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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 8, 2011
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 February 8, 2011 Director's Summary.

Budget

General Fund (100) – Agency 300 - On the expenditure side, the General Fund is currently reporting expenditures 22% or \$88,744 under the year to date (YTD) budget. There are no revenues collected within the General Fund.

Enhancement Fund (241) – Agency 305 - Enhancement Fund is currently reporting revenue at 19.5% or \$310,859 over the YTD budget. Enhancement Fund is currently 5% or \$107,511 under the YTD operating budget for expenditures.

Lake Fund (240) – Agency 302 - Lake Fund is currently reporting revenues at 19% or \$160,740 over the YTD budget. Lake Fund is reporting operating expenditures under budget at 5% or \$53,369.

Spur Cross (225) – Agency 306 - Spur Cross is currently reporting revenues at 8.2% or \$7,556 over the YTD budget. Spur Cross is reporting operating expenditures under budget at 13.7% or \$24,524.

Park Planning – Trails Report

The Park Trails Crew has been scouting for routes between the Hassayampa River Preserve and the Arizona Department of Transportation (AZDOT) rest area; across BNSF ROW; and through the Box Canyon to BLM land. Crossing through Box canyon was evaluated on February 28th and determined to be feasible.

On February 10th we met with Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) at the Vulture trailhead to review placement of the proposed campground relative to habitat, wildlife waters and corridors. It was determined that the campground should be moved or the footprint be altered. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is scheduled to evaluate the area with their biologist and report back to the group.

On February 23rd we met with EPG to discuss the AZGFD concerns about campground location and possible ways to keep the location, but adjust facility placement.

On February 24th there was a project team meeting with EPG to discuss the project schedule including, OHV use and integration into a County Park; development area (i.e. campground/facility siting); BLM Routes; Hassayampa Preserve or ADOT site as trailhead; the next steps; and future meetings.

On February 24th the Project Team met with BLM to discuss the Travel Management Plan, route inventory, campground location and facility location to satisfy AZGFD.

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Superintendent Reports

Cave Creek Regional Park – The Park offered 25 interpretive programs in February with a total of 421 participants, including 168 repeat attendees. Some of the programs offered; Reach Your Fitness Goal Hiking series; Frontier Tour; History of the Cowboy; Tiny Tumbleweed Trekking: Birds!; Desert Drugstore; Creature Feature: Spirit; "Friend of the Devil" Movie Screening; and Ride with the Ranger.

The campground has been extremely active with overflow being utilized everyday with a minimum of two – nine units.

The staff and host have been busy training on the new Point of Sale System.

The interpretive ranger instructed staff and hosts in the safety fundamentals for the new archery program.

The host will be departing in April and May so we are busy trying to complete the following projects: design and install a temporary archery program site at the horse staging area; upgrading the critter display window; purchasing and placing decomposed granite at the campground sites; upgrading the kiosk; building plexi-glass display cases; and building new souvenir display cases.

Desert Outdoor Center – The Center is taking the lead in developing a partnership with Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department to provide additional and enhanced outdoor recreational opportunities for people with disabilities throughout Phoenix and Maricopa County. Nearly 10% of Arizonans from ages 5 to 20 have a physical disability. In addition, over 40,000 troops nationwide returning from combat are physically disabled, and an additional 300,000 suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. A primary goal is to develop the capacity to serve a significant number of people with disabilities through high-quality adaptive outdoor recreation programs.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park – Park attendance in February continued to follow January's trend with attendance 63% higher than February 2010.

Park Rangers held 27 interpretive programs for 461 participants in attendance, including a new program "Rock Your World – Geology Hike". Other popular programs continue to be our Audubon led bird hikes, dark sky telescope nights, full moon hikes, critter feeding and singing around the campfire.

Estrella hosted the 2011 version of Camp Digalus. This is a 2-night camp for Webelo's Scouts which was started to encourage scouts to go on to higher scouting levels. The camp is put on by Senior Scout Troop 30. There were 625 cub scouts and 150 leaders who participating in competitions including fire-starting, compass reading, knot tying, archery, fishing and many other scout activities.

Vandalism continues to be a problem at the Park. On January 28 wiring was again cut on the lights at the ball fields and also sliced and pulled from the field irrigation lines. On February 13 the front fence was cut and vandals drove into the park and stole 3 water valves. The valve in front of the nature center was a combination pressure relief and check valve. When this valve was cut away, water flooded the area in front of the nature center.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park - Lake Pleasant (LP) booth RSVPs for Adventure Day are almost due. Several vendors from around the valley have jumped on board and it should prove to be a successful event.

We are currently working with the Peoria Fire Department (PFD) to have a water safety day in August in support of drowning prevention month and with Phoenix Children's Hospital to get purple ribbons to hand out to all park visitors during the month of August.

Final details for the Great Backyard Family Campout with REI are underway. Once details are set in stone, a flyer will be posted online.

Safe Boating Celebration planning has begun and various local businesses have been contacted to join this year. Those participating so far include AZGFD, LP, Phoenix Power & Sail Squadron, United States Coast Guard (USCG), PFD, etc. Other invitations have been extended to SRP and CAP.

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The Lake is working with Brockfish Paddle to form a co-sponsorship offering paddling classes at Lake Pleasant. The current plan is to mirror the Cabelas relationship, however, Brockfish will offer stand-up paddle board instruction and on-water training.

The Park and Environmental Services are planning a program on the Saturday of Earth Day which will offer displays and kiddy crafts at the visitor center showing the impact of pollution.

Christine Maxa, a well known author, will be leading a hike on the Pipeline Canyon Trail followed by a book-signing at the visitor center.

Beginning in March, movies at the amphitheater will be offered with the first showing of 'Pirates of the Caribbean'. Each month, the next sequel in the Pirates saga will be shown in preparation and celebration of the May 20th release of 'Pirates of the Caribbean IV'.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park - The Park offered 30 programs in the first 25 days with 360 participants. The campground was in overflow most of the month, group areas were rented, and the first Fireside Chat was held on the new Visitor Center Plaza with attendees gathering around the fire pit to stay warm.

The Park hosted the annual RPM McDowell Criterium. This circuit race has called McDowell home for many years and brings over 300 road bicyclists to the park for day long heat races.

A first time event, the Xterra trail run took place with 312 runners starting either the 7K or 15K race. This three race series event was already held in Estrella and White Tank Mountain Regional Parks, and the series finished at McDowell.

McDowell hosted a demo day for Trek Bicycles with 110 members of the Grey Hawk hiking club and also the 14th Annual Pemberton 50K trail run. The park was bustling from sun up to after sun down. The hikers left the Trailhead Staging Area just after sunrise to hike 13 miles up and over the McDowell Mountains to the Gateway Trailhead and later that day, at 5:00 p.m. 191 runners began the first ever nighttime 50K race in the United States.

The Desert Classic Duathlon, now in its 14th year, moved to the Competitive Track for its 3-mile runs, and an added mountain bike option. Through the Sunday morning rain 15 professional duathletes raced over muddy trails and a wet 21-mile road course. Altogether nearly 400 competitors raced through difficult wet conditions.

Over the past several weeks, the Department has heard from equestrian visitors who have voiced concerns and displeasure over the lack of access to facilities, deep washes, inconsistent policies, banned horses, discrimination, and trail connectivity at McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park – The Park offered 14 interpretive programs and activities during February which attracted 161 park visitors. Unfortunately, weather conditions hindered turnout for several of the programs – including the full moon hike. The program highlights of the month were the movie madness day, bat cave hike and home school programs.

The park hosted a special event, the inaugural San Tan Scramble (part of the Aravaipa Running Desert Trail Runner Series), on February 5. Approximately 200 trail runners participated while spectators cheered them on and then explored the park.

The Park Supervisor participated in a segment with Arizona Midday (part of Channel 12 News) highlighting the upcoming dog hike and talking about key points to hiking in the desert with dogs.

The Phoenix Zoo veterinary staff came out to the park to conduct the annual vet visit with our wildlife display animals. All 8 of the available animals received a checkup and are in good health, however our adult and baby tortoises chose to pass on the exam and stay in hibernation.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area – The Park hosted 26 interpretive hikes conducted with 306 participants. Park staff provided presentations to 8 different groups of 4th graders and Ranger Kevin participated in an outreach to 245 scouts.

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The Park also hosted an Elephant Mountain hike for the mountain division of the sheriff's office and for 30 resident doctors from the Banner health group.

Staff has been busy fabricating wooden pedestrian crossings for the public to cross Cave Creek

Usery Mountain Regional Park – The Park offered 60 interpretive programs with a total of 1,781 participants and 630 repeat attendees. Stargazing (175), Desert Edibles (48), Kid vs. Wild (56) were crowd-pleasers along with the cool night air on the Full Moon Hike (102). The All About Brown-bag lecture series continues to be the bread and butter with all ages in attendance and All About Coyotes was also well attended. The home school sessions were blind-sided with gooey fun while dissecting real cow eyes and learning about desert animals' vision!

The Usery campground has been active with overflow everyday since January 25th. While here, campers are taking advantage of the Nature Center, interpretive ranger programs and yoga.

Ranger B participated in a TV fundraising drive for the County's Animal Care & Control Department.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park - The Park hosted 23 programs with over 1,100 visitors attending the programs. The MBAA race held on February 26th at the Competitive track was another success with 221 participants.

Revenue sales continue to do well in our new Nature Center/gift shop, including a busy President's Day weekend for a monthly total of \$10,366.75!

The Park will host the Aravaipa Desert Runner Series race on March 12th, which is the championship race in the series.

The old visitor center trailer has been removed and replaced with landscape. Moving forward we are currently considering other uses for the area.

Vulture Mountain – Planning is continuing with EPG and BLM to address alternative uses for the area. We are formulating a process to get the review of the options underway. The feedback initially from the public was that they wanted to see the trail routes on the map. Once the draft map for the routes is complete, we will have a one month web posting of the alternatives for comments, a review with the stakeholders and an additional public meeting during the one month posting.

Contract Updates

Paradise Valley – The transition of golf course management responsibilities occurred on February 26, 2011 from B.C.C.O.P. to Southern California Golf.

General Joe Foss Shooting Complex – We have received 2 proposals for management, operation, maintenance and improvement of the General Joe Foss Shooting Complex at Buckeye Hills Regional Park. Proposals were received from Precision Survival Foundation and the Buckeye Hills Sportsman Club. The Evaluation Committee is currently reviewing the proposals and a recommendation will be made to the Director.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park – The permitting process continues for the equestrian complex at Estrella Mountain Regional Park. All indications are that the facility will be open to the public next fall.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park and Lake Pleasant Regional Park – We have resumed discussions (non-response on the part of the proposed concessionaire) for the design, management, operation and maintenance of a zip line concession at Lake Pleasant Regional Park and Estrella Mountain Regional Park.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

Nothing to report at this time.