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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 5, 2013

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 January 8, 2013 Director's Summary.

From the Office of the Director

Google Street View, a division of Google Maps began a project of mapping selected trails in each of Maricopa County's Parks and segments of the Maricopa Trail. Google's first trail to be mapped in Arizona was at the Grand Canyon. Maricopa County Parks will be the first park system in Arizona to have a series of maps available to the public on Google Maps. The mapping should take approximately two weeks and the trails will be loaded to Google Street View/Google Maps in six to twelve months.

Desert Botanical Garden recently received a three-year grant of \$300,000 to support the formation and work of the Conservation Alliance, a collaboration of stakeholders committed to studying, restoring and promoting the mountain park preserves in the Phoenix area, a system encompassing 186,000 acres of open space. Maricopa County Parks along with the Phoenix Mountain Preserves and Scottsdale Sonoran Preserves are the primary land managers in the collaborative along with a number of non-profit friends groups that advocate for the parks and preserves.

Vulture Mountains Roadway Study is underway by Maricopa County Department of Transportation in response to the 2011 Vulture Mountains Cooperative Recreation Management Area Master Plan (RAMP) that was approved by the Board of Supervisors. The purpose of the RAMP was to determine the recreational uses and needs for the Vulture Mountains Cooperative Recreation Management Area (CRMA) located south of Wickenburg, Arizona. The RAMP identified a general capital improvement plan to guide future development within the Vulture Mountain CRMA. The purpose of this roadway/access evaluation is to develop a transportation plan to service three of the capital improvement projects identified in the RAMP which are:

- Vulture Peak Campground
- Vulture Peak Day-use Area
- Vulture Peak Off-highway Vehicle area.

Governor Jan Brewer announced the appointments of R.J. Cardin to the Arizona State Parks Board on January 25, 2013. The seven member Board guides staff in managing 30 State Parks and Natural Areas along with several statewide recreation and historic preservation programs.

Budget

December came and went with a HO HO HO from Santa and a bit of a slow down due to the busy holiday season. It is hard to believe we are six months into Fiscal year (FY)13! Here are the highlights for
December 2012:

Budget Status (through December close):

General Fund (100) – Agency 300: On the expenditure side, the General Fund (Fund 100, Agency 300) was under budget by \$89,702 or 20% 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 10% or \$108,002 over the YTD budget.
- Enhancement Fund reported expenditures 1% or \$20,362 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures.

Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:

- Lake Fund (Fund 240, Agency 302) reported revenues 18% or \$133,464 over the YTD budget.
- Lake Fund reported operating expenditures over budget at 6% or \$44,359.

Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:

- Spur Cross (Fund 225, Agency 306) reported revenues at \$906 over the YTD budget.
- Spur Cross reported operating expenditures over budget at 2% or \$1,909.

Information Technology

- Ongoing software upgrades were completed for several programs including Snag-It and Adobe Pro.
- Due to the vacancy at the Executive Assistant position, work was done regarding Parks Commission appointments and working to set up the 2013 meeting schedule, etc.

Human Resources

Congratulations and Welcome!

- Welcome Alix (Alexandra) Larson, Accounting Specialist at Park headquarters. Alix comes to us via Public Fiduciary where she worked as an Estate Administrator.
- Welcome Bruce Zavoda, Contact Station Assistant at Lake Pleasant. Bruce has worked with us in the past as a temporary employee and was able to land one of the regular full-time positions.
- Welcome Amy Roberts, Interpretive Ranger for Estrella Mountain Regional Park. Amy comes back to Parks from Public Health, her start date was January 22, 2013.
- Welcome Donna Southard, Executive Assistant to the Director. Donna comes to us from the City of Peoria, her start date was January 22, 2013.

Finance Program

- Budget kick-off for FY14 was held. There are several changes to the format for budget submittals, several of which will make the process easier. The Department received tentative targets for all funds with no changes over FY13.
- With the start of the new Accounting Specialist, we are getting caught up on revenue reporting.

Central Reservations

- The main reservation line continues to be busy with new reservations, cancellations and reservation changes.
- Employee discount passes seem to be picking up again. We seem to average 8 to 10 employee annual passes each month and since program inception in April, we have issued 170 cards.

Volunteer Program

- With our Volunteer Coordinator also being new to the Department, most of December was spent visiting each park to better understand the park operations and volunteer needs.
- Work has started to set up the 2013 Host Appreciation Event scheduled for March 6, 2013.
- Work continued on the Maricopa Trail and Operations Plan with a newly written Adopt-A-Trail section coming close to completion.
- The Vehicle Use Permit application process was updated in November by Risk Management. There are several significant changes and the Department is working to understand the new process and ensure all our Hosts and Volunteers are meeting the new requirements.

Souvenir Fund

- The Interpretive Retail Display Program has been officially launched! The concept is to identify souvenir items that align with monthly interpretive programs offered, providing park patrons the ability to buy themed merchandise

and/or books that match programs they just attended. The parks have been very enthusiastic about this and have shared lots of great ideas.

Superintendent Reports

Lake Pleasant Regional Park - Lake Pleasant offered 19 interpretive programs during the month of January with roughly 289 program participants. Highlights of the month included archery 101, desert awareness, and the Pleasant Paddlers program.

In its short existence, the Lake Pleasant Facebook page continues to attract a lot of attention from visitors and potential visitors. The Park currently has 62 likes and receives regular comments from visitors about the beauty and wonderful things going on at the Lake. Visitors seem to enjoy the regularly posted pictures by the Lake Pleasant Park Interpretive Ranger, such as pictures of the programs, weather-related items, and of course, the wild burros and other wildlife.

Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) conducted a survey of the Bald Eagle nesting sites along the Agua Fria. Early indications show activity at two of the nesting sites by different adult pairs, but have yet to result in eggs being laid. While this is a little later in the season, the AZGFD remains optimistic about the possibility and feels that the competing pairs may change the dynamics of typical mating seasons. The AZGFD nest watchers will be arriving the first week in February to continue the monitoring efforts of the nesting sites.

The septic lift station at the Bajada Loop of the Desert Tortoise Campground has been repaired and is open for service once again. Special thanks to the Parks 7 Crew for all of their hard work to complete the repairs as quickly as possible.

A lightweight plane went down in the Agua Fria shortly after the eagle closure began. The pilot was rescued with no injuries in the plane landing. The plane has not been recovered yet due to limited metal on the plane to be detected. Recovery has been postponed until after the eagle closure is lifted.

Cave Creek Regional Park – The park hosted 29 interpretive programs with 336 participants, including seven docent lead program with 77 attendees. The program highlights were Backyard Birding, Polliwogin' Story Time, 3 Dog Nights Hike!, Quartz Trail Hike, Fitness Hike, Animal Art, Reptile Feeding, Venomous Creatures, Horses, Gold and Critters Oh My!, Fireside with the Ranger, Ride with the Ranger, Archery 101 and Clay Mine Hike.

Staff and 40 Hands on Phoenix volunteers completed the Clay Mine trail maintenance project on President's Day. They raked and removed large rocks, picked up trash and stabilized a slope to the entrance of the mine.

The campground has been full since January 16th with several campers in over-flow over the weekends. February's booking also looks very promising with all weekends booked with reservation.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park – The event season began with the Mountain Bike Association of Arizona (MBAA) kicking off their state championship race series at McDowell Park. The first event, the McDowell Meltdown, the first in eight races, was held on Saturday January 19th with nearly 500 racers competing.

A rainy, overcast night held the numbers down for the month's Full Moon Hike, but the Interpretive Ranger held an additional 23 programs attracting 128 repeat attendees and a total of 264 participants.

The most popular program of the month was the Dixie Mine Petroglyph hike. While hiking in light rain, 27 hikers still covered four plus miles and enjoyed petroglyph interpretation for over four hours. Always a crowd pleaser, the indoor reptile feeding attracted 35 park visitors, including drop-ins.

During one of the coldest periods in Arizona history, the park had five consecutive nights of freezing temperatures. By providing the campers with guidelines on how to prevent the water pipes from freezing, the park experienced only one burst waterline.

In spite of the unusually cold days of January, the Family Campground filled to capacity by mid-month. The six tent sites at McDowell were booked a total of 63 nights in the month of January.

The maintenance staff spent many days in January cleaning up the trails and tracks to resolve erosion problems. They also removed old water bars pulled out by the trails crew.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area – The park hosted 19 interpretive programs with 158 participants. A few of the programs included: Fitness Series, Rock Art of Spur Cross, Dragonfly Trail Hike, Ruins of Spur Cross, Sonoran Desert 101, Sunset Walk, and Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike.

Volunteers and hosts have been stationed at the entry on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, greeting visitors and ensuring fee collection. We have had positive feedback from visitors and staff from Cave Creek Town Hall. The visitors and staff have complimented both the volunteers and host for their customer service.

Usery Mountain Regional Park - The park offered 16 interpretive ranger programs in January totaling 608 participants, and 54 docent lead programs totaling 755 participants. The highlight was the Grand Canyon Adventure Movie Night with 104 attendees, which packed the nature center on a Saturday night. The Full Moon Hike had a tremendous turnout with 323 and is becoming one of the favorite programs amongst our park visitors.

Park maintenance staff repaired one mile of damage to the barrier-free Merkle trail with eight tons of stabilizer, water, and a six-ton driving roller. The trail required a stabilizer mixture to create a hard packed surface.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park – San Tan offered 18 programs bringing over 650 guests to the park, despite the rainy conditions. The program Kids vs. Wild brought in 78 people alone. This month's home school continues to follow its growing pattern with over 40 people attending on a Wednesday morning.

The Interpretive Ranger met with the East Valley Tribune and filmed five promotional segments highlighting the park, snake safety, trail use, the crested saguaro and the graves of San Tan.

Park volunteers and staff have been hard at work rehabilitating some damaged sections of the park due to off-trail usage and taking the opportunity to provide education to park visitors about the importance of staying on designated trails.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park Attendance has increased steadily through the month of January. Warmer weather brought out hikers to try out the new 9 miles of trails and improved tread on many other miles. The public has been providing much positive feedback to the park hosts and staff.

Corral West, the rodeo arena and horse operations managers are seeing increases in horseback ride rentals. They held a rodeo and planned a Spanish horse but the event was cancelled due to lack of sponsorship, funding and time. Both events are planning ahead for 2014.

Estrella Park conducted interviews for the Interpretive Ranger position. It is with pleasure that we announce that Amy Roberts was hired and started work in January. Amy comes with ranger experience from Phoenix Parks and several years working as an educator with Maricopa County at Spur Cross, Usery and San Tan Parks.

The Centennial Trail Committee continues to meet with the Park Supervisor. Improvements have been made to the Trailhead and Nature Center areas.

Hosts and park staff have been working hard around the park to make improvements. Estrella, being the oldest park, has many repairs and issues to overcome. Patching, scraping and painting work is underway. Repairs to restrooms and ramadas are ongoing. Huge steps forward have occurred with tree issues.

The Coldwater Run, an event within the Aravaipa Trail Runner Series went off without a hitch. On January 19th, about 300 runners ran various lengths from 4 to 50 miles. The runners and event organizer were happy and in the future, want to offer 2 or 3 runs each year in Estrella.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park – In spite of the cold weather and rainy January, the interpretive ranger recorded 736 program attendees at 18 programs for January. On a very cold night with The Friends of White Tank Park serving hot chocolate and cookies, 200 people thoroughly enjoyed the Stargazing event. In addition, the Nature Center remained open until 9 pm for visitors to shop. Another popular offering for the month was the reservations-only

popular Celestial Petroglyph Hike into the Mesquite Canyon. This hike features the unique double sun petroglyph as well as several other more remote rock art sites.

Park staff is planning and making preparations for upcoming events. The MBAA race scheduled for February 9th is expecting 200 bikers. Staff is also anticipating a great number of visitors for the Friends of White Tank Park Art Fair scheduled for February 23rd, over 1,000 people attended last year. Vendors and artists are already scheduled for the big day. Arizona Wing Civil Air Patrol also enjoyed their outing last year for desert training at White Tank Park and decided to come back again, scheduled for February 23rd. The Buckeye Air show is the same day and we will be sharing a booth with the White Tank Library to promote the park.

The January gift shop sale was successful; selling out of t-shirts, hats and over 20 trekking poles! Visitors, as well as hosts and volunteers, took advantage of the sale.

The construction continues on the 303 highway upgrade. Olive Avenue has been opened again resulting in increased visitation for the park, updated directions are on the website.

Contracts

Sportsfield Complex at Estrella Mountain Regional Park – In 2009, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued to upgrade and expand the existing Sportsfield Complex at Estrella Mountain Regional Park. Unfortunately, no responses were received. Renewed interest in this facility has prompted us to issue an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) in lieu of an RFP. Negotiations for the Agreement will be based on upgrades to the ballfields, lighting, parking, restroom and expansions to include the undeveloped sports fields and a concession facility. A drafted ITN is under review by the County's Office of Procurement Services.

Lake Pleasant Commercial Development – Various activities regarding the ITN for the Development of the Resort and Commercial Properties are underway. 1) Negotiations with Red Rock are proceeding as we are having meetings with their team of consultants, assisting with preparation of their development, phasing, pro formas and contract development; 2) We are working with Bureau of Reclamation for an Amendment to incorporate the additional commercial acreage as well as other minor "clean up" administrative issues; 3) A joint team meeting with Red Rock, Bureau of Reclamation, and the City of Peoria, etc., will be scheduled in February to review progress and for each entity to provide guidelines and timeframe for the various phases of pre-development; 4) A Request for Proposal is being issued for a consultant to assist, advise and develop a concessionaire/developer agreement with Red Rock; and, finally 5) Lake Pleasant Master Plan Amendment will be drafted once all modifications to the Plan are approved.

Adobe - In a mutual agreement of understanding between Parks and Desert Wake Park, we are terminating their agreement for development of a cable ski lake due to Flood Control constraints (50 year flood plain), water rights and permitting issues. This will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for approval. On a good note, Victory Lane wants to expand to include soccer fields, however, this will require additional water rights for irrigation. We will be negotiating with Wet & Wild to release their water rights (they are not using well water as originally intended) and transfer to Victory Lane.

Paradise Valley /Bowtie - The City of Phoenix has requested to Public Utility Easements (PUE - Electrical and Water) be installed beyond the Union Hills Right of Way at the Paradise Valley Golf Course (PVGC) to necessitate construction for the new Arizona Arigibusiness and Equine Center (AAEC) School (formally Bowtie Property). Each PUE will be less than 100 square feet. The Electrical PUE is for City access to the new location of the street light, while the water PUE is for the relocation of the existing water meter that services the PVGC. AAEC is preparing all easement documents and we are working with Council and Real Estate for approval procedures. AAEC has requested to tap into our existing well for their irrigation. In a good faith effort, we agreed that we would work with them as long as it did not impact the Golf Course and they would be paying for the water usage.

Commercial Management Concessions Agreement (CMCA) - Several new smaller concessions have expressed interest in doing business at the Parks. There are three pending agreements being negotiated; 1) Sail boat tours at Lake Pleasant (this is the 2nd CMCA of this type for the Lake); 2) Kayaking at Lake Pleasant; 3) Food concession at all Parks.