



Maricopa County

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 15, 2017
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 March/April 2017.

From the Office of the Director

Prickly Pedal 2017 Race: The Prickly Pedal mountain bike race took place on April 1. Approximately 325 riders took part in the activity, and were treated to a special after-party event at the Lake including live music from Sugarbeats. The Prickly Pedal Race on the Maricopa Trail kicked off in the Town of Cave Creek traversed through the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area and finished at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

Awards:

- The National Association of Counties (NACo) awarded the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department a 2017 Achievement Award for its program titled "Prickly Pedal Mountain Bike Race" in the category of Parks and Recreation.
- The National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO) selected Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department's Lake Pleasant Regional Park Discovery Center construction as a recipient of a 2017 NACPRO Award for best Park & Recreation Facility - Class II category.

Board of Supervisors Agenda Items:

Date/Status	Tracking Number	Summary
6/7/17 Pending	C-	New CMCA with Commercial Divers International, Inc.: Approve a CMCA with Commercial Divers International (CDI) to manage and operate a commercial scuba diving concession at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.
5/10/17 Approved	C-30-08-036-5-02	IGA Amendment Two with City of Peoria for Maricopa Trail Signage Maintenance Approve Amendment Two with the City of Peoria that defines the County's and City's responsibilities for trail signage maintenance along the section of the Maricopa Trail, Segment 12 within the City's limits.
4/26/2017 Approved	C-30-17-020-M-00	Proposed Revisions of the Parks Fee Schedule: Board of Supervisors held a Public Hearing for comments and approval of the Hassayampa entrance fee and room rental fee for April 26, 2017. Approved fees effective 5/1/17.
4/12/17 Approved	C-30-17-023-M-00	IGA WITH CITY OF SCOTTSDALE FOR MARICOPA TRAIL SEGMENTS 23, 24 AND 25: Approve the IGA with the City of Scottsdale to establish a partnership for the County to provide Maricopa Trail signage or other route markers and support the City in future efforts to secure funding for Trail improvements. The City will install Maricopa Trail signage or other route markers, maintain the Trails and provide emergency services as needed along the Trails within the City's boundaries.
4/12/17 Approved	C-30-17-025-M-00	New CMCA with MTM Ranch, LLC: Approve a CMCA with MTM Ranch, LLC to manage and operate an equestrian trail riding concession at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Easement. MTM Ranch is restricted to the designated 5.2 Mile Spur Cross Trail.

Administration

The purpose of the Administrative Division is to provide strategic direction, leadership, administrative and financial support to the Director and employees of the department so they can produce the results necessary to achieve the departmental mission and vision.

Financial/Budget Status:

- Current Park's budget forecast is good (see Appropriated Budget Check through March close, below). With the exception of the Donation Fund, expenditures are within budget and all funds are structurally balanced. A brief summary of Parks budget forecast through March 2017 close is below:
 - Donation Fund (F243) is reporting over budget for expenditures and revenue. This is due to a higher than anticipated requests for memorial benches. It is anticipated that an adjustment to expenditure and revenue authority will be needed in FY17 and will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors in May.
 - Enhancement Fund (F241) is reporting revenue 9.4% over anticipated year to date budget (\$3,791,083).
 - Lake Fund (F240) is reporting revenue 8.2% over anticipated year to date budget (\$1,921,554).
 - Spur Cross (F225) is reporting revenue 6.2% over anticipated year to date budget (\$204,911).
 - Souvenir Fund (F239) is reporting revenue 38% over anticipated year to date budget (\$207,830).
- Other items of note: Financial staff are gearing up for the numerous end of year activities required. This will be the first year end with the new CGI Financial System and we are hoping for a smooth end of year process.

Appropriated Budget Check - All - REV											
Department Code	Name	Fund Code	Name	Appropriation Unit		Expenditures			Revenue		
				Code	Name	Appropriation	Detail Budget	Variance	Appropriation	Detail Budget	Variance
D300	Parks and Recreation	100	General	OPER	Operating	874,325	874,325	0			
D300	Parks and Recreation	225	Spur Cross Ranch Conservation	OPER	Operating	272,132	272,132	0	272,132	284,941	-12,809
D300	Parks and Recreation	230	Parks and Recreation Grants	OPER	Operating					48,828	-48,828
D300	Parks and Recreation	239	Parks Souvenir	OPER	Operating	398,182	398,182	0	398,183	400,134	-3,951
D300	Parks and Recreation	240	Lake Pleasant Recreation Services	OPER	Operating	2,840,393	2,840,393	0	2,742,031	2,974,980	-232,949
D300	Parks and Recreation	241	Parks Enhancement	OPER	Operating	4,893,887	4,893,887	0	4,959,106	5,550,982	-591,896
D300	Parks and Recreation	243	Parks Donations	OPER	Operating	25,404	34,462	-9,058	25,404	45,838	-20,434

Contracts:

- **Adobe:** It has taken over two years for the 500 Club to receive the preliminary Right of Way / 408 permit from Maricopa County Flood Control District / Army Corps of Engineers (FCD / ACOE respectively) for their new banquet facility and the expansion of their existing clubhouse. The 500 Club is now starting the process for obtaining the construction permits. The County has a perpetual Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Phoenix (City) that allows Maricopa County Planning and Development Services (P&D) to permit the construction on Park lands that are within the jurisdiction of the City. As the design will not be connected to the City's existing utility systems and there is no construction in the City's right of way, the 500 Club is permitting this project through P&D. It was just brought to our attention by the 500 Club's engineers that P&D is referring back to the City for several permits. We have set up a meeting on May 9 with P&D and the 500 Club's engineer to address the permit process.

Fort Adobe Paintball facility closed its business last summer. In lieu of the \$25,068.04 in fees that are payable to the County, they offered their restroom event trailer (a 2008 Wells Cargo Comfort Elite ADA +2 Portable Restroom Trailer) with a resale value \$25,000- \$28,000. The termination agreement has been drafted and will be on the Board of Supervisors' agenda in June. We anticipate using the facility at the Horse Staging Trailhead at Usery Park. Currently that area is served by two portable toilets.

Legacy Sports requested permission to pothole the site to obtain geotechnical information of the soils. We worked with FCD for the right of way permit, however, additional permits were required from Federal Fish and Wildlife Service and Arizona State Game & Fish Department. They will have to perform a biological

survey of the area. Although time consuming and costly, this survey would have been required prior to the construction of the new sports facilities; performing this process now will not delay the actual construction timeline. Legacy is still working to obtain full funding for the project.

- **Lake Pleasant:** In 2015, we contracted Capital Hotel Management (CHM) to prepare a high level study for Lake Pleasant Resort Development. This study provided observations and findings for the market, investment, and financial analyses of a resort development at Lake Pleasant Regional Park. Earlier this year, the City of Peoria (City) contracted with Ritoch-Powell & Associates (RPA) to develop a Lake Pleasant Resort Infrastructure Feasibility Study. Currently, we are working with the City and RPA in gathering information to assist them in this study. Both of these studies are crucial for future development in bringing lodging facilities to Lake Pleasant.

Among the planned expansions at Scorpion Bay Marina, Desert Troon is currently designing an additional dock for governmental use. Currently, the Maricopa County Sherriff's Office (MCSO) has a License to Use agreement for their existing boathouse located at the Marina. Desert Troon would like to move the MCSO boathouse to this new government dock (G-dock) and will provide enough space for additional boathouses. As Park's existing boat house is in poor condition and unusable, we are very interested in obtaining a new boathouse at the G-dock. Arizona Game and Fish Department is also showing interest in having a boathouse at the G-dock. Desert Troon is currently assembling cost information since the combined effort of constructing the boathouses would be the most cost effective and efficient way to proceed. Parks is currently working out terms of an agreement between all parties involved for the funding of the boathouses.

- **Buckeye Hills:** We are continuing our pursuit with various governmental agencies to locate a manager for the Buckeye Hills Shooting Range. Efforts thus far have been challenging. Our primary goal is to find an agency that will be able to use the range during the week for training (police and military) and then operate the facility on the weekends to be open for the general public. We are also attempting to have the new manager assume some of the current maintenance costs that are currently being paid by the County's Facilities Management department (i.e. generator fuel and repairs).
- **Estrella Mountain:** in 2015, we entered into a Use Management Agreement with Estrella Youth Sports (EYS), a non-profit organization, to provide improvements for the existing ballfield and additional improvements, including new ballfields, adding multi-use fields, and adding sand volleyball along with other sports-related amenities. We divided these improvements into five (5) phases throughout the term of the Agreement. Phase I consisted of the renovation of the two existing softball fields, repair of the field lighting, electrical service and upgrade the dugouts to concrete floors and new benches. This work was scheduled to be completed by January 1, 2017. EYS has not met this schedule and has been unsuccessful in obtaining necessary funding to complete Phase I. EYS remains very passionate about the efforts to improve the facilities and are continuing their efforts to obtain funding. Although we respect their passion, we felt it necessary to send a letter of non-compliance for Phase 1 improvements. If EYS does not show progress with Phase I improvements within the next 30 days, we will start the default proceedings.

Information Technology/Facilities:

- Changes to the Century Link Frame Relays (Ethernet Circuits) at the parks are still in process and have not increased the current monthly billing amount.
- Verizon Capacity issues for staff using mobile computers and end user knowledge of the new features and functions from the changeover to office 2013 declined as personnel get used to the new software.

Human Resources:

- Welcome to the following new employees:
 - Welcome Justin Williams – Interpretive Ranger at White Tank
 - Welcome back Charles Sizer, Park Maintenance at Lake Pleasant
- Farewell and best of luck to the following:
 - Tippy Jackson, Interpretive Ranger at Estrella
 - Amy Mitic, Park Maintenance at Estrella

- Open positions and recruitments:
 - Trades Specialist – Job reposted, recruitment underway.
 - Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant – Interviews scheduled.
 - Interpretive Ranger, Hassayampa River Preserve – Recruitment underway.
 - Interpretive Ranger, Estrella – Selection made; background clearance underway

Volunteer Program:

- The seasonal park hosts have finished up the busiest part of the year and are heading back to their home states now. Their service is invaluable and the parks are in their best shape with them here.
- Hassayampa River Preserve volunteers have continued to serve and their volunteer hours are now added to the department total.
- FY17 Volunteer Hours:

	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17
Total Dept. Hours	2945	3146	5113	6283	9900	10972	13274	11808	13129
Financial Savings	\$69,384	\$74,120	\$120,462	\$148,027	\$233,244	\$258,500	\$312,735	\$278,196	\$309,319
YTD Hours	2945	6091	11204	17487	27387	38359	51633	63441	76570
YTD Savings	\$69,384	\$143,504	\$263,966	\$411,994	\$645,238	\$903,738	\$1,216,473	\$1,494,670	\$1,803,989
FY16 Month Hours	3739.25	2948.5	4567.95	6827.5	11319.23	11966.43	14240	11897	13273
FY16 YTD Hours	3739.25	6687.75	11255.7	18083.2	29402.43	41368.86	55608.86	67505.86	80778.86
FY16 Financial Savings	\$86,264	\$154,286	\$259,669	\$417,179	\$678,314	\$954,380	\$1,282,896	\$1,557,360	\$1,863,568
Number of Volunteers	78	75	502	228	371	218	287	277	384

Planning and Development Division

- The Department has been actively working on the Vulture Mountain Recreation Area development plans. On April 27th, Director Cardin and staff met with the owner of the Vulture Mine to discuss possible collaboration on the OHV – Day Use section of the park development. Early indications are positive for access and long term cooperative planning for the site.
- Work on the Maricopa Trail continues as the completion of the loop nears. Director Cardin and staff met on Segment 22 on April 6th and were able to see significant trail work and trail improvements on this beautiful 15 mile segment. Connecting Bronco Trailhead on the Seven Springs Rd to the City of Scottsdale, this segment tops out at over 4000' of elevation at Miners Saddle and offers magnificent view of the Mazatal, Superstitions, Goldfield, McDowell, and other distant mountain ranges. Completion of this segment is expected in December of 2017.
- Illegal parking was an issue for staff at the corner of 43rd Ave and Pinnacle Peak at Adobe Dam Recreation Area. Trades staff completed a pipe rail fence around the lot the week of March 27th to prevent illegal parking and dust issues on the site.
- The Park Development and Planning Manager and the Maricopa Trail Manager presented an educational session at the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) in Scottsdale on May 4, 2017. Titled *Community Connectivity, Creating a Regional Trail Network*, the session discussed the challenges and opportunities of connecting parks and open spaces through multiple agencies and jurisdictions to create connectivity and access to Maricopa County Parks.
- The Parks Planning and Development Division completed the new Evapo-transpiration bed project at Fireman's Cove near the Four Lane boat ramp area of Lake Pleasant. Parks Project Manager oversaw the completion of the project which will allow expansion in the future of much needed restroom facilities in this area of the park.
- Park improvements continue at Estrella Mountain Regional Park. The large group ramada parking lot has been renovated with new slurry, parking space striping, and new signs. 20 new trees were planted at the Super Playground for a new total of 40, ramada #4 was demolished along with restroom #6, and new electrical service section cabinets were installed at the large group ramada area as part of a risk claim for

storm damage. Currently in process, contractors are replacing fixtures in the ballfield restrooms to complete that renovation and have a great starting place for potential user groups.

- The White Tank Mountain Regional Park ramada renovation project was completed in April. Ramadas were abrasive blasted to remove paint, walls and roofs were sealed, and new LED electrical fixtures were installed. This summer, new barbeque grills will be installed and new granite will be spread around the ramadas.
- Improvements continue on the recently acquired Hassayampa River Preserve Visitor's Center parcel. On May 1, the contractor begin installing communications conduit from the Century Link drop to the main visitor center building and the Sanger building. In addition, the department Trades Crew installed some new larger granite and laid out the parking bumper timbers in the rear overflow parking lot.
- Trails Crew worked much of March getting areas of the Maricopa Trail ready for the Prickly Peddle Mountain Bike Race held on April 1st. Due to abundant winter precipitation, the trails crews have been busy trimming spring growth on trees and shrubs on the competitive tracks at White Tank and Estrella Parks. In addition, while at Estrella, the Trails Crew rerouted ½ mile of Gadsden Trail at Estrella Park getting the trail out of the sand and making it easier for users.

Maricopa Trail and Trailhead Facilities:

- The following trail segments are currently being worked on – 9, 11, 12, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 35 and 78.
- The following portions of the Maricopa Trail are in review by the Arizona State Land Department:
 - Segment 35 – North and south of I-10 on the Tuthill Road alignment
 - Segment 12 – North of SR303 on Lake Pleasant Road
 - Segment 11 – East of SR303 on Happy Valley Parkway
 - Segment 33 – Rainbow Valley – BLM land to Estrella Community
- Agreement preparation/negotiations:
 - City of Scottsdale – Segments 23, 24 25 and 26 – BOS approved April 2017, opening 49 miles of the Trail.
 - City of Buckeye – Segment 35 – BOS approved April 2017, opening 3 miles of the Trail.
 - City of Avondale – Segment 9 and Segment 1 – part of Avondale Master Plan (in progress).
 - Bureau of Land Management – Submitted plan of proposed route between Estrella Mountain Park and Buckeye Hills Park.
- Construction
 - Segment 22 – McDowell Sonoran Preserve to the Bronco Trailhead – Started construction 3/6/17 and is 70% complete.

Parks Operations Report

Cave Creek Regional Park:

- In March, the park hosted 26 interpretive programs with 375 participants attending. The interpretive ranger also participated in four outreach programs: *Survival Basics*, *AZGF Expo*, *Hiking Safety* and *Nature Talk*. The highlighted programs were: *In Search of Wildflowers* with 40 participants and *Feeding Frenzy* with 28 attendees.
- In April, the park hosted 18 interpretive programs with 283 attendees. The highlighted programs for the month: *Desert Night Hike* with 35 attendees and *Feeding Frenzy* with 30 attendees.
- In April, a news release was sent out about the *Wildlife Selfies* that we have posted on our Facebook page. This story went viral and the Interpretive Ranger was interviewed by Channel 3, 10 and 8. We also received over 332 new likes to our Facebook page.
- An eagle scout completed his pollinator garden project behind the Nature Center by adding interpretive signage describing the garden and some of the plants

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):

- Staff has been cleaning and repairing many of the watercraft and other camp equipment over the past few months in preparation of the summer camp season.

- Registration is growing higher every day, however, we are still hoping for more youth to register right up to camp beginning in June.
- 26 summer camp staff has been hired, 14 of which will be part of the Counselor-in-Training program to mentor young scouts. Staff trainings have already begun with the Staff Orientation in April and Lifeguard training in May. Staff Training Week will run May 30 thru June 2.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- Park attendance was up for Estrella in March due to increased hiking users and ramada picnicking. February attendance increased from 2016 by 23% and March increased this year by 8%. The souvenir sales in the Nature Center have also seen an increase.
- The *100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge* was again a success at Estrella and participants enjoyed a celebration and recognition of their efforts on March 11.
- The Neo Tribal Group had their annual *Drum and Dance Fest* on the weekend of March 17th and 18th. Attendance decreased this year, but all participants had a wonderful weekend.
- Estrella Park volunteers staffed a booth at the Tres Rios Nature Festival during the first weekend of April. They handed out park information, brochures and maps.
- The beautiful weather in April guaranteed strong attendance through hiking and picnicking.
- April 15th Race Timers held a foot race on the Coldwater Trail. Nearly 100 people enjoyed the park and its trails.
- Easter weekend was strong in Estrella Park this year with many families enjoying picnics in the ramadas and turf area. The sounds and cooking smells added to the festive day. The park experienced increased revenue over the 2016 Easter weekend.
- Department staff met with the Estrella Park Corral West horse concessionaire to review the close of the recent horseback rental season. The new concessionaires focused this season primarily on gaining knowledge and expanding the customer base.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park:

- Lake Pleasant offered 52 interpretive programs during the months of March and April to the enjoyment of 2,528 program participants. The highlights of the months included *Rattlesnakes of Arizona*, *Stargazing for Everyone*, and the *Pleasant Paddlers Program*.
- The park, along with members from the Trades and Trails Crew, worked together to put the finishing touches on the Pipeline Canyon Floating Bridge repair. The bridge is beautiful and stronger than ever. The trail access is once again open – connecting visitors from Cottonwood Day-Use Area to the Pipeline Canyon Day-Use Area.
- The park hosted its annual *Dam Good Run* event in collaboration with Aravaipa Running. The event attracted 350 running participants, who were excited to be able to cross the dam and utilize the new Pipeline Canyon Floating Bridge.
- In addition, the park was pleased to host the annual *Lake Pleasant Paddlefest*. The event attracted approximately 1,500 participants and was a wonderful opportunity for the public to get to experience the wonderful world of paddle activities (i.e. kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, etc.). Special thanks to our partners – including (but not limited to) South By Southwest and Arizona Game and Fish Department.
- The park also hosted the annual *CAST for Kids Clinic* in association with the Bureau of Reclamation and C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation. This is a wonderful event in which anglers donate their time to take youth (underprivileged, underserved, disabled, etc.) out on the lake for a day of fun and fishing. The event welcomed approximately 200 youth participants.
- Unfortunately, the baby bald eagle that was nesting at Lake Pleasant did not survive after a few months of life. Arizona Game and Fish Department is currently investigating the cause of death.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park (MMRP):

- During the month of March, 20 interpretive programs were offered at the park with 290 people in attendance. The most popular single program was our *Moon Hike* with 70 in attendance. Liberty Wildlife provided a live animal presentation to park visitors with 31 people were in attendance.

- Six special events took place during the month of March:
 - *Hike for the Homeless*; 164 people participated plus nearly 100 spectators were in attendance.
 - *Mountain to Fountain*; nearly 600 people participated in this 15K endurance run.
 - *Ragnar Del Sol*; Four Peaks Staging Area was the transition area/baton exchange for this 200 mile run. 241 teams participated.
 - *The Cactus Cup*; one competition took place each day including the Fat Tire 40 which took place on Saturday. 390 people participated in this 3-day event.
 - *Snakebite 30K*; 29 runners participated.
 - *Bike MS*; cyclists had a choice of six different routes, ranging from 36 miles to 104 miles. Routes took participants from MMRP and throughout the east valley. A total of 160 people participated including our own Ranger Amy who completed the 36 mile course.
- MMRP hosted the *100 Miles in 100 Days* celebration with shirts, snacks and cake, 11 people joined the celebration.
- MMRP staff along with various department staff hosted the annual Park Host celebration; lunch was served along with several prizes given away. 20 hosts were in attendance. On Wednesday, March 29th, the Park Supervisor along with all Park Hosts hosted a potluck luncheon as an appreciation to park staff.
- Western Spirit Cycling hosted a guided mountain bike tour with 10 people participating. Rim Tours offered a guided mountain bike tour with 16 participating.
- REI hosted two classes at McDowell in March; *Introduction to Maps & Compass* and *Introduction to Mountain Biking*.
- During the month of April, 14 interpretive programs were offered at the park with 112 people in attendance. The most popular single program was the Desert Tortoise presentation with 23 in attendance.
- REI hosted two classes at McDowell in April; *Intro to GPS Navigation* and *Intro to Mountain Biking*.
- Ranger Amy hosted an outreach program for youth at the DC Ranch Community Center, she provided a live animal presentation and arts and craft project.
- Ranger Amy presented to a crowd of 25 people at the River of Time Museum located in Fountain Hills during their lunch talk series.
- MMRP Campground continued to be at capacity during the month of March and what appears to be a first at MMRP, the camp overflow area was also at capacity during several weekends.
- Park staff met with Mark Johnston and Al Schoon regarding Geocaching at MMRP. Mark and Al gave a brief presentation regarding the history of Geocaching and current caches located at MMRP (approximately 140 currently located at the park). The group discussed future opportunities to partner and continue this very successful program. Mark reported over 50,000 people logged their geocaching experience at McDowell Park in 2016.
- Park maintenance staff completed a number of projects in April; re-painted the Ramada structures located near the Visitor Center, repaired and re-painted the look-out area located near the Visitor Center; re-located and installed a new flag pole (donated by park hosts) near the Visitor Center, re-painted the monument sign located at the entrance of the park and made several repairs plus applied new coating to the roof of the Visitor Center.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- In March, the park hosted 28 programs with 680 participants. The ever-popular *Stargazing for Everyone* drew in 250 sky viewing participants. Park visitors had the opportunity to enjoy a special program presented by the San Tan Valley Master Gardeners Club, the *Wildflower Seed Ball*.
- Ranger Nikki presented a program at Robson Library in Sun Lakes for 50 people that featured San Tan's "greatest hits", including geology, history, plants and animals.
- San Tan participated in the "100 Miles in 100 Days" grand finale celebration with t-shirts, awards and cake provided to 20 Challenge participants.
- In April, the park hosted 25 programs with 327 participants. Children and adults enjoyed the night air with the *Moonlight Hike* and *Flashlight Walk*. Park staff presented *Archery 101* and *202* classes to 18 and 10 students respectively. The San Tan Valley Master Gardeners club returned again this month to lead a *Sunset Saguaro Stroll* that brought in 25 people.
- San Tan served as the host site for Aravaipa Running Club's *Sinister Night Run*, with 319 racers taking on 9k, 27k or 54k distances.

Spur Cross Conservation Area:

- The Park hosted 24 interpretive programs in March with 921 participants attending. The highlighted program for the month: *Archaeology Expo* with 572 attendees.
- In April, the park hosted 23 programs with 327 participants in attendance. The highlighted programs for the month: *Stargazing* with 35 attendees and *Find the Ranger* with 27 participants.
- Joshua Balch and Troop #244 raised revenue to buy the materials and constructed 16 plank bridges to complete an Eagle Scout project for us.
- Mason Draper and Troop #11 raised revenue to buy and then planted three 20 gallon Velvet Mesquite trees by the solar oasis on the Metate Trail.
- Owen Connell and Troop #131 completed a Leadership/Community Service Project by removing many invasive Fountain Grass clumps in Cottonwood Wash and raking loose rock from sections of the Spur Cross Trail.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- Usery Mountain Regional Park offered 47 interpretive programs in March totaling 1,631 participants. In April, the park offered 32 interpretive programs totaling 1,333 participants.
- The park congratulated the *100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge* finishers and treated them to cake at their celebration party. 30 finishers attended the party to talk about their experiences during the 100 days, and to pick up their official t-shirt for completing the challenge.
- The Buckhorn Campground was 99% full in the month of March.
- *Stargazing for Everyone*, led by Tony La Conte, brought in 175 park visitors wanting to learn about the night sky. Participants enjoyed a slide presentation about the stars, followed by an opportunity to view the stars with a variety of high powered telescopes.
- The Arizona Republic hosted a private stargazing event at the park bringing together outdoor enthusiasts from around the east valley. 58 people attend their event.
- Park hosts were treated to a BBQ Host Appreciation Lunch at the park. Staff cooked hamburgers and hotdogs for the hosts in attendance. Director Cardin dropped by to thank the hosts for all they do for our department and encouraged them to continue volunteering next season.
- The interpretive ranger helped out at the 2017 AZ Game & Fish Outdoor Expo at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility. Maricopa County Parks and Recreation set up a booth at the event and gave out information on county parks.
- The Usery State FITA Field Championship was held at the archery range. 14 of the best archers from around the state participated in this competition.
- The park received and installed a memorial bench donation which was placed on Pass Mountain Trail.
- A new Desert Tortoise Habitat was built by the Amphitheater at the Nature Center. The wall was constructed with steel and rock (gabion wall) to help blend in with the environment. Trees, native plants, a watering hole, and shade structures were installed for the arrival of a new tortoise. Al (the Desert Tortoise) was relocated from McDowell to his new home at Usery.
- Three wedding events were held in the park. Two were held at the Amphitheater and Nature Center after business hours, and one was held at the C&D Picnic Ramadas.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- The park provided 24 programs, outreaches, and events in March with 836 attending total. Two "Living with Urban Wildlife" programs were sponsored by the White Tank Mountains Conservancy. Both the "Bees" program and "Rattlesnakes" program were great presentations and well attended. The always popular weekly "Wildflower Wednesdays" with Wildflower Lady Cindy were especially well attended with this year's spectacular wildflower bloom.
- March is event month at White Tank. The bi-annual *Cactus Flower 7K* running event held on March 11th had 126 participants. On March 18th, the *Mesquite Canyon Trail Run* utilized most of the trails with 407 runners starting early to escape the heat of the day. The MBAA also had a mountain bike race on the 25th with a record number of riders totaling 536.
- There has been an increase in schools coming out to the library and Nature Center for programs and just to visit the facilities. Some of these groups are hiking as well. The teachers are splitting their classes between the Library and the Park to get a well-rounded visit.

- The wildflower season in White Tank Park was the most prolific in many years. Many visitors took advantage of this and the park experienced an increase in attendance over last year.
- The park provided 15 programs, outreaches, and events in April with 216 attending total. In cooperation with the Library, the Park celebrated Earth Day with both departments providing a number of kids' activities. The new interpretive ranger started on April 24th and is training and prepping for new programming. Even with the mildly increased April temperatures, there are many schools hiking the Waterfall Trail and stopping by the Library and Nature Center where staff has been having fun providing impromptu teaching and connecting with nature. Staff also provided scheduled outreaches at the park to the Girl Scouts and to the Sun City Festival Community.
- Many of the park hosts left for the season in April. Orvan and Lela Pickett who hosted for 16 years retired from the volunteer program. Park staff celebrated their service with a party and send-off.
- On Saturday, April 29th, the long-time resident Blue-speckled Rattlesnake passed away suddenly. Despite the efforts of the new interpretive ranger who has extensive animal handling experience, the snake could not be saved. It is always a sad moment for park staff and volunteers when a member of the critter family passes.

Vulture Mountain Regional Park:

- March was a busy month at the Hassayampa River Preserve with a total of 2,456 visitors. Staff and volunteers conducted 15 interpretive programs, field trips, and outreaches to a total of 466 visitors. Program highlights included Desert Cooking, led by Bernadine McCollum (TNC staff). Being Archaeology Month, the popular kids' Nature Ranger program focused on archaeology and was led by the Park Supervisor with assistance from volunteers. The Project WET program brought 293 students and program volunteers over a period of two days to learn about the Preserve and conduct various water and wildlife-focused activities.
- Honor students from Wickenburg School who provide many hours of service to their community, came to the Preserve at the end of March. Park staff charged this energetic group with making the decision for placing the bench for the highest use with consideration for the different types of visitors at the Preserve. Particularly the local bird watchers have commented to staff that they enjoy this new location.
- The Saturday Maintenance Work Crew along with park staff worked diligently in March to control the insane vegetation growth at the Preserve resulting from a wet winter of over 7 inches of rain. With additional help from White Tank maintenance staff and volunteers, the growth of grass and weeds was finally knocked down to a manageable state. After the storms and flooding stopped for the winter rainy season, a month still passed before the river flow subsided enough to set the bridges to re-open Lion Trail.
- The volunteer hosts in the Visitor Center have been very committed and are embracing the transfer from TNC to Parks. Park staff is ever grateful for their help.
- Yahoo!...the official transfer of the Preserve from TNC to Maricopa County Parks occurred after the Board of Supervisors' approval came on April 26th. Park staff and other county departments such as legal and real estate worked together with TNC staff to finalize the necessary legal documents.
- Plans are moving forward for an office and Visitor Center redesign, staff hiring, telecommunications upgrades, etc.
- Visitation continues to be steady, especially on weekends, with a total of 1,751 visitors for the month of April.
- Staff and volunteers conducted 15 interpretive programs, field trips, and outreaches to a total of 285 visitors. A few of the programs were presented by White Tank volunteers who would like to get involved at the Preserve. Project WET finished up their season with two additional visits totaling 186 students and program volunteers.
- Wildlife sightings are abundant at the Preserve. Javelina, grey foxes, gila monsters, a number of western diamondback rattlesnakes, king snakes, coachwhips, and of course, lots of birds. The Regional Superintendent and an AZGFD employee excitedly reported a rare sightings of a Black-throated green warbler and a Thick-billed Kingbird. As it turns out, this particular sighting of the Black-throated Green Warbler is only the second reported sighting in Maricopa County ever.
- Our volunteer ranks slightly diminished as snowbird volunteers finished up for the season and left for their summer homes. Preserve staff and volunteers said goodbye to long-time Preserve volunteer Jean Arrowsmith (age 90) for the season as she prepared to head to cooler climes (Vermont) for the summer. She hopes to return in the fall. Another goodbye was said to TNC's Bernadine McCollum, whose last day at the Preserve was April 14th. Bernadine's knowledge and experience was invaluable during the transition and she

promised she will still be involved as part of the Friends of Hassayampa and the Wickenburg Conservation Foundation.

- The R&PP Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed developed areas in the Vulture Mountains Recreation Area has been proceeding; March and April conference-style meetings with the BLM, Logan Simpson Consulting and Parks staff were productive. A field site visit was conducted in March and the EA is moving forward with a robust timeline.
- Parks staff continues to meet and work with the Maricopa County Department of Transportation staff on the Vulture Mountains future road alignment for proposed facilities in the recreation area.