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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 4, 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 April 14, 2009 Director's Summary.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA) - There were 23 interpretive hikes with 318 participants. The Interpretive Ranger assisted at the Arizona Game and Fish outdoors expo.

This April's attendance broke existing records and exceeded 1,100 park visitors per week in mid-April. The new Dragonfly trail is getting rave reviews by the hiking public.

Park staff worked with Professor Malotki of NAU to access and photo-document several archeological sites.

Usery Mountain Regional Park – On a year-to-year average, Usery revenues are up 2.6% over fiscal year 2008. Annual pass sales have dramatically increased throughout the year with a total of 124 passes sold this month to bring Usery's total of 1,067 passes for the fiscal year. This is 32% of the department's total annual pass sales this year.

There were 60 interpretive programs performed in April with a total of 2,067 participants with 523 repeat attendees. The Brown-bag series and all kid programs are still seeing great participation, despite the increase of temperature. Stargazing was very popular with 350 night sky watchers. Hikers helped the ranger clean up the Wind Cave Trail on Earth Day Sunday and families had fun on Easter "Finding the Easter Ranger" for a Junior Ranger badge. National Arbor Day was celebrated with a Terrific Trees Hike.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park - There were 20 interpretive programs offered with 481 park visitors in attendance. Revenue for the last full month reflected an increase in all revenue streams except day-use which was due to the lack of wildflowers and the cancellation of the NOVA National Mountain bike race. It was cancelled this year because of a new format for the national championship series and lack of national sponsors.

The 3rd Annual Measure of Love 10K was held. The park hosted a NOVA Youth Cycling Foundation and a Boy Scouts mountain bike race for boys and parents with nearly 70 racers competing in the cool morning hours.

Maintenance staff constructed a rock kern to hold a 2" water line for refilling the pond.

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Work continues on the upgrades for the Visitor Center. Three shade structures are complete, two Saguaro skeletons have been located on the park and moved to create an entrance to the planned plaza. Materials have been ordered to put in electrical lines, wiring for sound and underground water system of planned trees.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park - During the month of April, San Tan increased revenues by 12.8% over April of last year, and increased revenue overall by 34% with a year-over-year equal comparison.

The park offered 11 programs to the delight of 590 program participants. Stargazing for everyone brought in 183 star searching spectators. We also hosted a school field trip for Harmon Elementary to teach youth about nature and the impacts we have on the environment – with 120 students in attendance.

The park supervisor teamed up with the Queen Creek Library to help participate in a program called, One Book AZ. The goal of the program is to bring people together for book discussions and programs by reading the same book. The program intrigued 41 visitors as we discussed the book *Hip, Hip, Hooray, It's Monsoon Day!* By Roni Capin Rivera-Ashford and showed the audience the San Tan wildlife (gopher snake, Gila monster and desert tortoise)

Estrella Mountain Regional Park - There were 31 interpretive programs which attracted 721 participants. Programs included school field trips. Students from Buckeye Elementary school hiked, learned desert survival, desert ecology, and were treated to our famous desert creatures with our tarantula, scorpion and gopher snake being the main attractions.

April was "eggciting" at Estrella with bunnies, colored eggs and piñatas. Revenue and attendance exceeded 2008 figures even with the rain on that weekend.

The Southwest Chamber of Commerce held their April meeting at the Nature center. This was a great opportunity to promote and showcase our new facility.

Cave Creek Regional Park - Revenues at the end of April are below last year on a weekly comparison of entry and camping. The souvenir fund at the Nature Center, however, has brought in \$7,500 in sales, just in March and April. "In park" interpretive programs were up by 36% from April 2008. Our best attended programs were "I Have Been Bit" which drew 40 participants, and a Bat program that drew 102 participants. Use of the Nature Center in conjunction with programs has proven to be successful.

Our first school to visit the new facility proved it to be a definite asset. 46 participants came from Stepping Stones Academy and enjoyed learning about desert animals in the classroom and then headed out on a hike.

Desert CSI was conducted at Cave Creek on April 4th. 36 paid participants came for the joint program with the Phoenix Zoo. The program proved to be successful for a second time and meetings are being set to plan the future of the program.

A total of 1,017 people took guided horse rides from the Trail rides concession in March, attracting an additional 342 family groups to the park.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park - There were 28 interpretive programs performed with a total of 1,533 participants which included 12 Out Reach programs.

Staff has added gravel to the areas near the Horse Staging area and Competitive Track to resolve the dust control issues.

Youth camp sites are being expanded for new larger tents and for some bigger groups that have been requesting the area. Areas are expanded where weeds and small bushes have grown in over the years.

A park maintenance worker at White Tank has been trained on Playground Safety and Inspections. He has inspected 8 playgrounds in 3 Parks within the system and will be inspecting the remainder soon.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park - At the end of April for FY09, the Lake has generated \$81,057 in sales. To give you a better idea of success, FY08 sales for the entire fiscal were \$64,147. This is a 26% increase in sales revenues so far.

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May 2nd - The Park is hosting the second annual Scuba Adventure Day for divers and non-divers where you can check out everything related to scuba diving. This event features an underwater obstacle course and navigation course, dive boat rides to special diving locations, an underwater treasure hunt and desert lobster hunt for great prizes. Dive shops will display the latest gear.

May 16th - Boat Safety Day - Find out how to operate your boat safely and learn about dangers such as excessive speed, alcohol, carbon monoxide poisoning, quagga mussels, etc.

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) announced on April 24th, that ADEQ, in association with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Arizona Department of Health Services, has issued a fish consumption advisory recommending that people limit consumption of certain fish caught from Lake Pleasant and Roosevelt Lake. The fish covered by the consumption advisory are largemouth bass taken in Lake Pleasant and largemouth bass and channel catfish for Roosevelt.

Lake Pleasant—largemouth bass:

- Children under the age of six: **No consumption**
- Women of child bearing age and children between 6-16 years old: **One 8 oz. fish meal per month**
- All other adult women: **One 8 oz. fish meal per month unless a doctor supports a higher consumption rate.**
- Adult men: **Two 8 oz. fish meals per month.**

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC) - The DOC staff and members of the Seven and Trails Crews are continuing to find ways of implementing energy efficiency and upgrading the habitats of the animals for overall general health. APS Grant Funding will be used to improve the energy efficiency of the exhibit's entire electrical system, cutting the cost by at least 20% over the next year.

Parks Wedding Subcommittee met on March 22 to review the DOC's bridal info packets in order to adapt this successful program for use in all parks. The presence now of amphitheaters and visitor centers for hosting receptions has increased the potential for weddings in County parks.

Lake Pleasant Aquatics Camp Update – Interviews for camp staff were held on April 18th and 25th. Hiring should be completed by beginning of May. The purchasing of boats for camp with the Fred's Fleet Fund has begun and boats should be received by May. Also, there is a newly updated camp website at www.grandcanyonbsa.org.

The DOC is being promoted as a teacher retreat venue – Letters are being drafted and sent to increase usage during summer months after aquatics camp. The target audience is school administrators which may consider the DOC for teacher retreats and related functions.

Promotional video – On April 14th and April 16th staff from the county communications department were at the DOC filming material that will be used in producing a DOC promotional video. Video will be 4-5 minutes in length and is set to be complete by fall of 2009. Target audience will be teachers, school administrators, parents and kids.

Arizona Academic Standards – State academic standards were configured for each class taught at the DOC. These standards will be posted on the DOC website Class Description page. In August the DOC staff will convene a meeting with Interpretive Rangers throughout the department to review the protocol for assigning state standards for instructional material, and to delineate instructional content of park programs needed to meet state standards. The goal of this endeavor is to make more programs attractive to teachers for bringing students to various County parks around the valley.

New DOC Class – A new curriculum is being put together titled Primitive Living Skills. In this hands-on class students will learn about the types of tools used by ancient people. This class is set to debut by fall of 2009.

Department – There are some Park Supervisor changes to mention; Darci Kinsman is at White Tank Mountain Regional Park and Don Harris is now at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

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Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant/Marina - Operation continues under a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy.

Permits have been issued for the remaining facilities under the initial development phase.

Requests for Proposals - Outstanding Actions Request for Proposals include:

- General Joe Foss Shooting Complex at Buckeye Hills – proposal received and accepted; Use Management Agreement drafted and sent to Buckeye Sportsman Club.
- Recreation Rental Vehicle Concession – no proposals received; intent is to republish.

Marketing Updates

This month, the department launched several low-cost marketing campaigns in an effort to attract new visitors and provide our existing client base with current information.

Animal Care and Control Mailers - During the months of May and June, Animal Care and Control will insert an 8 ½" x 3 ½" parks mailer with all of their license renewals, spay and neuter vouchers, adoption programs, vaccination letters and microchip correspondence. The program is expected to reach 25,000 households per month.

Social Media - This month, the department launched two social media sites.

- **Twitter.** Parties interested in receiving up to the minute information on Parks may now follow us at MCParks. The site has been active for two weeks and department has 60 followers
- **YouTube.** This site provides visitors with a virtual tour of the park system. Currently, there are 14 videos on the site; however, the department will continue to add more. Visit Parks at <http://www.youtube.com/MaricopaCountyParks>.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The Park Office Assistant from the Desert Outdoor Center (DOC) was transferred to Cave Creek Park effective April 20, 2009, replacing the Park Office Assistant from Cave Creek who was terminated effective March 30, 2009.

The Interpretive Ranger at McDowell was terminated effective May 1, 2009, and was replaced by an Interpretive Ranger from the DOC effective May 4, 2009.

Interviews for the Park Maintenance Supervisor position at Lake Pleasant were held on April 13, 2009. A candidate has not yet been selected.