



Maricopa County

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: September 10, 2014
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 July and August 2014.

From the Office of the Director

Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell, traveled to Arizona on August 9– joining local elected officials and community partners to celebrate the positive economic impacts and successes of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as it approaches its 50th anniversary. Heralded as one of the most effective tools for conservation, outdoor recreation, and economic growth in local communities, the program is set to expire next year without action from Congress. LWCF has provided numerous grants to the county and throughout Arizona over its tenure. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, established by Congress in 1964, does not use taxpayer dollars. The primary source of revenue is receipts from a small portion of federal oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Following the media event Director Cardin and several other parks and recreation directors, along with local officials, attended a lunch with the Secretary. The lunch was an open forum session and the Director shared our concerns with current BLM policies related to the ability to effectively manage these lands patented to the County. The Director stated “our number one priority is to be good stewards of the land, but to do that we must be given the flexibility to manage those lands in a sustainable manner. Part of sustaining those lands is generating adequate and appropriate revenue so that we can reinvest in stewardship and recreation activities.” The Director will continue to work with BLM and Interior to allow the County more flexibility in managing patented lands.



The Lake Pleasant Visitor/Nature Center Reconstruction Project is underway. On August 27, 2014, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved the Cost Share Agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation and payment for Parks 50% of the project has been forwarded the Reclamation's Regional Office for final approval. It is anticipated that project design will begin in early October.

Parks would like to welcome our newest Parks and Recreation Commissioner from District 1, Denise Merdon. Denise works for the City of Gilbert's Parks and Recreation Department.

Administration

Welcome to a new fiscal year! It is amazing how quickly time passes. We spent June closing out another fiscal year and settling into our new digs at Lake Pleasant. July and August have been spent focusing on FY15 and getting ready for our park visitors to come back when the temperatures drop a bit. Here are the highlights from July and August, 2014:

Budget Status (through July FY15 close):

- **Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:**
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenues at 121% or \$167,839 over the YTD budget.
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures at 3.9% or \$13,723 over the YTD operating budget.
- **Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:**
 - Lake Fund reported revenues at 124% or \$193,486 over the YTD budget.
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures at 9% or \$16,063 under the YTD budget.
- **Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:**
 - Spur Cross reported revenues at 1% or \$248 under the YTD budget.
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures at 1% or \$147 over the YTD budget.

Finance Program:

- July was spent paying FY14 invoices, completing purchase card reconciliations and fund allocations along with getting FY15 purchase orders and projects underway. We are happy to report that we were able to get FY15 up and running significantly faster than FY14 while finishing up FY14 reporting to meet County deadlines.
- Finance program staff has begun reporting weekly over/short and deposit errors directly to the individual parks. We have also added a category for Souvenir Fund revenue loss. The intent is to promote accuracy and identify areas where training or assistance can be provided to ensure financial accountability throughout our staff, hosts and volunteers.
- A new report has been created in the Point of Sale system to help increase our speed when reporting revenue to the Treasurer's Office. This new report will streamline our existing procedures by cutting down the number of steps required to create the formal Cash Receipt Transmittal.
- Finance staff is working with the Office of Procurement Services to write a Scope of Work for several high dollar projects planned for FY15; fire alarm repair/replacement at the DOC; Point of Sale/Reservation System replacement; and septic grinder/pumper system for Lake Pleasant are a few of the larger projects that we are hoping to have out for bid in September.

Contracts:

- **Lake Pleasant Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):** The inoperable solar system has been removed by SOLID, the firm originally charged with installing the system. The initial installation and subsequent equipment removal were done at no cost to the department. In lieu of removing some of the concrete pads, SOLID has provided the DOC with a nice storage container. Not only does this provide much needed storage area, but also provides a screen for the existing air conditioning chiller units.
- **Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** Negotiations for the Use Management Agreement (UMA) with Estrella Youth Sports (EYS) for the Sportsfield Complex are progressing nicely. EYS has provided Parks with a nice conceptual layout of facilities that will integrate nicely into Estrella's Master Plan.
- **Paradise Valley:** The July 27th macroburst storm left massive damage to our two concessionaires – Casey at the Bat and Paradise Valley Golf Course. The storm took out the batting cages (poles, net and a few machines); damaged the Mudville course, rink and mini golf course. Paradise Valley Golf Course incurred damage to 97 trees in varying degrees from complete destruction to broken limbs, damaged the roof of one of the on-course restrooms and destroyed several shade structures. Altogether, the damage resulted in costs well over \$250,000. This was not only a financial impact for the reconstruction of the facilities, but Casey At the Bat's batting cages have been shut down since that storm, which affects the revenue stream.

- **Adobe Dam Regional Park:** The recent storms also impacted Adobe concessionaires. The level of water at the Adobe Dam peaked at 14.1 feet. The Railroad Society had over 2,000 feet of track that was "moved" and damaged; Phoenix Kart Racing lost the roof off one of the buildings; Wet 'n Wild had extensive damage to their shade structures and trees; and the rest of the concessionaires had minor damage. Altogether, the damage resulted in costs well over \$135,000.
- **Commercial Management Concessions Agreements**
 - Pending CMCA's:
 - One scuba concession
 - One Kayak concession

Human Resources:

- New Hires or Transfers:
 - Welcome to Charles Sizer, Navigational Aide Technician at Lake Pleasant (7/7/14).
 - Welcome to Ben Kelstrup, Park Maintenance Worker at Usery (7/7/14).
 - Welcome to Nancy Staufenberger, HR Specialist at Parks Administration (7/21/14).
 - Welcome to Alma Izaguirre, Park Maintenance Worker at Lake Pleasant (8/18/14)
- Farewells:
 - No farewells to report in July or August 2014 ☺.
- Open positions and recruitments:
 - Interpretive Ranger (Estrella) – Position offered and employee starts 9/2/14.
 - Contact Station Assistant (Lake Pleasant) – Position offered and employee starts 9/15/14.
 - Administrative Staff Supervisor (Lake Pleasant) – Position changes approved by Central HR. Waiting on a new Position Control Number to start the recruitment process.

Information Technology:

- Our new IT Liaison has now had two full months in her position and we are moving forward with several projects that were on hold while the position was vacant and training occurred. Projects include:
 - Assessing computer and technology needs for the department. All POS equipment is now four years old and may be eligible for replacement. In addition, a master inventory list is being created of all computers with related software and user information.
 - Review of all park phone bills and ensuring charges are accurate.
 - Review and update the POS/Reservation system; ensure website information is accurate and uniform between parks.

Souvenir Fund:

- Orders have been placed in preparation for the FY15 season. Several new items have been added that will enhance our visitors' experience in our parks. Some of those items are: new hiking items such as bandannas and hiking poles, fun items including chocolate boulders and science kits that are relevant to our environment, and several new book titles that cover birding, local history, and rock identification books.
- Work is also underway to streamline the product line for the parks. Older stock items that have been at the parks for more than two years are being phased out and replaced with new, fresh items. The goal is to bring in new product each year while maintaining our focus on recreation and educational products.

Volunteer Program:

- The Conservation Alliance of Arizona has committed to partnering again in the fall/spring on park volunteer projects. They will also contribute \$350.00 to each project that they assist with. Last season, they helped in not only finding volunteers for service, but providing snacks, supplies, and tools for the events.
- The Desert Foothills Land Trust (DFLT) recently adopted a segment of Maricopa Trail near Anthem. They are planning a trail work event that will take place on December 6th which will include the County, City of Anthem, and DFLT volunteers. They are fulfilling the expectations of the adoption agreement, as well as encouraging citizens to preserve and utilize the Maricopa Trail. Additionally, the Maricopa Trail and Park Foundation will be providing trail etiquette information for the participants.

- The Park Hosts from last season have continued confirming their return dates and new couples are submitting applications. Several parks are full and with only Estrella and Lake Pleasant still in need of hosts.
- *Hands On Greater Phoenix* will continue our partnership to support special project days by recruiting volunteers as well as leading trail maintenance efforts at White Tank this season. They have been a great help in recruitment as well as providing tools and gloves for volunteers last season.
- Volunteer Hours for July and August 2014:

	July 2014	August 2014
Total Dept. Hours	2,708	3,303
Financial Savings	\$61,065	\$74,494
YTD Hours	2708	6,012
YTD Savings	\$61,065	\$135,559
Prev. Year Month Total Hours	4,052	2,968
Prev. Year YTD Hours	4,052	7,020
Prev. Year Financial Savings	\$89,717	\$ 155,434

Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights as of September 8

- **Estrella Master Plan:** Progress is on-going. The overall master plan process should take approximately 18–24 months. Staff continues to coordinate with Estrella Youth Sports (EYS), a concessionaire interested in using the ball fields and establishing multi-purpose fields. A “front country” site visit was held July 9th and a back country visit is scheduled for October 20th.
- **Vulture Mountain Update:** Staff continues to process the Hassayampa River Preserve Action Plan with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which will set the timeline for transfer of the Preserve Property to Parks.
- **System Wide:** The refurbishment of all (~75) restrooms (RRs) for all the parks began in January. The project is expected to take four years and cost ~\$3.5 million. With the help of two “Job Order Contract” (JOC) contractors, staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system.
 Currently, 7 (all) RR’s have been completed at Cave Creek; a scope of work (SOW) is in process for one RR at Estrella; 2 RR’s have been completed and 5 are in process at McDowell; 2 RR’s have been completed at Usery; 5 RR’s have been completed and 5 are in process at White Tank; and 1 RR has been completed and SOWs are in process for ten more at Lake Pleasant. Septic pumping and necessary septic upgrades are also in process at several of the parks. Approximately \$980,000 has been spent thus far. Additional new playgrounds are being planned for Cave Creek, Estrella and Usery parks.
 Staff is researching various methods of refurbishing existing ramadas throughout the park system. Work is starting on additional projects planned for this fiscal year, including construction of electrical hook ups for individual camp sites at Cave Creek; a water “solution” (well or water line) for San Tan; and chlorination systems for Lake Pleasant.
- **Maricopa Trail and Trail Facilities:**
 - The following trail segments are currently being worked on: 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, and 35.
 - The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are in the final agreement stages for perpetual easements on Flood Control Department (FCD) property:
 - Segment 11 McMicken Dam – 17 miles
 - Segment 35 White Tank 3 Dam – 2.1 miles
 - Segment 35 White Tank 3 Outfall Channel – 2.5 miles
 - Planning new trails in the Tonto National Forest – Cave Creek and Mesa Ranger Districts, the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, and on the Central Arizona Project – south of Lake Pleasant Park, El Rio, Tres Rios, and the Fort McDowell Indian community.
 - Completing sign location and inventory
 - Installing additional signage.

- **Trades Crew:** The Trades Crew completed modifications required by the Town of Cave Creek to the backflow preventer at Cave Creek Park which allows the park to continue to receive water. They have also been assisting with septic maintenance at several of the parks. Work has started on HVAC upgrades and a major fire alarm upgrade for the Desert Outdoor Center (DOC).
- **Trails Crew:** The Trails Crew, with the help of the Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC), has been working on new construction and trail maintenance at the Lake. Additional clearances were received September 3rd from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) allowing work to continue.

Park Operations Report

Cave Creek Regional Park:

- In July, the park hosted 7 interpretive programs with 49 participants attending. *Archery 101* was the highlighted program with 11 attendees.
- In August, the park had 9 interpretive programs with 107 participants attending with 40 participants for the two *Desert Night Hikes*.
- With the large monsoon storm that passed through on August 19th, several of the trails incurred some damage. The Overton Trail was washed out between the Nature Center and the Ramada area; those repairs have been completed.

Desert Outdoor Center:

- A Kayaking program co-sponsored by Cabela's had 31 participants, a 35% increase over the event last year. Two more events are scheduled for September.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- In July and August, park staff and volunteers offered several bird hikes and open house style programs tied with the Wet 'n Wild tickets.
- The turf irrigation pump system continues to be problematic. Recommendations to be considered are to install isolation valves and air bleeder valves at various locations to prevent the extremely high water pressure from slamming into the valves causing line ruptures.
- Park staff has been examining and repairing fence line at various locations. This project will be paralleled with a GPS mapping program of the park trails to include locations of illegal trails and access points.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant offered 31 interpretive programs to the excitement of 595 participants during the months of July and August. Highlights of the two months include: Know and Go Scorpion Hunt, Hike-N-Splash, and the Sunset and Full Moon Paddle.
- The Lake Pleasant Interpretive Ranger continues to assist the Desert Outdoor Center in collaboration with Cabela's retail store to promote our "Get Wet Flat Water Kayaking" class. The course provides a free informative session at the Glendale Cabela's, seeing an average of 35-40 people per session. Folks that are interested in pursuing kayaking further can register to participate in a hands-on kayaking lesson at Lake Pleasant, reaching the maximum available attendance of 15 participants.
- Over Labor Day Weekend, the park saw a 50% increase in revenue for the weekend. Special thanks to the McDowell Park Supervisor, White Tank Administrative Assistant, and Operations Manager, for their assistance during the busy weekend. Great job Team Lake Pleasant!
- The 10-Lane Boat Ramp incurred damage over the July 3rd Fireworks Show. An act of nature (i.e. excessive winds, stormy weather, etc...) and a large number of boats being tied to the dock contributed to the cause, as the center core of the anchor for the dock gave way. Repairs have been made to the dock. We are currently awaiting a re-design approval for a new connection for the main anchor line to the boat ramp. Repairs are anticipated to be completed by early October. Special thanks to the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) for funding the repairs to the dock, and the assistance received from Boatlift Technologies (the contracted vendor through AGFD), Maricopa County Risk Management, and the Parks Department for their effort and contributions to help resolve the issue.

- In addition to the 10-Lane dock incurring damage, the boat house for the navigational aide operations also incurred damage from the recent storms. The Parks Department is currently evaluating the damage and seeking potential resolutions for the issues at hand.
- The AGFD performed an annual survey to evaluate the population of the Gila Topminnow fish in select areas of the park. The surveys yielded a thriving population of the Topminnow. However, the park incurred a series of severe rainstorms over the past few weeks which have the potential to impact the numbers since the survey was completed.
- The Lake Pleasant Park Supervisor attended the APRA (Arizona Parks and Recreation Association) Conference in Chandler. The conference provided very informative sessions about a diverse variety of parks and recreation related topics.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- During the month of August, the park held the 6th and 7th night rides of the summer. These gatherings of local mountain bike riders had participation levels of 154 and 93 consecutively which brought the summer total after the seven rides to 1,008. During the summer of 2013, the park held 9 summer night rides and set a record attendance record at that time of 902 riders.
- August marked the first month of summer programs offered by new Interpretive Ranger Amy Roberts. Amy transferred to McDowell earlier in the summer and has had the opportunity to hike and bike the park learning the trails, archeological sites and other areas that can be used for her future programs.
- August saw five new arrivals in the park's tortoise habitat, just three years after finding nine baby tortoises in the habitat. The 3-year olds have been moved to the outdoor habitat after gaining enough weight not be threatened by raptors.
- The maintenance staff has split their time between maintaining park facilities, fixing cut fences and doing trail maintenance damaged during the monsoon storms.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- During the month of July, San Tan provided 21 interpretive programs with 554 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the Scorpion Scavenger Hunt which attracted 110 participants alone. In August, the park provided 13 interpretive programs with 441 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the Perseids Meteor Shower which attracted 135 participants.
- Several projects are under way to help prepare us for the upcoming busy season. Projects include striping the parking lots, sealing the Nature Center floors, trail maintenance, fence repairs and building inspections are all under way or complete.
- With our monsoons coming to an end, we are beginning to assess the trail damage within the Park. Some landslide damage to the Dynamite trail was notice, which has been repaired. The rest of the trails will be assessed and minor trail repairs will be completed by staff and volunteers.
- The park staff, the Arizona Archaeology Society- San Tan Chapter, and a group of dedicated volunteers have completed a series of archaeological trainings throughout the summer. We were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to be led by archaeologists on some behind the scenes private tours and into some collection vaults.
- San Tan continues to have the opportunity to work with News Channel 12 on their Arizona Friday Midday segment to help promote park programs at San Tan Mountain Regional Park. Souvenir items, park programs, hiker safety, dog safety, wildflowers and the department have all been highlighted.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The park hosted eight interpretive programs in July with 141 participants attending; the highlight Full Moon Hike program attracted 31 visitors. The park completed seven interpretive programs in August with 90 participants attending of which 34 alone attended the Flashlight Tour.
- Spur Cross monsoon damage included the creek crossing on the Metate Trail. The worst damage is on the lower section of the Dragonfly Trail between Boca Grande Wash and the Jewel of the Creek Preserve with many fallen trees, debris piles, and washouts of the trail. The trail is currently impassable, but the Interpretive Ranger is in communication with the Desert Foothills Land Trust to see if we can combine our efforts and repair the Dragonfly Trail and Jewel of the Creek area.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- The park offered 14 interpretive ranger programs in July totaling 617 participants. In August the park offered 14 interpretive ranger programs totaling 732 participants, and 2 docent lead programs totaling 120 participants.
- The Usery Mountain Archers finished their Thursday night Archery league in August. The league ran for 12 weeks with 288 participants and was open to all ages; 27 participants were youth.
- AZ Game and Fish set up four live traps in our pond to get an accurate count of the endangered Gila Topminnows currently living in the protected habitat. This year, they captured 845 Topminnows with 222 being juvenile fish. The Gila Topminnows are flourishing at the Usery pond which will help reestablish fish into wild sites and increase public awareness of these native endangered fish.
- The Park Supervisor attended the 2014 Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Conference and received a \$500 scholarship towards next year's National Recreation and Park Association Conference in Nevada.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- In July and August, the interpretive ranger and volunteers presented 19 programs in the park with 715 people attending; July's Family Moonlight Hike was well-attended with 87 people. The always-popular Stargazing for Everyone was attended by 150 people despite the hot and humid August evening. In August, for the interpretive theme of Water in the Desert, the ranger presented a new program, What About Water? This is an interactive program discussing the history of water management and use in the Valley. The ranger also did several outreaches to schools serving approximately 190 children.
- Two trail races were held in July at the White Tank Competitive Track. On July 19th, 171 runners participated in *Gotta Run*, a fund raiser for a cancer patient. On July 26th, 263 runners with headlamps and glow sticks raced around the Competitive Track for the overnight *Vertigo Run*.
- The park supervisor worked with three Cub Scouts and their parents on a service project removing invasive plants from around the Nature Center.
- Park visitors are now enjoying four new information kiosks installed as part of the ongoing project to replace park signage. The major trailheads that received these new kiosks include Goat Camp Trail, Mesquite Canyon Trailhead (Area 7), Ford Canyon Trailhead (Area 9) and the Trailhead Staging Area.
- In an effort to eradicate invasive species from the park, maintenance staff and volunteers filled and removed 29 trash bags of the roadside buffelgrass.
- Maintenance staff and volunteers continue with projects such as roadside trimming at intersections, septic/leach bed brush removal and trail maintenance on lower Ford Canyon Trail. Staff has also started an aggressive schedule on the north boundary for fence repair and monitoring. Another project is inventory control and clean up in the maintenance compound. A rock slide at the pass on the main park road caused some driving hazards, but was quickly cleaned up by staff.
- Per the recent update to the White Tank Park Master Plan, the Trails Crew performed a recon for a new trail that will connect the Ironwood Trail to the Competitive Track parking lot.
- The park supervisor, ranger and maintenance staff attended the APRA Conference in August, enjoying many educational sessions. The ranger and park supervisor also attended the Arizona Site Steward Land Managers meeting to discuss improving coordination and management of archeology sites.

Vulture Mountain Regional Park:

- Bureau of Land Management's Travel Management Plan has been appealed; we are waiting on the process to run its course. Meanwhile, we have met with the Arizona State Parks OHV Coordinator regarding future planning of the site.