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MEMORANDUM

Date: April 3, 2009
 To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
 From: R.J. Cardin, Director *R.J.C.*
 Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the March 10, 2009 Director's Summary.

Annual Pass Sales

At the last Commission meeting an inquiry was made regarding annual pass sales history. A review of pass sales was conducted based on the last day-use entry fee increase from \$5 to \$6 on August 13, 2007. As you can see by the table below, annual pass sales increased 57% over the prior year, presumably due to the increase in the day use fee. The previous year's increase was only 10%.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park had a 38% increase in annual pass sales from '07 to '08, which is still a significant increase, considering their day-use entry fee did not increase in August, 2007.

Mountain Park Annual Pass Sales

From	To	Total	Increase
8/12/2007	8/13/2008	3616	57%
8/12/2006	8/13/2007	2308	10%
8/12/2005	8/13/2006	2093	3%
8/12/2004	8/13/2005	2023	

Lake Pleasant Annual Pass Sales

From	To	Total	Increase
8/12/2007	8/13/2008	358	38%
8/12/2006	8/13/2007	260	

Budget

On March 16, 2009, the Board of Supervisor's adopted the tentative target budgets for Parks and Recreation. As anticipated, they reduced our General Fund budget by 50% from the FY09 funding level. The department is currently making final decisions regarding potential reductions in staffing and services.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Twenty interpretive programs were conducted for public and private groups. The new Dragonfly Trail was highlighted in the Arizona Republic and attendance has spiked to over 1,000 per week; a new record.

The federally listed native fish, Gila topminnows, was stocked in the solar oasis pond.

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Usery Mountain Regional Park: In March, 62 interpretive programs were performed with a total of 1,866 participants with 450 repeat attendees. The Brown-bag series, Backyard Birding and all kid programs are seeing increases this season just in time for the new Nature Center. Brown-bag lunch-time topics are getting anywhere up to 55 eager listeners.

Total revenue in March 09 has stayed constant with March 08. Camping increased in February but decreased slightly at the end of March. Annual pass sales have dramatically increased with a total of 136 passes sold in March 09 alone, to bring Usery to a total of 943 passes sold year to date. In March, 117 regular passes as well as 19 senior passes were sold.

Usery obtained record souvenir sales for one week from the entry station window totaling \$460.

The "You Are a Shining Star, Red Carpet Affair" Host Appreciation Picnic was held on March 25th; 108 attended with great food, interactive Bingo and lots of fun!

The Park received donations of archery targets from monies collected from charity shoots at Usery Archery Range.

Staff collaborated with the Arizona Republic on a bird watching article that highlighted back-yard bird watching and where to go in the valley for bird watching. In addition, all the "bird" programs offered at Usery and San Tan Parks were also mentioned.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: The Park's revenue is up 19% for the month of January and up 8% for the year-to-date.

Getting the month started, MBAA held the McDowell Meltdown a mountain bike race on the competitive track where nearly 500 racers competed and ABC Channel 15 covered the event and featured the race on the evening news cast.

The following day, in a steady down pour of rain, the Reata Pass Masters conducted their 8th Annual, Criterion race and although a slightly lower turnout this year, the race went well and over 200 racers competed.

The 9th Annual Pemberton 50K was held in bright sunshine and had a record turnout. 177 runners completed the 31.5 mile run and follow-up e-mails from participants reflected their enjoyment of running in such a beautiful environment.

The Park hosted the 12th Annual Desert Classic Duathlon. With the largest field ever for this race the park staff and volunteers are busy planning for the event. The year's field includes a 2 time world champion tri-athlete, the returning champion from last year of this race, the Canadian, Danish, University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University duathlon teams.

The Park had a booth at the Fountain Hills Arts and Crafts Fair and spoke to hundreds of festival attendees over the three days.

The McDowell Park Association purchased paint and equipment, and sent volunteers to help paint the Visitor Center (VC) as the first of several steps identified as necessary to upgrade the facility.

The first collection of Topminnow and Pup Fish were introduced to the Pemberton Pond. The first group of fish was introduced under the Safe Harbor Agreement signed by Arizona Game and Fish Department, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Channel 12 was on site and did an early morning live report concerning the introduction of fish into the Pemberton Pond.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: With three months remaining, the park has already reached the revenue mark set last year and surpassed it by 7% for a total of over \$77,000.

The park offered 8 programs in March to 1,036 program participants. The highlight activity of the month was "Find Me Green Lucky Charms" scavenger hunt and crafts activities, which brought in 345 youths and adults. We also led a successful hike to the Goldmine Bat Cave. Visitors were dazzled by 4 California Leaf-Nosed Bats flying about in the cave. It was a very special find, because it was the first sightings of the night-flying creatures in over 2 years of field surveys.

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Thirty six Eagle Scout volunteers embarked on a buffelgrass removal project to help protect Goldmine Mountain from the invasive weed species. The group removed 217 large bags full of buffelgrass from a highly concentrated area on the mountain. The continued support from the community has been overwhelming in our fight to take back control of the mountain. The volunteer efforts are showing their worth, as we are seeing a decline in the spread of buffelgrass and a resurgence of native vegetation in the targeted areas.

The new Littleleaf Trail has been established northwest of the San Tan entry station. The trail will offer 0.7 miles of beautiful, pristine desert for all to enjoy and give users a nice, short loop as they connect to the Goldmine Trail. In addition, a section of trail heading over the top of Goldmine Mountain has been re-named as the Goldmine Trail, instead of the San Tan Trail to avoid confusion for park users. With the addition of the two latest trails (Littleleaf and Stargazer), the park now offers a total of 17.6 trail miles.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: At the end of March revenue was \$35,161. Souvenir sales are increasing monthly. There were 32 interpretive programs with attendance of 1770.

Citizens for Estrella Mountain Park (CEMP) hosted a Trail Horse Competition as a fundraiser for the Park. Horse and rider had to show their skills approaching fences and gates, approaching mailboxes and retrieving mail, crossing water, sidestepping, etc. Over \$1,000 was raised to help the park with various projects.

"The Day of the Spanish Horse" played to the delight of over 600 onlookers. Park visitors had a rare chance to watch the astounding horsemanship of the Pura Raza Espanol or Andalusian horse and its relatives. This is the kind of event that usually costs hundreds of dollars and is very rare! Domo Vaquero showed the skills of bull handling in dance form, the extreme sport of a Lusitano doing bullfight maneuvers, horse ballet, and groups in quadrille, thundering hooves and swirling dancers. The partnership of horse and human was a fairy tale of beautiful costumes and dancers. Flamenco dance passion by Un Corazon Flamenco and the charming color of Ballet Folklorico Esperanza added to the excitement.

The Hike for the Homeless was successful with more than 547 vehicles filled with individuals who came to raise money and "Hike for the Homeless." Hikers were treated to beautiful weather and wildflowers along the trails.

The Park hasn't really "Gone to the Dogs", but you would have thought so when the Australian Shepherd Club of Arizona held their recent competition at Estrella. Dog owners from California and other surrounding states came by the camper full for the opportunity of enjoying the Arizona weather and showing off their "Best Friends."

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: At the end of March, the park is representing a 14% increase in revenues at \$405,404 compared to this time last year. There were 22 interpretive ranger programs and 1,975 were in attendance.

The "Invisible Ranger" Self Guided Program was put together. Customers can download (from our Web site) a Self Guided Package to use on the Waterfall Trail. Detailed information about the desert is available on the Self Guided Package and can be combined with the information available on the Interpretive Panels on the trail.

Friday night, March 20 the Hay Ride and Campfire program had 350 attendees. Enthusiastic families enjoyed a night by the campfire with marshmallows and a 20 minute starry ride around the park.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Through the end of March revenues show a 2% increase in revenues at \$1,048,103 compared to this time last year. In addition, they had 26 programs with 541 participants.

Honeywell's Annual Campout was held at the northern portion (4-lane) of the park on March 18 through 22, approximately 1,000 employees showed up for the event.

On March 24, Arizona Game and Fish, park staff, and 25 homeschooled children were in attendance for the banding of a female eaglet. The eaglet is healthy and should be fledging the nest within the next few weeks.

Dam Good Run is scheduled for April 4, 125 participants have preregistered. Unofficial timing will be provided to participants at the finish line. Medals will be awarded to first place male and female for each course, which include a 4

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mile and 7 mile run. The current major sponsors for this year's event are Carmex, Zona Communications, Gatorade and Central Arizona Project.

Lake Pleasant staff is partnering with Arizona Clean and Beautiful to implement a recycling program in the park. Arizona Clean and Beautiful has submitted for a grant to fund the needed materials and will manage the program by providing volunteers to collect the recycled materials.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC): At the end of March 2009, the Center is showing a 3% increase in revenues at \$129,784 compared to this time last year.

A total of 255 people participated in the Stargazing event on March 21. Using the equinox event as a theme to draw the public we opened an hour early to celebrate spring with face-painting and games for kids.

Tortoise Habitat – A volunteer group from Cox Communication worked on March 20, 2009 to add amenities to the existing Butterfly Garden so it can afford suitable habitat for an adult Sonoran Desert Tortoise. The Friends Group provided funds for fencing so the tortoises cannot escape. New tortoise features, in addition to the fence, were burrows for winter and summer use.

To promote visits to the DOC by teachers and schools that have not yet experienced our educational programs we have solicited the expertise of the County's Office of Communications. Kim Stafford and Casey Miller will assist in the production of a 4-5 minute DVD that highlights school kids learning and having fun at the DOC. Target completion date is late summer, at which time DOC staff will personally distribute the DVD to new schools. Eventually we will put the production on You Tube linked to our website.

Cave Creek Regional Park: At the end of March 2009, the park is reflecting a 9% increase in revenues at \$243,270 compared to this time last year. The month of March also reflected 18 programs with 287 in attendance.

A very successful Grand Opening of Cave Creek's new Nature Center was held on March 19, 2009. During the hours of the Grand Opening (8 to 10:30 am), 140 vehicles came through the entry station. Channel 15 and various newspapers covered the event.

The first two programs conducted in the nature center received positive feedback, based on a survey handed out afterward. A class for amateur photographers interested in wildflower photography was held in the new classroom space. A night program on Bats attracted one of the Parks largest crowds of the year, with 102 participants.

Contract Updates

Adobe Dam: Discussions continue with Flood Control District for a new Joint Use Agreement.

Requests for Proposals: Outstanding Actions Request for Proposals include:

- Adobe Dam Recreation Facilities/Concessions – selected the proposal for a cable ski lake concession – have begun drafting of Use Management Agreement.
- Horse Riding and Horse Stable Concessions – one (1) proposal received for Cave Creek, Estrella, Lake Pleasant and White Tank. Evaluation by Selection Committee continues.
- Recreation Rental Vehicle Concession – released February 12, 2009; proposals due March 26, 2009.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The appointment for the Temporary Recreation Assistant at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area expired effective March 8, 2009.

The Accounting Specialist at Headquarters resigned effective March 20, 2009 and was replaced by our former Grant Coordinator effective March 23, 2009.

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The Park Office Assistant at Cave Creek terminated effective March 31, 2009.

Permission was granted to recruit for the Park Maintenance Supervisor position at Lake Pleasant. The position was posted internally, county-wide which closed on March 16, 2009. The department is currently waiting for interviews to be scheduled.