to be located at Estrella Mountain Regional Park.

Paradise Valley: Received three Proposals for management, operation, maintenance and improvement of Paradise Valley Golf Course; vendor recommendation made to Director, Parks and Recreation Department; Agreement discussions on-going.

All Parks: Three (3) Proposals received were for RV Pumping Service; evaluation process started.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

Interviews from the external posting of the vacant Park Maintenance Worker position at Lake Pleasant were held on January 11 and 12, 2010. A candidate was chosen and the department is currently waiting for fingerprint/background check results.

Received the hiring freeze exemption for the Events Coordinator at Lake Pleasant and the position has been posted "internal-County-wide." Closing date was January 27, 2010.