

**MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING**

Regular Meeting of May 19, 2026

LOCATION:	Virtual Meeting
COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:	Megha Budruk, Jack Stapley, John Crane, Isabel Chavez, Samantha Stelp, Shelby Scharbach
COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:	Eric Mears
STAFF PRESENT:	Jennifer Waller, Director; Betsy Pregulman, Deputy County Attorney

The official correspondence and staff recommendations contained in this Commission folder are hereby entered as supportive material to the official minutes of the May 19, 2026, Parks and Recreation Commission regular meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

ITEM #1 – CALL TO ORDER – Jack Stapley, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

- The regular meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

ITEM #2 – ROLL CALL – Roll call was taken, and a quorum was present.

ITEM #3 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETINGS – Jack Stapley, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

- Commissioner Chavez motioned to approve the March 17, 2026, meeting minutes.
- Commissioner Scharbach abstained from voting because she was absent from the meeting.
- With all others in favor, the motion to approve the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting held on March 17, 2026, was approved.

ITEM #5 - DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS – Jenn Waller, Director, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Director Waller conveyed appreciation on behalf of Vice Chair Lesko and Supervisor Galvin, who had earlier participated in the Fourth Annual Water Safety and Hiking Safety event. The event focused on raising public awareness of summer heat, water, and trail safety through media outreach and community education.
- Director Waller reported on year-to-date attendance figures, noting that the data from January through April appears inconsistent and should not be considered fully accurate. She explained that the discrepancy is due to the implementation of a new point-of-sale system, which has not yet been fully activated or integrated with the attendance tracking mechanism used for park entry transactions.
- Director Waller further stated that under the prior system, day-use transactions were recorded through vehicle counts, which generated real-time attendance data, but this functionality is not yet fully implemented in the new system. The department is currently working with the vendor to resolve the issue and restore accurate reporting functionality.
- Director Waller presented the budget report and stated that the department is closely monitoring financial performance. April showed a strong turnout, and similar positive trends are anticipated for May and June. She further reported that, following the implementation of new fees in January, the department will provide an updated financial review in August to reflect early impacts and overall trends.

- There were several personnel changes in March and April, including promoting Marvin Morris, Custodian at Lake Pleasant, to Navigational Aide; promoting James Conway from Maintenance at San Tan to Trails Specialist; and promoting Wade Risinger, Jr., from Custodian at Usery to Maintenance at McDowell. New hires included John Choi, Development Superintendent, and Christian Larson, Park Supervisor at Hassayampa. It was also noted that Frances “Fran” Scott retired from her role at Lake Pleasant.
- Director Waller announced a partnership among the Interpretive Rangers, the Natural Resource Specialist, the Arizona Master Naturalist (Maricopa Chapter), SciStarter, the Desert Botanical Garden, and Arizona State University for the Greater Phoenix City Nature Challenge.
- The Greater Phoenix City Nature Challenge is part of America’s 250th birthday celebration, with the county launching programs related to this milestone.
- Attendees were encouraged to visit the county’s website for more information about the 250th anniversary efforts, which include various programs planned by Interpretive Rangers. The primary goal of this initiative is to contribute to 250 million acts of science in honor of America’s 250th birthday.
- Natural Resource staff conducted the annual butterfly monitoring survey for the fifth consecutive year.
- The survey recorded nearly 5,000 butterflies spanning almost 50 species: a notable increase from last year’s findings.
- Natural Resource Specialist Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg will provide a detailed update on the survey findings and their implications at a future meeting.
- Director Waller provided an update on the Maricopa County Leadership and Education Advancing Public Service (MCLEAPS) program. Intern Adriana, introduced at the last meeting, is concluding her wildlife monitoring internship. Results from Adriana’s work will be reported this fall in collaboration with Arizona State University.
- With an impressive total of 90 events, the Desert Defenders program concluded this month. Director Waller commended volunteers, park staff, and the Natural Resource Specialist for their contributions to the program’s success this season.
- Volunteer activities included an Earth Day event with 15 volunteers and the Arizona Public Service Fish Line Cleanup at Lake Pleasant, where 150 volunteers contributed to cleanup efforts across multiple areas.
- A comprehensive annual wrap-up of volunteer activities will be presented at the end of the fiscal year, with details shared in August or sometime in the fall.
- At the Desert Outdoor Center, the trades crew has renovated the dinosaur pit to enhance safety during children’s fossil digs.
- Work continues at the Estrella Campground.
- Major renovations by the trails crew were completed on the Merkle Trail, including installing culverts and drains to improve water management.
- At San Tan, trail rerouting was implemented to reduce conflicts among equestrians, mountain bikers/hikers.
- Development projects include completing Ramada 9 at Usery, which involved replacing an unused restroom with a new facility featuring picnic tables and grills.
- Installation of chilled drinking fountains is ongoing; the most recent addition was at the Usery picnic area.
- Usery Restroom 6 has been successfully replaced due to structural issues with the old facility.
- At Cave Creek, Natural Resources coordinated herbicide treatments to eliminate stinknet in accordance with previous agreements with the National Park Service.
- Collaboration with the county’s Enterprise Technology and Innovation (ETI) group for drone monitoring continues, providing data on invasive species.
- At the Desert Outdoor Center, there was strong participation in educational programs with approximately 2,000 students from 17 schools in March and April.

- Hassayampa River Preserve held its annual Mesquite Festival, an event centered on the cultural and practical uses of mesquite, including mesquite bean flour production. The event was organized in partnership with the Friends of the Hassayampa, the Wickenburg Conservation Foundation, the Desert Awareness Committee, and the Arizona State University Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners and was attended by approximately 225 participants.
- At San Tan, the Goldmine Trailhead is now open to the public. Completed improvements include parking lots, restrooms, an entry station, ramadas with picnic tables, and volunteer host sites. The facility held a soft opening, during which more than 3,100 visitors used the area in the first several weeks of operation.
- Staff at Spur Cross continue to conduct annual inspections of mining areas located throughout the park to ensure that mines are properly signed, secured, or filled in, as required for state inspections. These inspections are part of ongoing safety and compliance efforts within the park system.
- Spur Cross Park Supervisor Kevin Smith met with Alan "Tex" Walker, a former ranch hand who worked on the property during the 1940s, and provided a tour to Frank Stewart and his family, who worked the ranch during the early 1950s.
- Director Waller announced that Kevin Smith will retire next month from his position as Park Supervisor at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. She recognized his dedication and passion for the park and stated that he will continue supporting the park as a volunteer following his retirement.
- A trailhead staging area improvement project is underway at White Tank Mountain Regional Park. The existing area, which primarily accommodates horse trailers and includes portable restrooms and limited hitching posts, is being fully redeveloped. Planned improvements include construction of a new parking lot, permanent restroom facilities, and a redesigned entrance to improve alignment with the roadway. The anticipated project completion date is the end of August.

ITEM #6 - SET AUGUST 2026 PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING LOCATION – CALL TO THE COMMISSION – Jack Stapley, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Commission – *DISCUSSION ITEM/ACTION ITEM*

- Chair Stapley opened the discussion and reminded the commission that the May 19, 2026, meeting was originally set to take place at Utery Mountain Regional Park but was moved to a virtual format.
- Commissioner Scharbach motioned that the August 2026 meeting be held at Utery Mountain Regional Park.
- Commissioner Crane seconded the motion, and, with all in favor, the motion passed to hold the August 2026 meeting at Utery Mountain Regional Park.

Item #7 – CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- M. Scott Burley, representing Arizona Whitewater Adventure Park, addressed the commission regarding pursuing the development of Arizona Whitewater Adventure Park at Estrella Mountain Regional Park.

Item #8– CALL TO THE COMMISSION

- Commissioner Stelp shared that she recently visited the Hassayampa River Preserve with Director Waller. While at the park, she inquired about donating funds by "rounding up" her purchase at the nature center. She was informed that this is not an option.
- Commissioner Stelp issued a call to the commission to investigate the ability to "round up" retail purchases at the parks' nature centers for the purpose of donating to the parks.
- Commissioner Chavez also expressed interest in the possibility of rounding up purchases for park donations.
- Director Waller stated that she would review the matter, taking into account applicable state statutes.

Item #9 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Chair Jack Stapley adjourned the meeting at 10:31 a.m.

Jennifer Waller, Director/Secretary

Jack Stapley, Chair