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MEMORANDUM

Date: January 6, 2009
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
From: R.J. Cardin, Director
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.J. Cardin".

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the November 12, 2008 Director's Summary.

Director

The Director has been asked to participate in a University of Arizona/National 4-H Think Tank on "**Reconnecting Youth with Nature**". The stated purpose of the think tank is to convene a diverse group of some of the best thinkers around the nation to help 4-H strategize how to address the "leave no child inside" movement. The goal is to engage in a strategic process to help identify initiatives that 4-H should pursue to "fast-track" a system response to ensure future generations of young people are connected to the environment.

Budget

On December 5th the department was required to submit proposed budget reductions up to 20% throughout all of the department's funds, including the special revenue funds. Some of these proposals would drastically change the way we do business in the department. The department continues to lobby the budget office staff to allow our revenues to remain in the park system, and not further supplement reductions to the County's General Fund; however, we are still awaiting analysis by the budget office.

Superintendent's Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Park staff participated in an equestrian trek for Professor Ekkehart Malotki of Northern Arizona University to the 6L archeological site as well as archaic sites on Spur Cross. Dr. Malotki is a rock art expert.

The park supervisor coordinated an equestrian tour for the Director to see the regional trail and state trust land that could be brought under our management authority in cooperation with Cave Creek. Park staff continues to serve on an open space committee to plan appropriate uses for state land between Cave Creek and SCRCA.

In December, the park offered 23 guided hikes with over 120 program participants. In November, 20 interpretive programs were offered with 170 willing participants.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: Phoenix Zoo and Parks collaborated on *Desert CSI - Critter Scene Investigators*, a kids' pilot program that was a tremendous success with 85 visitors strong! The Zoo-mobile ramped-up the morning with a live animal presentation and petting of desert critters. Our Parks'

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rangers followed with walks on a "secret trail" discovering and discussing clues why certain animals call the desert "home"! Responses from all were overwhelmingly positive.

34 interpretive programs were performed in the November revenue month with a total of 1,027 participants with 157 repeat attendees. 42 interpretive programs were performed in the December revenue month with a total of 1,072 participants with 199 repeat attendees.

Annual pass sales have increased with a total of 459 passes sold year to date compared to 411 during this period for 07 reflecting an increase of 48 passes. 315 are regular passes, 43 are senior passes and 101 are archery passes. 98 passes were sold in December!

Usery Park benefited from the dedicated assistance of an intern at Arizona State University through the months of October and November. The intern learned from and assisted with interpretive programs and park operations in exchange for a semester toward her degree in Parks and Recreation.

Stargazing, What's that Bird? Gold Panning and the *Toddler Cruises* were program hits this month. The bird feeding station in the campground is once again becoming the hit this year.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: In the month of December, McDowell Mountain Regional Park received the annual donation from the Javelina Jundred. The 2008 donation was the largest ever made to the park and was in the amount of \$12,500.00 which brings the total of donations from the Javelina Jundred to \$52,000 in six years.

The busiest November ever for the park included a Dust Devil race, the 24 Hours of Fury, the 6th Annual Javelina Jundred and the Valley of the Sun Ride, an equestrian 50 mile endurance ride.

The installation of a self-guided tour of the North Trail was substantially completed in November. A draft guide is now available for park visitors to use when hiking the North Trail and based on responses from the user's changes will be made.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park joined the McDowell Preserve (Fountain Hills) and the McDowell Sonoran Preserve to have a three booth joint effort at the Fall Arts and Crafts Fair in Fountain Hills on November 14th, 15th, and 16th. Most of the staffing in the park's booth was done by volunteers from the McDowell Park Association.

In less than 20 days from starting her employment at McDowell, the Interpretive Ranger produced a list of programs and hikes for December. By mid December, the schedule of guided hikes and programs for January was available and the number had increased to 25 events.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: November and December were relatively nice months for the park. Despite the loss of one-week for the fiscal month of November 08, the park held it's own with an 18% decline in revenue and a decrease of 24% in attendance. However, the month of December brought about an increase in revenue and an increase attendance.

In November, the park offered 7 programs to the delight of 180 event attendees. In December, the park offered 11 programs attracting 395 event attendees. The highlight for the month was a three-program night bringing in 274 participants for our *Walking in a Winter "Glowing" Wonderland, Cowboy Poetry* and *Reindeer Games for the Family*. Special thanks to Usery for sending over their ranger and a host to assist with programs during the month of November and December.

An Eagle Scout and his team of 27 enthusiastic helpers completed a major road repair project of the old Olberg Road, allowing park staff to safely access the south end of the park. The group also donated and set out a bench for visitors to enjoy.

The park has been working with the San Tan Historical Society and San Tan Chapter of the Arizona Archaeological Society to establish an educational display within the San Tan Visitor Center. The park received the initial phase of artifacts and items. In addition, the park is working with the groups to establish a Pre-Historic Life Festival and additional archaeological/historical research of the area.

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Estrella Mountain Regional Park: The Nature Center is open for business!!!! Staff is continuing to work on coordinating the exhibits and displays that are needed for all three (3) centers.

Over 2,000 park visitors experienced the very colorful 2nd Annual Fairie Festival Celebration featuring crafts, theater and dancing for all ages. 62 interpretive programs attracted 1047 participants to the park.

The Gila River Clean-up was successful with over 40 participants helping to clean up the river area next to the park. An eagle scout and his fellow scouts have begun construction of a tortoise habitat located at the rear of the new Nature Center. The habitat is being modeled after the one at San Tan.

With assistance of maintenance staff from other Eastside parks (Eastside shared maintenance program) most of the dead trees have been removed from the turf area.

Cave Creek Regional Park: A *Spooktacular Cleanup* was held at Adobe Dam on Nov. 1 in conjunction with 'Keep Phoenix Beautiful' —approximately 40 volunteers helped to remove trash from the park.

Eagle Scout completed fabrication and installation of plant identification signs along the Slate Trail.

Cave Creek offered 11 different interpretive programs in December. The most well-attended program was the 'Coyotes are calling' – *Sunset hike* in November attracting 50 attendees.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: Interpretive programs in December (19), brought in 1009 attendees.

Staff is working on a media push and grass roots effort to reach out to local papers, hotels and community centers to inform them of park facilities and programs. Also, promotional materials are being prepared for contact expansion in the surrounding communities of White Tank.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Lake Pleasants staff expects a record breaking year for souvenir sales. Last years revenues for the months of July – October totaled \$7,824.45 and this year's same time the park has generated \$16,366.98 which is an increase of \$8,542.53.

Middle Men Production filmed a scene for their motion picture at the park on November 14th. Two large cranes with lights were stationed at the Operations Center to shine onto the waterway. The scene involved their main character, Luke Wilson going on a boat with several others and dumping a dead body in the water. Everything went swimmingly.

The Bureau of Land Management conducted a public meeting in November for their Travel Management Plan. The Parks Department submitted comments in regards to park boundary issues.

As of November, the following are scheduled events for 2009; Ragnar Relay – February 27, Dam Good Run – April 4, Honeywell Employee Campout - April 6, Scuba Adventure Day – May 2, DCB Triathlon - June 6.

23 Interpretive programs for December; including a new program introduced this year for the Holiday Season ~ 'Story Time' with the original 1939 version of "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer" and the 1952 version of "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer Shines Again".

The 7-crew with some help from park staff has completed the installation of the ramadas, grills and picnic tables in the Sunset Ridge Day Use area.

Park staff, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Central Arizona Project (CAP) is assessing the replacement of the Visitor Centers displays.

The buoy line for the Eagle Closure has been installed and will be monitored from December 15, 2008 through June 15, 2009. BOR is in the process of installing fencing on the eastside of Morgan City Wash the project will complete the enclosure of the area to detour off highway vehicles and live stock from entering the area.

The Agua Fria Conservation Area planning process is still underway. A draft of the plan for the area was submitted to the partners and all comments were due on December 5th. On December 11, BOR staff along with and Park staff

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completed a site visit for the environmental assessment process. A Partners and Technical Team meeting will be scheduled the first week of January, to discuss the planning of the public meeting which will be scheduled for the end of January or beginning of February.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC): To help foster environmental education endeavors, connect kids with nature, and generally assist the DOC move toward its mission, we are happy to announce that Be Outdoors Arizona (BOAZ) is officially up and running. A formal board of directors has been established and Rich Glinski, DOC supervisor, has been appointed to this founding board. BOAZ has filed for tax exempt status with the IRS. At its first regular meeting held on November 10th the various organizations and individuals that have assisted in developing the energy behind BOAZ continued to propel the organization forward by establishing committees and setting goals. A website that presents BOAZ's mission and goals and members will be online by January.

Annual Turkey Trot event was held the Friday after Thanksgiving. Initiated in 2004, this is an opportunity for people to hike the Honeymoon Cove Trail, which is usually not available to the general public. 28 people participated, which is about average for the event.

Staff designed and implemented a photo-point riparian vegetation monitoring strategy on the upper Agua Fria River at the proposed conservation area site. This strategy will document the current condition of riparian vegetation, and monitor changes to this plant community as human presence in this area is regulated.

Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant / Marina - A temporary Certificate of Occupancy was issued for the Scorpion Bay Marina and Yacht Club.

Buckeye Hills – Grand opening of the General Joe Foss Shooting Complex of Buckeye Hills is scheduled for January 16, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.

Grant Updates

An Urban Wildlife grant application has been submitted to Arizona Game and Fish for a project titled, "Living with Urban Wildlife Interpretive Displays" for each of our three new nature centers. Each center display will have both an indoor and outdoor component educating visitors on living with urban wildlife by a computerized kiosk, graphic-intensive banners and brochures. Outdoors, wildlife-viewing stations will provide benches, bird feeders, a spotting scope and water feature with native plants. We requested \$76,620 in grant funds with a match contribution of \$16,300 totaling the project at \$92,920. Notification of awarded projects will be in May, 2009.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The Park Office Assistant position for White Tank was filed, she started late November.