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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 10, 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 May and June 2014.

From the Office of the Director

A new trail planning effort is underway. The Sun Corridor Trail Project is a multi-agency effort led by County, City, State and Federal entities and non-profit organizations, to link together some of the most scenic and significant regional trails in the southwestern United States along a burgeoning economic, transportation, and tourism corridor.

What started as a vision to connect the largest regional trail in Maricopa County, the Maricopa Trail, with the largest regional trail in Pima County, the Tribute Trail, using the planned Central Arizona Project Trail in Pinal County has quickly expanded to include large regional loops and long linear trails from Las Vegas to the southern border of Arizona. After a mapping exercise, and focused discussion, it became apparent that many of the pieces to knit this unique system together were already in place, or in the planning stages.

The Sun Corridor Trail is a blend of terrific trails, in excess of 1,000-miles in total length. The trail begins in a loop around Las Vegas, Nevada, and ends with several linear corridors around the countryside in Cochise and Santa Cruz Counties in southern Arizona. When completed, it will tie together regional trail loops around Las Vegas, Kingman, Williams, Flagstaff, Sedona, Prescott, Wickenburg, Phoenix, Casa Grande, the Picacho Mountains, and Tucson and be linked to rail corridors that connect Benson, Fairbank, Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Sonoita, Patagonia, Naco, Bisbee, Douglas and Pearce. Once completed, the trail will connect urban, suburban and rural hubs with regional, state and national parks and forests. Additional connection opportunities include linking the Sun Corridor Trail to several National Scenic, Historic and Recreational Trails such as the Arizona National Scenic Trail, Anza National Historic Trail, and the CAP and Wild Burro National Recreational Trails. It's a cutting edge trail concept that is rapidly gaining strong support.

Linking these communities will showcase the beauty and diversity of the area's natural resources and highlight the unique cultural and historical differences found within each region. The project will also showcase the impressive trail planning and construction done by the communities along the route. Once completed, the project will enhance quality of life opportunities for area residents by providing additional venues to recreate, increasing property values and leaving a legacy of natural corridors for generations to come and explore. In addition, the trail will enhance the regions travel and tourism portfolio as it provides visitors new destination points and venues to learn about the flora, fauna and culture backgrounds.

Administration

May and June were exciting months for Parks Administration! We moved our offices from Downtown Phoenix to Lake Pleasant (May 28th) and ended another successful fiscal year. Staff shortages continue to challenge our ability to complete work, but we are getting it done, one project at a time. Administrative staff continues to pitch in and providing coverage at several parks including White Tank and Lake Pleasant. Listed below are the highlights by program for May and June, 2014:

Budget Status (through April close):

- **Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:**
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenues 9% or \$358,209 over the YTD budget.
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures 3% or \$105,988 under the YTD operating budget.
- **Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:**
 - Lake Fund reported revenues 1% or \$21,878 under the YTD budget
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures under YTD budget at 5% or \$102,995
- **Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:**
 - Spur Cross reported revenues at 2.5% over the YTD budget or \$6,226
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures under budget at 13% or \$31,986

Finance Program:

- Finance Program staff have been busy closing FY14 and working to get FY15 up and running. This includes paying invoices and verifying all payments have been made, opening Purchase Orders for the new year, verifying validity of existing contracts, and providing project budgets to staff. June was especially busy with change orders and tracking of the restroom and playground projects as they were completed.
- Electronic P-card reconciliation is up and running and we are ironing out the small wrinkles the new system has identified.
- Staff met with vendors to obtain supplies and needed items for the new office location

Contracts:

- **Lake Pleasant Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):** The inoperable solar system installed 9 years ago is going to be removed by the contractor that installed it. SOLID LLC has provided a removal/demolition plan at no cost to the Department that includes provisions for hazardous waste, performance bond, and general liability insurance with oversight from County Risk Management and Parks Planning and Development. It is anticipated that the removal and site restoration be completed by the end of August 2014.
- **Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** Negotiations for the Use Management Agreement (UMA) with Estrella Youth Sports (EYS) for the Sportsfield Complex are continuing. We are cooperatively working with EYS on scope of work, infrastructure needs and layout of new facilities. EYS is also participating as a committee member for the Estrella Master Plan Update to coordinate the Sportsfield Complex planning with the master plan effort.
- **Adobe Dam Regional Park:**
 - Road improvements and new drainage culverts at Pinnacle Peak Road are ongoing. A portion of our fence that provides security and access to our well site is located in the Right-of-Way and some modifications were needed to accommodate the new improvements. The City of Phoenix and their contractor had to remodel the gate access into this compound, so we approached the city and asked if they would construct a new fence. The city and contractor have agreed and will use their contingency funds to accomplish the task at no costs to Parks.
 - Potential New Revenue Opportunities at Adobe Dam Regional Park: We are in the fact finding mode for the interest in a 92 acre parcel for possible use as an equestrian concession (as reported in the previous summary). Land layout and usage is a challenge with flood control development restrictions.
- **Commercial Management Concessions Agreements**
 - The Flyboard concession is currently on hold. The concession's insurance costs were well above what they anticipated paying and they have elected not to proceed unless the County can reduce the limit of insurance required.
 - New CMCA's added:
 - One scuba concession
 - One hiking/biking concession
 - Two food concessions

Human Resources:

New Hires or Transfers:

- Welcome to George Hichborn, Maintenance Worker at Lake Pleasant.
- Congratulations to Jenna Hammond who transferred from her position at Lake Pleasant to Administration (Administrative Assistant Specialized).
- Congratulations to Amy Roberts, who transferred from Estrella to McDowell (Interpretive Ranger).
- Congratulations to David Chatfield who transferred from the Trails Crew to Lake Pleasant as the Office Assistant Specialized.

Farewells:

- Farewell to Valerie Ergish, Lake Pleasant, who retired on 6/29/14.

Open positions and recruitments:

- Contact Station Assistant - Temporary (Lake Pleasant) – Interviews pending.
- General Maintenance Worker (Usery) – Position to be filled on 7/7/14.
- HR Specialist (Temp/Administration) – Position to be filled on 7/21/14.
- Navigational Aide Technician (Lake Pleasant) – Position to be filled on 7/7/14.
- Interpretive Ranger (Estrella) – Interviews Pending.
- Contact Station Assistant (Lake Pleasant) – Interviews Pending.
- Administrative Staff Supervisor (Lake Pleasant) – Position under review.

Information Technology:

- Office of Enterprise Technology (OET) has begun work to determine the issues with the speed of our POS/Reservation system at Lake Pleasant. Changes to the proxy server setting and traces have identified possible causes to intermittent slowness of the system.
- In addition to working with OET, we have been working with our POS vendor, Art Street Interactive, to determine if there might be issues on their side as well. During the last week of June, Art Street worked with their hardware provider to switch the location of our hosted system and we moved from an older server to a new, faster “beefed up” server. So far, the system speed does appear to have improved.

Souvenir Fund:

- Significant changes are underway for FY15. Revisions to the category system used in the Point of Sale system will have all products categorized by vendor rather than type, allowing for direct ordering from the POS as well as making the barcode book easier to navigate. In order to do this, all of the approximate 2,000 products have to be reviewed and updated.
- The FY15 Souvenir Fund Product Line show was held in June. Several new products and ideas were discussed as well as planned updates to our product line. Older merchandise that is no longer available to order will be on sale to clear out old stock, we plan to reduce the options available for various products so that we can change up the selection each year (i.e. instead of three sand globes with snakes, we will offer one and change the selection each year to keep it fresh), and finally, we plan to bring in some new merchandise that we have not carried before. Overall, the show was a success and we are looking forward to FY15.
- With the new fiscal year, we have sent out requests for quotes to select a vendor for our Parks Logo merchandise (shirts and hats). The goal is to order the new merchandise by the end of July to ensure product is received by the end of September, just as our visitation picks back up.
- We are also looking at categorizing our merchandise into four categories (souvenir, convenience, educational, and recreational) to ensure the focus of the fund is to supplement our educational and recreational mission and vision.

Volunteer Program:

- The Adopt-A-Trail had two new trail segment adoptions in May and one in June. In May, one segment near Anthem was adopted by the Desert Foothills Land Trust and a family in North Phoenix adopted 3 sections near the Black Canyon Trail Node. In June, one segment was adopted by Urban Trail Adventures. They adopted the Mule Deer Trail and even came out to the trail on June 21st to contribute to some light maintenance.

- The number of volunteer hours historically goes down by more than half during the summer. Many of the regular hosts and volunteers take the summer off and will return in the fall. Additionally, the episodic volunteer opportunities are generally on hold until cooler months. On a good note, there have been many new host applications submitted for the winter season. Cave Creek and McDowell have several host couples who will not be returning this season, so the park supervisors will be interviewing new prospects soon.
- Volunteer Hours for May and June 2014:

	May 2014	June 2014
Total Dept. Hours	3782	2891
Financial Savings	\$83,745	\$64,012
YTD Hours	96,595	99,486
YTD Savings	\$2,138,602	\$2,202,615
Prev. Year Month Total Hours	3891	3424
Prev. Year YTD Hours	82,005	85,429
Prev. Year Financial Savings	\$1,800,823	\$ 1,876,020

Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights as of July 7

- **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 is complete and final permit clearance was received May 21st.
- **Estrella Master Plan:** A kick-off meeting was held April 10, 2014. Committee meetings will be held approximately every month to review the old Master Plan (last updated in 1987), examine existing facilities, review visitor data and new trends, and consider future amenities. The overall process should take approximately 18 – 24 months. A “front country” site visit is scheduled for July 9th.
- **Lake Pleasant:** Two new electronic gates were installed on the “By-Pass” Road and became operational on May 21st. A contractor completed \$100,000 worth of water valve repairs and upgrades throughout the Park on June 30th.
- **Vulture Mountain Update:** Staff continues 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. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the *Travel Management Plan* for final public comment on May 21st. Staff is working with the Town of Wickenburg about a possible issue.
- **System Wide:** The refurbishment of all restrooms (~75), for all the parks began in January. The project is expected to take four years and cost ~\$3.5 million. With the help of two “Job Order Contract” (JOC) contractors, staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system.
 All seven restrooms were refurbished at Cave Creek Park. Two restrooms were refurbished at McDowell Park (RR #10 (family campground) and the RR for Area 3 (North Trail)). Two restrooms were refurbished at Usery Park (Wind Cave RR and RR #10 day use area). Five restrooms were refurbished at White Tank Park (three campground RRs (F, G & Y), #9 and #11). One restroom (10-Lane RR) was refurbished at Lake Pleasant Park.
 Staff worked very hard during May and June on hand dryer upgrades, toilet upgrades, and extensive septic system pumping throughout the system, to successfully complete all budgeted activities for restroom improvements (~\$1 M).
 New playgrounds were installed at Cave Creek, Estrella, McDowell, Usery and White Tank Parks. Additional “clean-up” work, including demolition of selected structures and the relocation of selected shade sail structures was also completed. Staff successfully completed all budgeted activities for playground improvements (\$866 K).

- **Maricopa Trail and Trail Facilities:**
 - The following trail segments are currently being worked on: 11, 12, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, and 35.
 - 3.1 miles of additional trail has been constructed south of White Tank Park; opening a total of 8 miles of new trail.
 - Planning new trails in the Tonto National Forest – Cave Creek and Mesa Ranger Districts, the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve, and on the Central Arizona Project – south of Lake Pleasant Park.
 - Trailhead for Segment 9 at Tres Rios at 115th Avenue has been defunded by the Corps of Engineers
 - Completing sign location and inventory
- **Trades Crew:** The Trades Crew completed a major upgrade to the septic system at Pallett Loop at Lake Pleasant, and while at the Lake, assisted the contractor on the water valve project. Staff also completed septic work at White Tank and Estrella Parks.
- **Trails Crew:** The Trails Crew, with the help of the Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) has been working on new construction and trail maintenance at the Lake. The new Yavapai Point Trail, with beautiful views of the lake, was completed in late May.

Superintendent Reports

Cave Creek Regional Park:

- In May, the park hosted 13 interpretive programs with 139 participants attending, which included 31 repeat attendees. The *Clay Mine Adventure* was the highlighted program with 42 attendees.
- In June, the park hosted 10 interpretive programs with 170 participants attending, which included 32 repeat attendees. The highlighted programs for the month: *Clay Mine Adventure* with 62 participants, *Monsoon Madness* with 43 attendees and *Survival Series* with a total of 36 attendees.
- FY2014 Highlights – The interpretive ranger conducted 192 interpretive programs with a total of 2,888 visitors in attendance; he also conducted 13 outreach programs to various groups.

Desert Outdoor Center:

- At the DOC, the Lake Pleasant Aquatics and Nature Camp offered another successful camp in conjunction with the Grand Canyon Council of the Boy Scouts of America. During the four weeks in June, 199 campers (up 10% over last year) earned a total of 470 merit badges in an assortment of 25 topics including kayaking, canoeing, motor boating, rowing, small-boat sailing, rifle shooting, cooking and citizenship in the nation. In addition, eight volunteers contributed a total of 688 hours of expert assistance to the camp.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- In May and June, park staff and volunteers performed 20 programs for 63 attendees. The early morning and sunset programs were the most popular. The Estrella Park Interpretive Ranger transferred to McDowell Park in early June.
- With the hot weather, park visitation is stronger in the morning and evening. The month of May experienced strong camping and ramada use early in the month, but usage tapered off in later May and June. Hikes, picnics and camping outings have significantly decreased.
- Great strides were made by park staff members in mapping and creating an inventory of many of the park's facilities including all the pumps, domestic water line valves and irrigation valves throughout the park.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant offered 27 interpretive programs to the delight of 560 participants during the months of May and June. Highlights of the two months include: *Know and Go Scorpion Hunt*, *Hike-N-Splash*, and the *CAP Connection* (with Lake Pleasant).
- The park held a special program, in association with the Arizona Game & Fish Department, for a free fishing clinic. The clinic attracted 150 participants and was a wonderful opportunity to expose youth and families to fishing and nature.
- Over Memorial Weekend, the park saw a 20% increase in revenue for the weekend. Special thanks to other park staff and park headquarter members for assisting the park during this busy time of year.

- New automatic gates have been installed along the bypass road, just in time for Memorial Weekend. The new gates will help better secure the south area of the park from illegal access and unpaid entry fees.
- During the months of May and June, the park, in collaboration with the Trades Crew and others, successfully installed or repaired several key water valves within the park. These valves are crucial during repairs, as it will minimize the impact to customers at the park.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- May began the 2014 series of summer night rides. The first three rides (two in May and one in June) were up an average of 85% over 2013 attendance numbers.
- The last special event of the fiscal year was held in June. The *Adrenaline Night Run* put on by Aravaipa Running brought in 361 runners on a beautiful cool night.
- The McDowell Mountain Regional Park friends group, McDowell Park Association, provided a check for just over \$13,000 to purchase a new service and rescue vehicle for the park. The new Polaris Ranger Crew 570 was selected because it is the narrowest side by side vehicle on the market and will be used to assist park visitors in distress and for work projects in the park.
- In May, the relocation of two sets of shade structures was completed. This park had two playgrounds removed from the park due to very low levels of use. After the old playground equipment was removed, the shade structures were taken down and set up in the Competitive Track parking lot and the Four Peaks Staging Area parking area.
- The transfer of Interpretive Ranger Amy to McDowell Mountain Park was completed in early June. The timing of this transfer has been ideal, allowing Amy to settle in, learn the park, and participate in some summer projects before initiating her regular schedule of programs for park visitors. One of the park's summer projects was the installation of a window in the back of the visitor center overlooking the newly installed water feature; allowing visitors to view the local wildlife coming in for water.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- During the month of May, San Tan provided 25 interpretive programs with 865 program participants. The highlight program for the month was *Stargazing for Everyone* which attracted 136 participants alone.
 - The Aravaipa Running group held the 2nd annual *San Tan Sinister* as part of the Desert Runner Insomniac Series. The event brought in over 266 participants who had the option to run a 9k, 27k, or 54k starting at 7pm and continuing throughout the night until 7am the next morning. This is a 77% increase from last year's event attendance.
 - We have had one Eagle Scout project completed for the month that involved closing a spider trail. We were also selected to hold a Court of Honor Ceremony for a scout to honor his completion of the scouting experience.
 - During the month of June, San Tan provided 20 interpretive programs with 628 program participants. The highlight program for the month was our *Moonlight Hike* which attracted 153 participants alone.
 - With the continued support of our amazing volunteer crew, we have ended the year with over 6,425 volunteer hours. San Tan would not have the opportunity to grow with the community or offer such a great experience for all park guests to enjoy without the help of our 45 dedicated volunteers and two hosts couples.
 - San Tan continues to borrow maintenance worker Tony one day a week from Usery. Tony has been a great addition to San Tan and has helped complete several projects including repairing and grading the Goldmine Entrance parking lot, creating a tortoise pond, weeding the maintenance compound, trail maintenance, fence repairs, building inspections, and much, much more!
- Fiscal year 2014 has been an incredibly busy year for San Tan. As the year comes to a close, the latest Attendance Report states that we are up 45.3% in attendance. With the current figures, San Tan is now situated as the 5th busiest park out of the eight mountain parks.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The Park hosted eight interpretive programs in May with 89 participants attending. The highlighted programs for the month: Full Moon Hike with 22 attendees.
- The Park hosted seven interpretive programs in June with 107 participants attending. The highlighted programs for the month: Moonlight Hike with 29 attendees and Scorpion Search with 24 attendees.
- FY14 Highlights – The interpretive ranger conducted 170 interpretive programs with a total of 2,219 visitors in attendance and one outreach program.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- Usery Park offered 12 interpretive ranger programs totaling 744 participants in May. The highlight was the All About Scorpions brown bag lecture (125) followed by a black light night hike Scorpion Hunt (193).
- Arizona Disabled Sports held the archery portion of their 2014 Desert Challenge Games on the upper practice range at Usery. 30 participants competed in the archery competition.
- The Usery Mountain Archers are currently hosting a Thursday night archery league from May through August. The league is held every Thursday night at 7pm and is open to all ages. So far, the league averages 24 adults and three youth per week.
- The Park offered 10 interpretive ranger programs totaling 871 participants in June. The highlight of the month was the Scorpion Hunt (208).

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- In May and June, the park staff and volunteers performed 26 programs in the park with 799 people attending. These programs cover full moon hikes, story time, archeology, plant and bird walks.
- The most popular in-park program was June's Friday the 13th Family Moonlight Hike with 124 participants. Attendees enjoyed watching the reddish moon rise over the Valley along the Mule Deer trail. Twenty-two early birds joined the interpretive ranger on a Summer Solstice Sunrise Hike, during which all watched the sun rise and discussed how the solar calendar has been important to people around the world for thousands of years.
- The interpretive ranger conducted two outreach programs in May and June. The first was for Litchfield Elementary school district as part of an education component they are offering during their Summer Feeding Program (free and reduced summer food program). Approximately 55 people joined the interpretive ranger for a presentation about desert animal adaptations. This was the first of several outreach days scheduled as part of this program. The second outreach scheduled was with the 40 Girl Scouts.
- The interpretive ranger presented at the Discovery and Travel Expo to 200 people and at Westgate for a program called Surviving the Summer Safely for 196 people. The ranger also partnered with the White Tank Library (45 people) on two programs and assisted another park with a program for 150 people.
- May produced an increase in camping at White Tank Park. In the past, campers rarely utilized the park after April. With the utility upgrades to the campground, White Tank had several campers each weekend in May, including 21 individual campers for the Memorial Day weekend.
- Because it is a living ecosystem, the nature pond takes continuous upkeep and maintenance. With volunteer help, bulrushes and weeds were removed to keep it from being overgrown. Maintenance staff and volunteers have been doing considerable roadside trimming at intersections, septic/leach bed brush removal, and some trail work on lower Ford Canyon Trail.
- Being faithful to the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Library, park maintenance repainted the fire lanes around the nature center parking a bright red. An inventory of the water valves throughout the park was completed as well. All valve covers were repainted blue for identification.