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MEMORANDUM

Date: October 7, 2008
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
From: R.J. Cardin, Director 
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the September 9, 2008 Director's Summary.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Sara Hunkins joined the Spur Cross team as our part time botanist. She will be doing her Masters project (a floral inventory) on the conservation area.

Park staff has been working with the Maricopa Audubon Society conducting systematic bird surveys on Spur Cross in order to obtain the requisite data to present the case to the National Audubon Society to recognize the Cave Creek corridor as an IBA (Important Bird Area) this will increase our exposure to eco-tourism and future grant proposals.

The supervisor designed and presented a presentation at the request of Director Cardin to the governor's conference on rural communities and economic benefits of open space.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: Ten interpretive programs were performed in September with a total of 424 participants with 114 visitors being dedicated repeat attendees.

The Milky Way twinkled down on 240 stargazers. A record for a September 'Stargazing' event!

Annual pass sales are well ahead of last year's sales with a total of 145 passes sold in the first quarter which is 45 more than last year's first quarter. 130 are regular passes, 15 are senior passes.

Day-use attendance for September increased by 53% with 6,941 visitors.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: September concluded the five-ride summer mountain bike series titled, 'Mountain Bike by the Moon Light'. On the last ride of the summer, 125 riders were in attendance.

The special event season for McDowell Mountain Regional Park has been set and will be the busiest yet. Thirteen events have been confirmed and are scheduled beginning with six events in the fall and the first ever night adventure race.

A design for a much needed new habitat for the Gila Monsters at McDowell Mountain Regional Park has been decided and construction has begun. Much of the needed materials have been purchased with a donation of \$500 from a friend of the park.

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A trail maintenance day was held on the Competitive Track to make some much needed repairs before the busy special event season begins in November. Over 100 hours of volunteer work was put into repairs on the track in September.

The self guided nature trail on the North Trail should be complete by the end of October and ready for the cooler weather and busy season.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: During the fiscal month of September, the park welcomed an increase in attendance of 72% and a 53% increase in revenue from this time last year.

In September, there were 4 programs offered to the delight of 155 program attendees. The most popular event of the month was 'Hiking with the Stars', which appealed to the likes of 85 intrigued visitors. October should be just as promising with activities such as 'Stargazing for Everyone', 'Meet the Real Batman' and the 'Haunted HOWL-O-WEEN Bash'.

The Rock Peak Wash, Hedgehog (previously a portion of the San Tan Trail), Malpais, and new portion of the San Tan Trails are available for users to utilize. The Trails Crew is working diligently to re-route a few sections of the new trails for the safety of our users and best interest of the park.

An Eagle Scout group, consisting of 14 volunteers, led a trail maintenance project to help beautify and protect a portion of the new San Tan Trail. Scouts repaired ruts/areas of water damage, trimmed back vegetation, removed unofficial routes/shortcuts, and cleaned up the area.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: A very popular and fun program was 'Talk like a Pirate Day', the ranger along with many participants were dressed in the appropriate pirate garb. The 70 participants were then sent into the park with treasure maps so that they could find 'treasures' throughout the turf area. The program concluded with stories from participants about the treasures they found.

The park is partnering with the Flood Control District for interpretive signage displays for the El Rio project that will be displayed in the Estrella Nature Center.

Ranger outreach programs went from 5 to 10 programs and included educational presentations at Buckeye, Avondale and Goodyear schools.

The 'Stargazing for Everyone' program had 98 park visitors gazing towards the cosmos.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC): In preparation for anticipated passage (next federal legislative session) of the "No Child Left Inside" legislation, a significant amount of time has been invested in participating on the board of Be Outdoors Arizona. If funded this law will enable teachers to be trained in outdoor / environmental education techniques that could be held at the DOC, as well as afford funds to cover expenses of bringing school groups to outdoor education classes at the DOC.

DOC staff has engaged the process of reviewing DOC classes to incorporate significant elements of experiential and inquiry-based learning into curriculum, which is the thrust of the new philosophy on environmental education. One of the DOC's goals is to act as resource for outdoor education curriculum that assists other educational entities incorporate experiential and self-discovery components into their programs, all of which will assist in the endeavor to develop best practices.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park (LP): The 'Scorpion Hunt' program attracted 25 people into the amphitheater, while the kayaking program continues to be popular. The Desert Tortoise Program – added two more animals and the LP History programs were conducted via slide show at amphitheater. A 'Full Moon Hike' on the Roadrunner Trail attracted 22.

National Public Lands Day Annual Park Clean Up was held on Sept. 27 from 7 a.m. to 10a.m. with 22 groups and 182 people in attendance.

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Cave Creek Regional Park: Cave Creek offered 6 different interpretive programs this month, attracting a total of 77 participants in September. The most well-attended program was the 'Stargazing for Everyone' program on September 12, which attracted 65 attendees.

White Tank Regional Park: Outreach program to Canyon Elementary educated 175 grade school kids. There were a total of 257 people that participated in educational programs at White Tank Park in September.

Parks: Department staff (15) visited the Sonoran Desert Museum and were treated to a fascinating behind the scenes tour of the exhibits and habitats seldom seen by visitors. Everyone left with a feeling that the 50 year old Tucson facility has much to teach the newer nature center operators.

Marketing Updates

Awards: The Department recently submitted the 'Youth and Family Fitness Hikes' and 'Lake Pleasant Camp' for the Innovations in American Government Awards. Award winners will receive a \$100,000 grant to develop dissemination activities.

Partnerships: Maricopa County park rangers and the Phoenix Zoo outreach staff have teamed up to provide a wild outdoor experience... 'Tails and Trails Desert Critter Scene Investigators'. Participants will enjoy a live animal presentation by the Phoenix Zoo that will get them ready for the adventure then they'll explore a secret area of the park with the park ranger looking for clues like bones, tracks, and scat. They'll use their Critter Scene Investigator (CSI) skills to decide what elusive critter has been there.

Promotions: On October 1, the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department began inviting the public to enjoy one night of free camping at a County park. Visitors who pay the camping fee for one night at a County park will receive the next night of equal value for free. The offer is valid at six of the eleven County parks and is good through November 12, 2008. Restrictions for the offer can be found at www.maricopa.gov/parks.

Grant Updates

The '09 grant cycle is in the works. The Game and Fish Heritage Fund workshop was held in September. There are five sub-categories that have available funds. Park Superintendents, Supervisors, and various committees are brainstorming and in the process of putting proposals together to take advantage of four of the five categories in hopes of enhancing our new nature centers.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The Temp Recreation Assistant at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area has been filled effective September 22 and the Trails Development Supervisor position with the Trails Crew has been filled, also effective September 22.

The Park Office Assistant position at Cave Creek Park has been filled and is effective October 20.

Interviews for the two vacant Contact Station Assistant positions at Lake Pleasant were held and are awaiting management approval of the two candidates that were chosen.

Interviews for the Interpretive Ranger position at McDowell Park are scheduled for October 9, and interviews for the Park Maintenance Worker position at Lake Pleasant were scheduled for October 6 and 7.

The vacant Park Office Assistant position at White Tank Regional Park is currently being recruited *Internal only*; the close date is October 6.