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MEMORANDUM

Date: January 3, 2013
To: Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
From: R.J. Cardin, Director *R.J.C.*
Re: Director's Summary of Current Events

Listed below are issues the department has been involved with since the November 13, 2012 Director's Summary.

From the Office of the Director Vulture Mountain Recreation Area Update

- Parks Staff met in early December with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) regarding the gifting of certain parcels of the Hassayampa River Preserve for incorporation into the Recreation Area. TNC staff has now indicated that they may prefer to gift the entire preserve to the Parks Department and just maintain a conservation easement over the property. Their desire is to transfer ownership of this area to the County so that they can begin to focus efforts on protecting the larger watershed of the river upstream. This is a fairly significant change to the original discussions/agreement and will require some additional analysis.
- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has now indicated that they will not finish their Travel Management Plan for the great Vulture Mountains Area until September or October of 2013. That Plan was supposed to have been completed in conjunction with or in advance of the Park/Recreation Area Master Plan that was approved by the Board of Supervisors this past summer. BLM has indicated that they will not consider the Recreation and Public Purpose Patent for the trailhead, campground and off-highway vehicle staging area until the Travel Management Plan is completed and adopted.

Parks and Recreation Commission Bylaws Update

- The updated bylaws as recommended by the Commission were approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 14, 2012.

Budget

General Fund (100) – Agency 300:

- On the expenditure side, the General Fund (Fund 100, Agency 300) was under budget by \$89,702 or 20% under the year to date (YTD) budget.
- There are no revenues collected within the General Fund.

Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:

- Enhancement Fund (Fund 241, Agency 305) reported revenue 10% or \$108,002 over the YTD budget.
- Enhancement Fund reported expenditures 1% or \$20,362 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures.

Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:

- Lake Fund (Fund 240, Agency 302) reported revenues 18% or \$133,464 over the YTD budget.
- Lake Fund reported operating expenditures over budget at 6% or \$44,359.

Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:

- Spur Cross (Fund 225, Agency 306) reported revenues at \$906 over the YTD budget.
- Spur Cross reported operating expenditures over budget at 2% or \$1,909.

Information Technology

- Network Migration for Administration was completed. In the future, this project will continue for the server portion, no date/time frame at this time.
- Server updates for the ADP time clocks was completed.
- Commission Bylaws were approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 14, 2012.
- Continued to work with Facilities Management and Contractor regarding Security Building window project. Parks will not be affected until early 2013.

Human Resources

Congratulations and Welcome!

- Welcome Kim Richard, our new Volunteer Coordinator!
- Welcome Alix Larson, our new Accounting Specialist!
- Welcome Cheryl Kidd, Contact Station Assistant at Lake Pleasant. Cheryl moves from a temporary position into a full-time position.

Central Reservations

- The online annual pass renewal system appears to be picking up. There were 19 renewals this month (no renewals in October 2012).
- Several cancellations of camping reservations were called in this month. Some research into the number of online reservations vs. phone reservation needs to be done to determine if more people are using the online system this year, reducing the phone calls for reservations and only leaving cancellations as one of the reasons to call Administration.

Volunteer Program

- Welcome Kim Richard!
- As reported in November, paperwork for the incoming hosts has increased, keeping the main focus on ensuring incoming volunteers and Park Hosts are processed quickly to get them into the parks and working.

Souvenir Fund

- The Holiday Sale ran from November 23rd to December 24th. There have been multiple reports of \$100.00 to \$200.00 sales, indicating our visitors are taking advantage of the sale.

Superintendent Reports

Desert Outdoor Center – The Lake Pleasant Sailing Club conducted Ladies Day at the Lake on November 10th. This event succeeded in drawing 29 women who learned about the various aspects of sailing. There seems to be an audience for these training events, and the DOC may elect to co-sponsor the next such event, which is planned for 2014.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park – The Park offered 34 programs during the months of November and December to the delight of over 460 program participants. The archery programs continue to be a huge success. The highlight of the month was the Bald Eagle Watch Paddle, which brought out over 50 dedicated paddlers to paddle the 15 plus mile adventure to see the various nesting sites and reach the Agua Fria. Paddlers expressed tremendous interest and pleasure with the program.

Adobe Wildlife presented Raptors Live to an intrigued crowd of 50 brave attendees, bearing the elements of the winter weather to get up close and personal with a red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, turkey vulture and several other raptor species.

The annual Bald Eagle closure was implemented on December 14. The past two years have yielded two unsuccessful mating seasons, but we are hopeful for a nesting or two at the various nesting sites this year.

Park visitors have been impressed with the new signage installed at the main and north entry of the park. The entry signs include a welcome sign, fee sign, and self-pay sign. At the main entry an events sign was also installed to notify visitors of upcoming activities.

The Arizona Yacht Club renewed their special use permit to conduct sailboat-racing adventures on the Lake at various times throughout the year. The activity is admired by park patrons and is an interesting site to see.

The North Entry station is currently undergoing remodeling with regards to establishing more secure doors and a sliding entry window.

The Lake Pleasant maintenance team completed the remodeling of the staff support building and installed the final pieces of office furniture. In addition, they are currently working on remodeling the maintenance compound with a fresh coat of paint on the walls and removal of the old, damaged tile flooring.

The Lake Pleasant Interpretive Ranger successfully joined Facebook, and within days of posting items to the account, established a large following with help from the Department's Public Information Officer.

Cave Creek Regional Park – In November, the park hosted 14 interpretive programs with 146 participants, including 1 - docent lead program with 42 attendees. The programs highlights were Fitness Hike, Ride with the Ranger, Horses, Gold and Critters, Oh My!, Feeding Frenzy, Archery 101, Sonoran Desert-Simplified, Venomous Creatures, Walk on the Wild Side, Survival Basics and Clay Mine Hike.

The Fourth Annual Cave Creek Bicycle Festival was hosted at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area and Cave Creek Regional Park. The event includes a 20-mile mountain bike race/ride through Spur Cross and Cave Creek Regional Park. The attendance increased this year from 162 riders from the previous year to 262 attendees this year. This annual event is organized by the Town of Cave Creek to generate funding for land acquisition to preserve pristine Sonoran Desert lands north of the Phoenix metropolitan area.

In December, the park hosted 18 interpretive programs with approximately 160 participants, including 4-docent lead program with 20 attendees. The programs highlights were Wildlife Tracking Ride with Ranger, Horses, Gold and Critters, Oh My!, Feeding Frenzy, Archery 101, Venomous Creatures, Survival Basics and Clay Mine Hike, Quartz Trail Hike, Geology of Arizona and Name the Stones.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park – The Interpretive Ranger held 14 programs in November and attracted 293 participants. In December, 13 programs were conducted.

The Park hosted the 4th Annual 24 Hours of Fury and for the first time the event saw a smaller turnout. With just 219 racers the trend was clearly moving toward the 12 hours of racing and away from the 24-hour race.

The Lead, Follow or Get Out of my Way event grew again this year. More than 100 horses and their riders rode 25, 50 or 75 miles under closely observed conditions to ensure the safety of the horses.

The Park set up and had the Interpretive Ranger and volunteers at the fall Arts and Crafts Fair in Fountain Hills and then again the following weekend in Fountain Park as part of the "Life in the Desert" fall fair.

December started quickly with the 4th Annual Dawn to Dusk mountain bike race. This event has sold out the last two years and this time almost a month in advance of the event. Under beautiful skies, 527 bikers rode for more than 10 hours around the Pemberton Trail.

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The fall events season wrapped up with the 3rd Annual McDowell Mountain Frenzy foot race. This year the participation rose by nearly 80% over 2011. Options for the day included participation in a 5k, 10K, 10 mile, 25K and 50 mile races.

Special Forces soldiers from the United Kingdom, while in town for other desert training asked for a private presentation of "Edible plants", to supplement their desert knowledge.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area – In November, the park hosted 14 interpretive programs with 150 participants, including 6-decent lead programs with 65 attendees. A few of the programs included: Healthy Hiking, Dragonfly Trail Exploration Hike, Take your Walk to the Desert, Rock Art of Spur Cross, Sunset Walk, Rocks and Streams Walk, Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike, Desert Discovery Day, Ruins of Spur Cross, and Moonlight Hike.

In December, the park hosted 20 interpretive programs with 150 participants including 9 - decent lead programs with approximately 95 attendees. A few of the programs included: Desert Wash 101, Find the Ranger, Healthy Hiking, Dragonfly Trail Exploration Hike, Take your Walk to the Desert, Rock Art of Spur Cross-, Sunset Walk, Rocks and Streams Walk, Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike, Desert Discovery Day, Ruins of Spur Cross, Sonoran Desert 101 and Moonlight Hike.

Usery Mountain Regional Park - The Park offered 81 interpretive programs in November totaling 1953 participants. The highlight of the month was the All About Bald Eagles Brown Bag Lecture (90) which included a Flashlight Walk (57) after the event. The Full Moon Hike (142) saw great numbers again due to perfect weather conditions, and our Ranger taught an outreach program to a group of 100 seniors at a nearby RV Park.

The first of three host trainings was hosted at Usery. Training topics included hazardous materials, fire extinguisher, blood-borne pathogens, emergency action plans, and general park rules.

Aravaipa Running hosted the Pass Mountain Trail Run as part of the Desert Runner Trail Series. 230 runners participated in the 50K, 26K or 12K run through the park.

Maintenance staff attended the Archery Instructor Class held at Ben Avery by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. They were instructed on how to teach the Archery 101 in the park and will be able to assist the Ranger with future programs.

The Park Supervisor attended training on how to use the new Kubotas that will be arriving to the parks soon. The Supervisor will then be able to teach staff and volunteers on how to properly use the vehicle once they are delivered to the park.

The Park offered 41 interpretive programs in December totaling 918 participants. The highlight of the month was the Archery 101 class with 44 straight shooting participants, these programs are now filling up 3 months in advance.

The Ham & Turkey 3D Shoot was held at the Usery Mountain Regional Park Archery Range with 50 archers competing in the holiday shoot. The 5th Annual Marked 3D Trail Shoot was also held with 60 archers in the two-day contest.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park – In November, San Tan offered 22 programs bringing in a total of 662 people. The highlights of the month included Boy Scout Day Camp where the ranger led multiple archery 101 classes to help scouts earn their badges for over 250 scouts and the Benjamin Franklin Charter Schools had a ranger led field trip for 75 6th grade students and chaperons.

With guidance from the ranger and supervisor, two Eagle Scouts completed their projects. The park saw an addition of 28 native plants to our interpretive trail as well as the successful removal of a large area of buffelgrass on Goldmine Mountain.

In December, the Park provided 18 interpretive programs to the delight of many program participants. The highlights of the month included archery, full moon and homeschool.

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Despite the chilly, rainy weather, folks were not deterred from visiting San Tan for the 5th annual San Tan Wonderland event! The event attracted roughly 175 people. Event-goers were treated to a number of fun activities such as reindeer games, arts and crafts, pony rides, a self-guided luminary hike, pictures with Santa and so much more. Special thanks to the Friends of San Tan, park volunteers and the partners of the event such as the Silver Rein Horsemanship, Pinal County and the team from the Nathan Martens Arizona Memorial for their assistance with the event.

5 new Eagle Scout projects have been added to the San Tan Roster for FY12-13:

- Steel Horse Hitches – Acquiring materials
- Re-vegetation of trails – Acquiring materials
- Archaeological Exhibit – Planning
- Split Rail Fence – Planning
- Hohokam Pit House – Acquiring materials

Estrella Mountain Regional Park – The year to date visitor attendance for Estrella shows an increase of 22% over last year! This is attributed to strong October and November ramada rentals. Attendance also increased with several high schools cross country track meets (800 participants) and a popular mud obstacle race. Park attendance has slowed in December due to the holidays.

In November and December, the Interpretive Ranger from White Tank Park provided a number of interpretive programs in Estrella Park. The Sonoran Desert Audubon Society performed several bird hikes and 150 visitors enjoyed a Stargazing outing.

Rodeo Arena Vendor and Horse Operations managers did not have strong attendance for their winter festival, they closed the festival in mid-December ahead of schedule.

The Centennial Trail committee continues to meet with the Park Supervisor. The project area is ready for earth contouring for ponds and the trail. The Three Rivers Historical Society is ramping up donation efforts. An Arizona State University professor is utilizing three graduate students to conduct scoping and modeling work for the project. Final phases of branch removal are being completed. Volunteers and staff have been filling Hickman Farm Dumpsters with Salt Cedar branches from the non-native trees that have been cut down in the trail area.

The Trails Division is wrapping up new trail construction in the park. It is estimated that about 9 miles of new trail construction will have been completed in Estrella Park this year. The Youth Corp provided valuable trail maintenance repair work on a number of issues during the month of November.

Phoenix International Raceway hosted NASCAR in November and proceeds for the park were approximately \$11,000 for camping during the 4-day event.

The park hosts have arrived to Estrella for the season. In addition to the entry station and Nature Center staffing, they have been helping with tree trimming, general park clean up and improvement projects.

The Operations Manager, Westside Superintendent and Park Supervisor met the Golf Course Manager and an organizer for Goodyear's Estrella Youth Sports, they proposed a trade of ball field time for managing the turf and field quality. The offer is being considered by the Management Team and is currently being worked on by Parks' Contracts Coordinator.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park – The interpretive ranger had 1918 program attendees for November and December which included the annual Luminary walk on the Black Rock Short loop and a special Celestial Petroglyph Hike. The Friends of White Tank Park served hot chocolate and cookies to over 200 walkers.

The Arizona Association of Counties choose White Tank Mountain Regional Park as their location to film interviews with 5 elected officials from various counties across the state. Filming occurred in the Library, in the Nature Center and other scenic locations throughout the park.

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Park staff is making preparations for other events coming up soon in the new year. On January 6th, the Xterra Race, an 8km and 20 km running series across Maricopa County will occur at White Tank Park. Many runners have been training in the park this month.

The Park experienced successful holiday park visitation throughout the Thanksgiving and Christmas. Many visitors and picnickers enjoyed the park and the Nature Center offerings for critter viewing and shopping.

The gift shop holiday sale that started the day after Thanksgiving was well received and many visitors purchased more items to receive the discount. In addition to our park visitors, hosts and volunteers took advantage of the sale.

The new host sites at the Maricopa Trail head are complete and filled with hosts. These hosts are now out maintaining trails and the nature pond areas. The work in the Family Campground has resumed with plans to be done before the end of the year. During the construction phase we have been accommodating campers in the Willow Area.

The road construction continues on the 303 highway upgrade and Olive Avenue is closed until January 26th. Due to the construction closures, park visitors have found it challenging to locate the park. However, directions have been posted on the parks website.