

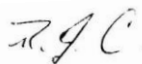


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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 6, 2013

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 since the February 12, 2013, Director's Summary Report.

From the Office of the Director

Lake Pleasant Commercial Development

- We are in the process of drafting a Pre-Development Agreement with Red Rock Investors for the development of the resort and commercial properties. This Pre-Development agreement will provide Red Rock with the County's intent to enter into an exclusive right for negotiating a Development Agreement and direct them to prepare various studies (i.e. feasibility), at their own risk (no cost to the County).
- The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) will be drafting two Amendments to our existing Lake Pleasant Agreement. The first will be to incorporate the 30-acre commercial property along Hwy 74 in order to expedite the development in this area. The second Amendment will be to include the additional commercial acreage (560 acres) as well as other minor "clean up" administrative issues.
- The Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued for a consultant to assist, advise, and develop a concessionaire/developer agreement with Red Rock. We had two consultants attend the mandatory pre-bid conference. Responses to the RFP are due March 1 and an evaluation committee is scheduled to meet on March 15.

Administration

January flew by and we are officially in our "busy season" with the month of February. The increase in park visitors ensures Administration is kept busy in all areas. Here is the activity for January and February 2013:

Budget Status (through February close):

- General Fund (100) – Agency 300:
 - There are no revenues collected within the General Fund.
 - Expenditures are under budget by \$91,778 or 13% under the year to date (YTD) budget
- Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305:
 - Enhancement Fund reported revenue 15% or \$359,659 over the YTD budget.
 - Enhancement Fund reported expenditures 8% or \$217,713 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures.

Budget continued:

- Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302:
 - Lake Fund reported revenues 16% or \$170,786 over the YTD budget.
 - Lake Fund reported operating expenditures over budget at 1% or \$18,103.
- Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306:
 - Spur Cross reported revenues at \$5,480 under the YTD budget.
 - Spur Cross reported operating expenditures under budget at 9% or \$14,298.

Information Technology:

- The server at our Administrative office began to fail and a replacement was ordered. This equipment was due for replacement and was budgeted.
- The Department has begun to replace 24 existing/outdated computers for most of the Administrative, Planning and Development, Trails, and Trades (7 Crew) computers. The age of the computers are between 3 and 7 years with several of the computer running slow due to changes and upgrades to existing software. The computers have been ordered and started to arrive; all needed software and County requirements for new computers will be addressed and installation will be complete by the end of March.
- Correction requests to ParksTechHelp have increased significantly with the busy season getting underway. The biggest challenge is with cancellations and refunds that were charged more than 90 days prior, as these require manual check preparation. Due to this, we are researching improvements with our credit card vendor to allow electronic refunds up to six months past the purchase date.

Human Resources:

- Congratulations to John Fenton, moving from a temporary position to a regular full-time position at Lake Pleasant (Contact Station Assistant).
- Congratulations to Pam Ueckerman who has transferred from Lake Pleasant to White Tank as the Park Office Assistant.
- The Department is currently recruiting for four seasonal/temporary Contact Station Assistants at Lake Pleasant. Interviews are underway.
- The Parks Office Assistant position at Estrella Mountain Regional Park is currently vacant. Recruitment has not yet started.
- The Procurement Specialist position at Administration is currently vacant and open for recruitment.

Finance Program:

- The operating and one-time budget was submitted to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on February 13, 2013. No information has been returned.
- Paperless revenue reporting is being reviewed and tested at Cave Creek Regional Park. The remaining parks will begin the new process as soon as possible.
- With our Procurement Specialist position vacant, remaining staff has taken on additional duties until a replacement can be hired.
- Work continues to begin paperless bill pay for all invoices. Initial computer work was needed to establish folders for scanning invoices and packing slips into OnBase, the first step in the process, and some delays were noted and have recently been corrected.

Central Reservations:

- The main reservation line continues to be busy with reservations, cancellations and reservation changes. The temperature fluctuations over the last two months have caused the rainy and cold weekends to be busy with cancellations and then calls increase dramatically when the warm weekends are expected.
- Employee annual passes for Maricopa County are approaching the one-year anniversary and renewals are rolling in.

Volunteer Program:

- Final preparation for the 2013 Host Appreciation Event (March 6, 2013) was a big focus in late February.
- Maricopa Trail Operational Plan and Strategic Model is almost complete and the final corrections and updates have been added. This has been forwarded to the Department's Administrator for final review and submission to the Management Team.
- 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:

- January kicked off the new Interpretive Retail Display program. It connects featured sale items with a monthly theme that enhances the parks interpretive programs. So far, this has been met with much enthusiasm and support by parks staff and the public.
- A new product inventory process that utilized a report from the Point-of-Sale system has been implemented. All parks were able to complete their inventories on time and the reduced preparation and processing time is significant for the Souvenir Fund Program Coordinator (about 5 to 8 hours/month).

Superintendent Reports

The Desert Outdoor Center (DOC):

- Staff has conducted meetings with Boy Scouts staff from the Grand Canyon Council in preparation for the 2013 Lake Pleasant Aquatics and Nature Camp. A draft Cooperative Management Agreement is being written to formally recognize this partnership; the agreement has been submitted for approval.
- The DOC rangers have presented 58 interpretive programs to 1,918 participants during February. Plans are underway to establish the kayaking training program in cooperation with Cabela's. The program is scheduled for August and September 2013.
- Gate sensors have been installed into the roadway leading up the DOC. Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will continue to work to increase the signage and other features along the road to reduce the potential for vehicles colliding into the gate.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park

- Lake Pleasant offered 12 interpretive park programs for 273 attendees. Highlights of the month included Archery, Homesteading or Just Passing Through, Paddling Lake Pleasant, and The History of Lake Pleasant.
- Staff has met with BOR to discuss the Agua Fria Conservation Area project in regard to fencing and archaeological survey needs. A payment was submitted to BOR for the Visitor Center renovation project.
- The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) nest watchers arrived and began monitoring the Bald Eagle nests at Lake Pleasant. Unfortunately, the first nest site had been invaded by a gray fox and the egg was lost. AZGFD is still hopeful and monitoring the second nest. Eggs have been laid and everything still appears to be moving along.
- February included several training programs for Lake Pleasant staff. A Defensive Driver Training course was held at the lake. With the arrival of the new Kubota club cars, the Park and Maintenance Supervisors received instructor training and will be able to train their staff. The Park and Maintenance Supervisor and one maintenance worker also received initial tractor training. The 7 Crew provided training to the Lake Pleasant Maintenance team on how to locate and exercise the water valves at the Roadrunner Campground.
- Outlines for a Maintenance Manual, a Navigational Aide Manual and an Administrative Manual have been completed and submitted for approval. A draft of the Trails Manual outline is currently being reviewed internally by Lake Pleasant staff.
- Repairs and installation to the septic lift station of the Bajada Loop of the Desert Tortoise Campground was completed on January 24 and is now back open for service. The Scute Loop septic pump had to be replaced and is currently functioning properly. The North Entry station window has been installed and works nicely. The air release valve has been replaced on the maintenance compound water tank water line.

Cave Creek Regional Park

- The Park hosted 26 interpretive programs with 589 participants, including three docent lead program with 78 attendees. The program highlights were Super Serpent Saturday with 292 attendees and Scorpions with 39 attendees.
- The first Annual Elephant Mountain Run was held on February 23 with the start and finish area stationed at the day use ramadas at Cave Creek. The course utilized the Cave Creek Go John Trail, the Maricopa Trail, and the Spur Cross Trail. 234 participants had a choice to run 12k, 35k, or 50k. Participants from as far away as Canada, Alaska, Colorado, and Minnesota flew in to compete. The oldest participant was a 61 year-old male from Phoenix, placing 26th in the 50k. The youngest to compete was an 8 year-old male from Scottsdale and he placed 124th in the 12k.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- It was a typical February in the Family Campground where 98.5% of the sites were full during the month. The primitive tents sites were rented 46 nights during the unusually cold and rainy month.
- Working around some cold and rainy days, the park hosted six special events and two bike manufacturer demo days. One of the highlights of the month was the hosting of the Arizona Spartan Race in the Competitive Track area with 5,635 participants running 4.8 miles and negotiating 15 obstacles along the way.
- The park conducted 20 interpretive programs attracting 358 participants and 112 repeat attendees.
- To the delight of hikers, equestrians and our mountain bikers, the Trails Crew and professional trail builder Dennis Smith, re-routed 4.5 mile of the Pemberton Trail as well as opened the 1.5 mile Lariat Trail and completed a new trail connecting Granite Tank to the Granite Trail.
- McDowell was selected by the International Mountain Bike Association to host the first ever Mountain Bike Instructor certification course. The new industry standard will require instructors be certified by this international association.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:

- The park hosted 20 interpretive programs with 210 participants, including nine docent lead programs with 43 participants. A few of the programs included Moonlight Hike with 42 attendees; Find the Ranger with 28 attendees; Healthy Hike; Dragonfly Trail Exploration Hike; Ruins of Spur Cross; Plants of Spur Cross; Elephant Mountain Fortress Hike; and Exploring Spur Cross.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- The park offered 15 interpretive ranger programs totaling 858 participants and 45 docent lead programs totaling 755 participants. The highlight of the month was the All About Gila Monsters lecture (80) which packed the nature center on a Friday night, followed by the Animal Flashlight Walk (108) around the Merkle Trail. The Full Moon Hike and Campfire (200) continues to be our most attended ranger led program.
- This month's Home School Program (23), taught by the Arizona Science Center, explored air pressure and how it behaves.
- Our docent led progressive fitness hikes have resumed, bringing an average of 43 hikers every Saturday morning. The 6-hike series, progressing from a 2.5 mile hike on Blevins Trail up to the final 7.5 mile hike around Pass Mountain, has been a popular program with local annual pass holders.
- Stargazing for Everyone program brought in 265 park visitors eager to learn about the night sky. Participants enjoyed a slide presentation under the stars, followed by an opportunity to view the moon craters, Mars, and the rings of Saturn with a variety of high powered telescopes.
- 250 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 ranging from pee wee to seniors.
- The Buckhorn Campground was completely booked the whole month of February. Campers are also utilizing our overflow area which has been "overflowing." The Group Campground is also being used when it is not reserved for overflow campers during the holiday and on weekends.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park:

- During the month of February, San Tan provided 18 interpretive programs with 897 program participants. The highlight program of the month was the Full Moon Hike which attracted 120 participants alone.
- San Tan hosted the American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA). This was a non-speed event in which riders and horses competed as a team with an emphasis on horsemanship. Judges and a veterinarian were on hand to establish guidelines for a safe and enjoyable ride. We saw a total of 46 participants who camped overnight for the event.
- In its short existence, the San Tan Facebook page continues to attract a lot of attention from visitors and potential visitors. The Park receives regular comments from visitors about the beauty and wonderful things going on at San Tan. Visitors seem to enjoy the regularly posted pictures by the Interpretive Ranger, such as pictures of the programs, weather-related items, and of course, the wildlife.
- We have had three Eagle Scout projects completed for the month of February. Split rail fencing was installed along the south end of our parking loop and in the front of our Nature Center. Three spider trails were closed on our Goldmine and Dynamite Trails as well as clearing out the invasive buffleggrass. All three Eagle Scout projects combined contributed 419 volunteer hours for the month.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park:

- White Tank Park experienced an exciting and busy February 2013.
- The excitement started with the Hayride and Cowboy Campfire on Friday, February 1. In spite of the chilly temperatures, many volunteers and visitors enjoyed a festive evening of music by the campfire and a hay ride through the park. Friends of White Tank Park provided cookies, marshmallows and hot chocolate. The excitement continued with the MBAA bicycle race boasting a lineup of 348 riders, an increase from 2012. Even with the campground being closed, 26 of the bike racers camped at the competitive track.
- Not to be outdone by the earlier events, couples strolled on a romantic walk lighted by luminaries on the Black Rock Loop for Valentine's Day. Hundreds of candles lined the short loop and couples snuggled by the campfire listening to love songs.
- Mid-February, the AZ Wing Civil Air Patrol utilized the group campground for the second year to train cadets in desert survival skills. Partnered with learning how to camp in the desert, the youth were taught about edible plants, fire starting, navigation and other survival skills. Staff is always invited to join the training.
- On Saturday, February 24, the biggest event to date was the Art Fair (3rd Annual) hosted by the Friends of White Tank Park. 41 artists and four food vendors served approximately 2,600 fair-goers in the library and Nature Center parking lot. All the vendors and visitors alike were very pleased with their sales and purchases. At least 800 of the visitors also visited the Nature Center and entered the park. It was a win for all.
- At the Buckeye Air Show, park volunteers shared a table with library staff and handed out informational literature about Maricopa County Parks and encouraged all to come visit our parks.
- The interpretive ranger and program volunteers conducted 21 programs with 942 visitors participating. The cold weather, Highway 303 construction, and a closed campground are adversely affecting program numbers this year.
- The parks construction crew is working to get the family campground usable for this spring. Waterlines and other minor repairs are complete. The restroom electric line is being repaired and APS is on-line to bring it up the first week of March.
- Master planning at White Tank Park continues to progress. Dates have been set for public meetings and a stakeholders group has been established. The stakeholders' first meeting will be the beginning of March and a public meeting will be at the end of the month. Many good ideas have already come forward and more will emerge with the public input.
- A cubicle office is being created for the office assistant in the large break room in the Nature Center. The park supervisor has moved into the office assistant's previous office. With the rearranging of these offices near the retail area, park staff will be able to better serve the volunteers and visitors alike. The regional superintendent has moved into the back office in the Nature Center.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- February hikers love our new trails and improved trail tread conditions. Park hosts and staff continue to get a lot of compliments on the new trails and improvements to existing trails.
- The Rodeo Arena and Horse Operations managers have seen an increase in horse rentals, ridership and small events in February.
- The new Interpretive Ranger began scheduling interpretive hikes and programs in the month of February. There were nine park programs hosting 74 attendees in the month.
- The Centennial Trail committee continues to meet with the Park Supervisor. Improvements have been made to the trailhead and Nature Center areas including new granite and the new trailhead kiosk, both donated by the Three Rivers Historical Society.
- Repairs to facilities and restrooms continue. Because of water damage, new wood has been added to the fascia of two restrooms. Scraping and painting is now underway on these buildings.
- Estrella Park had a 2½ day scouting jamboree with nearly 1,000 scouts. 150 scouts and leaders from Boy Scout Troop 30 hosted the Camp Digalus Jamboree for 708 Cub Scouts from around the state. Great fun, activities and merit badge accomplishments were had by all on the February 8 -10th weekend.

Contracts

Estrella Mountain Regional Park:

- Sportsfield Complex at Estrella Mountain Regional Park. The drafted Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) has been reviewed by the Office of Procurement Services and is back at Parks. Our next step is to have Parks' Counsel review the document for content.

Adobe Dam Regional Park:

- The Mutual Termination Agreement between Parks and Desert Wake Park (Cable Ski Lake) is on the BOS Agenda for March 27. Victory Lane is working on pro-forma for their expansion of adding soccer fields. They will do this expansion within the land provided in their existing Use Management Agreement. Wet & Wild has agreed to release their water rights (they are not using well water as originally intended) and transfer the rights to Victory Lane.

Usery Mountain Regional Park:

- Our Counsel is working with Washington Federal on their demand for access to their property (a foreclosed parcel) via Microwave Tower Road. Their intent is to market and sell the land for development. Parks is working with the tower operators to determine the feasibility of allowing access and evaluating any other associated impacts.

Paradise Valley (Bowtie):

- We are waiting formal documentation to provide the Public Utility Easements (PUE) (Electrical and Water) at the Paradise Valley Golf Course (PVGC) to necessitate construction for the new Arizona Agribusiness & Equine Center (AAEC) School (formally Bowtie Property). In a cooperative effort, we have been working with AAEC's consultant to configure how to access our well for their irrigation needs without impact to the PVGC.

Commercial Management Concessions Agreement (CMCA):

- There are two new CMCA's on the BOS Agenda for March 27. It is anticipated that there will be three more added during the month of March.