



## MEMORANDUM

234 N. Central Avenue  
Suite 6400  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2187  
Phone: 602-506-2930  
Fax: 602-506-4692  
www.maricopa.gov/parks

Date: August 5, 2008  
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners  
From: R.J. Cardin, Director  
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the July, 2008 Director's Summary.

### Budget

The county has learned that due to the adopted state budget, the county will be required to absorb an additional 46 million dollars in expenditure reductions. It is anticipated that this will affect the Parks & Recreation department's FY09 General Fund budget appropriation. Mid-year reductions are expected. The county has continued to move forward with its capital expenditure and hiring freeze for FY09. The department has submitted several requests for exemption to the hiring freeze and will have an answer on those positions soon.

### Superintendent Report

**Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA):** The Park Supervisor worked with the producers of Animal Planet for five nights, filming various elements of desert wildlife. The episode will be a part of "Nights" airing this season. This effort should result in a significant marketing opportunity for our Department and Cave Creek.

The solar oasis wetland element is coming along nicely with some 24 species of indigenous wetland flora established and thriving thus far.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:** Sixteen interpretive programs were offered in July with a total of 215 heat-hardy participants and 58 of those visitors were dedicated repeat attendees. Despite the heat, the Full Moon glowed on 78 adventurous hikers. Upcoming programs include, Wildlife Safari, Just for Kids – Monsoon Water Fun!, Animal Hide and Seek – Flashlight Night Hike, Exploring Desert Washes, Full Red Moon – Full Moon Hike, and various fitness hikes.

Day-use attendance saw an increase of 91% with 6,030 visitors, up from July last years at 3,151. Camping revenues also increased by 91% with more than 300 campers coming to the park, up from 157 in July 07. Revenue in July has seen a significant increase of 46% or \$3,253 from July 07. Annual pass sales are producing promising increases for the first quarter this fiscal year with 31 passes sold in July after 24 sold July 07. This summer's trend is showing archers purchasing more passes.

The Interpretive Rangers from Usery and Cave Creek are planning a collaborative program with the Phoenix Zoo that will be conducted at both parks in November. Desert CSI (Critter Scene Investigation) will be for kids and families.

The park obtained a new Gila monster from Phoenix Herpetology Society and it will reside at San Tan until the nature center is completed and ready for occupants.

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**McDowell Mountain Regional Park:** The Park was able to conduct all but one program on the schedule of guided hikes that had been advertised, with the July 1<sup>st</sup> resignation of the park ranger. The Ranger from White Tank Park led a Geology hike for 7 park visitors. The Park Supervisor lead three programs and one of the Park Maintenance Workers volunteered to lead 2 programs.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> in the series of Mountain Bike by the Moon Light rides was held under a partly cloudy sky and a late arriving moon. Over 120 riders enjoyed a relatively cool evening and appreciated the recent trail work to repair damage for a storm which had swept through two days earlier.

Park staff with help from volunteers have completed trail maintenance in several areas around the Park. Two culvert projects have been completed and will hopefully stop the regular washouts which occur at two locations on the North Trail and the Pemberton Trail.

**San Tan Mountain Regional Park:** The park continues to see an increase in attendance. During the fiscal month of July, we saw an increase in attendance of 54% and a 44% increase in revenue from this time last year.

In July, five programs were offered. So far, our most popular program for the month was Animal Olympics, which attracted 31 visitors. Other hikes in July included "Evening Explorers" black light special hike (to find scorpions) and "Better than Coffee" fitness hike.

Eagle scouts assisted with the implementation of two new benches along the San Tan trail near Goldmine Mountain. The group also led a buffelgrass removal project on the north side of the mountain.

The Usery Park maintenance staff is assisting with trail repairs on the Goldmine and San Tan Trail resulting from the recent monsoon storms.

The Park Supervisor worked with a representative from Arizona Game and Fish to monitor bat activity at the Goldmine Mountain bat cave. No signs of activity were observed at the site. However, bats were observed near the surrounding area. After four observation sessions during various times throughout the past year, we have yet to witness California Leaf-Nosed Bat activity at the bat cave location.

**Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** The turf area is now green and inviting to picnickers as we have finally been able to operate the irrigation system. Of course the monsoon rains have helped as well.

New interpretive programs included, "Backyard Games Indian Style", "Signs of Life Tracking Hike", "Desert Survival", "What Animal Would You Be", "Animal Olympics", and "Moon Walk With Moon Cake". The riparian area has also provided an excellent opportunity for bird watching hikes. Outreach programs at some of the Avondale and Goodyear schools have been introducing students to desert wildlife such as owls, scorpions, snakes and tarantulas.

**White Tank Mountain Regional Park:** White Tank Park showed an 18.76 % increase in attendance over last year. For fiscal year 08 White Tank was up 32% in revenue and down 10 in expenses!

**Lake Pleasant Regional Park:** The 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend had a better turn out than expected, both in campers and boaters, even with the gas prices. It was still not as good as the previous years. We had great law enforcement response from Maricopa County Sheriff Office for the weekend and it deterred the amount of illegal activity issues that occur during most major holidays. There was a noticeable reduction in the amount of littering, vandalism, and disputes.

Agua Fria Conservation Partners are still moving forward. They are scheduling a field meeting in the near future to develop an implementation schedule.

Bradshaw Foothills Coalition continues to meet on the Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) access issues and public education/awareness around Lake Pleasant. With the recent OHV Bill that passed they are excited about the opportunities in future funding for trail designation.

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**Desert Outdoor Center:** Aquatics Camp this year ended on July 10, 2008. Here's the breakdown (MB = Merit Badge or "regular" classes, of which there are five 4-day sessions; TTE = Trail to Eagle, of which there is one 7-day & night session):

YEAR	Total Scouts	MB	TTE	Staff
2006	229	190	39	42
2007	227	180	47	41
2008	262	201	61	38

This is a 15% increase over last year!

Friends of the DOC received \$2,000 from Central Arizona Project to go toward the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration that is being planned for August 22, 2008.

4 boys from Adobe Mountain Juvenile Detention Center participated with about 60 other boys at the final week of Aquatics Camp. Channel 12 News came to the DOC to do a story on Tuesday, July 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. They emphasized the partnership that Boy Scouts has developed between Arizona State University's mentoring program and the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC). The TV spot lasted about 90 seconds.

**Cave Creek Regional Park:** Summer program attendance is down as expected in summer (although still up significantly from summer 2007); we are focusing on early morning and evening programs in order to attract participants.

Cave Creek offered seven different interpretive programs this month, attracting a total of 37 participants in July. The best-attended program was the "Into the Moonlight Hike", with 14 very enthusiastic participants.

Planning for Nature Center Animal and Interpretive exhibits continues. Stucco, skylights, roofing are complete on Nature Center and stone veneer is nearly complete. Utility lines from building are being placed.

**Contract Updates**

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:** The Board of Supervisors approved the License Agreement with AT&T for access to their communications site via Microwave Tower Road.

**Grant Updates**

We have officially been notified by Arizona State Parks Board that the FY 2008 State Lake Improvement Fund (SLIF) Grant Cycle has been cancelled in light of the severe budget cuts sustained by State Parks due to the current state budget crisis. At this point it has not been determined whether or not there will be a FY 2009 SLIF Grant Cycle; therefore, results of our applications submitted for the Agua Fria Conservation Area Access project and the purchase of a Lake Pleasant Navigational Aid Boat will be on hold indefinitely.

**Coming and Going in Human Resources**

The following positions were vacated; the Interpretive Ranger at McDowell resigned effective June 28, one of the Contact Station Assistants at the Lake resigned effective July 10 and the Administrative Supervisor at Headquarters resigned effective July 18.

A Temporary Contact Station Assistant was hired at the Lake as of July 14 and has started the position.

Interviews were held for the Park Maintenance Worker position at McDowell Park on July 24 and 25, 2008.

Interviews for the Administrative Supervisor position at Headquarters are currently being scheduled.

The Contract Trails Development Supervisor, with the Trails Crew, is currently being recruited internally - county-wide, the recruitment closed on August 1 for internal applicants.