



Maricopa County Parks & Recreation Department

41835 N Castle Hot Springs Rd
Morristown, AZ 85342-9887
Phone: 602-506-2930
Fax: 602-372-8596
www.maricopa.gov/parks

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 10, 2019
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 **November and December 2018**.

From the Office of the Director

- Buckeye Hills:** The Arizona State Rifle and Pistol Association (ASRPA) will continue to manage and operate the Joe Foss Range (JFR) under a Special Use Permit through December 2019. Reported attendance for November and December was 509 shooters and 651 shooters, respectively. The month of December was a record month for JFR. Having built the core of JFR volunteers from a base of 10 at the start to over 40, ASRPA has extended the days of operation from two 3-day weekends a month to three 3-day weekends a month. ASRPA has also launched a new User Group Program to encourage more user groups training at the range. JFR had closed for a good portion of 2017 while staff searched for a new manager. In October 2017, an agreement with ASRPA to manager/operate JFR was approved. In comparison to the previous concessionaire who managed JFR (2011 through 2016), the yearly average attendance had been 5,900 shooters. For 2018, ASRPA reported 5,547 shooters; staff anticipates calendar year 2019 could be a record-breaking year for attendance.
- E-Bikes:** Effective January 1, 2019, E-Bikes will be allowed in Maricopa County Parks. Per Arizona Revised Statute 28-819 class 1 and class 2 electric bikes shall be allowed on bicycle and multiuse paths. Class 3 electric bikes are not allowed to operate on bicycle or multiuse paths unless it is within or adjacent to a roadway. A provision in the law does allow local jurisdictions to prohibit e-bikes by adopting a rule or regulation. At this time, the department will monitor the use of e-bikes and any related safety issues to determine if a new park rule is warranted in the future.
- Prickly Pedal:** The fourth annual Prickly Pedal Mountain Bike Race and Ride on the Maricopa Trail will take place January 19, 2019. The race begins in the town of Cave Creek and the ride starts at the Arizona Game and Fish Headquarters on Carefree Highway. The finish for both is at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

Board of Supervisors Agenda Items:

Date/Status	Tracking Number	Summary
11/7/2018 Approved	C-06-16-165-M-00	Proclamation: Board of Supervisors proclaimed November 2018 as <i>Maricopa County Parks and Trails</i> month.
11/7/2018 Approved	C-30-19-007-M-00	Set Hearing: Set a hearing for 12/12/18 to solicit comments and consider approval to grant a non-exclusive utility easement to APS to provide power to the public shooting range and the MCSO training range at Buckeye Hills Regional Park.
11/28/2018 Approved	C-06-19-196-7-00	Donation Report for October 2018: Cash value of \$250.07
12/12/2018 Approved	C-30-19-008-M-00	Hearing for APS Easement at Buckeye Hills: Convene a scheduled public hearing to solicit comments and consider an APS easement for power to Buckeye Hills Park shooting ranges.
12/12/2018 Approved	C-06-19-213-7-00	Park Commissioner Appointments and Reappointments: Jack Stapley was appointed to a two-year term as a Member-at-Large. Tom Rhoades (District 2) and Eric Mears (District 3) reappointed for a two-year term.
12/12/2018 Approved	C-06-19-226-7-00	Donation Report for November 2018: Cash value of \$433.46

Administration

The purpose of the Administrative Division is to provide strategic direction, leadership, administrative and financial support to the Director and employees of the department so they can produce the results necessary to achieve the departmental mission and vision. The following information is provided as a high-level overview of the activities of the Administrative Division:

Financial/Budget Status through December 2018:

(Note: revenue reported for first two weeks only)

DECEMBER			YTD	YTD
Fund Name	Fund	Type	Actual	Budget
General Fund	100	Expenditures	\$380,015.57	\$435,874.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$55,858
		Budget to Actual Percentage		12.82%
Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Fund	225	Revenue	\$107,237.52	\$141,307.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$34,069.48
		Budget to Actual Percentage		24.11%
	225	Expenditures	\$126,635.57	\$130,944.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$4,308.43
		Budget to Actual Percentage		3.29%
Lake Fund	240	Revenue	\$1,503,167.02	\$1,557,948.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$54,780.98
		Budget to Actual Percentage		3.52%
	240	Expenditures	\$1,424,409.74	\$1,598,648.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$174,238.26
		Budget to Actual Percentage		10.90%
Enhancement Fund	241	Revenue	\$2,629,145.82	\$2,847,715.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$218,569.18
		Budget to Actual Percentage		7.68%
	241	Expenditures	\$2,632,457.85	\$2,888,727.00
		Budget to Actual Amount		\$256,269.15
		Budget to Actual Percentage		8.87%

GREEN	Positive variance, no concern
RED	Negative/under budget - watch

Contracts:

- **Adobe:**
 - Special Use Permits Issued:
 - Mears Group – Staging construction area on 3.4 acres for December 5, 2018 – January 5, 2019.
- **Cave Creek:** Cave Creek Trail Rides (our horse concessionaire at Cave Creek Regional Park) had an outstanding month for November; reporting 747 riders and an adjusted gross revenue of \$42,005.
- **Commercial Management Concession Agreement (CMCA):** Parks has entered into a CMCA with Corral West Horse Adventures (our current horse concessionaire at Estrella Mountain Regional Park) to conduct trail rides at White Tank Regional Park. Corral West Horse Adventures has entered into an agreement with the property owner adjacent to the White Tanks for boarding and staging the horses. Corral West Horse Adventures will continue to offer rides through their Use Management Agreement at Estrella Mountain Regional Park as well as now offering rides at the White Tank Regional Park.

Human Resources:

- Welcome New Employees:
 - Candace Jones, Office Assistant Specialized, CC – 11/5/18
 - Grady Hudson, Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant – 11/5/18
 - Laura Horton, Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant – 11/5/18
 - Kaycie Green, Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant – 11/19/18
 - Marcus Castro, Park Maintenance Worker, Estrella – 11/19/18

- Promotions/Transfers:
 - Trudie Kenney, Contact Station, temporary at Estrella to full time at Lake Pleasant – 11/19/19
- Departing Employees:
 - Laura Manzanarez, Contact Station Assistant, Lake Pleasant – 10/6/18
- Open positions and recruitments:
 - Park Office Assistant Specialized, Lake Pleasant – Reposted, applications under review
 - Park Supervisor, McDowell – Offer accepted, pending background check
 - Contact Station Assistant, Temp Estrella – Offer accepted, pending background check
 - Park Asset and Inventory Coordinator, HQ – Interviews held

Volunteer Program:

- FY19 Year-to-Date Volunteer Hours:

	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	FY19 YTD Total
FY19 Total Dept. Hours	2754	2824	2968	4373	9230	10390	32540
Financial Savings	\$67,996	\$69,725	\$73,280	\$107,969	\$227,889	\$256,529	\$803,388
Financial Savings YTD	\$67,996	\$137,721	\$211,001	\$318,970	\$546,859	\$803,388	\$2,085,935
% Diff comparison/prev. FYTD	-2%	-4%	-20%	-23%	-15%	-11%	
# of Volunteers-current month	95	75	94	105	136	191	696
# of Park Hosts	23	26	25	45	84	105	308
Park Host Hours	2140	2216	2217	3565	8328	9507	27973
# of Community Volunteers	34	33	38	49	44	67	265
Community Volunteer Hours	485	547	610	712	844	779	3977
# of Episodic Volunteers	36	16	31	10	7	19	119
Episodic Volunteers Hours	129	61	141	96	59	104	590
MCSO Prisoner Service Hours	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FY18 Month Total Hours	3506	4936	4911.5	6682	11841	12353	99374.5
FY18 Financial Monthly Savings	\$69,384	\$143,504	\$263,966	\$411,994	\$645,238	\$903,738	\$2,250,828
Current Value-\$24.69		\$212,888	\$476,854	\$888,848	\$1,534,086	\$2,437,824	\$5,550,501
Previous Value-\$24.14							

Planning and Development Division

Vulture Mountain Recreation Area Update

- The 60% design work with EPS is complete on park amenities and the MCDOT County Park roadway system. Staff has prepared a competition impracticable process to send to the Board of Supervisors to approve the 100% design scope contract for the consultant, EPS Group. Once approved, the sealed construction documents will be prepared by the end of calendar year 2019. Currently, the final approvals for the Environmental Assessment (EA) are on hold due to the government shut down and the target date of February 2019 may change

Project Management

- Estrella Park renovations are moving forward, phase II of ramada construction is underway and electrical work is wrapping up on the east side of the park. Grill stations and new tables have been installed.
- Parking lot installation and renovation quotes for Estrella Mountain Regional Park have been submitted. MCDOT has completed 95% design for the Super Playground Road, which will coincide with the new Super Playground parking installation this coming spring. Navy south parking will be renovated to allow for visitors to access the new pathway and ramada improvements from the south side of the turf area.
- The new horse staging restroom facility and the septic system have been installed at Usery Park. The new building was delivered and installed in December with the final touches scheduled to be completed in January. The contractor is completing concrete work and the ADA parking spot in preparation for the final inspection.

Natural Resource Management

- Natural Resource Specialist Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg has been visiting with staff and touring the parks compiling data for the department's new over-arching natural resource plan. Plant and animal species, invasive weeds, wildlife connectivity, park encroachment, and sensitive habitat are being evaluated for inclusion in the report.

Park and Open Space Planning

- The McDowell Park Master Plan revision is progressing. The Park and Open Space Planner is completing the final chapters for Commission approval later this spring. Internal staff review begins in January and the BLM Lands staff will review when the government shut down ends.

Trades Crew

- The Trades and Trails Crew completed work on the pipe rail fencing and construction of a new pipe rail gate at the Hassayampa River Preserve. The new steel pipe rail fence replaces the aged split rail cedar fence that was in need of replacement.
- The Trades Crew assisted Estrella Park assemble new picnic tables for the Park. Staff continues to assemble tables and move them into the new west side ramadas as they are completed.
- Park Trades staff met with White Tank staff to plan the improvements to the Willow camping area renovation, which was a recommendation of the recently completed Park Master Plan update. Coinciding with the shower building install this spring, the new camp sites will feature small trailer spots and tent camping. Staff is expecting to start work on the new sites this month.
- Trades Crew Electricians replaced lighting at the campground host sites and restroom building at White Tank Regional Park. The new LED lighting is more energy efficient and provides better lighting than the previous light fixtures. In addition, park electricians continue with the annual electrical preventative maintenance program at McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

Trails Crew

- The Trails Crew continues to work with the ACE (American Conservation Experience) trail crew as work winds down for the Goat Camp trail tread maintenance at White Tank Mountain Regional Park. The ACE crews will be working on this project to redefine the trail footprint, fill in erosion, and make the trail more hiker friendly while still maintaining its rugged character and reputation.

Maricopa Trail, Sun Circle and Trail Facilities:

- The following trail segments are currently in progress – 11, 12, 18, 27, 29, 32, 33, 77 and 78.
- Agreement preparation/negotiations:
 - Estrella Community – Segment 33, new route. Reviewing submittal from Community.
 - Bureau of Land Management – Waiting for the Travel Management Plan completion on the proposed route between Estrella Park and Buckeye Hills Park. The federal government has put this on hold.
 - Queen Creek – Re-route of trail to existing trail systems. Received permit October 2018; waiting for post placement and direction by Town of Queen Creek personnel.
 - City of Phoenix – Meeting on Sun circle re-route.
 - Maricopa Water District (MWD) – Trailhead on Segment 35 at Northern Avenue. Approved by MWD in October 2018, waiting on MCDOT and developer NW of site.
 - Avondale – Met and reached agreement on the Sun Circle Trail re-route.
- Construction
 - Segment 11 – Arizona State Trust Land (ASLD) parcel, construction completed November 2018.
 - Segment 12 Arizona State Trust Land (ASLD) parcel, construction completed November 2018.
 - Segment 27 – Inside Usery Mountain Park, construction completed November 2018.
- Maintenance
 - The following segments had maintenance completed this period. This includes grooming the tread, brushing and signage:
 - Segment 14 – Lake Pleasant to I-17.
 - Segment 15 – Anthem – I-17 to 7th Avenue.
 - Segment 16 – 7th Avenue to intersection with Segment 18 (Cave Creek).
 - Segment 18 – Intersection with Segment 16 to Spur Cross.
- Trailheads
 - Segment 35 – Northern Avenue – waiting for MCDOT and developer.
 - Segment 11 – Sun Valley Parkway – waiting on Flood Control District.
- Sign Installation, Inventory and Mapping
 - Provided Segment 7 Stewards with stickers to set on posts on the National Trail in South Mountain Park.
 - Completed the following Segments: 14, 15, 16 and 18.

Parks Operations Report

Cave Creek Regional Park

- In November, the park hosted 13 interpretive programs with 152 participants. The highlighted program for the month: Scorpion Hunt with 41 attendees.
- The park also hosted the Maricopa Trail Dedication on November 17, with approximately 200 attendees.
- The park hosted 16 interpretive programs with 185 participants in December. The highlighted program for the month: The Big Hike – 50 participants hiked from Cave Creek Park or Spur Cross along the Maricopa trail to the other park.

Desert Outdoor Center (DOC)

- In November, we hosted over 1,200 students from grades 2-8 who attended 62 programs. The DOC also hosted the annual Maricopa Community Colleges Global Leadership event allowing a diverse group of college students to celebrate cultures and enjoy nature over a 3-day period.
- In December, 878 students attended 45 programs.
- One of the few community events of the year in which we open our gates to the general public was our bi-annual stargazing event. A cloudy day led to low attendance of only 58 people, but the night was beautiful with an excellent showing by the Friends of the DOC and the staff of *Stargazing for Everyone*.
- Ranger Jenny was able to obtain the permits to handle and mark the local population of desert tortoises at the DOC. She was able to mark six individuals of the population before they all packed up for winter. Marking the tortoises will enable us to get a better idea of the population size and to continue the legacy of AZGFD (Arizona Game and Fish Department) desert tortoise's population documentation from 2004.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park

- On November 17, Estrella Park had two foot races in two areas of the Park. 800 youth of all ages enjoyed running on the 64-acre turf area. There were various courses set up by USA Track and Field of Arizona. USATF-AZ had a variety of grade school, middle school and high school kids running the courses while 800 spectators watched from the ramada and viewing areas. It was fun to watch groups of coaches and kids running the 1-mile sidewalk to warm up for their race. The second race had about 100 runners and spectators combined. Between the two races, there were about 1,000 people enjoying the turf and desert trails in the park.
- Corral West Horse Rentals continues to operate horse rental rides and cowboy cookouts in the green winter desert in our Sonoran Park.
- In November, Estrella Park had 27 programs with 543 attendees. With the *100 Miles in 100 Days Challenge* kick off; we are starting to see an increase in hikers at our programs. Thanksgiving week proved very busy and the post-Thanksgiving full moon hike was very successful with 61 participants. School outreach has also picked up with two 2 programs accounting for 150 of our participants.
- ISM Raceway held a NASCAR race the week of November 5-11. Several hundred campers camped on Estrella Park property and generated revenue for the park.
- On December 8, the Equestrian group AERC enjoyed long distance endurance rides on the desert trails in the park. The group of nearly 70 riders gave glowing feedback on what wonderful trails we have in the park.
- *Race Timers* had a fun run in the park on December 15th with nearly 150 people enjoying the day on the park trails with various runs including 5K, 10K and a Half Marathon.
- Estrella Park had 26 programs with 395 people in attendance during December. December was an overall busy month with lots more visitors in the Nature Center. Wildflowers continue to bloom and the first half of the month was a great time to highlight the wildflowers in the park, which is extremely unusual this time of year. With the holidays, staff continued to focus on family programming that would bring in locals with their travelling families. All programs had increased attendance from 2018.
- The park has been having OHV and shooting issues on the north boundary near the Maricopa County Flood Control property north of the Gila River. The park placed out more markers and signs prohibiting this activity and collaborated with MCSO who is doing some enforcement in the area. Illegal roads will be further blocked off after MSCO completes their enforcement days.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park

- Lake Pleasant offered 40 interpretive programs during the months of November and December to 871 program attendees. Highlights for the months included *Bald Eagle Management*, *Discovery Center Explorations*, *Sunset* and *Full Moon* hikes.
- Lake Pleasant/Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, Bureau of Reclamation and the AZGFD have teamed up to introduce a bald eagle camera at Lake Pleasant. The bald eagle cam will provide live feeds to the public of one of Lake Pleasants most active/successful nesting sites. To view the eagle cam, visit <https://www.maricopacountyparks.net/park-locator/lake-pleasant-regional-park/> and click on the "Live Bald Eagle Cam" link under the "Park Information" section of the webpage.
- The Navigational Aide team installed the annual bald eagle buoy closure to protect several breeding areas within Lake Pleasant. The eagle closure will remain in place from December 15 thru June 15 for various areas of the Agua Fria arm. A secondary part of the buoy closure will be put into effect near the Agua Fria Conservation Area boat launch area of Boulder Creek, when water levels reach adequate levels. For more information on the Bald Eagle program, please visit <https://www.maricopacountyparks.net/park-locator/lake-pleasant-regional-park/park-information/bald-eagle-program/>.
- Desert Tortoise surveys will be conducted in October 2019 to evaluate the current status of tortoise populations around Lake Pleasant thru the Bureau of Reclamation. Surveys have not been conducted for over a decade, and there is tremendous interest to see how the populations have responded to illegal access issues (i.e. in the area of North Lake Pleasant).
- Over 200 volunteers from *Keep It Wild* came out for a day of Black Friday cleanup fun at Lake Pleasant. The team collected approximately 100 bags of trash from around the park. We greatly appreciate their continued support to help keep it wild at Lake Pleasant.
- The Maintenance team has been hard at work performing a number of preventative maintenance repairs and projects around the park. Some of the highlights include proactive maintenance to all of the plumbing fixtures within the park, tractor training, renovations to the amphitheater and the construction of a garden bed and bike rack area at the Discovery Center. Special thanks to the Desert Outdoor Center maintenance team for their assistance with repairs to the Desert Outdoor Center dock from damages incurred from the storms over the summer.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park

- In November, the park offered nine interpretive programs with 124 people in attendance. The highlights for this month was a school field trip from a Title I school with 24 participants, a full moon hike and campfire social.
- Park staff and hosts participated in the Fountain Hills Arts Fair by providing an information booth on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, November 9-11. Various park materials & critters were on display along with park information, maps, etc. The outreach estimated for this event was over 700 people! The Interpretive Ranger also assisted at Estrella Park for a field trip with over 100 first graders.
- Four special events took place during the month of November:
 - *Ragnar Trail Relay* had 2,812 runners participate plus nearly 700 spectators were in attendance.
 - *Lead, Follow or Get Out of My Way* had 64 equestrian riders plus nearly 50 spectators in attendance.
 - *12 Hours of Fury* had 298 mountain bike riders with approximately 150 spectators cheering them on.
 - *Running Lungs*, which is a trail run event, had 48 people in attendance.
- REI hosted a class at McDowell in November, *Introduction to Mountain Biking* with 10 participants in attendance.
- In December, 12 interpretive programs were offered with 97 people in attendance. Program highlights included a children's story time with the author of the book "Bubby's Puddle Pond – A Tortugas Tale of the Sonoran Desert" and the ever-popular Reptile Feeding, which drew 28 people.
- Two special events took place during the month of December:
 - *McDowell Mountain Frenzy* (Trail Run) with 625 participants and approximately 200 spectators.
 - *Dawn to Dusk* with 687 mountain bike riders along with about 250 spectators in attendance.
- Friends of Arizona Highways Magazine Foundation hosted a Fun in the Dark photography workshop at the Trailhead Staging Area with 11 shutterbugs.
- Giant Bicycles offered a free bike demo at the Competitive Track lot in December.

San Tan Regional Park

- San Tan hosted 18 programs in November for 301 participants.
- The park celebrated the start of the *100 Miles Challenge* with a kickoff hike led by the ranger, which brought out 20 challenge participants. Another highlight was the *Homeschool Fossils* class where 30 students and parents made a dough fossil and dug for "dinosaur bones" in our sand-filled dig site in the picnic area.
- San Tan served as the host site for 120 people attending the annual Boy Scouts Day Camp with badge activities presented by scout leaders and archery classes for the kids.
- The XTERRA trail running race was held at the park and included a combined total of 300 participants and volunteers.
- The interpretive ranger also presented an outreach program at a senior center at Merrell Ranch Anthem in Florence. 25 seniors learned what the park has to offer and met our kingsnake and chuckwalla animal ambassadors.
- In December, just over 700 visitors attended 20 programs at San Tan. The highlight for the month was the *Full Moon Hike*, which drew in approximately 360 people, a potential record for a San Tan program. There was also a great turnout for a holiday-themed guided hike where the ranger pointed out Desert Christmas Cactus and Desert Mistletoe to 40 hikers.
- Also during this month, the ranger presented a two-part water program in collaboration with the Stormwater Division of the County's Environmental Services Department to help spread their educational message to the public. Homeschool students learned about water pathways in the park, storm water in neighborhoods, water pollution prevention and water quality.
- San Tan also served as the host site for the Equine Trail Sports annual equestrian skills and obstacle event. 35 riders and volunteers were part of this competition that took place on the trails and in our parking lot.

Spur Cross Conservation Area

- In November, the park hosted 12 interpretive programs with 335 participants. The highlighted program for the month: *Discovery Days* with 236 participants.
- Trail volunteers continue to help with restoring rain-damaged trails and other regular maintenance tasks.
- In December, the park hosted 19 interpretive programs with 184 participant. The highlighted program for the month: *Full Moon Hike* with 32 attendees.
- The security door and shutters for the new entry station have been installed. It will be fully staffed seven days a week starting January 1 through the end of April.

Usery Mountain Regional Park

- Usery Mountain Regional Park offered 24 interpretive programs in November with 1,132 participants and in December, the park offered 21 interpretive programs with 845 participants.
- 328 participants attended the Park Ranger's *Full Moon Hike* in November and 212 participated in December. 116 enjoyed the Park Ranger's *All About Rattlesnakes* program.
- Two-Wheel Jones hosted the Showdown Mountain Bike Race, an 8-hour mountain bike race through our beautiful Sonoran desert. 208 riders participated and attempted to complete as many laps as they could in the 8-hour time period.
- Aravaipa Running hosted the *Pass Mountain Trail Run and Punisher Trail Run* as part of the Desert Runner Trail Race Series with 550 participants in the all day running event.
- The Usery Mountain Archers hosted the *Ham & Turkey 3D Archery Shoot* at the park's archery range which brought in 36 archers from around the valley to participate.
- Pass Mountain Archery Co. hosted several one-on-one plus group style archery classes in the months of November and December with a total of 38 people participating.
- The park received and installed a new memorial bench on the Merkle Trail.
- The new restroom facility was literally "dropped" at Trailhead Staging area on Monday, December 17. There is still work to be done (ADA ramp, sidewalk, parking area, etc.), but the new facility looks great and will be such a nice, needed addition to Usery Park.

Vulture Mountains Recreation Area and Hassayampa River Preserve

- Beautiful weather kicked off the busy season in November at the Preserve with 1,317 visitors (up over 25% from last November). The interpretive ranger, volunteers, and guest presenters presented 15 interpretive programs during the month. This month's Nature Rangers program was a Thanksgiving-themed

"Hassayampa Harvest" focusing on the types of foods native people and pioneers grew and used in the area. Attendees enjoyed samples of foods, including peach cobbler cooked in a Dutch oven and mesquite bread warmed in the interpretive adobe oven located at the Preserve. Guest presenter Cindy Marple's "Building Your Birding Skills" in-depth workshop received numerous compliments by those who attended.

- Park staff partnered with Project WET to receive training from Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to participate in their Citizen Science Water Monitoring Program and Arizona Water Watch, which involves various water quality monitoring activities. This training will allow both Project WET staff and HRP staff to offer these activities as part of the overall school group field trip curriculum at the Preserve, while at the same time providing meaningful data to ADEQ scientists.
- MCPRD staff worked with contractors to conduct various septic repairs. A separate water leak was identified by park staff.
- December ended a good year at the Preserve. The weeks before the holidays saw the usual slowing of visitors, followed by a significant increase of visitation after the holidays, despite cold weather. Visitation for the month was 1,151 people, up 23% over last December.
- The interpretive ranger and volunteers presented nine programs during the month, including bird walks and a more in-depth *Winter Bird ID* workshop.
- The Preserve also partnered with the Wickenburg Conservation Foundation (WCF) to present a new program, *Desert Awareness*, as part of this month's Nature Rangers program. Participants rotated through several different stations led by WCF volunteers, each station focusing on various components of the Sonoran Desert, including plants and animals, archeological history, and conservation and ethics. The Preserve hopes to continue to partner with WCF to offer *Desert Awareness* as a field trip component for schools visiting the Preserve.
- Various maintenance and improvement projects continued around the Preserve as well. The Trades Crew installed new, custom-made rusted steel bulletin boards in the Visitor Center to match the rustic theme.
- Maintenance staff and volunteers repaired existing fences and replaced a few missing fence sections. A roofing inspection was conducted of the historic buildings to assess upcoming repairs needed.
- The interpretive ranger, an ornithologist by background, represented the Preserve at the annual Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative (ABCI) meeting.
- Preserve staff also attended the public meeting for the draft Environmental Assessment for the Vulture Mountains Recreation Area.
- The park supervisor represented the Preserve at a monthly Tourism committee meeting at the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce. The Preserve participated in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), as it has done for several decades. Arizona Game and Fish employees and volunteers counted over 115 different bird species as part of the larger "Hassayampa" count area, which includes the Preserve, Wickenburg, and the upper stretch of the river north of Wickenburg.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park

- In November 2018, White Tank Mountain Regional Park offered 21 interpretive programs with 451 guests attending. In true Westside collaboration, Ranger Eric from Hassayampa River Preserve gave a bird walk and presentation at White Tank, as this is his expertise. Ranger Justin's expertise is in reptiles and amphibians, so he has presented interpretative programming at Hassayampa in the past. With the rangers working together closely and providing programming at sister parks, the public receives the best possible experience.
- Volunteer led interpretive programs at White Tank also continue to enhance the visitor experience. Our long-time volunteer, Chris Reed, presents an incredible *Waterfall Archaeology Hike*. This Thursday morning hike attracted 18 visitors this month who were excited to learn about the valuable cultural history of the White Tank Mountains.
- White Tank's attendance continues to rise each month, as the West Valley grows and more people learn about the valuable resources the park offers. This month the attendance was 4,779 people higher than November 2017.
- November's special event schedule started with the ever growing Arizona Interscholastic Cycling League middle school and high school mountain biking races the first weekend of the month. This year was busier than ever with 683 race participants; both camping and parking reached maximum capacity in the park. A few days later, Cox Media shot a film shoot on the park's main roads for a local car dealership, keep an eye out for the beautiful scenery of the park when you are watching local TV!

- The Sun City Hiker's Club brought 30 of their members out for their annual trail workday to continue work on the Waterfall Trail. With the assistance of the Trail Crew and maintenance staff, the club was able to haul, spread, and tamp down additional decomposed granite along the edges of the concrete trail to enhance the aesthetics and safety of the trail.
- In December, White Tank Park offered 20 interpretive programs with 1,615 guests attending. On December 8, the park hosted the annual *Holiday Luminary Walk*. This was the first luminary event in which the park used all LED battery powered reusable tea-light candles instead of disposable fire lit candles. The battery powered lights worked incredibly well and we are very excited to be able to reuse them in the future and avoid any fire related concerns. The Friends of White Tank nonprofit group who also supported the event with cocoa and cookies donated the 365 lights. In addition to the luminary lit half-mile Black Rock Short Loop Trail, volunteers also set up stations to teach visitors about animal skulls, and our volunteer entomologist, Jack Jenkins, set up his insect displays and an extra-large black light to show off the many species of glowing scorpions.
- An even more incredible aspect to this luminary event was the high number of visitors who participated. Typically, White Tank's Halloween event is very popular and the Holiday Luminary Walk is a quiet event. Last year's numbers were in the 300 range, and this year 1,077 park guests attended; far exceeding our Halloween numbers. As our special events grow, staff is excited for our CIP funded Area 4 renovation which will increase parking, functionality, and efficiency of this space for large events like these.
- December also brought the second annual "Hike with the Supervisor" park program, which offers a guided hike on the 9.3 mile Ford Canyon-Willow-Mesquite Loop. This is the park's most "backcountry" trail and visitors are often times hesitant hiking it without someone who has been before. The park supervisor, interpretive ranger and several volunteers, were joined by 11 park visitors for this amazing hike. The new Natural Resource Specialist, Juanita Armstrong, also joined the hike and was able to provide hikers with a great wealth of information on invasive species and scope out the invasive species along the trail.
- The week before Christmas was quiet, but as soon as the holiday was over the park was swamped with visitors bringing their out of town friends and family to the park. Ranger Justin's snake feeding program brought in 106 people eager to get in on the feeding action.
- White Tank hosted one Special Use Permit in December, Racetimers 7K, which was a small trail run with 65 participants.
- As word continues to spread that our camping sites provide electric and water, our current campground is typically filled to capacity with large RV's and camp trailers. The demand for tent campers and truck campers has increased; we are looking forward to providing additional alternative camping options in the Willow camping area.