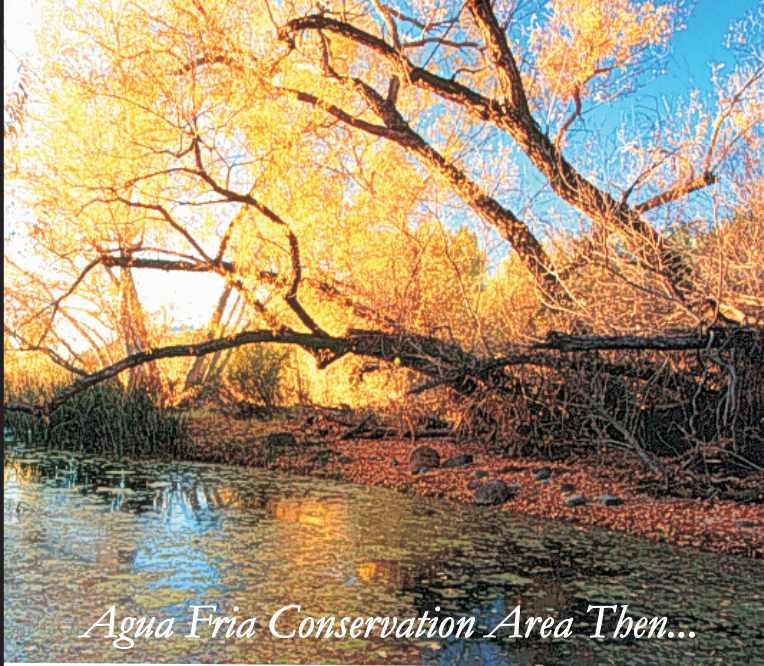


Maricopa County

Parks and Recreation Department
Lake Pleasant Regional Park

Effective July 1, 2007, motorized vehicle restrictions enforced in the Agua Fria Conservation Area



Agua Fria Conservation Area Then...



Agua Fria Conservation Area Now!

Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department, the Bureau of Reclamation and multiple partnering agencies are very concerned about the illegal dumping, shooting and off-highway vehicle use at the Lake Pleasant Regional Park Agua Fria Conservation Area which is located south of Table Mesa Road. During a recent clean-up, 32 tons of trash were removed from the area and the dumping continues to be a problem. Illegal shooting is occurring creating an unsafe environment. Irresponsible off-highway vehicles are causing damage to the desert and riparian areas in and near the park.

All of this is very concerning to the agencies who manage the public lands in the area. In 1995, multiple natural resource agencies, along with extensive input from the public, identified this section of the park as a *conservation area* in the Lake Pleasant Regional Park Master Plan. Recently, these agencies have been meeting to determine the best short and long-term actions for the area. In order to ensure public safety and to protect the conservation area, the agencies have agreed that it is necessary to enforce the restriction on motorized vehicle use in the conservation area. **Effective July 1, 2007, in accordance with the Park Rule R-107 and 1995 Park Master Plan, the restriction on motorized vehicle use at the Agua Fria Conservation Area entrance will be enforced.** Park visitors may continue to fish, hike, bike, picnic, and camp in the conservation area. All supplies will need to be carried into the site without the use of motorized vehicles.

At this time, the agencies would like to encourage individuals who witness **any illegal activity** in the area to contact the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office at (602) 876-1011. Future developments on the Agua Fria Conservation Area will be made available to the public at www.maricopa.gov/parks/lake_pleasant/agua_fria.



Maricopa County

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Frequently asked questions

1) How did the decision to enforce the motorized vehicle restriction at the Agua Fria Conservation Area come about?

- a) The primary reasons the agencies decided to begin enforcing the restriction on motorized vehicles at the Agua Fria Conservation Area are to ensure public safety and protect the natural and cultural resources. Over the past four years, the Agua Fria Conservation Area has been subject to increased:
 - i) Illegal dumping;
 - ii) Illegal shooting;
 - iii) Off-highway vehicle use;
 - iv) Degradation of natural resources - including habitat destruction;
 - v) Degradation of cultural sites - including petroglyphs that have been either damaged or stolen;
 - vi) Wood cutting;
 - vii) Vandalism;
 - viii) Violation of federal, state, county, local and park regulations and laws;
 - ix) Cattle on local property have been shot;
 - x) Offensive behavior; and
 - xi) Open campfires

2) What prompted the decision to enforce the Park Rule (R-107) regarding motorized vehicle access to the Agua Fria Conservation Area on July 1, 2007?

- a) According to Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department Park Rules, Rule-107 states the following act is prohibited in Maricopa County parks *operating any motorized vehicle except on roads and parking areas designated by the Department for such purpose*. This conservation area, as designed in the 1995 Master Plan, does not have established roads. Due to a substantial rise in illegal activity in the conservation area, all agencies have agreed that the area has become unsafe for the public and it is time to enforce the rule. Additionally, the land in the conservation area is being destroyed at a rapid and irreparable rate.

3) Define "limited access".

- a) No motorized vehicles.

4) What types of activities have been identified as "acceptable" for the public under the new restrictions?*

- a) According to the Lake Pleasant Regional Park 1995 Master Plan, the following activities are allowed:
 - i) Boating
 - ii) Fishing
 - iii) Swimming
 - iv) Camping
 - v) Hiking
 - vi) Bicycling
 - vii) Picnicking

*A designated parking area will be established for visitors

5) Who owns and manages the Agua Fria Conservation Area?

- a) The Bureau of Reclamation owns the land; however, Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department has a 50-year management agreement to manage the

land. Under the original agreement, the Agua Fria Conservation Area was designated as a conservation area with limited access and development in order to preserve the riparian areas.

Conservation areas, as defined in the 1995 Master Plan, are natural, environmentally sensitive areas intended to remain relatively undisturbed to preserve the native environment. No development, except natural trails, will occur in these areas. Some interpretive natural trails will be developed to allow visitors to experience the unique environment offered in the conservation areas.

6) What is the short-term plan?

- a) The level of activity in the Agua Fria Conservation Area has increased in a way that wasn't foreseen when the 1995 Master Plan was developed. The decision to enforce the motorized vehicle restriction may be an inconvenience to all parties involved; however, a long-term solution is currently being developed to ensure that the conservation area provides safe, pleasant and compatible recreational opportunities for all. The motorized vehicle restriction will remain in effect until a long-term solution has been developed. The public will be kept apprised as developments unfold.

7) What is the long-term plan for the area?

- a) A concerted effort with multiple agencies to develop a long-term plan is currently underway. The 1995 Master Plan originally identified the area as a conservation area and it is the intent of the agencies to use that plan as a starting point in developing a final plan. The agencies are working on identifying recreational opportunities that the conservation area will offer.
- b) Public comments will be sought, encouraged and taken into consideration in developing a final plan and before implementation of any permanent solution.

8) Who will be impacted by the decision?

- a) Anyone and everyone accessing the area legally or illegally. Last year, 443 watercraft and 2,685 autos entered the Agua Fria Conservation Area legally. These individuals may still access the conservation area as pedestrians or by boat via the main entry or north entry stations of Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

9) What will happen to individuals who don't adhere to the closure?

- a) Individuals who do not adhere to the new regulations, can and will be cited by:
 - i) Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) – MCSO will enforce both the Park Rules and Arizona State Revised Statutes.
 - ii) Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGF) – AZGF will enforce Title III, V, XVII and XXVIII (OHV Law) and Arizona Game and Fish Statutes.
 - iii) The levels for the citations are dependent upon the illegal activity.
 - iv) Please note that the Maricopa County Park rules are Class II Misdemeanors which may lead to an arrest.

10) Who should I contact for additional information?

- a) New developments and information will be posted at www.maricopa.gov/parks/lake_pleasant/agua_fria. Please e-mail your comments to maricopacountyparks@mail.maricopa.gov or phone (602) 372-7460.