



Maricopa County

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 12, 2016
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 2016.

From the Office of the Director

- The Board of Supervisors approved the Cooperative Agreement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) at their March 23, 2016 meeting. As previously reported, this agreement outlines the requirements for 1) the development of a master plan; 2) TNC will transfer a portion of land to the County including the visitor center grounds; 3) the County encumbering the visitor center parcel with a conservation easement in favor of TNC; and 4) responsibilities of each party including management and development by Parks. The term of the agreement is five years with an additional one-year period extension if needed.
- The Board of Supervisors approved the amendment for Phoenix Speedway Corporation (PSC) dba Phoenix International Raceway in March. In addition to an acknowledgement of a dedicated easement through PSC to the competitive track site, this amendment also provides guaranteed annual revenue and a reduced time frame when the competitive track is restricted from public access due to NASCAR camping.
- Parks is currently working with the Maricopa Trail and Park Foundation (MT+PF) on an agreement that will delineate authorities and responsibilities for enhancing and maintaining the Maricopa Trail, to conduct outreach, volunteer programs and events, and to include marketing/promotions that will benefit the public and the community in support of the Parks' mission and vision and appropriate standards.

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 for March and April, 2016:

Budget Status (through April 2016 close):

- Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenues 8% or \$345,290 over the YTD budget of \$4,227,533.
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures of 8% or \$323,465 under the YTD operating budget of \$3,868,124.

Budget Status continued:

- Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:
 - Lake Fund reported revenues of 7% or \$142,064 over the YTD budget of \$2,118,711.
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures at 15% or \$336,785 under the YTD budget of \$2,234,530.
- Spur Cross Fund (225) – Agency 306:
 - Spur Cross reported revenues at 3% or \$7,217 over the YTD budget of \$232,645.
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures \$200 over the YTD budget of \$222,675.
- Souvenir Fund (239) – Agency 303:
 - Souvenir Fund reported revenues 5% or \$14,701 under the YTD budget of \$306,422.
 - Souvenir Fund reported operating expenditures 10% or \$30,044 under the YTD budget of \$313,415.
- Donation Fund (243) – Agency 304:
 - Donation Fund reported revenues 31% or \$6,397 over the YTD budget of \$20,508.
 - Donation Fund reported operating expenditures 38% or \$5,689 over the YTD budget of \$14,641.

Budget Forecast:

- The overall forecast appears to be strong and we are on task to complete the year structurally balanced in all funds. Enhancement and Lake Funds are tracking to what our forecasted amounts are for this time of year. Souvenir Fund is lagging due to the delayed opening of the redesigned Lake Pleasant Discovery Center, but sales have been solid at other parks so the overall forecast is structurally balanced.

Accounting Services:

- Training has started for the conversion to Advantage 3x (aka CGI – the new countywide financial/budgeting/procurement system to be implemented in July 2016). Multiple spreadsheets and verification of accounting codes has been requested; all have been submitted to Department of Finance as requested.

Procurement Services:

- End of year requisitions have been turned in so a considerable amount of activity has occurred to complete purchase requests prior to spending cut off dates (May 13, 2016). The Department has also started end of year procedures for downtown Finance including capital asset tracking and reporting.

Contracts:

- **Estrella Mountain Regional Park (EMPR):** Staff has previously reported the equestrian concessionaire who manages the arena and horseback riding/western cookouts at Estrella has informed us of their retirement effective May 1, 2016. Although it was reported that the County would not pursue a replacement, the concessionaire would like to assign the agreement to another horse concessionaire to keep the recreation opportunity at Estrella. At this time, they have been unsuccessful, but would like to continue their efforts until October. The attempt to find a new concessionaire is challenging with the implications of BLM restrictions for third party concessions at the arena site along with the proposed EMPR Master Plan Update that envisions repurposing the arena for other recreational opportunities. If a replacement concessionaire is not found, the agreements with the existing concessionaire will be terminated.
- **Buckeye Hills:** In 2012, Parks entered into a UMA with Helzapoppin Rod and Gun Club, d.b.a. Buckeye Sportsman Club to manage, operate and improve the public shooting range at Buckeye Hills Regional Park, known as the General Joe Foss Shooting Range. Although the UMA terminates in December 2016, it does provide a renewal option for up to ten (10) years. Staff has arranged the standard annual inspection of the facility to be conducted in May along with the Maricopa County Environmental Services (ES) Department. ES will be assessing the current concentrations of lead and other metals and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs). ES will be collecting fairly shallow samples from the two (2) berms, retention basins, washes and samplings from the Skeet range. Upon obtaining the results from the inspections, along with the review of the financial status of the range, we will then begin the process of proposing a renewal amendment or other alternate management methods for this facility.

- **Cave Creek Regional Park:** The equestrian concession (Cave Creek Trail Rides) has been providing horseback rides at Cave Creek since 1999. This concessionaire (as reported at Estrella) has retired as of May 1. We are in the process of assigning the existing Use Management Agreement (UMA) to their onsite managers. We feel confident about the abilities of this new owner as they have been managing the facility on behalf of the concessionaire for approximately 10 years. We are anticipating the assignment to be on Board of Supervisors Agenda for approval in July.
- **Lake Pleasant Regional Park:** Scorpion Bay Marina's revenues have increased approximately 35% for the first quarter of 2016. In March, staff met with the new owners and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for review of their proposed additions to the Marina which may include additional docks, relocation of staff offices, enlarging the restaurant and providing floating cabins on the docks. Current renovations include the remodeling of the store, upgrades to the kitchen, expanded the exterior dining areas, new paint and logo on the exterior face of the building, additional covered slips, and prepping the dirt parking area for asphalt. Both the BOR and Parks are very excited for the future of the Marina.
- **Crown Castle Monopole:** Last year, Parks received an audit report from our monopole concession, Crown Castle, which indicated they overpaid Parks in the amount of \$37,660.53 for years 2011-2014. This was due to a merger of cell companies which reduced the secondary tenants on the monopole. They requested reimbursement of the full amount. The County's legal counsel verified contractually and the County Auditor verified their audit report and found Parks was obligated to pay the balance due. Through our diligent efforts in negotiating, we were able to negotiate a reduction to \$28,245. However, Crown Castle presented an option to forgive this debt if the County could provide an additional 15-years term on their agreement. This option for granting another 15 years requires Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) approval. Staff has received BOR's conditional approval with the condition that Parks is assured to recoup the money that was lost due to the merger. We have presented these recommendations from BOR to Crown Castle and await their reply.
- **Concession Management Commercial Agreements (CMCA):**
 - New concessions include:
 - Venture Yogi (stand up Yoga on Paddleboards)
 - Black Mountain Adventures (hiking and mountain biking)
 - Perfect Boat Rentals (boat rentals – offsite, delivered to Lake)
 - The Brrr-ista (mobile food)
 - Wild Bunch Desert Guides (hiking and mountain biking)
 - Pending CMCA terminations include:
 - Arizona Outdoor Fun (Jet Ski rentals at Lake Pleasant, moving to Scorpion Bay)
 - Sport Chalet (all stores closed)
 - Southwest Kayaks (concessionaire's request - sold their business)
 - Rooster's Kountry Kitchen (concessionaire's request - no activity)
 - I-Yad Adventures (concessionaire's request - no activity)
 - Angies Dawg House (concessionaire's request - no activity)
 - Good Times (concessionaire's request - no activity)
 - Arizona Fishing Guides (concessionaire's request - no activity)

Human Resources:

- **New Hires :**
 - Alex Dos Santos, Park Maintenance Worker, Estrella
 - Sharon Richards, Park Maintenance Worker, Usery
 - Richard Plautz, Park Supervisor, San Tan
- **Transfers:**
 - Charles Sizer, transfer from Lake Pleasant Navigational Aide to Lake Pleasant Park Maintenance Worker
- **Departures:**
 - Adam Melle, Interpretive Ranger, DOC
- **Open positions and recruitments:**
 - Park Supervisor, McDowell – New hire pending
 - Office Assistant Specialized, Lake – open for recruitment

- Contact Station Assistant, Temp, Lake Pleasant – open for recruitment
- Interpretive Ranger, DOC – Interviews pending
- Navigational Aide, Lake – Interviews pending

Information Technology:

- The last of the exchange of the Dell OptiPlex XE to new Dell OptiPlex 9020 or HP 7800 touchscreens was completed. The following parks have new computers for POS processing: Cave Creek (2), DOC (1), Estrella (2), Lake Pleasant (4), McDowell (2), San Tan (2), Usery (2), and White Tank (3).
- Status of current Technology Roadmap for Parks:
 - Completed and launched Hosted Web Site and Content Management System (March 2016).
 - Implement Hosted Asset Management System: work is underway to complete this project. Anticipated go-live date is July 1, 2016.
 - Circuit/Bandwidth Assessment at four parks.
 This project involves study and improvement for slow bandwidth at Estrella, White Tank, McDowell, and Cave Creek (Fiscal year 2017). There is also work ongoing with Century Link (via OET) to update older data circuits and similar equipment that can no longer be supported and must be replaced. Although unrelated, we are hopeful that some of this required upgrade will also improve internet speeds for all the parks with Century Link service (all Mountain Parks).
 - Vulture Mountain Assessment is pending budget approval from Board of Supervisors (F Y17).
 - Establish a Service Level Agreement with OET to define expectations and responsibilities. Complete by July 1, 2016. A meeting with OET has been scheduled to discuss.

Souvenir Program:

- Completion of full park souvenir inventory has been done at McDowell, San Tan, Lake Pleasant, and DOC. The remaining parks will be done in May and June. With the new POS, a robust inventory system was implemented and this upcoming year will be the first time the program has had the ability to calculate stock on hand (in quantity and dollar value) and provide loss reports to each park during the year.

Volunteer Program:

- As the busy season comes to an end for the Mountain Parks, applications and preparation for next year are underway. In addition, collection of data from exit interviews continues to help review improvement suggestions from our Park Hosts.
- Year-to-Date Volunteer Hours:

	Jul-15	Aug-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16
Total Dept. Hours	3,739	2,949	4,568	6,828	11,319	11,966	14,240	11,897	13,273	7,852
Financial Savings	\$86,264	\$68,022	\$105,383	\$157,510	\$261,135	\$276,066	\$328,517	\$274,464	\$306,208	\$181,146
YTD Hours	3,739	6,688	11,256	18,083	29,402	41,369	55,609	67,506	80,779	88,631
YTD Savings	\$86,264	\$154,286	\$259,669	\$417,179	\$678,314	\$954,380	\$1,282,896	\$1,557,360	\$1,863,568	\$2,044,714
Prev. Year Month Total Hrs	2,708	3,304	3,083	6,102	9,726	12,287	12,682	12,548	13,329	9,876
Prev. Year YTD Hours	2,708	6,012	9,094	15,196	24,922	37,209	49,891	62,439	75,768	85,643
Prev. Year Financial Savings	\$61,065	\$74,494	\$69,516	\$137,596	\$219,321	\$277,071	\$285,979	\$282,954	\$300,559	\$ 222,704
Numb. Vol-current month	78	71	414	361	480	235	444	212	232	220

Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights

- **Estrella Master Plan:** The planning process is substantially complete. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reviewed the draft master plan and determined the plan adheres to R&PP policies and provided an approval letter in March 2016. Staff presented to draft master plan to both Avondale and Goodyear's parks commissions in March 2016. The next step is Board of Supervisor's approval, tentatively scheduled for June 2016.

- **Vulture Mountain Update:** Staff is working with MCDOT engineers on realignment of Vulture Mine Rd as well as interior park roadway designs. MCDOT has chosen a preferred alignment and is now working on 30% plans. The Notice of Realty Action is showing movement and should soon be in the Washington DC office for approval and 30 day posting. The lengthy BLM approval process has impacted the start date of the Environmental Assessment (EA). A completed EA is required before any construction or management activities may begin.
- **Hassayampa River Preserve Update:** A Phase I Environmental report has been conducted and staff is awaiting results. No property transfer can occur until the inspections results are received and any outstanding issues corrected. Staff has been working with the Maricopa Facilities Management Department and their contracted engineering firm to construct restroom facilities and associated improvements on the site. Septic system, water, and electrical systems will be evaluated during the planning process. The Facilities Department has offered assistance with Phase One in terms of funding, design and construction.
- **System Wide:**
The refurbishment of all 75 restrooms (RRs) for all the parks began in January 2014. The project is expected to take four years and cost ~\$4 million. With the help of "Job Order Contracts" (JOC) contractors, staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system. 48 restroom facilities are currently completed with 4 additional units expected to be completed by June 30, 2016. We will complete a total of 18 restrooms this fiscal year; two of them are complete demos and 16 units remodeled.

Current Status:

Usery:

- Completed Work
 - Archery restroom, sewer line, and septic complete,
 - Demo of Restroom #7 is complete
 - Restroom #4 is complete.
- Work in Process
 - Remodel of Merkel restroom is in progress
 - Restrooms #2, 3, and 6 will be completed May 2016

San Tan:

- Completed Work
 - Trees have been installed around the new well station
 - New well cover has been installed over the well site.
 - Sewer connection from host site to septic tank is complete
 - Tuff Shed has been installed at Nature Center.

Estrella:

- Completed Work
 - Restroom #5 is complete
 - Restroom #7 is complete
 - Restroom #3
 - Restroom #2
 - Restroom #1 demolition
- Work in process
 - Playground improvements with May 2016 completion

Lake Pleasant/DOC:

- Completed Work:
 - New LED lights for Bajada, Pallet, and Scute loop restrooms 1 and 2.
 - Demo of existing playground is complete
 - Desert Outdoor Center front patio and plaza repair work is complete
- Work in Process
 - Lower concrete patio on the Visitor's Center
 - Winch anchor project at 10 and 4 boat ramps begins this month

- **Trades Crew:**
 - Trades Crew continues to provide excellent customer service to department customers.
 - In April and May, Trades staff has been continuing facility clean up at Estrella Park. Work continues on the irrigation system repairs, removing trees in decline, and installing parking stops at the Super Playground Parking.
 - Trades staff has been ripping the ET Beds at Lake Pleasant to increase evaporation for the upcoming busy season. The beds accumulate dust and dirt on the top layer inhibiting evaporation, slowing the process down.
 - Parks Trades staff has been repairing camping site driveways in Pallet Loop and Den Loops. New concrete driveways have been installed in the Pallet loop on sites 164 and 165. Excavation continues on site 158 to allow pull-through vehicles. Grading and granite installations continue this month on the other sites.
 - Renovations will begin on the RV dump station at Usery Park. Currently, the inside dump station lane is too narrow for most RV's. Trade staff has purchased the new water towers and site inspections have revealed the exiting station can be narrowed, freeing up additional lane space to accommodate larger units.
 - Trade staff continues to assist with the cleanup at the Lake Pleasant Maintenance compound to assist with hauling of debris and scrap steel.

- **Trails Crew:**
 - The Trails crew has been working with the AZCC trail crew on repairs and realignments at Estrella Park.
 - The crew completed minor storm damage repair and maintenance on Horseshoe and Butterfield trails.
 - In anticipation of the Maricopa Trail coming into Estrella Park, approximately 2 miles of the Gadsden Trail was realigned completed. The reroutes took out heavily eroded downhill sections and wash crossings and brought the trail up to Maricopa County trail standards.

- **Maricopa Trail and Trail Facilities:**
 - The following trail segments are currently being worked on: 9, 11, 12, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35 and 78.
 - Environmental Assessment continues on:
 - Segment 22 – Tonto National Forest – Bronco Trailhead to Scottsdale City Limits – 15.5 miles
 - The draft Chapters 1 and 2 were submitted and reviewed by Parks and the Tonto National Forest
 - The schedule reflects the assessment will be completed in June 2016.
 - We are planning to start construction in October 2016.
 - The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are on hold by the Arizona State Land Department:
 - 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.
 - Construction Progress:
 - Segment 9 Estrella Park – 3 miles – archeological survey complete, awaiting SHPO approval – expected construction May 2016.
 - Segment 9 Tres Rios – 0.5 miles – waiting for City of Phoenix approval - expected construction summer 2016.
 - Segment 12 Maricopa Water District – 1,600 feet – trail completed February 2016, fencing (required by the Maricopa Water District) completed March 2016.
 - Segment 12 Central Arizona Project Waddell Canal - 5.7 miles – SR303 to SR74 – to be completed in May 2016.
 - Segment 18 – installed rollover gate 4/9/2016.
 - Segment 35 Goodyear – 7.1 miles – completed March 2016.
 - Segment 35 – Verrado – 3 miles – expected construction fall 2016.

- Agreement preparation/negotiations:
 - City of Phoenix – Segment 9 – March 2016 Board of Supervisors approved, waiting for City of Phoenix Council approval
 - City of Scottsdale – Segments 23, 24 25 and 26 – in review, expected approval summer 2016
 - Verrado – Segment 35 – March 2016 Board of Supervisors approval
 - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation – Segment 27 – Formal revised application to be submitted May 2016.
 - City of Buckeye – Segment 35 – in review
 - City of Avondale – Segment 9 and Segment 1 – part of Avondale Master Plan
- Inspected and reported on Segment 20 Spur Cross to Bronco Trailhead condition; met with Tonto National Forest Cave Creek Ranger on guidelines for maintenance
- Performed maintenance by Maricopa Trail volunteers from White Tank Park
 - Segment 35 – White Tank 3
 - Segment 35 – White Tank Park to White Tank 3
 - Segment 11 – McMicken Trail
 - Segment 14 – New River to Black Canyon Trail

Park Operations Report

Cave Creek Regional Park:

- In March, the park hosted 18 interpretive programs with 226 participants attending, including 54 repeat attendees and two docent led programs with 24 participants and 2 outreach programs for a total of 64 participants. The highlighted programs for March: *Moonlight Madness* with 17 attendees, *Feeding Frenzy* with 17 attendees and *Wildflower Walk* with 17 attendees.
- In April, the park hosted 17 interpretive programs with 179 participants attending, including 40 repeat attendees and two docent led programs with 13 participants and 2 outreach programs for a total of 75 participants. The highlighted programs for the April: *Full Moon Hike* with 33 attendees and *Feeding Frenzy* with 17 attendees.
- Park hosts were treated to a Host Appreciation Lunch at the Adobe Park with pizza, salads, and dessert. Director Cardin and Operations Manager, Jenn Waller dropped by to thank the hosts for all they do for our department.

Desert Outdoor Center:

- Interviews are being scheduled for the interpretive ranger position at the Desert Outdoor Center. The goal is to have someone in place by next school year.
- Front patio construction is nearing completion with new front entrance doorway and patio covering.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- Estrella Park provided 27 public programs in March with 854 people in attendance. One program of note was a Dr. Seuss campfire, where the interpretive ranger read Dr. Seuss stories to attendees, games were played and s'mores toasted over the fire. Many families joined in the fun, as well as about 30 adults with special needs who came all the way from Chandler to enjoy this event.
- The interpretive ranger participated in a number of festivals in March. A new festival this year was the Avondale public library STEM festival. The ranger provided science-based activities for different ages and had the park's outreach critters set up for viewing. The gopher snake was a big hit at the event and many people learned about our parks and programs for the first time. Another festival that park staff participated in was the annual Tres Rios festival the first weekend in March. Fun family activities were provided and the ranger educated attendees that the Estrella Park, and all it has to offer, was right around the corner; again, many of the guests were finding out about the park for the first time.
- NASCAR was held at Phoenix International Raceway (PIR) over the week of March 7-13. Many RVs and other camping units camped at the Competitive Track on Estrella Park property. The parked housed 300 to 600 camping units per night during PIR week. A total of 3,170 units were counted during the NASCAR race week.

- A new park maintenance worker has been hired in March for Estrella Park. Alexandre Dos Santos brings a wealth of experience from his years working for the County of San Diego Parks.
- Neo Tribal Drum, Dance and Camp Festival was held again this March in the Navy Area of the turf. Guests enjoyed camping under the trees as an unusually warm March week occurred. The group celebrated different cultures and paid special tribute to Veterans and Elders. The group also planted some mesquite trees and is placing a bench focusing on suicide prevention in a peaceful area of the park.
- Estrella attendance remained strong in March. Park staff saw an increase in the primitive camping use over the month.
- Estrella Park and the Parks Department hosted an appreciation celebration for the Estrella park hosts and community volunteers on March 3rd. About 20 people were in attendance. Hosts and volunteers were acknowledged for their lengths of service which varied typically from 6 months to 10 years. One host, Gayland Lockridge, has now hosted at Estrella Park for 21 years!
- The studies for the cooperative planning of the wetland brine project continue between Goodyear and the MCPRD.
- During the month of April, Estrella Park provided 28 public programs with 393 people in attendance. The highlight was definitely the pajama party campfire! 45 folks attended and made s'mores, played games, sang songs and heard stories.
- Estrella attendance remained strong in April. Every weekend, camping groups used the Navy Area to enjoy primitive camping and group activities. Ramada reservations stayed strong throughout the month as well.
- The Desert Canvas Festival was held the first weekend in April in the Estrella Park Navy Area. Guests enjoyed camping under the trees, live music, painting, hiking and yoga classes. Many booths were there providing wellness opportunities.
- 300 Boy Scouts and leaders enjoyed the April weather and participated in a camping Jamboree in the Navy Area and surrounding ramadas in mid-April. Everybody participated in the fun-filled games. The scout group is hoping to make it an annual experience.
- A large 200-person Youth Camping Experience filled the Navy Area for a campout on the weekend of April 23rd. Many excited youth were happy to get out of the city for a weekend of fun.
- On Saturday, April 23rd, REI Sports had a fun run on the Coldwater Trail. About 125 runners enjoyed the park trails.
- On April 30th, Race Timers held a foot race on the Coldwater Trail for about 100 runners.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant offered 39 interpretive programs (seven docent led) during the months of March and April to the enjoyment of 689 program participants. The highlights of the months included the *Family Fishing Fun Clinic*, *Easter Island Egg Hunt Paddle*, and *Lake Pleasant's History*.
- The park hosted the annual *Cast for Kids* event which is a co-sponsored, community event with the Bureau of Reclamation and the C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation (Catch a Special Thrill). This unique opportunity provides youth with disabilities or living in underserved and underprivileged communities a chance to experience Lake Pleasant for a day of fun on the water catching fish and enjoying all things nature related. The event brings in about 400 people – including the families and volunteers. Various levels of fisherman (from professionals, to semi-pros, to just plain folks that like to fish) donate their time and boats to provide this service and participate in this magical event.
- *Lake Pleasant's Paddlefest* event was a huge success, attracting over 2,100 park patrons to participate in anything and everything non-motorized paddlecraft. This event is a wonderful opportunity to introduce newbies to the non-motorized watercraft world at Lake Pleasant, while educating them about safe water recreation practices.
- The annual *Dam Good Run* was held at the end of April to the delight of 418 participants. This is the largest number of participants ever to attend this 10+ year event. In addition, this year, two new route options were made available utilizing the new trails within Lake Pleasant to include a 26 and 40KM route. Special thanks to Aravaipa Running who helped co-sponsor the event and take the event to new levels.
- The Lake Pleasant Interpretive Ranger assisted the department at the AZ Game and Fish Expo in April. He helped man stations to include the fishing tank, kayaking tank and the Parks' booth, meeting approximately 1,300 people.

- Due to an oversaturated evapotranspiration bed (ET bed) at Scute Loop (within the Desert Tortoise Campground), the restroom facilities have been shut down while repairs are made to the ET bed. Portable restroom facilities have been placed in the area to minimize the inconvenience to campers impacted within this loop.
- The Roadrunner Campground playground area is currently being removed. A new playground is planned for the future to be installed near the Discovery Center to provide all park patrons an area to experience nature through play.
- The Discovery Center renovations are coming along nicely. We are currently awaiting the produced pieces for the interpretive exhibit and hope to see the exhibits installed during the month of May.
- The Lake is pleased to announce the successful addition of two new bald eagles to the area. The two babies were successfully raised within the closed breeding areas at Lake Pleasant and are getting ready to fledge. We anticipate seeing them soaring through the sky within the coming weeks. Special thanks to the nestwatchers from the Arizona Bald Eagle Nestwatcher Program, the Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Southwest Bald Eagle Management Committee for their continued conservation support for the bald eagle program at Lake Pleasant.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- In the month of March, 19 interpretive programs were offered at the park with 243 people in attendance. The most popular single event of the month was the *Moonlight Hike*, which drew 74 people. The Interpretive Ranger also worked with staff at the River of Time Museum to promote the park and support the local 4th grade desert learning series exhibit at the museum.
- Visitation to the Visitor Center peaked in March, with staff recording over 2,200 visitors!
- In addition, the park also hosted six special events this month, which included the Fat Tire 40, Mountain to Fountain, Hike for the Homeless, Daughters of the American Revolution Dedication, Beti Bike Clinic, and the Beti Bike Bash cycling event.
- April drew 209 people to the 16 park offered programs, which included two outreach events to the local elementary school. There were a total of three special events in the park this month. The MS 150 Bike Ride made its inaugural ride from the park with over 300 riders in attendance. There were also two equestrian events with 37 participants.
- Park hosts were treated to a BBQ Host Appreciation Lunch at the park with the “newly” retired park supervisor grilling up hamburgers and brats. Dessert included homemade ice cream and brownies.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- An amazing 23 programs were offered in March with 804 park visitors participating. Some of the highlights for the month include; 70 park visitors were entertained by what could never be the new *Rachel Ray Cookin' Show*, but Jean and Ranger Tish served up plates of fun for the *Desert Edibles: Breakfast in the Park*. The menu included mesquite waffles, prickly pear syrup, agave nectar, and mesquite marmalade on cream cheese; washed down with thirst-quenching prickly pear iced tea. Everyone who attended the show left with smiles on their faces and their bellies full of goodness.
- By far, this incredible journey for participants into the *Dinosaurs of the Desert* and the *Dinosaur Dig* through a paleontologist's eyes was the most attended event of the year with 208 kids! This number doesn't include all the parents that were WOWed just the same if not more than the children. Over half in attendance had no idea about the program until they arrived at the park. Ranger Tish and maintenance staff, Peter, went by the aliases: Doctor Stewart and Professor Jones (Yes, from Indiana Jones...how original. HA!). What began as a long helicopter ride back from the Badlands of North Dakota with a mighty T-Rex wrapped in plaster (and, yes, Ranger Tish did make life-size T-Rex bones), Doctor Stewart and Professor Jones discussed the life and job of a paleontologist through a PowerPoint, hands-on demonstrations, authentic and made fossils, and more.
- During the month of April, 21 programs were offered with 451 park visitors participating. Our archery and night programs such as the *Moonlight Hike* and *Animal Spotlighting* had superb participation.

- Liberty Wildlife Education volunteers always bring birds of prey that are real crowd pleasers with 75 park visitors for the Raptors Program. Drawing attention to special conservation efforts, each park guest is treated to an up close and personal experience with the featured animal. This year, Liberty presented a Burrowing owl, Red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, Turkey vulture, an orange Gopher snake, and a Gila monster.
- What can we say? Stargazing is one of those activities that anyone can enjoy either from their own backyard or right here at San Tan Mountain Regional Park. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have Tony La Conte and his team come out with their big 'scopes to conduct what Ranger Tish calls, "Disco under the Skies" with 150 starry-eyed park visitors.
- The nine volunteers who showed up for the trail work volunteer day to give of their time for trail work at San Tan are simply the best! We saw folks from the San Tan Runners, San Tan Shredders, Scouts, families, and senior citizens who want to show us through volunteering how much they love and value our parks.
- Staff and volunteers repaired 12 areas of fencing that had been cut in March and April around the park.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The Park hosted 17 interpretive programs in March with 297 participants attending and nine docent led program with 119 attendees. The highlighted programs: *Arch Expo* with 99 attendees and *Art Rock of Spur Cross* with 27 attendees.
- The Park hosted 17 interpretive programs in April with 160 participants attending and six docent led program with 55 attendees. The highlighted programs for the month: *Full Moon Hike* with 36 attendees, and *Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike* with 22 attendees.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- Usery Mountain Regional Park offered 20 interpretive ranger programs in March totaling 1,139 participants, and 28 docent lead programs totaling 440 participants. In April, the park offered 14 interpretive ranger programs totaling 690 participants, and 11 docent lead programs totaling 183 participants.
- *Stargazing for Everyone*, led by Tony La Conte, brought in 100 park visitors wanting to learn about the night sky. Participants enjoyed a slide presentation about the stars, followed by an opportunity to view the stars with a variety of high powered telescopes.
- Park hosts from Usery and San Tan were treated to a BBQ Host Appreciation Lunch at the park. Eastside Superintendent, Teresa Retterbush, 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 interpretive ranger helped out at the 2016 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.
- The Usery State FITA Field Championship was held at the archery range. 20 of the best archers from around the state participated in this competition.
- The park received and installed a memorial bench donation which was placed on Merkle Trail.
- Fuji Bikes hosted a bike demo featuring their new bikes at the Trailhead Staging Area. Park users had an opportunity to test out the new 2016 Fuji mountain bikes for free and chat with reps from the company about their products.
- Staff attended the Home Depot Earth Day Event at Riverview in Mesa to promote the park and provide information to local residents.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- The interpretive ranger and volunteers provided 32 programs, outreaches, and events in March with 1,164 attending. With March as National Archaeology Month, several related programs were offered including the popular "Detectives in the Past" which is a shared program in the library. The ranger also went out to the Waterfall Trail to teach about studying history with the "Trailside Archaeology Display."
- In spite of the wildflowers making a small effort this year, the *Weekly Wildflower* hikes were well attended. The yearly hayride and campfire on March 19th starting at the Nature Center had a respectable showing of about 240 guests. All participants enjoyed a beautiful night with lots of stars.

- March 12th saw the best revenue day of the year with the annual Mesquite Canyon Run taking place. A well-organized set-up took place Friday and the races were run on Saturday. The 325 runners scabbled over rocks and trails to finish the race.
- March 19th was the annual MBAA bike race. The park was brimming with campers, bikers and spectators all weekend. Racers and teams poured into the park all day Friday to set up their camp and practice the run course. Saturday was also a busy day with 471 bikers competing in the race, one of the largest numbers we ever had.
- On Sunday March 20th, Blue Wolf Events, LLC (promoter of the Prickly Pedal race) also had a few small bike races of about 120 cyclists. They are an organized group who are easy to work with.
- Easter was a busy weekend following spring break. Every ramada was rented on both Saturday and Easter Sunday. The weekend was unseasonably warm, but overall, it went smoothly and uneventful.
- Park staff and the department took time out to celebrate the park hosts and the community volunteers. They were thanked for their hard work with pizza, music and games on Thursday March 17th. It was a fun, relaxing time of enjoyment for all of their valuable contribution after a hectic spring season.
- Two Boy Scout troops conducted a cleanup project in and around a number of the picnic sites. Area 1 and Area 3 were tidied up by getting weeded, trimmed and raked in preparation for the Easter holiday. A small group of four young community workers helped clean up in the Family Campground.
- The interpretive ranger provided 32 programs, outreaches, and events in April with 588 total attending. There were several joint programs and school outreaches with the White Tank Library this month. Two school groups of 100 kids each rotated between the Nature Center and Library to enjoy story time and to learn about snakes, scorpions and tortoises. Earth Day was another opportunity to partner with the Library; readings of the Lorax and showings of the movie took place in the Nature Center while Environmental Services had a display in the Library.
- The interpretive ranger developed a nature quest (scavenger hunt) around the library building that educated participants utilizing the LEED features of the building to learn more about living "green."
- The tortoise enclosure is now complete with trees, shrubs, a den, and a saguaro skeleton. The new interpretive sign is also installed. The tortoise arrived on April 6th and seems very pleased with her new "digs." Visitors are enjoying her as well when she is not in her burrow napping. Many thanks to the grant provided through the AZ Game and Fish Heritage Fund.
- The Central AZ Conservation Alliance has been conducting a botany study in the mountains over the last several weeks. They are impressed with the great diversity of plants in the park. White Tanks has something the other parks don't have, substantial landscapes above 3,000 feet elevation. There is also some concern over the invasive plants found in the mountains in general.
- The Interpretive Ranger and the Park Supervisor attended a "meet and greet" of Site Stewards in the Salt River Region. Park staff hopes to continue a positive relationship with the Site Stewards and the State program.
- Paradise Honors High School had a cleanup day on April 2nd, picking up trash along Olive Ave.
- A number of the education and information displays in the Nature Center were upgraded for a fresh and improved look. Some of the improvements included the installation and hanging of the donated taxidermy animals and new slat wall. Park staff is pleased with the new look and have been receiving compliments on the improvements.

Vulture Mountains Recreation Area:

- The R&PP Environmental Assessment for the proposed developed areas in the Vulture Mountains Recreation Area continues to proceed.
- Park staff is conducting periodic site visits to the Vulture Mountains development area to walk and draft out more detailed placement for day-use facilities and campgrounds.
- Parks staff continues to meet and work with the Maricopa County Department of Transportation staff on the Vulture Mountains future road alignment for proposed facilities in the recreation area.

Hassayampa River Preserve:

- The Board of Supervisors approved the Memorandum of Agreement between the Nature Conservancy and the Parks Department to begin the transition of the initial 77 acres to the County.

- With the hopes of an approved budget for FY17, Park staff has been meeting with The Nature Conservancy staff in March and April to revisit the plans for the Hassayampa Preserve operations. Updates to the planning documents are in process.
- Park staff met with biologists and hydrologists from the Nature Conservancy to discuss the revised drafts to the Conservation Site Plan. The plan is being updated in order for the Parks Department to integrate conservation monitoring into the master plan and the yearly management plan.
- Director Cardin has been conducting several in-depth site visits with several Park Commission members to the Hassayampa River Preserve.
- Park staff has been conducting weekly visits to the Hassayampa River Preserve to observe the resource and its current operations and programming.