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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 27, 2009
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 October 9, 2007 Director's Summary.

Budget

The budget proposal to the Board of Supervisors was delayed again from the February 25th meeting, so the department still does not have finalized budget targets for FY2009-10. We continue to prepare for substantial anticipated cuts to the general fund.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Twenty-two interpretive programs were conducted for the public and private groups. Four docents donated 17 hours in these activities.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: Fifty-one interpretive programs were performed in the February revenue month with a total of 1,416 participants with 360 repeat attendees. The Brown-bag series and kids' programs are steadily growing each month just in time for of the new Nature Center. Brown-bag lectures are getting 10-30 eager listeners for each topic the ranger presents. The new Desert Scavenger Hunt has families giggling hard to solve the Ranger's corny riddles about the Sonoran Desert on the Merkle Trail.

Total revenue in February 2009 has seen an increase of 7% up by \$4,659 from February 08. Family camping revenue also increased for the month. For several weeks in February we have seen 20 to 27 RV's in overflow. Group Camp was designated the overflow area. For the first time in the last five years the overflow was at capacity due to other prior group camping reservations.

Annual pass sales have dramatically increased with a total of 114 passes sold in February 09 alone to bring Usery to a total of 807 passes year-to-date. Regular pass sales were 98 and 16 were senior passes.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: Through the first 7 months of the fiscal year, McDowell Mountain Regional Park's revenue is up 8% for the year-to-date. Revenues increased 19% for the month of January.

Getting the month started, MBAA held the McDowell Meltdown a mountain bike race on the competitive track where nearly 500 racers competed and ABC Channel 15 covered the event and showed film on the evening news cast. The following day, in a steady down pour of rain, the Reata Pass Masters conducted their 8th Annual Criterion race and although there was a slightly lower turnout this year, the race went well and over 200 racers competed.

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The 9th Annual Pemberton 50K was held in bright sunshine and had a record turnout. 177 runners completed the 31.5 mile run and the Park received several follow-up e-mails from participants reflecting their enjoyment of running in such a beautiful environment.

The 12th Annual Desert Classic Duathlon was held with the largest field ever for this race, 560 contestants. This year's field included a 2-time world champion tri-athlete, the returning champion from last year of this race, and the Canadian, Danish, University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University duathlon teams.

The Park had a booth at the Fountain Hills Arts and Crafts Fair and spoke to hundreds of festival attendees over the three day festival.

The McDowell Park Association purchased paint and equipment, and gathered volunteers along with their painting supplies to help paint the Visitor Center as the first of several steps identified for updating the look of the facility.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: San Tan saw a steady increase in the month of February. Revenue increased by 53% and park attendance increased 45% in comparison to this time last year.

The park offered 10 programs in February to about 169 program participants. The highlight activity of the month was "Hiking with the Stars". Unfortunately, mother nature was not too kind to us this month regarding our programs, as she offered rain, wind and very cold weather for a few of our scheduled events.

Roughly 163 volunteers from a local youth group assisted in a clean-up effort on the north side of Goldmine Mountain. The group removed 37 large bags full of buffelgrass, an invasive weed species, from a highly concentrated area on the mountain. Volunteers also helped pick up trash and removed more than 25 t-posts that were originally used to keep off-road vehicles from destroying the park before the boundary fence was established. The t-posts will be salvaged and used for future needs of the park.

The new Stargazer Trail has been established branching off of the Moonlight and San Tan Trails. The trail will offer a short 2-mile loop for users to enjoy interesting views of exceptional rock formations, vegetation, wildlife and a spectacular overlook of the nearby town of Queen Creek.

Re-vegetation efforts have commenced to repair a number of blazed, non-designated trails and damaged terrain from the staging area to the main trailhead. The Trails Crew moved a small section (0.1 miles) of the Moonlight Trail in an effort to eliminate the number of blazed trails (future and present) in this area and to avoid confusion for park visitors, by having the three trails meet at the main trailhead.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: The month got off to a great start with the Nature Center Grand Opening. Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox cut the ribbon before 50 spectators including Commission members, community leaders and Citizens for Estrella Park. One result of this event was the first public reservation for the room. The Southwest Chamber of Commerce has also scheduled an upcoming meeting in the Nature Center. A tour of the facility was conducted by Director Cardin.

There were 1,057 participants in 32 programs. Cowboy Mounted Shooters presented two programs during the month which attracted 600 attendees. The Sonoran Audubon Society has conducted two programs for us. In addition a seminar, "Science Takes Wing" was held. Twenty Participants were asking "Whoo, Whoo?" as Ranger Patricia presented a new children's program "Kids Owl Day." Persephone (our gopher snake) delighted 50 onlookers as she ate her Saturday meal.

The outreach program continued at the Avondale Library and Saguaro Elementary School with 177 participants who learned about gold mining, owls and Buffalo Soldiers.

There were bikes all over the hills at the competitive track for the MBAA "Hedgehog Hustle;" it was a great day for racing. Revenue from camping and gate entries were over \$1500.

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Cave Creek Regional Park: February 2009 Program attendance was increased by 122% from February 2008. Attendance at February programs rose from 134 in 2008 to 298 in 2009. The best attended programs were "Rocks and Mining" and "Coyotes are Calling."

On February 21, 150 runners participated in the successful inaugural *Adobe Dam 10km & 5km*, benefiting the track & field programs at Boulder Creek, Sandra Day O'Connor and Barry Goldwater High Schools. The course was held entirely within the Park on a mix of paved roads and desert walking trails.

Four separate Eagle Scout Projects are being coordinated to begin at Cave Creek Park in March.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: Six Educational Outreach programs were held in February at local schools.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: A Seaplane demonstration was held on February 21 on the main body of water by the 10-lane boat ramp. Five pilots landed their vessels on water then taxied to the shoreline area. The demonstration was held to monitor the operation of the vessels and what type of impact it would have on other water activities. One hundred surveys were handed out to boaters to get their feedback of how the activity affected them and if they would like to see similar events in the future, or if they thought individual pilots should be approved for permits to utilize the waterways. The demonstration went well and the spectators seemed to enjoy it. Twenty surveys were returned and will be reviewed by staff.

Lake Pleasant Bald Eagle Nest Watch Report – The older male eagle (21 years old this year) of previous years has been replaced by a young male of about five to six years of age. The nest watchers have observed the adult eagles sitting on the nest and delivering prey which indicated that there are nestling(s). Soon the nestling(s) will be large enough to see over the edge of the nest and the number of nestling(s) can be determined.

An electronic excel work order system has been implemented for the maintenance staff.

Park and Department staff have completed the revisions to the water proof map. Three thousand maps will be printed and be ready to sell by the beginning of March.

Honeywell's Sixth Annual Employee's Campout is scheduled for March 18 through 22. The northern portion of the park will be closed to the public. Nine hundred employees attended the campout last year and the park generates approximately \$10,000 for the event.

Dam Good Run is scheduled for April 4; currently 110 people have registered. Final early registration cut-off is March 20. Current major sponsors: Carmex, Zona Communications, Gatorade and CAP.

Bradshaw Foothills is creating a website to keep the public updated on current OHV laws and events. They are also coordinating a volunteer day to replace park boundary and private property signs that have been vandalized.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC): Thirteen tours of the DOC were booked at the Bridal Show, 3 brides came in for tour and one of these brides booked a date. Also, the first Parks Wedding Committee meeting was held February 11, 2009. Committee is reviewing Bridal Info Packets in order to adapt for use in all parks.

DOC Staff are marketing to school administrators to promote teacher seminars and workshops. We are currently developing a marketing strategy to be implemented.

Lake Pleasant Aquatics Camp held a meeting on February 19, 2009 to discuss the budget for purchasing new boats/equipment for summer 2009. All Arizona Boy Scout of America camps will try to work together to agree upon boats to be purchased and a decision will be reached by mid-March. Also, phone calls were made to ~ 25 potential staff members encouraging them to fill out an application and interview in April.

Tortoise Habitat – A volunteer group from Cox Communication will be coming out on March 20, 2009 to donate labor to the reconstruction of the existing Butterfly Garden. The goal is to convert the garden into a habitat suitable for an adult Sonoran Desert Tortoise. Minimal funding is needed and will be provided by the Friends Group.

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DOC Exhibit Hall Upgrade – A meeting was held February 26, 2009 to discuss ways of implementing energy efficiency and upgrading the habitats of the animals for overall general health. APS Grant Funding will be used to improve the energy efficiency of the entire electrical system cutting the cost by at least 20% over the next year.

Contract Updates

Adobe Dam Recreation Area – Discussions continue with Flood Control District for a new Joint Use Agreement.

Requests for Proposals: Outstanding Actions Request for Proposals includes:

- Adobe Dam Recreation Facilities/Concessions – selected the proposal for a cable ski lake concession – have begun drafting of Use Management Agreement.
- Horse Riding and Horse Stable Concessions – one (1) proposal received for Cave Creek, Estrella, Lake Pleasant and White Tank. Evaluation by Selection Committee continues.
- General Joe Foss Shooting Complex at Buckeye Hills – proposals due February 19, 2009.
- Recreation Rental Vehicle Concession – released February 12, 2009; proposals due March 26, 2009.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

Interviews for the Park Maintenance Supervisor position at Lake Pleasant were held on Friday, February 6, 2009 and no one was hired. We have requested to recruit the position again but we are still waiting for permission.