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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 31, 2009
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
From: R.J. Cardin, Director
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.J. Cardin".

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the August 11, 2009 Director's Summary.

Superintendent Report

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: The Park offered 10 programs during the month to the pleasure of 355 program participants. This is a 32% increase in attendance from August 2008. The Scorpion Scavenger Hunt attracted the most participants with 195 arthropod seeking adventurers joining the quest.

A new attraction has been established at the park by means of a Chuckwalla (large lizard) habitat. The habitat was created through an Eagle Scout project. It is a unique experience for visitors to see these magnificent creatures up close and in a fairly natural setting; most users would not see them in the park due to the location in which they are normally found. We are working with the Phoenix Herpetological Society to adopt several more Chuckwallas for the habitat and hope to have them introduced to their new home soon.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: There were 30 interpretive programs performed in August revenue with a total of 490 participants, including 187 repeat attendees. Stargazing always twinkles bright stars and August was no different with 225 viewers on a beautiful night. In addition, the new concept of the self-guided Full Moon Hike pulled in 95 evening walkers.

A new yoga partnership with Inner Vision Yoga studio was also successfully started in the Nature Center. The class has consistently seen between 4 and 7 returning or new students each class.

The final showing for Creature Feature Movie series drew a record crowd of 43 viewers. Not only did they get to see a great movie but viewers had a pillow fight too! Due to excellent marketing and outstanding buy-in from media, the families coming are truly newcomers to Usery Park. In the Nature Center, staff is developing lasting relationships with a small private school, a home-schooled family and other kids and parents.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: There were 29 ranger programs with an attendance of 424 (in 2008 - 17 programs and attendance of 215). The program of the month was the release of two (2) Great Horned owls which attracted 80 park visitors.

Dark sky telescope hikes continue to be popular but this month, the most attended hike was "Full Moon over Elvis" with 43 hikers.

Brand Productions filmed a segment for a reality show "Find my Family" at Estrella. The individual who was reunited with her family stated she had always enjoyed hiking at Estrella and wanted to share the experience.

An Eagle Scout completed a fire ring at our amphitheater. This ring is a replication of the one built at each of our nature centers and is a wonderful addition. It will be especially nice for the Marshall Trimble program in November.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Lake Pleasant had 21 public programs this month with 331 patrons in attendance.

The Partnership with Cabela's is a big success! The Beginner Paddling Program, with kayaks and canoes, had 71 patrons the first day and 58 on the second day for a total of 129 in attendance. We also partnered on a good fishing program. The Beginner Fishing Program drew in 41 participants.

The re-roofing of both the Old Ranger Station and Visitor Center are complete.

Desert Outdoor Center: An extraordinary number of school reservations have come in during August as many schools are requiring teachers to have their calendars delineating field trips and other special events submitted for approval in early September.

DOC and the Lake staff have engaged the notion of conducting aquatics training and events after a very successful venture with Cabela's in late July. The idea is that aquatics training (kayak and canoe mainly) would occur at the DOC then move the lake (west) side for practice and growing enjoyment...move from the classroom to the playground. The DOC is working with the Lake Pleasant Sailing Club in a similar endeavor of aquatics training, this time targeting women and sailing. In October, a one-day event will afford women the opportunity to learn and practice sailing skills. We hope to develop a fee-based training program at the DOC, which would be followed by increasing aquatics users entering the Park to practice their new sport.

Cave Creek Regional Park: Interpretive programs have continued through the summer at Cave Creek and have attracted the highest number of attendees. The best-attended program this month was "Venomous Creatures of Cave Creek Park", which attracted 36 people.

Cave Creek finished its movie series on Thursday, August 6th. We will continue showing movies again in the fall, hoping to attract locals and our winter camping visitors.

On September 5th, the official opening of our new desert tortoise habitat enclosure took place. Visitors had the opportunity to meet and help feed our resident tortoises *Scar* and *Sonora*. Ranger Jim also talked about the challenges and rewards of keeping adopted tortoises as pets.

On October 10th, equestrians will ride through Cave Creek Park and Spur Cross via the Maricopa Trail for an Open Space event. A similar event is being planned for mountain bike riders in November.

Buckeye Hills Regional Park: A meeting was held on August, 20th between AZGFD and BLM to continue the planning efforts for the joint management of properties surrounding the park. A draft MOU is being developed along with the gathering of GIS data to start overlays. The team will be modeling the efforts of the Vulture Plan (below).

Vulture Mountain Cooperative Recreation Management Area (CRMA): A Memo of Understanding (MOU) is ready for signature by the Board of Supervisor (BOS) at their next available meeting.

The department was awarded a grant for \$25,000 from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to hire a consultant to conduct the Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) to be merged with our Departmental monies designated for this project. The RAMP determines the recreational uses and needs of the area equal to our Park Master Planning. Additional BLM funding can reach a total of up to \$99,000 (if available). The BOS Agenda item is being drafted for receipt of grant funds.

The County will take the lead in hiring a consultant for the RAMP. This will establish the framework for the Cooperative Management Agreement and is to determine which areas the County should apply for Recreation Public Purposes Act (R&PP) in order to collect fees.

A Regional Development meeting was held on Aug. 19th at the Wickenburg Town Hall with the Town Manager, Chamber Executive Director, Town Council member who serves on the Trail group, three (3) representatives from public conservation groups, and 4 representatives from BLM. The meeting was positive and all participants appear to approve of a BLM/County partnership.

There will be a joint Planning Summit with high level stakeholders this fall. We will be brainstorming on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and perhaps finding out what issues and concerns there may be. This is in conjunction with the BLM Trails Master Plan for the Wickenburg Area and BLM is providing a professional facilitator.

The department will be planning more scouting trips out to Vulture with BLM and volunteers to determine current use and areas the County may want to pursue for patent.

Contract Updates

Buckeye Hills Regional Park: Discussions continue with Buckeye Sportsman Club regarding operation of the General Joe Foss Shooting Complex.

Lake Pleasant: Scorpion Bay Marina received the final Certificate of Occupancy for the restaurant, convenience store, restroom and pump house. They held a public open house over Labor Day Weekend (not formal); the store and restaurant are now open to the public.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The department is working to fill two vacant positions – Events Coordinator at Lake Pleasant and Electrician for the construction crew. Approval has been granted for the Electrician position and recruitment is currently underway. We have requested an exemption from the hiring freeze for the Events Coordinator position.