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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** March 13, 2014  
**To:** Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission  
**From:** R.J. Cardin, Director  
**Re:** Director's Summary of Current Events

Listed below are activities the department has been involved with during January and February 2014.

### **From the Office of the Director**

The Parks Department and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) held an informational meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup> for the preserve's friends group followed by a public meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup>. The meetings' focused on the recently completed development plan for the Hassayampa River Preserve and gave participants an update on the progress of changing management of the facilities from TNC to Maricopa County Parks staff with an anticipated date of January 2016. Both meetings were well attended and participants provided positive comments for moving the effort forward.

### **Administration**

Here are the highlights for January and February 2014:

#### ***Budget Status (through September close):***

- ***Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:***
  - Enhancement Fund reported revenue 10.19% or \$267,247 over the YTD budget.
  - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures -1.33% or \$36,521 over the YTD operating budget for expenditures.
- ***Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:***
  - Lake Fund reported revenues 3.5% or \$45,232 over the YTD budget
  - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures over budget at 9.8% or \$150,646
- ***Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:***
  - Spur Cross reported revenues at 2% over the YTD budget or \$3,390
  - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures under budget at 8.32% or \$14,356

#### ***Finance Program:***

- Budget preparation for FY15 continued and both the operating and non-recurring budgets were submitted to OMB (Office of Management Budget) on February 7, 2014.
- The Capital Project budget (for Maricopa Trail and Vulture Mountain) was also completed and submitted to OMB on February 27, 2014.
- Electronic P-card (purchase card) procedures have been tested and all parks will be officially "electronic" starting with March P-Card reconciliation.
- With the move to Lake Pleasant in May, a good amount of time has been spent cleaning out files and preparing them to move for long term storage at Iron Mountain or for destruction (per our records retention policies).

**Contracts:**

- **Concessionaire Audits:** The Victory Lane Sports Audit was completed and sent to Victory Lane for their response. Experis Finance did provide Victory Lane with alternate methods for additional controls of tracking inventory as to reduce the losses that were reported.
- **Lake Pleasant Commercial Development:** A mutually agreeable contract could not be negotiated after approximately 15 months and therefore we have terminated the ITN process.
- **Estrella Mountain Regional Park** We are in negotiations for a Use Management Agreement with Estrella Youth Sports for the Sportsfield Complex. In the interim, we have issued Estrella Youth Sports a Special Use Permit for their design consultants/contractors to evaluate the ball field complex and to begin minor ground and facility improvements. If improvements are adequate to conduct sports activities, the Parks Director may authorize limited use of the fields for designated sports activities. The Special Use Permit will expire upon Board of Supervisor's approval of a Use Management Agreement.
- **Adobe Dam Regional Park:**
  - The road improvement and new drainage culvert at Pinnacle Peak Road is ongoing. The City of Phoenix has been working in a cooperative effort for the road closures to keep us posted of scheduled activities. There were a few instances of water shut downs that were not scheduled, however somewhat anticipated with this size of a project.

Adobe Dam Regional Park's Special Use Permits processed through March include:

- March 9–16: Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society / Maricopa Live Steamers will hold their Annual Spring Meet.
- March 21-22: Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society will host a Boy Scout Day Camp to earn achievement pins.
- March 21–23: Arizona Model Pilots Society – One-Eighth Air Force Fly-in
- March 22: Arizona Kart Racing Association Half-Time Performance Spanky Spangler Stunt Car Show
- March 28-30: Sahuaro Central Railroad Heritage Preservation Society will host the 2014 Boy Scout Webelos Crossover.

Potential New Revenue Opportunities at Adobe Dam Regional Park:

- We have received interest from an athletic organization for youth flag-football fields, as well as an organized club for an RC Cars dirt track. As the land use is minimal for these activities, it may be possible for these activities to be sub-concessions to our existing concessionaires.
- **Commercial Management Concessions Agreements**
  - Three new scuba instructions and certifications concessions
  - One water taxi and tours concession
  - One boat & RV rental concession
  - One equestrian concession
  - One hiking/biking concession

**Human Resources:**

New Hires or Transfers:

- Welcome to Jeremy Garnice, Navigational Aide, who started with Lake Pleasant on 2/18/14

Farewells:

- Farewell to Saturn Ontiveros, Customer Service Representative (HQ), effective 2/17/14
- Farewell to Debbie Lemon, Administrative Assistant (HQ), effective 2/28/14

Open positions and recruitments:

- Contact Station Assistant (Lake Pleasant) – Interviews pending
- General Maintenance Worker (Lake Pleasant) – Offer of employment pending
- HR Specialist (Temp) – creating job specifications and pending recruitment
- Administrative Operations Specialist - creating job specifications and pending recruitment

**Information Technology:**

- Computer replacements have been occurring throughout the Department. This also includes upgrades to Windows 7 and introduction of rugged/mobile tablets for mobile fee enforcement. When completed, almost 50 new computers will have been ordered and installed in Fiscal Year 2014.
- With the new computers coming in, there are many computer and related parts that require surplus. The upcoming move also means reviewing older equipment and determining if it is needed at Lake Pleasant.

**Souvenir Fund:**

- The Souvenir Fund is busy! Sales have really picked up in February and the warmer weather has our customers shopping.

**Volunteer Program:**

- The January volunteer event was in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. It took place on January 18<sup>th</sup> at Cave Creek. A total of 40 volunteers assisted in painting 30 trash cans and 10 recycle bins. Cave Creek is able to kick off their new park recycle program now. The bright blue cans will be distributed throughout the park and at picnic areas. *Hands On Greater Phoenix* provided the blue paint, painting supplies, and snacks/water for the volunteers.
- Jewish Family and Children's Services brought out 15 teens for a shoreline cleanup at Lake Pleasant the first week of January. They have also planned to bring the teens out for future projects.
- The Parks Department attended the Boy Scout's Scout-o-Rama in February to educate troops and individuals about volunteering in the parks as well as completing Eagle Scout projects in the parks.
- The host appreciation lunches began mid-February and will continue through March at each park. Hosts are invited for a lunch in the park that includes some fun, prizes, and a few huge *Thank You's* from the administrative staff and leadership.
- Volunteer Hours for January and February 2014:

	January 2014	February 2014
<b>Total Dept. Hours</b>	10,204	20,181
<b>Financial Savings</b>	\$225,924	\$446,803
<b>YTD Hours</b>	45,848	66,029
<b>YTD Savings</b>	\$1,015,084	\$1,461,886
<b>Prev. Year Month Total Hours</b>	11,047	11,517
<b>Prev. Year YTD Hours</b>	46,015	57,531
<b>Prev. Year Financial Savings</b>	\$ 1,010,484	\$ 1,263,392

**Planning and Development (Engineering) Highlights as of March 10**

- **White Tank - Water Supply System Upgrade Project:** This project will update and improve the potable well and booster pump station that services both the park and the library. The job is progressing well and a planned water outage on February 25<sup>th</sup> lasted less than eight hours and went very smoothly. The job is expected to be complete in early April.
- **White Tank - RV Dump Station Project:** This project will construct a new waste disposal (dump) station for camper and recreational vehicle (RV) use. The job is virtually complete and included pavement replacement for the entire roadway-width of the station. We are waiting for final approval from ADEQ (expected this week) to open the station for public use.
- **White Tank Master Plan:** Staff made a presentation to the Maricopa County Parks Commission on November 12<sup>th</sup> and approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 24<sup>th</sup>, completing the master plan process. Staff is beginning the next master plan update which will be for Estrella Park.
- **Vulture Mountain Update:** Staff continues to process the Hassayampa River Preserve Management Plan with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which will set the timeline for transfer of the preserve property to Parks. Staff is waiting to hear back from the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad regarding permission for a trail crossing underneath one of BNSF's trestle-bridges.
- **System Wide:** The refurbishment of all restrooms (~75), for all the parks began in January. The project is expected to take four years and cost ~\$3.5 million. With the help of two "Job Order Contract" (JOC) contractors, staff is working to standardize interior and exterior finishes and hardware improvements throughout the park system.

At Cave Creek, work has just started for all seven restrooms (RR), including new sidewalk near the day-use area playground required for ADA compliance. At McDowell, RR #10 (family campground) is complete and the RR for Area 3 (North Trail) is under construction. At Usery, the Wind Cave RR is complete, and RR #10

(day use area) is under construction. At Lake Pleasant, work at the 10-Lane RR and park-wide hand dryer upgrades are underway.

New playgrounds have been installed at Cave Creek, Estrella, McDowell, Userly and White Tank Parks. The contractor is completing "clean-up" work, including demolition of selected structures and the repainting of shade sail structures.

- **Trades Crew:** Trades Crew staff has been assisting with the contractor projects at White Tank Park. The Trades Crew has also been focusing on septic and interior lighting maintenance for the Operations Building at Lake Pleasant.
- **Trails Crew:** The Trails Crew has been coordinating with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for approval of the Trails Plan for Lake Pleasant and has been working with the Southwest Conservation Corp on trail maintenance and construction at the Lake

## **Superintendent Reports**

### ***Cave Creek Regional Park:***

- In February, the park hosted 25 interpretive programs with 297 participants attending, which included 59 repeat attendees. 4 docent lead programs were offered with 25 attendees. The Interpretive Ranger also conducted 1 outreach program. The *Clay Mine Hike* and the *Valentine's Moonlight Hike* were the most popular programs for the month.
- Two Eagle Scout Projects have been completed: a new nature center sign and the amphitheater outer walls have been refaced with natural rocks.
- The second annual *Elephant Mountain Run* was held at Cave Creek and Spur Cross. Two hundred and sixty seven (267) participants had the opportunity to run a 12k, 25k, or 50k course.
- The Cave Creek and Lake Pleasant staff coordinated a boat tour and breakfast for our park host to show our appreciation of the outstanding work they do for us. Everyone had a good time!

### ***Desert Outdoor Center:***

- DOC staff has a full teaching load in February. This will continue through July with school groups thru May followed by the Aquatics Camp and school district summer camps in June and July.

### ***Estrella Mountain Regional Park:***

- In January and February, park staff and volunteers performed 39 programs for 506 attendees. Bird walks and other programs located at the Gila River bottom had to be modified or cancelled due to increased hunting activity in the area this year.
- The interpretive ranger made contact with the staff at the Joe Foss Shooting Range in Buckeye Hills to collaborate on program promotion and expansion.
- Aravaipa Running held the *Coldwater Rumble Run* at Estrella at the end of January. About 200 runners and 50 spectators attended. Impressively, out of the 200 participants, 83 runners ran in the 100-mile race and 62 out of the 83 finished.
- The ACTHA Horse Riding Group had two *Handling and Challenge* rides in the beautiful January and February weather. Each event had 50 riders.
- The park hosts enjoyed an intimate volunteer appreciation luncheon in the nature center put on by the volunteer coordinator, Parks director and park staff.
- Camp Digalus, an annual scouting jamboree, was hosted again by Boy Scout Troop 30 at Estrella Park. This year, **850** Cub Scouts enjoyed camping and merit badge activities.
- An Eagle Scout project was completed at El Rio to remove wire fencing that had been installed around freshly planted young trees for protection from wildlife. Approximately 50 people participated in removing the now unnecessary wire from around the well-established trees.
- Estrella Park experienced two domestic main water line breaks in February. Some areas of the park's water system, the Nature Center and restrooms, were closed during the repair.

**Lake Pleasant Regional Park:**

- Want to learn more about the park? Join us on one of our many splendid park programs, just like 486 park attendees experienced during the months of January and February at one of 33 park programs offered. Highlights of the month included shoreline fishing talks, *Hummingbirds of Arizona*, *Humbug Paddle*, archery (on-going), *Get Fit with a Lake View* (fitness series), *Natural History of the Desert*, and *Monsoon/Stormwater Awareness* (with Maricopa County Environmental Services).
- Due to a dry fall/winter season, the wildflower season appears to be off to a slow start with minimal plants in bloom. However, that has not stopped the die-hards in search of the illusive blooms. Some of the plants observed flowering include brittlebush, globe mallows, poppies, and desert lavender.
- The Arizona Game and Fish Department has completed a majority of the work on the new boat ramp at the Agua Fria Trailhead off of Table Mesa Rd. Due to low water level predictions for the year, we do not anticipate opening the area at this time for access to the boat ramp.
- The park is excited with anticipation for a successful bald eagle breeding season. We hope to have positive news to report in the coming months. The park has not had a successful season since 2010.
- The Lake Pleasant Trails Plan has had four of the planned trails approved in collaboration with the Bureau of Reclamation. The Trails Crew and Southwest Conservation Corps are diligently working to establish these new trails. The trails will enhance the area between the Group Campground and the North Entry Station. Perhaps one of the most anticipated trails is the Yavapai Point Trail which will lead adventure goers up to a scenic overlook of the lake and sure to be a park user favorite.
- Park staff has been working closely with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) agents to help generate awareness about the Wild Burro management program and efforts to try catch the culprits that killed two burros near the park premises. In addition, efforts have been made with other agencies (Peoria Public Works, Yavapai DOT, and MCDOT) to increase awareness about the potential conflicts that could arise along the roadways (especially at night) through signage.
- Through collaboration with the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), a special "Quagga Mussel Awareness" campaign blitz occurred in early January to educate park users about pulling their plug and minimizing potentials to carry the invasive mollusk to other non-impacted waters within Arizona. Handouts were given to park users along with direct contact efforts by the AGFD at the 10 Lane Boat Ramp.
- The Lakeshore Chinooks, a collegiate summer baseball league, filmed a commercial shoot at Lake Pleasant with special guests Bob Uecker and Robin Yount making guest appearances.
- Thomas Rychtik, a park maintenance worker, has volunteered to assist the Parks Department with overseeing the department's vehicle fleet for repairs and preventative maintenance needs. We are very excited to have his knowledge and assistance to help us manage the many vehicles within the Department.

**McDowell Mountain Regional Park**

- This busy month in 2014 had consistently great weather for the entire 28 days. This park was very busy on all fronts, the campground was 98% full and the tent sites were 84% full all while the park hosted 7 special events.
- McDowell's interpretive ranger offered 22 programs in February which had 478 participants, a 34% increase in participation over 2013. Of the attendees this year, 136 had attended previous programs.
- The first weekend, on Super Bowl Sunday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> race in the *Arizona Xterra* was held on the Pemberton and Scenic Trails and drew 462 runners.
- On the second Saturday in February, the park hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Pemberton 50K. This race consisting of two laps on the Pemberton Trail with another great turn out even with the race director setting limits on the number of participants.
- During the last weekend of February, the park hosted a class offered by the International Mountain Bike Association for Instructor Certification of mountain bike guides.
- That same weekend, the park had a booth at the Fountain Hills Arts and Crafts Fair. Park staff, hosts and a great group of volunteers from the McDowell Park Association helped staff the booth for three great days of record breaking attendance at the fair.
- During February, the park hosted both Trek Bikes and Rocky Mountain Bikes demo days. The park is a popular location for demo-ing new bikes for the large number of park visitors who are mountain bikers.

**San Tan Mountain Regional Park:**

- During the month of February, San Tan provided 17 interpretive programs with 644 program participants. The highlight program for the month was the *Glowing Night Hike* which attracted 183 participants alone.
- Two Eagle Scout projects were completed for the month. Scouts aided in removing Buffelgrass (an invasive plant) from our Dynamite Trail; 142 trash bags filled with the plant were removed from the park. Scouts designed and installed two concrete fire pits to be utilized by our hosts and park visitors. Both Eagle Scout projects combined contributed 215 volunteer hours for the month.
- The park supervisor gave a presentation to the Arizona Archaeology Society, San Tan Chapter: *The Past, Present and Future of Archaeological and Historical Resources*. A discussion was held to look at opportunities for resource protection at San Tan Mountain Regional Park. Our goal moving forward will be to organize monthly visits to the park with archaeologists and interested youth to help inventory archaeological and historical sites and give the youth an opportunity to explore the field.

**Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:**

- The park hosted 22 interpretive programs in February with 220 participants attending along with eight docent lead programs with 95 participants.
- The highlighted program for the month was *Find the Ranger*. This open-house style program features the park ranger hiking along the Metate Trail and stopping to talk with park visitors. The ranger has some photos of desert animals as well as some old photos of the Spur Cross dude ranch from back in its heyday. The ranger is also available to answer questions about the park, discuss park history, and help identify desert plants and animals.
- The interpretive ranger and docent have completed cement work and cattail removal at the pond area along with minor trail work throughout the conservation area.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:**

- The Park offered 17 interpretive ranger programs in February totaling 909 participants and 28 docent lead programs totaling 504 participants. The *Hiker's Choice Full Moon Hike and Campfire* (396) had the most participants ever recorded for that program!
- Our host-led progressive fitness hikes have resumed, gathering an average of 34 hikers every Saturday morning. The 6-hike series progressing from the 2.5 mile Blevins Trail hike up to the final 7.5 mile Pass Mountain Trail hike has been a popular program with local annual pass holders.
- *Stargazing for Everyone*, led by Tony La Conte, brought in 120 park visitors eager to learn about the night sky. Participants enjoyed a slide presentation about the stars, followed by an opportunity to view the stars with a variety of high powered telescopes.
- 262 archers from around the state competed in the Cactus Classic Archery Tournament hosted by the Usery Mountain Archers. The tournament was held on the walking courses at the archery range and showcased archers of all ages ranging from pee wee to seniors. The Cactus Classic is the first of a four-leg series held throughout the state.
- 1,928 of the 1,932 available sites in the Buckhorn Campground were reserved this month (69 sites x 28 days). We have moved overflow to the A & B Group Campground when available.
- The park received and installed a Memorial Bench donation which was placed on Pass Mountain Trail.

**White Tank Mountain Regional Park:**

- In January and February, park staff and volunteers presented 33 programs with attendance totaling 933 participants. The new interpretive ranger has been adding new programs like *Design for the Desert* as well as enhancing the traditional programs like the *Black Rock Archeology Hike*. Her extensive archeology background is proving to be popular with program attendees.
- *Stargazing for Everyone* had a beautiful February night to teach many families about the great universe above us.
- Other events included the annual *Arizona Xterra Trail Race* held in the beginning of January. A total of 445 runners ran either an 8km or 20km race across the rugged terrain in the mountains. This year's race had the highest attendance recorded for this event with 100 more participants.

- Also in January, the Brain Aneurysm Foundation held Olivia's Dash, their first fund raiser of its kind here at the park. The 91 people participating in Olivia's Dash ran, jogged or walked their way around the 7 miles of the competitive track to raise money for this cause. The foundation would like to return next year.
- The Wigwam, a local resort, invited White Tank Park to staff a booth for their Day of Play, giving the park a great marketing opportunity as well as continuing our good relationship with them.
- In February, MBAA (Mountain Bike Association of Arizona) hosted their annual bike race on the competitive track for their biggest attendance for this race yet, 469 racers. The Saturday prior, dozens of volunteers and racers from MBAA spent 4 hours doing trail maintenance on the technical loops of the competitive track to prepare it for the race.
- In other February bike news, Diamondback Bikes did a Bike Demo Day at the track and we received great feedback from the event.
- At the end of February, 45 hikers with their families celebrated their completion of the Parks Department sponsored *100 miles in 100 Days* with a cake social at the Nature Center. While proudly wearing their new 100 Miles t-shirts, tales of their hiking exploits in the county parks were told throughout the social.
- The 3rd Annual Friends of White Tank Park Art Fair was the big event in February. Due to size and parking issues, this year's event was held in the Group Campground. The large parking area and beautiful views of the mountains and valley made it an instant hit with fair goers and artists alike. It was estimated that over 3,000 people came out to browse and purchase the beautiful art work on display from over 40 vendors. The Friends of White Tank Park did a professional job of planning, set-up, and running of the fair and the vendor artists were pleased with their sales. A portion of the sales will go to improvement projects in the park.
- Prior to the start of the dump station construction in the Family Campground, the Parks' maintenance staff and volunteers relocated a number of cactus species away from the construction zone. Campers are excited and eager to use the new dump station when it opens mid-March. Camping revenue has doubled this year with the completion of the upgrades of electric and water services. Longer camping stays are expected next year.

**Vulture Mountain Regional Park:**

- Staff continues working on the Operation Plan in development with The Nature Conservancy and other planning efforts while waiting for the final travel management plan from BLM (Bureau of Land Management). Operation Plan.