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MEMORANDUM

Date: October 9, 2012

To: Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

From: R.J. Cardin, Director 

Re: Director's Summary of Current Events

Listed below are issues the department has been involved with since the September 11, 2012 Director's Summary.

From the Office of the Director

Valley Forward presented Maricopa County with its prestigious Award of Merit at the 32nd Annual Environmental Excellence Awards Banquet on September 29, 2012. The Parks and Recreation Department was recognized in the category of Livable Communities: Public Policy/Plans for the Vulture Mountains Cooperative Recreation Area Master Plan. The Plan was recognized for its outstanding regional, cooperative vision of resource conservation, sustainability, innovation and contribution to fostering livable communities. EPG Consulting, Maricopa County Supervisor and Chairman Max Wilson, Park's staff, BLM, the Nature Conservancy, Arizona Game and Fish, MCDOT, residents and officials from Wickenburg and a host of others have contributed to making this an outstanding plan.

Budget

General Fund (100) – Agency 300:

- On the expenditure side, the General Fund (Fund 100, Agency 300) was under budget by \$5,139 or 3.6% under the year to date (YTD) budget.
- There are no revenues collected within the General Fund.

Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:

- Enhancement Fund (Fund 241, Agency 305) reported revenue 14.8% or \$48,598 over the YTD budget.
- Enhancement Fund reported expenditures 10.8% or \$70,640 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures.

Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:

- Lake Fund (Fund 240, Agency 302) reported revenues 22% or \$75,240 over the YTD budget.
- Lake Fund reported operating expenditures under budget at 3.3% or \$10,510.

Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:

- Spur Cross (Fund 225, Agency 306) reported revenues at -41% or \$15,485 under the YTD budget. This shortage is due to below expected payments by the Town of Cave Creek.
- Spur Cross reported operating expenditures over budget at 2% or \$745.

Information Technology

- The downtown Administrative building will be getting a new network in the coming weeks. Test/Pilot users were designated and testing will begin the first week in October.
- Work continues to update the public reservation system website for ramada reservations. Interactive maps and updates to information are required.

- The POS/Reservation Manual is close to being completed.
- GoToMeeting is now available for use by the Department (through the Office of Enterprise Technology). Use of this product would be beneficial to the Department as it would allow meetings to occur where staff is not required to drive into HQ, saving travel time for staff.

Human Resources

Congratulations and Welcome!

- Welcome Michele Kogl, our new Park Planning and Development Division Manager!
- Welcome Brett Frederick, Trails Technician (start date is October 1).

Other personnel news to note, the following positions are open for recruitments and/or are waiting to be filled:

- Accounting Specialist (HQ) – One round of interview occurred and a candidate was not selected. Additional recruitment is underway.
- Volunteer Coordinator (HQ) – Interview process is underway with three candidates being selected for an additional interview (first round held on September 28, 2012)
- Contact Station Assistant (Lake Pleasant) - Two positions are currently open. We are waiting for the job posting at this time.
- Executive Assistant (HQ) – This position is currently posted for recruitment.
- Interpretive Ranger (Estrella) – This position is currently on hold.

Finance Program

- With the Accounting Specialist position still vacant, we continue to work to keep up with revenue reconciliation and payables.
- Work on the revenue reconciliation process continues and appears to be going well. There are issues with the POS reports for Administration (comprised of HQ and website sales) but once these are corrected, the new reconciliation process will be more efficient for park staff and finance staff.

Central Reservations

- Participation in the fall camping promotion – Buy 2 nights, get 1 free – continues to be limited. During the last month, only one person called to take advantage of the promotion and unfortunately, they were hoping to stay at Lake Pleasant (promotion is for mountain parks only).

Volunteer Program

- Paperwork for the incoming hosts has started to increase. With the position being vacant, the main focus is ensuring incoming volunteers and Park Hosts are processed quickly to get them into the parks and working.

Souvenir Fund

- Most of the new fall product line has arrived and looks great. New stuffed animals, clothing, and books are just some of the new offerings in the park this year.
- New Park Logo shirts have been added, replacing some of the shirt designs we have carried for the last several years. They are expected to start arriving the first week in October.
- With the updates, all the parks now carry park logo clothing (San Tan and Spur Cross did not carry logo items prior to this year). The DOC does not carry clothing items at this time but we are working to find some lower cost t-shirts for the students and boy scouts that are the primary customer base at this location.

Superintendent Reports

Cave Creek Regional Park – The park hosted 4 interpretive programs with 329 participants. The programs highlights were Snake Feeding, Scorpion Hunt, Clay Mine Hike, and Venomous Creatures.

The Clay Mine Hike continues to be one of our most popular programs with 175 in attendance this month. The Cave Creek Interpretive Ranger and Spur Cross Interpretive Ranger with volunteers jointly conducted this program.

Maintenance staff has continued to help cover shifts in the Nature Center through the summer months to ensure quality customer service. They are also, in the process of completing several tasks to get ready for the up-coming season, which includes deep cleaning of all facilities, ordering supplies and getting the host sites ready for our return volunteers.

Cave Creek Regional Park connection trail to Desert Foothills Land Trust - The Department is currently soliciting feedback from park visitors regarding which access points they use to enter the park and their level of interest in connecting to Desert Foothills Land Trust.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park – In September, park attendance picked up slightly. A slight cooling brought more morning and evening hikers. Weekend picnics and hikes are coming on stronger.

The Rodeo Arena building and facility repairs were completed in September. Park staff completed drywall, painting and building repairs. The Parks 7 Crew completed repairs for electrical, water and welding issues as well as additional roof repairs.

Rodeo Arena Vendor and Horse Operations Managers Jeff and Deb Bitton have arrived and are setting up shop for the season ahead. The horses should arrive the first week of October. The Bittons are offering a Fall Festival for the month of October.

Estrella Park staff is making preparations for an early October Bike Race (XTERRA) and a mid-October mud and obstacle race (Gladiator Rock N Run). The two events combined should bring in about 4,000 participants and spectators.

The Centennial Trail committee continues to meet with Park staff. Planning phases of the trail, the art, and the interpretive elements all continue to progress. An MCSO Sheriff's Chain Gang will be filling Hickman Farm dumpsters with non-native trees and branches being eradicated in the trail area.

In addition to the Centennial project, Salt Cedar branches and trees from several areas in the park have been piled and prepared for removal. Great progress was made in August, with branch removal continuing into September. Invasive Salt Cedar trees have been cut down in the area around the ball fields. Several customers have made positive comments about the tree removal.

The Parks Department Trails Division continues to renovate and construct new trails in Estrella Park. Several have been completed, others are in progress. The Youth Corp is in the park helping repair trail maintenance issues on various trails.

The Parks Operations Manager, West Side Superintendent and Park Supervisor met with recreation youth/adult sports supporter, Dale Kamarata and Estrella Golf Course Manager, Mike Dooley to discuss possible turf improvements and programming for the Estrella Mountain Regional Park ball fields.

Interpretive Ranger Mark Paulat transferred to Cave Creek Park. Processes are in the works for a replacement Interpretive Ranger to be hired at Estrella.

Buckeye Hills received a recent face lift. The park coordinated with a scout group to paint the restrooms and a ramada. Volunteers and scouts have been utilized this month on a variety of projects including kiosk repair, tree trimming, ramada cleaning and improvements and trash barrel painting.

Desert Outdoor Center – We conducted our final two of four seasonal "Get Wet Beginner Kayaking" events with Cabela's. This program is part of our joint programming with Lake Pleasant Regional Park, an endeavor aimed at offering aquatic training at the Desert Outdoor Center to produce future recreationists at the Lake. Ninety-six participants had great fun learning the basics of this sport and surely will enter the park as kayak enthusiasts in the future and take advantage of the kayaking programs offered there. We will consider conducting five on-water events next year since these last two classes were full...this program is becoming real popular. In 2011 three sessions had a total of 86 participants; in 2012 four sessions were attended by 137 kayakers...a 60% increase.

In lieu of schools, which are our main customers, September visitors were two Girl Scout troops and a Labor Day weekend wedding. Our calendar for the rest of the school year through May is totally full...mainly with school field trips during the week and scouts, other training programs and retreats on weekends.

A second strategic planning session with leadership of the Grand Canyon Council of the Boy Scouts has resulted in developing a draft cooperative management agreement to delineate efforts toward an expanded scout program that embraces non-scouts and girls into our aquatics training camp.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park – National Public Lands Day Cleanup Event - approximately 350 volunteers successfully cleaned up a large portion of the west end of the Lake, getting into many knooks and crannies that staff would have otherwise been unable to have time to do.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park – Park Maintenance Staff completed trail repairs on 12 areas along the Pemberton where erosion from summer rains had damaged the trail.

Interpretive Ranger Amy Burnett conducted 19 interpretive programs with 116 participants, 49 were repeat attendees.

The summer Mountain Bike by the Moonlight ride series continued and wrapped up in September. The last two rides had 105 participants and final ride of the summer had 117 participants. The mountain bike community continues to be grateful and supportive of the summer ride series.

The first event of the fall season took place on last Saturday of September when 257 runners participated in the Javelina Night Run.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park had a booth set up at the Premier of Wings over the Preserve. The McDowell Sonoran Preserve contracted to have their preserve filmed from the air and three short promotional videos were created and premiered in September. Approximately 400 attended the showing at the Scottsdale Center for the Arts.

Park Hosts have begun to return for the fall season. All hosts new and returning will be sent to get new finger prints taken. All host positions are filled at this time.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area - The Park hosted 9 interpretive programs with 122 participants. A few of the programs included: Sonoran Desert 101, Healthy Hiking Rock, Art of Spur Cross, Nature Walk Desert Washes, Walk Ruins of Spur Cross, Sunset Walk, and MC Parks Staff Hike - Dragonfly Trail Moonlight Hike Exploring Spur Cross.

Usery Mountain Regional Park - Usery Mountain Regional Park offered 15 interpretive programs with 767 participants (426 repeat attendees.) The highlight of the month was the Full Moon Hike with 214 in attendance; the program also included a brown bag lecture, All About Tarantulas with 58 participants. The Scorpion Hunt was very successful with 138 park visitors and 70 scorpions trying to evade the black lights.

A special memorial bench ceremony was held for the Larson family at the Wind Cave Trailhead. Van & Dee Larson lost their daughter Shannon 5 years ago that day at Usery Mountain Regional Park due to heat exhaustion. The family created the Sunshine Memorial Foundation in Shannon's memory and has future plans to donate landscaping, shade structures, and additional signage at the Wind Cave Trailhead to help beautify the area and increase awareness of proper hydration.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park - San Tan provided 7 interpretive programs with 400 program participants. The highlight was Interpretive Ranger Adam's Gold Panning with 65 park visitors seeking gold.

With the help of an Eagle Scout and his troop, an interpretive trail was developed and constructed that starts near the memorial and loops back to the nature center. The trail is approximately .25 mile in length and has many areas to be developed into future interpretive sites.

We are continuing to prepare for our upcoming Halloween Bash. Two new activities will be added this year with the friendly Haunted House and the Spooktacular Trail, which will host roughly 75 reflective objects strategically placed along the way to be enjoyed by flashlight crazy visitors!

White Tank Mountain Regional Park – The interpretive ranger delivered 10 programs and 3 outreaches with 728 people attending. Some of these programs were Mammals of the Sonoran Desert, Edible and Medicinal Plants, and our popular Moonlight Hikes.

The Heritage Grant proposal for a desert tortoise enclosure has been submitted asking for \$7900. A joint training with Arizona Game and Fish Department for program collaboration was also completed and another will be held in October.

It is with sad news that after serving the public for over 10 years, our gopher snake succumbed to age and passed this month. It was our oldest snake, living to about 16 years.

The new host sites at the Maricopa Trailhead are almost complete. The pedestals are installed, water and sewer completed and concrete pads are being poured. The electrical wiring will be complete after APS has approved. The work in the Family Campground has been put on hold until further notice.

To manage pond health and control the overgrowth in our Nature Pond, the maintenance team is conducting bulrush abatement.

The Wildland Fire Crew has just started to assist us with trail repair on the South Trail on a weekly basis.