



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

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 16, 2014
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 during November and December 2013.

From the Office of the Director

The Parks Department and The Nature Conservancy will be holding an informational meeting on January 23rd for the preserve's friends group followed by a public meeting on February 6th. Staff from both agencies will present the conceptual site plan (presented to Park Commissioners in November) and give a brief presentation how the Hassayampa River Preserve ties into future plans for the Vulture Mountains Recreation Area. Site plans for the preserve's planned entrance and visitors' area will be on display, along with satellite views with site plan overlays.

Administration

It is incredible that we are starting a new year; it seems that 2013 just started and already we are writing 2014 on our paperwork! The end of the calendar year also brings the Department to the midpoint of fiscal 2014 and we are going strong. Here are the highlights through December 2013:

Budget Status (through September close):

- ***Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:***
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenue 29.80% or \$462,605 over the YTD budget
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures 3.07% or \$62,356 over the YTD operating budget for expenditures
- ***Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:***
 - Lake Fund reported revenues 9.40% or \$83,139 over the YTD budget
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures under budget at 9.6% or \$111,757
- ***Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:***
 - Spur Cross reported revenues at 0% under the YTD budget or \$101
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures under budget at 6.71% or \$8,819

Finance Program:

- Budget preparation for FY15 is underway and most of December was spent working on the forecast for remaining FY14 and entering MfR (Managing for Results) information into the system.
- Finance program has been busy with the Parks gearing up for the busy spring season and making the purchases and plans for February, March, and April.
- Electronic P-card (Purchase card) procedures are ready and electronic submittal testing will be in January. If successful, all finance related paperwork will be able to be submitted electronically, saving the Department money in fuel and staff time (staff will no longer need to drive to HQ several times a month to deliver paperwork).

Central Reservations/Administrative Support:

- The conversion of engineering paper files to electronic documents is underway and a vendor was selected to complete this project. A great deal of work has been done to organize and box the files and plans, with the project being approximately 25% completed.
- Annual park pass renewals and requests for new passes continue to stream through HQ. The online and Cortessa passes appear to be picking up as we head into 2014.

Contracts:

- **Concessionaire Audits:** The Lake Pleasant's Scorpion Bay Marina/Lake Pleasant Marina Partners audit report has been sent to the concessionaire for comments. The audit did bring forth additional revenue from Dillon's that was not reported properly; however, the under-reported sales may still be within the parameters of the minimum payment due from the concessionaire. However, the audit found no income was reported for the casual boat sales at the Marina. The additional income may trigger revenues over the minimum payment. Experis Finance is currently auditing Victory Lane Sports.
- **Lake Pleasant Commercial Development:** We have been working diligently with CHM (our consultant) and Red Rock, LLC on the development of a Pre-Development Agreement (PDA), which requires Red Rock to conduct feasibility studies which will help determine the financial viability of the project.
- **Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** We have accepted in good faith, the Estrella Youth Sports response to the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) for the upgrade, management, operation, maintenance and expansion of the existing sports field complex at Estrella.
- **Adobe Dam Regional Park:**
 - The City of Phoenix and the City of Glendale, in collaboration with the Maricopa County Flood Control District, have begun the improvements to Pinnacle Peak road; widening the road from 55th Avenue to 45th Avenue, along with new storm drains, culverts, bus stop, street lighting, and sidewalks. It is a year-long project and will impact the traffic in this area. As with all road construction, there will be an impact on our concessionaires, which will have a direct effect on our revenue.
 - 500 Club - We are currently working on their 25 year renewal option.
 - Wet N Wild - In November, ownership of the facility changed to CLP Partners. CLP acquired the North America brand, Wet N Wild; therefore, there will not be a name change. Management of the facility will also remain the same. CLP is one of the nation's largest owners of water parks. We believe this will be the beginning of a great partnership, as they also specialize in golf, marinas and other recreational attractions.

Adobe Dam Regional Park's Special Use Permits processed for January through March include:

- January 16–19, Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society / Maricopa Live Steamers will hold their Eighth Annual Operations Meet.
- February 21-22, Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society will host a Boy Scout Family Campout for Mesa District Boy Scout Troop 301.
- March 9–16, Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society / Maricopa Live Steamers will hold their Annual Spring Meet.
- March 21-22, Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society will host a Boy Scout Day Camp to earn achievement pins.
- March 28-30, Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society will host the 2014 Boy Scout Webelos Crossover.

Human Resources:

New Hires or Transfers:

- Welcome to John Rose, Maricopa Trail Manager, who started with Parks on 12/23/13.

Farewells:

- Farewell to Amber Conant, Contact Station Assistant (Lake Pleasant), effective 12/29/13.
- Farewell to John Capes, Interpretive Ranger (Desert Outdoor Center), effective 1/3/14.

Open positions and recruitments:

- Contact Station Assistant (Lake Pleasant) – Interviews pending.
- General Maintenance Worker (Lake Pleasant) – Interviews pending
- Navigational Aide (Lake Pleasant) – Interviews scheduled for 1/10/14
- Two temporary Contact Station Assistant positions are currently vacant and under review.

Information Technology:

- Replacement of older and outdated computer equipment continues. This project will be completed by the end of the fiscal year and includes new mobile fee enforcement units to assist the parks with fee collection during holiday and busy weekends. This has been a challenge during December as several computers have simply stopped working and we have had to shift orders around to get new computers out to these locations.
- The County has signed a new contract for copiers/scanners/printers. Staff is working with the Finance Department to coordinate IT/IP addresses and installation/delivery/set up for the new units. The installation is expected to be completed in January.
- The Point of Sale/Reservation System developed multiple credit card processing errors during the holidays and much time was devoted to working with the vendor to troubleshoot the errors to find a resolution.

Volunteer Program:

- November's volunteer event took place on November 16th celebrating "National Family Volunteer Day" at White Tank Mountain Regional Park. Fifty volunteers assisted in painting 30 trash bins and working on Black Rock Trail.
- December's Volunteer event was "County Cares Day." Thirty-five volunteers assisted on December 14th at Estrella by planting 40 native trees around the Nature Center. Additionally, the volunteers pulled several large Salt Cedar trees from the area. Hands On Greater Phoenix loaned several tools as well as work gloves for the day. The Saguaro High baseball team also participated.
- Most of the Park Hosts returned in November/December for the season. They have been incredibly helpful and were ready to get started upon arrival.
- Volunteer Hours for December 2013:

	December 2012	December 2013
Total Dept. Hours	13,046	9,194
Financial Savings*	\$275,782	\$203,560
YTD Hours	34,968	35,644
YTD Financial Savings	\$767,897	\$789,159
*Value = \$22.14 per hour		

Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights

- **Parks would like to welcome** John Rose as the new Maricopa Trail Manager! John is a Registered Land Surveyor (RLS) who has just retired after 34 years with the Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) where he served as the Survey Chief. Through a cooperative agreement with MCDOT, John has already worked extensively on the Maricopa Trail and has hiked large portions of it. John has a wealth of diverse experience, including a decorated military career and a lengthy tenure as a professor at Phoenix College. John is an Arizona native and an avid hiker. Ask him about surveying in Antarctica when you see him! Welcome to Parks John! We are glad you are here!
- **Adobe:** The emergency repair of the waterline leak in 51st Avenue (which feeds the 500 Club Golf Course at Adobe Park) was completed in December. This major repair was accomplished by a contractor under a City of Phoenix permit and involved road closures and timed water outages. Staff worked closely with the 500 Club during this critical time when they were in the process of reseeding their winter grass.
- **White Tank - Water Supply System Upgrade Project:** This project will update and improve the potable well and booster pump station that services both the park and the library. The job has been advertised, bid and awarded. A pre-construction conference was held October 17, 2013. The contractor is in the process of getting the technical submittals approved. Construction is expected to start in February. The Trades Crew has completed the new concrete slab and roof required to protect the new equipment.

- **White Tank - RV Dump Station Project:** This project will construct a new waste disposal (dump) station for camper and recreational vehicle (RV) use. The project has been advertised, bid, and awarded. A pre-construction conference was held December 19, 2013. Construction is expected to start in February. The park staff has completed relocating selected saguaros.
- **White Tank Master Plan:** Staff made a presentation to the Parks Commission on November 12th. The Commission will be voting at the January 21st meeting to recommend approval to the Board of Supervisors.
- **Vulture Mountain Update:** Staff is continuing to process the Hassayampa River Preserve Action Plan with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which will set the timeline for transfer of the Preserve Property to Parks. Staff met with the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad representative on December 13, 2014. BNSF is re-considering a previously submitted application for a trail crossing underneath one of BNSF's trestle-bridges.
- **System Wide:** Work began January 13, 2014, to refurbish restroom #10 at McDowell Park. Scopes of Work (SOW) have been completed for seven restrooms at Cave Creek Park, one restroom at Lake Pleasant, four restrooms at Usery Park, five restrooms at White Tank Park, and an additional restroom at McDowell Park. Staff is working with two "Job Order Contract" (JOC) contractors to obtain quotes. Staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system. New playgrounds have been installed at Cave Creek, McDowell, Usery and White Tank Parks. A new playground is currently being installed at Estrella Park. Staff is continuing "clean-up" work, including playground signing and repainting of shade sail structures.
- **Trails Crew:** Completed the brand new Escondido Trail, 6.2 miles in length, at McDowell Park. The trail has been getting rave reviews from hikers, bikers and equestrian users. The trail has been GPS'd and added to the park's trails map.

Superintendent Reports

Cave Creek Regional Park

- In November, the park hosted 16 interpretive programs with 231 participants attending, which included 44 repeat attendees. Two-ocent lead programs were offered with 56 attendees. The program highlights for the month were *Clay Mine Adventure* with 70 attendees and *Venomous Creatures* with 47 attendees.
- In December, the park hosted 20 interpretive programs with 200 participants attending, which included 20 repeat attendees. Three-ocent lead programs were offered with 24 attendees. The program highlights included *Desert Denizen's*, *Feeding Frenzy*, *Hike*, *Clay Mine*, *Archery 101a*, and *Backyard Birding*.
- The annual *Cactus Classic Mountain Bike Race* was held with 270 attendees, utilizing roads in the Town of Cave Creek and continued to Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, Maricopa Trail and Cave Creek Regional Park then back to the Town.
- The first annual *Luminaria Run* had a very successful 1st year event with 448 participants.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- Estrella Park hosted a couple of large regional high school cross country track meets in November. The two events drew in large crowds of participants and spectators gathering 800 participants and 1,200 spectators.
- The Phoenix International Raceway (PIR) held a NASCAR race on the November 9th weekend.
- November /December Interpretive Programs - Attendance for interpretive programs improved this month, with over 300 attendees for 35 programs offered during the two months. *Stargazing for Everyone* proved to be the most popular program with 125 participants during the holiday season. The ranger is visiting local hotels and apartment complexes with park and program information in an effort to boost program attendance.
- Two Eagle Scout projects have been scheduled to be completed by February.
- The horse concession operation is up and running again for the second season in Estrella Park. Horse ride rentals have been fair. Wagon Rides and Cowboy Cookouts at the event area are growing in popularity.
- The Majestic Car Club held a toy drive at Ramada #9 in December drawing 200 people which provided toys for many kids in need.
- Park staff, volunteers, and hosts planted more trees in the park during December. Approximately 250 trees have been plated year-to-date.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant offered 25 combined interpretive programs during the months of November and December with roughly 373 program participants. Highlights of the month included the *Pipeline Canyon Hike*, *Waddell Dam Full Moon Paddle*, *Bald Eagle Paddle*, and *Reindeer Stories-N-Smores*.
- Congratulations to Kyle Randall, a Navigational Aide Technician at Lake Pleasant, for completing the very difficult and advanced stress rescue dive course training. By completing the training, Kyle is now certified as a Master Diver.
- As of November 2013, Maricopa County Parks & Recreation and Lake Pleasant Regional Park officially relinquished facility management oversight back to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the Emery Henderson Trailhead.
- The current water level at Lake Pleasant is roughly at 73% full with an elevation of approximately 1,677 feet. We anticipate gaining a total of 11 feet over the next few months to reach the peak for the season.
- The Arizona Game and Fish Department is currently working on establishing a new and improved boat ramp within the Agua Fria Conservation Area located off of Table Mesa Road. The ramp will be made available/accessible for boaters to utilize on select days (i.e. weekends) when the water level reaches the elevation for the boat ramp and when the bald eagle closure is no longer in effect.
- Officials from the Arizona Game and Fish Department were in the park the end of December to monitor the bald eagles in the arm of the Agua Fria Conservation Area. A nesting pair was observed displaying typical activity patterns for this time of year at the main nesting site. The second nest site did not have the same type of activity observed at it...staff is still hopeful.
- Sears Holding Corporation conducted a two-day photo shoot special event at Lake Pleasant for an upcoming summer advertisement. The models were put to the test to act like it was a warm, sunny Arizona day, even though the actual weather conditions were less than ideal with wind, rain, and daytime temperatures in the 50's.
- Special thanks to the Trades Crew for assisting the Lake with several impromptu projects to include responding quickly to a water leak along South Park Road.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- The park hosted the 3rd annual *McDowell Mountain Frenzy* and participation was up again for the 3rd straight year with 356 participants. The 6th *Dawn to Dusk* mountain bike race was held with 540 participants. This race is one of the most popular events held at the park and has sold out for the last five years. The park also hosted the *12-Hours of Fury* endurance mountain bike event with over 350 event participants.
- Two equestrian events returned to the park in November with the *American Competitive Trail Horse Association* and the *Lead, Follow or Get Out of My Way* endurance ride taking place.
- The McDowell Park interpretive ranger offered 17 programs and had 179 participants in November. The park offered 13 ranger lead programs in December attracting nearly 150 participants of which 65 were return participants. Liberty Wildlife released two Great Horned Owls in the park with over 40 observers watching this very special moment.
- The park has been receiving very positive reviews on the new 6.2 mile Escondido Trail that was recently completed by the Trails Crew. The trail connects the Four-Peak Staging Area with the northeast area of the park along the eastern border.
- MBAA (Mountain Bike Association of AZ) members, members of the McDowell Mountain Conservancy, and other volunteer mountain bikers and hosts all came out to put in 84 hours of trail work on the Pemberton and Scenic Trails.
- The park had a booth at the Fountain Hills Fall Arts and Crafts Fair which had an attendance of nearly 300,000 over 3 days. The booth was staffed with park volunteers and McDowell Park Association members.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- During the month of November, San Tan provided 13 interpretive programs with 530 program participants. One of the highlights of the month included a Boy Scout Day Camp which provided an opportunity for over 250 scouts to earn their badges during multiple archery 101 classes. Another fun event was the ranger-led field trip for 93 participants for the Benjamin Franklin Charter School's 6th grade students and chaperones.

- During the month of December, San Tan provided 16 interpretive programs for 802 program participants. The highlights of the month included a desert survival program led by the park supervisor for 45 *Sizzling Seniors* and 25 students from the Queen Creek Unified District in a ranger-led wildlife program.
- The 6th annual *San Tan Wonderland* event was a huge success with roughly 408 people. Event goers were treated to a number of fun activities such as reindeer games, arts and crafts, wagon rides, pony rides, a self-guided luminary hike, pictures with Santa and so much more.
- Two Eagle Scout projects were completed. One project was led by Scout B. Udall who had an innovative idea for offering an educational opportunity; by measuring the growth rate of popular cacti, our park visitors had a better understanding of the development of our native sonoran vegetation. The combined Eagle Scout projects contributed 150 volunteer hours for the month.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- In November, the park hosted 13 interpretive programs with 177 participants attending. Six docent-led programs were offered with 60 attendees. The program highlights for the month included *Spur Cross Flora Talk* with 23 attendees and *Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike* with 26 in attendance.
- In December, the park hosted 20 interpretive programs with 174 participants attending. Five docent-led programs were offered with 75 attendees. The program highlights included *Spur Cross Flora Talk*, *Rock Art of Spur Cross*, *Friday Fitness Walk*, *Elephant Mountain Fortress*, *Sunrise Equinox Walk*, and the *Dragonfly Trail Hike*.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- The park offered 13 interpretive ranger programs in November totaling 563 participants and 30 docent led programs totaling 479 participants. In December, the park offered 19 interpretive ranger programs totaling 726 participants and 37 docent led programs totaling 371 participants. Ranger B shared some amazing facts about wolves to 130 guests in his one-hour "All About Wolves" brown bag presentation. Participants brought in their favorite snacks and enjoyed an evening education lecture in the nature center.
- The park collaborated with Maricopa County's Animal Care & Control Department to offer a program that would bring attention to adoptable animals and county parks. In November, the agencies launched a *Wag & Walk Adoption Hike* program at the park. The program is designed to provide hikers the opportunity to meet potential canine hiking companions while enjoying one of the county's most beautiful parks. The one-mile trek takes participants, human and canine, on a wide, barrier-free path along the Merkle Trail.
- The annual *Pass Mountain Trail Run* (Desert Runner Trail Series) was held with 314 participants. The park hosted the first orienteering *Adventure Race* which had limited success with 22 participants. Teams of two hiked and biked numerous trails searching for orienteering flags that were strategically placed around the park. The teams had a great time and Adrenaline Adventure Sports looks to increase these numbers in the future.
- The International Round Spot Shoot, Ham & Turkey 3D Shoot, and the Field-Hunter Round archery tournaments were ran at the archery range in November bringing in 52 archers from around the valley to participate.
- Two Eagle Scout projects were completed. One scout painted all of the ramadas at Area 10 and Merkle. Another scout planted plants at the pond parking lot to make the trailhead more inviting.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- November/December Interpretive Programs: Park staff and volunteers presented 18 programs with attendance totaling 409 people. In addition, two school outreach programs were presented to a total of 38 students. Park staff attended 2 community outreach events, reaching a total of 78 people.
- Park staff also participated in the *National Take a Hike Day*, which coincided with a park visit from County Supervisor Clint Hickman. *Take a Hike Day* activities included a guided hike on the Waterfall Trail led by park educator Shelley Rasmussen and a booth featuring various animals from the Nature Center. Additional booths were set up with hand outs and goodies by the department PIO, the White Tank Library, Friends of White Tank Park and Friends of the Library. Twelve people attended the hike and 116 people stopped by the table to chat with the ranger and look at the animals.
- Holiday events included the *Black Rock Luminary Walk* and *Outdoor Adventure Family Day*. The cold weather and holiday shopping didn't keep people away with a total of 225 people attending the luminary

walk! Our first *Outdoor Adventure Family Day* was a huge success with estimates of 3,000 people attending! A variety of activities and hikes were enjoyed by all. Visits by Liberty Wildlife and the Wildlife World Zoo as well as archery programs presented by the visiting Usery Park ranger were especially popular. Ninety-four children participated in an Adventure Passport activity to earn Junior Park Ranger badges.

- Race Timers had their first Cactus Flower Women's race on December 21st. It was a cold, but beautiful morning for the 50 women that braved and enjoyed the trails.
- Other events included the Arizona High School Cycling League holding their first race on November 10th. About 30 participants camped at the track and overall, it was a busy but successful event. Trek Bicycle also had their annual popular Bike Demo Day the first weekend of November.
- With the improvements of water and electric upgrades and the additional site preparation, the family campground opened November 22, 2013. Thanksgiving weekend saw the campground full and overflow camping was utilized for the first time ever in the fall.
- On November 18th, the Trails Crew provided a workshop to the park hosts and volunteers on proper trail maintenance. This training included 1 hour of classroom followed by a few hours of actual trail work. About a ½ mile of Mesquite Canyon Trail was repaired by the 18 people that took the class. These volunteers are now doing much needed repair around the park. With the assistance of the volunteer group, Hands On, the Black Rock Loop has been completely redone and is much more visitor friendly. Parts of Mule Deer, Ford Canyon, Wildlife and South Trails have been improved as well.
- With the heavy rains this year, the road cut in the hill above Area 3 has seen loose rock and rock slides. Maricopa County Department of Transportation has been surveying the road and cliffs to come up with a safe solution to the rock fall.

Vulture Mountain Regional Park:

- The Travel Management Plan is due this week to the Parks Department from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This allows for a final review to enable BLM to approve the master plan.