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Date: February 4, 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 January 8, 2008 Director's Summary.

### **Director**

On January 23 and 24 the Department participated in a workshop hosted by the Lincoln Institute and the Sonoran Institute titled "On the Edge: A Dialogue and Design Exercise for Public Land Managers, Local Governments and Developers on the Urbanizing Edge of Protected Public Lands." The workshop was designed to explore planning and development practices that can minimize disruption to the natural environment. A report will be issued in two to three months with recommendations for future action.

### **Superintendent Report**

**Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA):** The solar oasis project is near completion, the artificial wetland component of this project continues with staff researching appropriate flora and plant material sources. Native fish (pupfish & topminnow) will be stocked in March of 2008.

Staff participated in the Audubon Christmas bird count; a nationwide effort. Bird numbers were noticeably down, though the species diversity was surprisingly high.

Staff assisted Scottsdale Parks and Recreation Department with one of their Seniors Outreach groups on an interpretive walk through.

The interpretive ranger offered 19 programs with 311 park visitors in attendance.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:** The new Interpretive Ranger started on January 14<sup>th</sup>. He comes from the Desert Botanical Garden and the Phoenix Zoo with much interpretive experience leading school groups and adult tours at both institutions.

Staff and hosts offered 27 programs in January with a total of 581 participants. The two Toddler Cruises are cruising to consistent participants (30 plus) each hike and the Seniors Full Moon Hike came in at 96 night hikers. Bird programs are receiving rave reviews from campers and day-users alike.

A park volunteer, who is also with the Phoenix Weedwackers, is mapping the exotic and invasive weeds in the park for the first step to our exotic weed eradication project.

**McDowell Mountain Regional Park:** The Mountain Bike Association of Arizona (MBAA) held its first race of the 2008 season at the park. The race was run on the Competitive Track and done in the reverse direction. The race was conducted in such a manner at the request of MBAA and response

from the racers was very positive. The hope was, and results indicated, that reversing direction improved the condition of the track and gave the racers a new course to race.

The Interpretive Ranger offered 12 programs at McDowell and 4 outreach presentations at elementary schools in Scottsdale.

Park staff met with staff at the Southwest Wildlife Center, toured the facility, and discussed future joint projects between them and the park. On January 31<sup>st</sup> Southwest Wildlife will release two Badgers within the park at two locations.

**San Tan Mountain Regional Park:** Starting the New Year off with a bang, the park is seeing a steady increase in visitor attendance, and shaping up to be the new hot spot in the far east valley.

The programs continue to be a hit with visitors. The highlights for the month of January included Cowboy Poetry and our popular "Hiking with the Stars" Moonlight Hike. In addition, we are starting to create a buzz with our educational outreach programs among local youth and senior groups in the area. We recently provided our critter outreach program to 120 enthusiastic youth at the local Edu-Prize School in Queen Creek.

**Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** The Western Heritage Day special event was successful with approximately 400 spectators & participants in attendance. Park visitors had a taste of our western heritage with a horse breed show, Folklorico dancers, Native American band and flute player, the Buffalo soldiers, mounted shooters, and the glamorous Calendar Cowgirls.

336 park visitors participated in 20 interpretive programs throughout the month.

**White Tank Mountain Regional Park:** The Park has planned great events during the Super Bowl week. One is the, February 2<sup>nd</sup> event for the Luminary hike, Cowboy campfire and hayride.

Due to the recent rains, staff is conducting major tree trimming along the park roadways, and the waterfall is flowing nicely. On January 26<sup>th</sup> the Grand Canyon State Games held a successful bike race at White Tank, with approximately 50 participants who are youth and disabled.

Supervisor Max Wilson requested the County film the newly renovated Waterfall Trail for Maricopa Moments. The segment will run on Channel 11 in the future and possibly on the web. In addition, the footage was used at the Informal Board meeting on Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup> to recognize staff for their efforts on the trail.

**Lake Pleasant Regional Park:** Staff is working with Arizona Game and Fish Department, Forest Service and SRP to develop proposals in response to the growing concern over the Quagga Mussel. Proposals are aimed at preventing or reducing the spread to other critical Arizona waters (Verde, Salt, Gila and Little Colorado etc).

The department submitted an application to the Boating Safety Grant Program to fund a Carbon Monoxide Program at Lake Pleasant. The grant has been awarded and the Park will receive funding for the printing of brochures and signage.

**Desert Outdoor Center:** The DOC acquired a booth at the Bridal Fashion Expo, held in Scottsdale on January 5-6, 2008. This event enabled us to highlight the DOC's amenities and opportunities as a venue for weddings. Staff and hosts handed out brochures. This effort was aimed at increasing the number of weddings held at the DOC; presently we host about two weddings annually.

In partnership with the Phoenix Zoo and the Arizona Association for Environmental Education, the DOC sponsored a roundtable discussion, public presentation and workshop by Dr. Joseph Cornell on January 11-12, 2008. The roundtable was specifically for the newly formed organization, Be Outdoors Arizona, which was formed to increase the

amount of contact time between kids and nature. A public presentation at the Phoenix Zoo on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> was attended by about 70 people whose nature education abilities were enhanced greatly from Dr. Cornell's lecture and group demonstrations. The workshop at the DOC on Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> was attended by about 48 participants. Dr. Cornell's book, *Sharing Nature With Children*, is a blueprint for utilizing experiential learning to convey environmental and nature content to young learners. His appearance in Arizona was the first event sponsored in part by Be Outdoors Arizona.

### **Contract Updates**

**Lake Pleasant:** Scorpion Bay Marina held a dock dedication on January 17<sup>th</sup> and construction continues with a tentative opening date of April 2008.

**Cave Creek:** The Bureau of Land Management has approved an extension of their lease with Parks for an additional 25 years as the patent process continues. In turn, Parks is amending the Agreement with the Town of Cave Creek for the rodeo arena and parking lot.

**Adobe Dam:** The City Planning Commission moved to initiate actions to remove the Special Permits that restrict future development of Adobe Dam Regional Park. The formal process required of Parks is on-going.

**Usery:** Parks will initiate action required to enter into a new Special Use Agreement with Action Tower Sites, LLC and AT&T. Both desire access through the Park on Microwave Tower Road in order to reach their respective communication complexes.

The Verizon Cell site became operational December 28, 2007. This will result in an increased stream of revenue for Parks.

### **Marketing Updates**

Per a recommendation from Commissioner Randy Virden, Parks provided assistance co-editing the February issue of the APRA Magazine. The new look and publication format is due out later this month. Depending upon availability, Parks may continue providing assistance with future issues.

Parks submitted National Association of County (NACo) Achievement Award applications for Lake Pleasant Camp and the Youth and Family Hikes on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Coming and Going in Human Resources**

The following people have been hired at Parks; Brennan Basler, new Interpretive Ranger at Usery Regional Park; Alan Wattle, new Park Maintenance Worker at Cave Creek Regional Park; and David Chatfield, new Trails Technician with the Trails Crew at Durango.

We received permission and are currently still recruiting for; Trails Development Supervisor with the Trails Crew.

Interviews were held on January 10, 2008, for the vacant Temporary Contact Station Assistant position at the Lake but no one was chosen.

Due to the hiring freeze, all other positions are not being recruited at this time and all interviews scheduled after January 14, 2008 were cancelled.