

MARICOPA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING
Regular Meeting of May 20, 2025

LOCATION: Cave Creek Regional Park

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: John Crane, Eric Mears, Samantha Stelp, Shelby Scharbach, Megha Budruk, Jack Stapley

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Isabel Chavez

STAFF PRESENT: Jennifer Waller, Director; Angela Anderson, Executive Assistant; Amber Gribler, Recorder; Betsy Pregulman, Deputy County Attorney

The official correspondence and staff recommendations in the Commission folder are entered as supportive material to the official minutes of the May 20, 2025, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission regular meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

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

- The regular meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m.

ITEM #2 – ROLL CALL – Roll Call taken - a quorum was present.

ITEM #3 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ITEM #4 – APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES MARCH 11, 2025, REGULAR MEETING – Megha Budruk, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

- Commissioner Crane motioned for approval of the March 11, 2025, meeting minutes, and Vice Chair Stapley seconded. With all in favor and with Commissioner Scharbach abstaining, the motion passed.

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

- Director Waller provided an overview of the Director's Summary.
- Update provided on Fee Study and Park Master Plans, and reviewed recent hires and promotions.
- Director Waller expressed her appreciation for the Natural Resource group and the Desert Defenders volunteers for their efforts in addressing invasive species and the collaboration with the Arizona Department of Forestry.
- Director Waller thanked the Trails group for covering the 28 miles of repair work at McDowell Mountain Regional Park, while they have been down a person for most of the season.
- Tammi Watkins, Park Supervisor at Estrella Mountain Regional Park, will represent the Parks Department with the Arizona Site Steward Program in the future and help with the management of our archaeological sites.

ITEM #6 – 100 MILE CHALLENGE – Candi Jones, Park Office Assistant, Cave Creek Regional Park

- Candi Jones provided an overview of the 100 Mile Challenge.
- Park visitors are challenged to complete 100 miles in 100 days from November 1 through February 8, through horseback riding, hiking, trail running, or mountain biking. This is the 13th season for the challenge.
- The total mileage for all participants was 101,721 miles, with 2,100 people registered and 610 who completed the challenge.
- Personal milestones and anecdotes provided by the participants were shared.

- Commissioner Scharbach shared her appreciation for the presentation and inquired how the program is promoted beyond social media and how participants can register.
- Ms. Jones described the various ways the participants can register and how the parks promote the program.
- Commissioner Scharbach suggested exploring possible outreach opportunities at local gyms to spread the word.
- Vice Chair Stapley requested clarification on whether participants would receive a t-shirt.
- Ms. Jones confirmed that the participants do receive a t-shirt after completing 100 miles. The shirts are distributed at the parks.
- Commissioner Crane stated that this is an example of the things the Parks Department does that may not be well-publicized but have a significant impact.
- Director Waller and Chair Budruk expressed their appreciation for the team running the program and its positive impact on the participants and the community.

ITEM #7 – TRAIL COUNTERS – Jonathan McKelvey, Trails Project Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Jonathan McKelvey provided an overview of the eco-counters on the Maricopa Trail.
- Eco counters use optical and ground sensors to determine the type of trail user, direction of travel, time of passage, and count the number of users.
- The counters were initially tested at Spur Cross Conservation Area. Additional ones are installed at McDowell Mountain Regional Park, White Tank Mountain Regional Park, and San Tan Mountain Regional Park. There is also a mobile unit.
- Mr. McKelvey provided data insights for the individual parks using the counters.
- Vice Chair Stapley inquired if the post shown in the presentation is the actual counter, and Mr. McKelvey confirmed his assumption.
- Vice Chair Stapley asked if the counter can distinguish between a human being, an animal, or a vehicle.
- Mr. McKelvey explained how the counters use the height and mass data obtained from the optical and ground sensors to determine whether the object is a human or animal. It is not able to determine individual animal species.
- Commissioner Scharbach inquired about how the park fee is collected for the remote trails.
- Mr. McKelvey explained that there is a manned remote entrance, but with summer approaching, there may be limited volunteers to operate the station. There is an Iron Ranger self-service payment station that users should utilize, and many people use their Maricopa County Park Passes.
- Mr. McKelvey reviewed the trends for San Tan Mountain Regional Park.
- Commissioner Crane noted that San Tan Mountain Regional Park had the 2nd highest number of visitors.
- Vice Chair Stapley asked why San Tan Mountain Regional Park has been one of the shining stars of the Parks system.
- Director Waller stated that population growth is a primary reason, as the region is one of the fastest-growing and is very popular.
- Commissioner Scharbach noted that the trailhead is located close to all the homes due to the area's high density, with the possibility of its popularity increasing even further.
- Director Waller confirmed that this is the trailhead receiving all the improvements and provided a reminder that San Tan does not have the same infrastructure as the rest of the park system, such as roadways.
- Director Waller shared that this data will help the Parks Department make informed business decisions related to resources, access, and users.
- Vice Chair Stapley inquired about the cost of the counters and whether the Parks Department is considering purchasing additional ones.
- Mr. McKelvey noted that these were part of the initial test, and we wanted to see how useful they were in meeting our needs.
- Teresa Retterbush, Development Superintendent, stated that the cost of the units are \$6,500 each, with an approximate \$500 yearly fee for the data.

- Vice Chair Stapley inquired about the installation process and costs.
- Mr. McKelvey stated that the Trails personnel handle the installation, and it takes about three-quarters of a day to install and calibrate the sensors.
- Commissioner Scharbach stated that we should ask for a discount if we have multiples.
- Ms. Retterbush shared that the yearly fee includes cell service and data.
- Commissioner Scharbach inquired about the maintenance of the counters.
- Mr. McKelvey stated that the only maintenance has been battery replacement, a few occasions of reconnecting some of the modules, and some minor graffiti.
- Mr. McKelvey shared the daily and monthly traffic data graphs, which showed a comparison between the parks, including breakdowns by user type.
- Commissioner Mears asked if the data from the north sensor would offset the data from the south sensor.
- Mr. McKelvey confirmed that the sensors do offset the data at different points, and the Trails team tested this during the setup and installation of the counters.
- Mr. McKelvey shared the potential use of data from the counters.
- Director Waller shared how the counters will provide valuable real-life data to help plan for the future.
- Chair Budruk inquired whether the Parks Department plans to add more counters.
- Director Waller stated that she hopes that this is a possibility.
- Vice Chair Stapley inquired if the counters are counting images but not videotaping activity.
- Mr. McKelvey confirmed that it does have a photo sensor, but it does not take any pictures or images. The counters have an optical sensor that utilizes a type of scatter technology to determine the direction of the object, but do not capture images.
- Vice Chair Stapley inquired if there are any cameras at any of the parks that capture video, such as in parking areas, in case of an accident.
- Director Waller stated that there are no cameras in that specific sense, but there are cameras at Lake Pleasant at the entry stations. Law enforcement agencies in cities utilize cameras that can track license plates and other identifiers, which is a very robust system. Over the years, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) has been looking at similar options for the parks, but she is unsure of the status of that effort.
- Commission members continued their discussion regarding the use of cameras on trails versus those for security, and the balance with the privacy of users.

ITEM #8 – MARICOPA TRAIL – 163RD TRAIL UPDATE – Jonathan McKelvey, Trails Project Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Mr. McKelvey provided an update on the 163rd Trail egress status.
- Mr. McKelvey provided an update on the collaboration between the applicable entities.
- Director Waller shared the context behind the project's origin and explained how it poses a traffic and safety hazard.

ITEM #9 – PUBLIC SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENTS - HEAT AWARENESS – Dawna Taylor, Communications Department Officer, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Taylor provided an overview of the safety announcements for the summer.
- Ms. Taylor shared the communication plan for the Fire Ban and collaboration with other Maricopa County departments.
- Ms. Taylor shared the Summer Resources signage and templates for the Parks Department.
- Ms. Taylor showed the messaging on various topics posted on the external Parks Department website and social media.
- Ms. Taylor provided an update on the Safety Committee topics.
- Commissioner Stelp inquired about how the wind advisories at Lake Pleasant are handled.
- Director Waller shared that the Parks Department received a State Parks grant for three brand-new wind warning devices and explained how they work.
- Commissioner Stelp asked when they were installed.

- Director Waller stated that they were installed in early 2024, replacing the existing devices, which were just lights. The new system has lights that are much clearer and crisper, with telemetry at the ramps.
- Commissioner Crane shared his appreciation for the collaboration with the City of Phoenix on the fire warning restrictions. He suggested working with the City of Scottsdale, as they have an extensive system.
- Ms. Taylor announced another collaboration with North Valley Outdoor Network (NVON) and Appreciate Arizona, focusing on the seven principles of Leave No Trace.
- Commissioner Scharbach inquired whether local media would be attending the Lake and Trail Safety Event at Lake Pleasant Regional Park on May 23rd.
- Ms. Taylor stated that in previous years, all the major media outlets would attend, but she would have to confirm with the County Communications Office that is handling the event.
- Commissioner Scharbach shared that the website looks awesome and hopes the media will attend so the information can be disseminated.

ITEM #10 – BUDGET/CIP UPDATE – Kara Currie-Gonzalez, Finance and Administration Manager, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department

- Ms. Currie-Gonzalez provided an overview of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and Capital Improvement Projects (CIP).
- The budget process has been moved to a recommended status and is awaiting approval from the Board of Supervisors.
- The Parks Department has followed the recommended process for a one-time general fund request of \$400,000 to support our Natural Resources department's fire management efforts.
- Commissioner Scharbach stated that receiving this one-time request is excellent, and after seeing the work that the Natural Resources department was doing, she felt that this is something that should be shared.
- Ms. Currie-Gonzalez shared a breakdown of the funding requests for the existing and new CIP projects.
- Commissioner Scharbach inquired if more than four new CIP requests were submitted.
- Ms. Currie-Gonzalez stated that only the four CIP requests were submitted; however, additional funding was requested under some of the existing CIP requests.
- Commissioner Scharbach noted that the increased monetary investment approved by the Board of Supervisors demonstrates their commitment and understanding of the importance of the parks system, which may aid in the application of the fee study.
- Director Waller confirmed that the increased investment and reinvestment in the infrastructure are relevant to the parks' master plans.

ITEM #11 – SET REMAINING PARKS COMMISSION MEETING LOCATIONS FOR 2025: AUGUST 26, SEPTEMBER 16, AND NOVEMBER 18 – Megha Budruk, Chair, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission

- Chair Budruk led a discussion regarding setting locations for the remainder of the year.
- Commissioner Crane expressed his preference for holding the meeting in person and requested clarification on which parks are being considered for meetings.
- Chair Budruk provided the names of the parks that have hard-wired internet and can support the streaming of the meeting.
- Commissioners discussed past meeting locations and dates of the Commission.
- Commission members discussed the previous locations of Commission meetings and shared their preferred locations for the remainder of 2025.
- Commissioner Scharbach made a motion to hold the meetings on August 26th at the Flood Control District Office, September 16th at Desert Outdoor Center, and November 18th at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, and was seconded by Commissioner Crane. With all in favor and none opposed, the motion passed.

ITEM #12 – CALL TO PUBLIC

- Chris Willis, representing Friends of Daisy Mountain Trails, read a statement urging Maricopa County to partner with Friends of Daisy Mountain Trails to renew efforts toward securing permanent public trail access.
- Curt Kempton, representing himself as a private citizen, shared his opinion regarding San Tan Mountain Regional Park and the congestion and friction caused by the large number of users. Mr. Kempton offered his assistance in advocacy for the park. Commissioner Mears offered to connect Mr. Kempton with a contact in a similar group.
- Eileen Baden requested additional time to speak, as a representative of Friends of Daisy Mountain Trails, to complete the statement of Chris Willis, in addition to her request to speak as a private citizen about parks funding. Chair Budruk approved this request. Ms. Baden read the remaining portion of the statement from Chris Willis. Ms. Baden read her statement urging support for dedicated parks funding.

ITEM #13 – CALL TO COMMISSION

- No comments

ITEM #14 – ADJOURNMENT

- There being no further business, Chair Budruk adjourned the meeting at 11:41 am.