



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

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 2, 2013
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 since the March 6, 2013, Director's Summary Report.

From the Office of the Director

Lake Pleasant Commercial Development - The Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued for a Consultant to assist, advise, and develop a concessionaire/developer agreement with Red Rock Investors LLC. The Respondent provided a collaborated proposal using all consultants who attended the Pre-Proposal Conference. The Evaluation Committee met and reviewed the response and determined that a number of scope issues appeared to be overstated, therefore, creating an over-budget proposal. The Committee developed a streamlined scope of work and presented it to the respondent via email and conference call. We are waiting for the revised response.

Due to sequestering of funds, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is unable to provide resources for the survey of the Commercial Property. Our intention was to process an amendment to include the 30 acre commercial property for phase I of the development. This will give the County, as well as the developer, the ability to receive revenue while allowing additional time for a final amendment and development of phase II. We have a meeting scheduled with BOR to review other options that may be available.

Administration

It is hard to believe yet another month has flown by. With the increased visitation at the parks due to our beautiful spring weather, work at HQ has also increased. Here is the activity for March 2013:

Budget Status:

- Financial data is not available until after March close or April 11, 2013.

Finance Program:

- OMB (Office of Management and Budget) is actively working to complete the Park's final FY14 operating budget submittal at this time. They have indicated yet another cut in the department's General Fund will be proposed, but no final numbers have been provided.
- Paperless revenue reporting is progressing with two parks actively using the new system and three additional parks set to begin in April.
- Electronic bill payment is also being tested at Cave Creek and Utery. This new system will allow the various parks to submit their invoices and other items electronically for faster payment; eliminating the need for park staff to drive to HQ once per week to deliver paper copies.
- As we head toward the end of FY13, each park is planning and making purchases for their summer repair and maintenance projects. This additional activity has been challenging for the Finance staff due to the Procurement Specialist vacancy.
- The existing chemical toilet contract expired so extensive work has been done to re-establish this contract for Parks.

Information Technology:

- The Department's new server was installed and set up on Sunday, March 17th. During the migration, connections from the department printers were lost to each user's computer. Re-mapping to the correct printer was done on an individual basis throughout the week. The Trails Crew printer and the GPS are still having issues. IT believes there is a compatibility issue with Windows 7/8.
- Five of seven new computers were replaced and set up for staff at headquarters during March. Some of the replaced computers were seven years old.
- ParksTechHelp has been very busy during March. Along with the migration issues, near capacity at each of the Parks' campgrounds significantly increases the need for fixes and updates in the POS system.

Human Resources:

Open positions and recruitments:

- The Department is currently working to hire four seasonal/temporary Contact Station Assistants at Lake Pleasant. Interviews were held in March and three candidates have been selected. Anticipated start date is April 15, 2013.
- The Procurement Specialist position at Administration has been filled and our new employee will be starting on April 1, 2013.
- The Project Manager position within our Planning and Development Division was vacated effective March 29, 2013. Work has begun to fill the position.

Volunteer Program:

- The Host Appreciation event was held on March 6th. 125 hosts came for lunch, entertainment, and socializing. They provided some valuable feedback regarding the event as well as their positions in general, which was shared with the Regional Superintendents. As a result of this feedback, work has begun to create a comprehensive host manual to be used as a supplement to their training. The Volunteer Coordinator is also working with the Operations team to expand the host annual orientation.
- The Maricopa Trail Operational Plan has been submitted for final approval to the Parks management team.
- Several members of the mountain bike community have contacted the department about adopting segments of the Maricopa Trail.
- Work continues with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) to allow Park's staff to take fingerprints versus requiring all incoming hosts and volunteers to visit the courthouse in downtown Phoenix. This will help speed up the intake process, allowing volunteers to begin working sooner.
- With March being the month of spring break for most of the schools, four different groups volunteered for projects within the system. Over 100 service hours were provided and tasks included painting picnic tables to pulling sticks and weeds.

Central Reservations:

- All park campgrounds are very busy and we have had at least two weekends during March where all available camp sites were reserved. Staff has had to turn away numerous customers due to the lack of any vacant sites.

Souvenir Fund:

- The souvenir program is winding down for the fiscal year with a definite slowdown in orders noted during March. The parks are fully stocked with product and as the season begins to wind down, reduced inventory is carried over during the summer.
- Work is underway for the FY14 product line. Bids for park logo shirts and other items are out and the search for new and exciting products is underway.

Contracts:

- **McDowell Mountain:** There is interest from a new concessionaire to put in a zipline at McDowell Regional Park. Access issue to the zipline site will have to be addressed, as well as the possibility of updating the Master Plan if we are to move forward with this concession.

- **Lake Pleasant Captain Zipline:** This Use Management Agreement has a portion of the zipline on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) property that is under a limited term withdrawal agreement (6 years remaining) with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). BLM would not typically work on this until the agreement is approximately two years from expiration. The zipline concessionaire has requested to move forward with this project, provided there are provisions if BLM decides to not withdraw the land in 6 years. Provisions may include a buyout based on a depreciated value of installed equipment along with an exclusive right for having a zipline at San Tan Park.
- **Paradise Valley (Bowtie):** In a cooperative effort, we have been working with Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center's (AAEC) consultant to configure access to our well for their irrigation needs without impact to the Paradise Valley Golf Course (PVGC), its primary user. AAEC hired an irrigation consultant and the study was received and reviewed by Parks and PVGC. PVGC is amenable, provided that AAEC shares in the cost of electrical, routine and preventative maintenance, and includes a penalty clause if water is not delivered to the PVGC site. The County will be negotiating with AAEC for the costs associated with the water; 1) fee for usage based on CAP yearly rates; and 2) Arizona Department of Water Resources Annual Withdrawal Fees. AAEC has also requested a Temporary Construction License for the purpose of constructing the fence, installing protective netting along the property line, and grading to compensate for the grade variations between the properties. The fence will serve as a boundary wall and the protective netting for errant golf balls.
- **Commercial Management Concessions Agreement (CMCA):** There are four new CMCA's on the Board of Supervisor's agenda for April 10th. It is anticipated there will be two more added during the month of May. There are a total of 33 Concessionaires providing the following services to the recreational public; services currently include, but not limited to Hiking, Biking, Equestrian, Fitness, Kayak, Paddle Boats, Sailing and Boat Tours, Sail Lessons, Jet Skis, Fishing, Diving, Boat Detailing and Food concessions.

Superintendent Reports

Cave Creek Regional Park

- The park hosted 27 interpretive programs with 348 participants, which included 7- docent lead programs with 51 attendees. The program highlights were *Wonderful World of Plants*, *Clay Mine Hike*, *Everyone's Getting Antsy!*, *Polliwogin' Story Time*, *Animal Art*, *Fireside with the Ranger*, *Animal Signs*, *3 Dog Nights Hike*, and Archery.
- The park had 50+ volunteers on March 22nd and 27th helping to spread decomposed granite in the day use area and around the picnic tables and pathways. The department's Volunteer Coordinator was out as well taking pictures of the project and helping staff and volunteers. In addition, an eagle scout installed an animal tracking pit on March 22nd next to the Nature Center. This new feature will help staff interpret animal tracking to our park guests.

The Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):

- The *Stargazing* event held on March 16th drew a crowd of 265 people. 70 of those attendees indicated they heard about the event from a flyer produced by one of the DOC Interpretive Rangers and distributed by our hosts to regional libraries and other public places.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- Estrella Park was busy in March with many hikers and picnickers. All the park's picnic ramadas were booked several weekends in March. Park hosts and staff continue to receive many compliments about the new trails and improvements to existing trails.
- The Rodeo Arena and Horse Operations managers have seen an increase in horse rentals, ridership and small events in March.
- The new Interpretive Ranger is continuing to integrate interpretive hikes and programs back into the schedule at the park. In March, there were 15 park programs and over 140 attendees.

(Estrella Mountain Regional Park continued)

- The Centennial Trail Committee continues to meet with the Park Supervisor. An Open House for the Centennial Trail 1-year anniversary of the ground breaking took place on March 15th and 16th. Visitors attending the open house were excited about the great potential in educational opportunities on the proposed trail.
- Restroom repairs continue with new wood fascia boards and paint. Plumbing failures throughout March called for several repairs.
- *Hike for the Homeless* was held on March 2nd at Estrella and logged 384 hikers. Hiking participants commented positively about the new trails and their ability to complete their hiking route all on the trails without using the park road. These fund raising hikes held at McDowell Park and Estrella Park raised more than \$90,000 to aid the homeless in the valley!
- The Mountain Bike Association of AZ (MBAA) hosted a public mountain bike ride at Estrella's competitive track on March 9th. Great spring weather contributed to the successful event for 305 participants excited to be recreating on the fast, post-rain trails. Many of the riders commented positively about the trail work completed over the last few months by the Department's Trails Crew and the Community Bike Group.
- Park staff prepared all month for an early Easter holiday occurring at the end of March. Historically, Estrella Park has experienced between 5,000 and 10,000 people attending a picnic or hike in the park on Easter day.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park

- During the month of March, the park offered 11 interpretive programs to the delight of 375 program attendees. The highlights of the month included *Introduction to Archery*, *Stargazing for Everyone*, *Rattlesnakes of Arizona*, and *Look Listen and Learn about Lake Pleasant*.
- Due to an unsuccessful bald eagle breeding season, the eagle closure will be lifted on Saturday, March 30. For the first time, two mating pairs established two different nesting sites. The Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) believes the reason for the lack of success was a result of one nest being invaded by a gray fox (eating the egg) and the second nest being fathered by a 28 year-old male eagle that is believed to be infertile due to age.
- A road impaction or sinkhole occurred near the intersection of South Park and Overlook Road; a detour was created to ensure the safety of the public. Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) responded to the incident and was successfully able to repair the damaged section of road. The cause of the road impaction was a result of a damaged or broken culvert under the road that was believed to have worn over time.
- The maintenance team, Maintenance Supervisor, and Park Supervisor successfully completed an updated boat operator certification training through the AZGFD. Park staff also completed a training course in defensive driving.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- During March, the family campground had an occupancy rate of 97.8%. The only open sites were an occasional site for 1-night only stays. In the same month, 80% of the six tent sites were occupied generating \$1,290 of additional income.
- McDowell Park hosted an additional four special events during March which included the 3rd Hike for the Homeless, the 13th Annual Desert Classic Duathlon, the 3rd Annual Fat Tire 40 and our first Rogue Runner obstacle course run. Participation in the special events held this fiscal year at McDowell Mountain Regional Park has topped more than 12,000 participants.
- In March, Trek and Santa Cruz bike companies brought their new models out and reported great crowds and lots of interest.
- The Interpretive Ranger conducted 21 programs in March with more than 611 park visitors in attendance. Program attendance increased 22% for this month over last year.
- Wildflowers were blooming all month and numerous visitors came out to see the flowers posted on our Facebook page. More than 350 viewers have "liked" our Facebook page.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The park hosted 21 interpretive programs with 201 participants, which included 6- docent lead programs with 72 attendees. A few of the programs included: *Archery Expo - Mesa Ruins Hike*, *Archery Expo - Rock Art Hike*, *Archery Expo - Metate Trail Hike*, *Rocks and Streams Walk*, *Wildflower Walk*, and *Moonlight Hike*.
- The presentation produced by the Interpretive Ranger for last month's Park Commission Meeting was converted into a movie by the Department's Public Information Officer and has been uploaded onto the Parks YouTube account for all to enjoy.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- The park provided 26 interpretive programs to almost 1,000 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the *Full Moon Hike* which attracted 220 participants alone.
- In addition to our monthly interpretive programs, San Tan also hosts two big events. *Find Me Green Lucky Charms*, our sixth annual St. Patrick's Day event, was enjoyed by over 75 participants. Guests were treated to a plethora of fun stations such as face painting, desert trivia, bean bag toss, obstacle course, crafts, coloring, pony rides, a petting zoo and so much more. *Eggstravaganza*, our sixth annual Easter event, is anticipated to draw over 200 participants and will offer the same activities along with an egg hunt consisting of over 1,000 eggs. Both events are a great way to connect with the community and offer opportunities for them to connect with the park.
- The park had three Eagle Scout projects completed for the month with a combined total of 150 volunteer hours. The projects included closing the three main spider trails near the grave site on the Goldmine Trail, removing 50 trash bags worth of Buffelgrass, an invasive plant species, and the installation of two steel horse hitches in the equestrian lot.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- The park offered 13 interpretive ranger programs totaling 623 participants, and 49- docent lead programs totaling 596 participants. The highlight of the month was the *Wild for Wildflower Walk* (81) which showcased several of the blooming wildflowers that can be seen throughout the park. The *Full Moon Hike and Campfire* (250) continues to be our most attended ranger led program.
- Our resident bird expert and park host had 78 people stop by her site during March and inquire about birds in the park. She teaches several classes each month on the *Basics of Birding* and *Choosing the Right Optics* and also leads bird walks on several trails throughout the park.
- The Buckhorn Campground was 99% full during March. The overflow lot near the entry station was moved to the A & B Group Campground for holidays, spring break and weekend use. Campers continue to compliment and praise the park's cleanliness and upkeep. Internet sites like www.rvparkreviews.com rate Usery Mountain Regional Park's campground a "9 out of 10".

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- The ranger and volunteers at White Tank Park held 13 programs and five outreach programs with 1,302 attendees. The ranger assisted other parks with six programs as well as providing staffing assistance at the department's booth during the Arizona's Game and Fish Department Expo held at Ben Avery. The second *Cowboy Campfire and Hayride* of the season proved to be a very successful evening with over 300 attendees.
- Another big event was the *Mesquite Canyon Desert Trail Runner Series*. These hardy runners do several races including a 8km, half marathon (13.1 miles), 30km, 50km (over 30 miles) and a 50 mile! They use most of the trails in the park and enjoy the challenge of the rugged and beautiful canyons.
- On March 30th, the March of the Fallen, hosted 50 military personnel carrying large packs and hiking the trails to raise money and awareness for the Wounded Warrior Project sponsored by Luke AFB.
- Because of heavier rains this year, the wildflowers are peaking as the best show in the last three years at White Tank Park. The ground cover was green and sprinkled with yellow poppies, fiddle necks and lupine. The brittle bush and globe mallow plants showed their blooms later to enhance the visitors' drive through the park.

(White Tank Mountain Regional Park continued)

- The family campground was opened for the first time this season on March 13th. It has filled to capacity each weekend since opening with additional campers moving into the overflow area. The campground will close again April 15th to finish the upgrades. Next season, there will be electric hookups at each site and a dump station. Additional plans are in the works to provide other minor improvements such as leveling the sites and adding decomposed granite.
- The Friends of White Tank Park are now an official 501c3 organization and are taking on a more active role in supporting the park with funding and community service.
- The park's Facebook page is doing well with over 300 "likes." The waterfall video posted this month received over 1,600 views.
- The first public meeting for the White Tank Park Master Plan Update was held on Wednesday, March 28th. The new Parks Commissioner, Dr. Robert Branch, and other community members attended the meeting.
- Hands On Phoenix volunteers worked hard on March 23rd by hauling dirt for improvements to the Black Rock Long Loop. They are scheduled to come once a month to complete this trail maintenance project.
- The ranger has recently submitted action plans and designs for two new Eagle Scout projects. Restrooms at Areas #1 and #3 have kept the maintenance team, volunteers and 7 Crew hopping this month due to problematic line constrictions. In addition, the water well pump went down; repairs were completed within a few days and the well was put back into service thanks to the 7 Crew.