Buffelgrass Blues’ campaign aims to combat invasive species in Phoenix parks

Gabrielle Olivera and Dylan Simard, Cronkite NewsPublished 11:10 a.m. MT May 31, 2019

Local organizations are teaming up to raise awareness about buffelgrass. Arizona Republic

Every week, thousands of hikers climb Piestewa Peak to take in the views and get in some exercise. In early April, hikers started to see plants splashed with bright blue chalk.

It’s part of an effort to raise awareness about buffelgrass, an invasive species that worsens a problem many Arizonans are already familiar with: fires. Buffelgrass makes excellent kindling, and it’s prone to burning fast, hot and often. Ranchers introduced the shrubby grass into Arizona in the late 1930s, hoping it would reduce soil erosion and feed cattle. The plant took off in Tucson and has spread north to Phoenix in the decades since.

Now the Buffelgrass Blues campaign aims to raise awareness about the problems with buffelgrass. The Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department, Desert Botanical Garden and Central Arizona Conservation Alliance are all involved in the effort. Organizers hope to highlight how the species, which is native to South Africa, is outcompeting native plants for water and eliminating food sources for native wildlife like desert tortoises.

Buffelgrass produces many seeds, which are easily spread by wind and water, according to the National Park Service. In addition, each seed has bristles that allow it to hitch a ride on passing humans and animals.

“This grass can have a lot of negative impacts on this landscape,” said Annia Quiroz, engagement director for CAZCA. “First and foremost is fire. This grass carries the fireload that is very heavy, and can burn up to 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit, which is pretty much in the same range as lava.”

Since the campaign launched last fall, dozens of volunteers have attended Buffelgrass Bootcamps, where they work with Phoenix park rangers to learn how to use an app called Collector. The app lets them map areas where buffelgrass is prevalent so it can be removed on “pulling days.”

Pulling is a bit of a misnomer, though, because removing buffelgrass properly requires a pickax and hours of painstaking labor. Clearing a 10-by-10 foot patch of buffelgrass is a three-hour process.

Because it’s such a strenuous process, Buffelgrass Blues won’t hold any pulling days until the fall when it cools down. The group will still host Buffelgrass Bootcamps and mapping days over the summer.

For removal in the most heavily infested areas, options are limited. There’s chemical spraying by helicopters and manual removal of the plants, Quiroz said, but both are expensive and disrupt the local wildlife.

“It’s up to the cities to best determine how they want to handle their invasives problem,” she said.

Sandy Bahr, the chapter president of the Sierra Club of Arizona, has volunteered to remove buffelgrass in the past.

“It will crowd out other plants and before you know it, you have a field of buffelgrass instead of our beautiful Sonoran Desert vegetation, and also creates unnatural fire conditions,” Bahr said. “I guess it’s just a reminder that we need to be careful about what we bring into our environment.”

Other organizations are joining in. The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and Maricopa County Parks and Recreation also are involved with Buffelgrass Blues. Maricopa County Parks and Recreation calls their program Desert Defenders, but it’s the same training with the same app.

Quiroz will lead a training session for the county at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 1, at the White Tank Mountain Regional Park Nature Center.

This story is part of Elemental: Covering Sustainability, a new multimedia collaboration between Cronkite News, Arizona PBS, KJZZ, KPCC, Rocky Mountain PBS and PBS SoCal. For more stories from Cronkite News, visit cronkitenews.azpbs.org.

77 fun things to do with kids in Phoenix this summer

Samantha Incorvaia, Kerry Lengel and Weldon Johnson, Arizona RepublicPublished 7:05 a.m. MT
All kids are different, but they have one thing in common: When summertime rolls around, they need to be entertained.

We’re here to help. We’ve surveyed the Phoenix metro to find 75 fun ideas to keep children of all ages active and curious throughout the long, hot season.

For outdoorsy types, there are mountain biking classes, a free fishing day and everyone’s favorite way to get down and dirty, Scottsdale’s annual Mighty Mud Mania. For animal lovers, there are zoos and lizard encounters. And for artsy kids, there’s a ton of live theater, from the Broadway tour of “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” (if you have a few extra bucks to spend) and Phoenix’s stalwart Great Arizona Puppet Theater (if you don’t).

So dig in. With this many options, there’s no excuse for letting the little ones spend the entire summer in front of their screens.

Want more stories about the best things to do, eat and see in the Valley? Subscribe to azcentral.com for guides, reviews and expert advice.

- **6/1: Beginner Mountain Bike Class**
  - First, you’ll learn the basic skills you need to ride desert and mountain terrain. Plus you’ll get to know your bike; learn how to balance, shift and control your speed; and familiarize yourself with riding protocol and safety. This 30-minute class is followed by a 3- to 4-mile ride to practice what you learned. A helmet is required. Bring plenty of water, an extra inner tube and tools to change a flat tire. Details: 7-9 a.m. Saturday, June 1. [San Tan Mountain Regional Park](http://www.maricopacounty.gov/parks), 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-2930, [www.maricopacounty parks.net/events](http://www.maricopacounty.gov/parks/).  

- **6/5: Indoor Animal Games**
  - Stay cool and learn interesting things about desert animals while playing games in the Nature Center. Best suited for ages 6-12. One participant will win a Family 4-Pack of tickets to Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix. Details: 10:30 a.m.-noon Wednesday, June 5. [Usery Mountain Regional Park](http://www.maricopacounty.gov/parks), 3939 N. Usery Pass Road, Mesa. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-2930, [www.maricopacounty parks.net/events](http://www.maricopacounty.gov/parks/).

- **6/6: Night Safari**
  - Learn about desert animals on this easy 1-mile walk along the Merkle Trail. The trail’s smooth surface is suitable for wheelchairs and strollers. Bring a flashlight and water and wear closed-toe shoes. No pets. Come early for the "All About Black Bears” program in the Nature Center at 6 p.m. in the Nature Center. This classic film has footage of Sonoran Desert animal behaviors and species interactions that people rarely get to see. Each family will receive one raffle ticket to a drawing for a Family 4-Pack of tickets to Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix. Details: 10 a.m.-noon Friday, June 7. San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-2930, [www.maricopacounty parks.net/events](http://www.maricopacounty.gov/parks/).
p.m. and the snake feeding at 7 p.m. Details: 7:30-8:30 p.m. Saturday, June 8.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park**, 3939 N. Usery Pass Road, Mesa. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 4; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/8, 15, 22, 29: Beginner Mountain Bike Ride**
  - This 5.5-mile ride is geared for beginners but open to all ages and skill levels. Experts will be available to help you understand your bike and safe riding. "No Rider Left Behind" is the policy, so we ride in a group. Helmets are required. Riders younger than 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Bring water, helmet, an extra tube and tools to change a flat tire. Details: 7-9 a.m. Saturdays, June 8, 15, 22 and 29. San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/14: Movie in the Park**
  - Enjoy a movie and the chance to meet animals up close. Bring a blanket, picnic lunch and favorite stuffed animal to enjoy this activity in the nature center. Details: Noon-2 p.m. Friday, June 14. **Estrella Mountain Regional Park**, 14805 W. Vineyard Ave., Goodyear. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/15: Full Moon Hike: White Tanks**
  - Join this 2-mile walk along the Mule Deer Trail to observe the night sky and experience the moonlight lighting the desert. This is a moderate hike. Wear closed-toe shoes and bring water. Flashlights are optional. No dogs, please. Details: 7:30-8:45 p.m. Saturday, June 15. **White Tank Mountain Regional Park**, 20304 W. White Tank Mountain Road, Waddell. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 5; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/15: Full Moon Hike: Estrella**
  - Experience the beauty of the desert in the moonlight. Bring water and sturdy shoes and meet at the Nature Center. At the beginning of the program, names will be entered into a drawing for a Family 4-Pack of Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix tickets. At the end of the program, one winner will be selected. You must stay for the entire program and be present to win. Details: 7:30-9 p.m. Saturday, June 15. **Estrella Mountain Regional Park**, 14805 W. Vineyard Ave., Goodyear. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, 6; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/15: Moonlight Hike at Spur Cross**
  - The **Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area** is a different experience when seen softly illuminated by the moon on this moderate hike. There will be minimal use of flashlights on this hike, but bring one just in case. Details: 8-10 p.m. Saturday, June 15. Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, 44000 N. Spur Cross Road, Cave Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 8; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/19: These Rocks Rock**
  - Geologist AJ Lombard will describe cool things about Arizona rocks, including what they’re made of and how they were created. This indoor program is designed for ages 7 and up. One participant will win a Family 4-Pack of tickets to the Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix water park. Details: 10:30-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 19. Usery Mountain Regional Park, 3939 N. Usery Pass Road, Mesa. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 4; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/19: All About Scorpions**
  - A short indoor presentation will be followed by a trail walk to look for scorpions. Wear closed-toe shoes and bring water, a flashlight and a black light if you have one. Black lights can be purchased at the Visitor Center. No pets. Details: 7-9 p.m. Friday, June 19. San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 7; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

- **6/21: Summer Solstice Sunset Hike**
  - Start the day with a sunrise hike along the 1½-mile Black Rock Long Loop Trail. Watch the sunrise from a viewpoint,
experience the Sonoran Desert as it awakens and see ancient petroglyphs along the trail. No dogs.
Details: 5-7 a.m. Friday, June 21. **White Tank Mountain Regional Park**, 20304 W. White Tank Mountain Road, Waddell. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 5; www.maricopacounty.gov/parks.net/events.

- **6/29: Creatures of the Night Walk**
  - A ranger leads an easy walk to look for and learn about nocturnal critters of the desert. Wildlife seen on past walks includes ringtails, foxes, javelinas, owls, scorpions and more. Black lights will be provided, but please bring your own flashlight. Space is limited, so call 928-684-2772 to sign up.
  Details: 7:45-9:45 p.m. Saturday, June 29. **Hassayampa River Preserve**, 49614 U.S. 60, Wickenburg. $5 per person. 928-684-2772, www.maricopacounty.parks.net/events.

- **6/29: Wet and Wild Hike and Splash**
  - The whole family will like this wet hike. Life vests will be provided, or bring your own. The hike is about 1 mile long. Wear clothes and shoes you don’t mind getting wet. The hike starts off of Waterline Way in the east parking lot of the 10-lane boat ramp, next to the restrooms. Just follow the hike signs from the main gate. Details: 9-11 a.m. Saturday, June 29. **Lake Pleasant Regional Park**, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 2; www.maricopacounty.parks.net/events.

- **7/3: Nature Documentary: Our Planet**
  - Beat the midday heat in the Nature Center classroom for a showing of the BBC documentary, “Our Planet, Fresh Water.” Over two-thirds of Earth’s fresh water is locked in the polar ice caps. Details: 1-2 p.m. Wednesday, July 3. **White Tank Mountain Regional Park**, 20304 W. White Tank Mountain Road, Waddell. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 5; www.maricopacounty.parks.net/events.

- **7/3, 10, 24, 31: Kids Creature Feature Movie**
  - Looking for cool fun? Bring a mat, pillow or blanket and watch an animal movie in the Nature Center. Movies are suitable for all ages. Snacks are available for purchase, and you are welcome to bring your own (no glass bottles). At the end of the movie, one person will win a Family 4-Pack of tickets to the Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix water park. Details: 10:30-noon Wednesdays, July 3, 10, 24 and 31. **Usery Mountain Regional Park**, 3939 N. Usery Pass Road, Mesa. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 4; www.maricopacounty.parks.net/events.

- **7/6: Beginner Mountain Bike Class**
  - First, you'll learn the basic skills you need to ride desert and mountain terrain. Plus you'll get to know your bike; learn how to balance, shift and control your speed; and familiarize yourself with riding protocol and safety. This 30-minute class is followed by a 3- to 4-mile ride to practice what you learned. A helmet is required. Bring plenty of water, an extra inner tube and tools to change a flat tire. Details: 6-8 a.m. Saturday, July 6. **San Tan Mountain Regional Park**, 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, www.maricopacounty.parks.net/events.

- **7/12: Movie Night in the Park: 'Spy in the Wild'**
  - Life-like robotic animals with built-in eye cameras give a peek into the social lives of wild animals in this movie. Snacks will be available for sale or bring your own (no glass bottles). After the movie, watch a snake feeding. One person will win a Family 4-Pack of tickets to the Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix water park. Details: 7-8 p.m., Friday, July 12. **Usery Mountain Regional Park**, 3939 N. Usery Pass Road, Mesa. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 4; www.maricopacounty.parks.net/events.

- **7/12: Searching for Scorpions**
  - A ranger leads this night hike in search of scorpions. Don’t worry — there’s a strict no-touch rule. Bring a flashlight and a black light if you have one. Some black lights may be available to borrow or purchase. Wear close-toed shoes and bring water. Details: 8-9:30 p.m. Friday, July 12. **Lake Pleasant Regional Park**.

Press Coverage May 2019
**Regional Park**, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 2; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

**7/13: Sunset and Almost Full Moon Hike**
- Take this 2-hour, moderate hike up the Yavapai Point Trail and enjoy the view under the full moonlight. Bring a flashlight (just in case), water and a snack. Meet at the Cottonwood Trailhead.
  - Details: 7-9 p.m. Saturday, July 13. Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 2; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

**7/13: Full Moon Hike: Estrella**
- Experience the beauty of the desert in the moonlight. Bring water and sturdy shoes and meet at the Nature Center. At the beginning of the program, names will be entered into a drawing for a Family 4-Pack of Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix tickets. At the end of the program, one winner will be selected. You must stay for the entire program and be present to win.
- Details: 7:30-9 p.m. Saturday, July 13. Estrella Mountain Regional Park, 14805 W. Vineyard Ave., Goodyear. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 6; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

**7/13, 20, 27: Beginner Mountain Bike Ride**
- This 5.5-mile ride is geared for beginners but open to all ages and skill levels. Experts will be available to help you understand your bike and safe riding. "No Rider Left Behind" is the policy, so we ride in a group. Helmets are required. Riders younger than 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Bring water, helmet, an extra tube and tools to change a flat tire.
- Details: 6-8 a.m. Saturdays, July 13, 20 and 27. San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek.

**7/19: Wet and Wild Hike and Splash**
- The whole family will like this wet hike. Life vests will be provided, or bring your own. The hike is about 1 mile long. Wear clothes and shoes you don’t mind getting wet. The hike starts off of Waterline Way in the east parking lot of the 10-lane boat ramp, next to the restrooms. Just follow the hike signs from the main gate.
- Details: 9-11 a.m. Friday, July 19. Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 2; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

**7/20: Let’s Discover Arizona Monsoons**
- This presentation will take you through the life cycle of Arizona’s monsoon season. Why are there monsoon storms here? Where do they come from? How long do they last? Get answers to these and lots more questions during this indoor presentation. Bring a snack if you like.
- Details: 1-2 p.m. Saturday, July 20. Estrella Mountain Regional Park, 14805 W. Vineyard Ave., Goodyear. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 6; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

**7/26: Make a Rain Stick**
- Kids can practice their arts and crafts skills while making rain sticks to take home. The activity leader will read a fun story as children create their rain sticks in the Discovery Center. One child will win a Family 4-Pack of tickets to Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix water park.
- Details: 3-4 p.m. Friday, July 26. Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930 ext. 2; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.
7/26: All About the Summer Monsoon
- Summer is when weather patterns change and the potential for dust storms, thunderstorms, wind, lightning and downpours increases. This indoor presentation will explain the conditions that bring about this weather, why this season is important to desert plants and animals and how you can stay safe when storms approach. Details: 10-11 a.m. Friday, July 26. San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road, Queen Creek. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 7; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

7/27: Scorpion Search Hike
- Walk with a ranger along the Waddell Trail to look for scorpions and experience the desert at night. This will be an easy 2-mile walk. Bring a black light if you have one and wear close-toe shoes. No dogs. Details: 7:30-9 p.m. Saturday, July 27. White Tank Mountain Regional Park, 20304 W. White Tank Mountain Road, Waddell. Vehicle entry fee is $7. 602-506-2930, ext. 5; www.maricopacountyparks.net/events.

MCSO: Teen killed in San Tan Mountain Regional Park shooting
Posted: 7:24 PM, May 31, 2019
Updated: 7:24 PM, May 31, 2019
By: abc15.com staff

Pleasant holiday visitors
Carissa Planalp
AZFamily.com
Posted May 30, 2019

Park employees from all over the county came out to lend a hand in picking up all the litter left on the ground, caught in the trees, and buried in the bushes at Lake Pleasant.

LAKE PLEASANT, AZ (3TV/CBS5) -- Maricopa County parks employees are still picking up the mess left behind by visitors at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

Interpretive Ranger, Terry Gerber, says nearly a hundred dumpsters were packed full of trash by the end of the long holiday weekend. On Thursday, parks employees from all over the county came out to lend a hand in picking up all the litter left on the ground, caught in the trees, and buried in the bushes.

“Mr. racoon, Mr. ringtail, Mr. skunk, they get into it and scatter it,” says Gerber.

Glass is not allowed at the park, but Gerber and others found beer bottles, some of them broken and the pieces difficult to pick up.

Gerber says fishing line is another big problem for the park because animals can get caught in it.

“There are many times we’ve had a blue heron out here, some type of animal, we’ve had to call a rescue in on them to come out and cut the line off of them,” says Gerber.

Rangers encourage visitors to pick up after themselves, Gerber says, by educating them on how litter impacts the park.

“We give them the tools, too, and we give them the trash bags,” says
Gerber. “I hear a lot of environmental things coming out of the schools but then I don’t see it.”

Maricopa County hopes getting out the message will encourage visitors to keep the park clean all summer long.

“We try to get that message to them, hey, you know, let’s be cool,” says Gerber.

Maricopa County is always seeking volunteers to keep the parks clean. The county is currently organizing volunteer days over the next couple months. Anyone interested in volunteering is encouraged to check the events calendar or email parkvolunteer@maricopa.gov for more information.

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**Arizona Free Fishing Day is Saturday, June 1: Where to fish around the Valley**

Posted: 1:00 PM, May 29, 2019
Updated: 2:45 PM, Jun 01, 2019
By: Josh Frigerio

PHOENIX — Pack the tackle, bait, bobber, poles and fishing lines because Arizona's "Free Fishing Day" is Saturday, June 1.

While kids 10 and younger do not need a license to fish in Arizona, everyone older than that does.

Fishing licenses normally range between $24 for a "community license," which allows people to fish at urban ponds and lakes around the Valley, to $37 for a general fishing license and $57 for a combined hunting and fishing license. You can buy a license here.

On Saturday, June 1, everyone will be able to throw out a cast or two without a license.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department will also have free clinics with loaner fishing poles, bait, and instructions at a handful of lakes around the state. The closest one to the Valley is at Lake Pleasant. That event is sponsored by Maricopa County Parks.

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**Arizona agencies urge safe practices around water after Lake Pleasant incidents**

MAY 30, 2019  FIRST RESPONDERS, NEWS, VALLEY
By Chris Caraveo
Independent Newsmedia

Lake Pleasant is pictured June 1, 2018 at Lake Pleasant Regional Park in Peoria. Set on 23,362 acres, the park offers boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and visits to the Discovery Center. Jacob Stanek/Independent Newsmedia

With authorities still searching for a missing jet skier and a man drowning over Memorial Day weekend at Lake Pleasant, safety in and around water continues to be a stressing point for agencies in Maricopa County and Arizona.

“It’s very unfortunate incidents like this occur and is something we wish for no one to ever have to experience,” David Jordan, park supervisor at Lake Pleasant Regional Park, told the Daily News-Sun. “All we can do is try to prepare ourselves to the best of our abilities and do as much as we can to ensure a safe recreation experience.”

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office responded to two incidents at Lake Pleasant over the holiday weekend. On Sunday, authorities learned a jet skier had fallen off his watercraft, struggled to stay afloat, went underwater, and never resurfaced. Searches for the man in his 40s continued into Tuesday and Wednesday with negative results.

Authorities are treating the search as a body recovery situation, meaning it’s more than likely the jet skier is dead somewhere in the lake. Authorities have been dealing with several obstacles to include extreme water depths and have been using resources available like a remotely-operated underwater vehicle.

On Monday, Ovidio Ramirez Gomez, 20, died in a drowning incident after he had trouble swimming from one part of the lake to another. Witnesses tried to swim to his aid, but MCSO said they themselves had trouble swimming. Mr. Gomez was found in an area of the water that was 7.5 feet deep.

MCSO has not indicated whether the jet skier or swimmer was wearing a life jacket or how to swim. Mr. Jordan said reminding people that life-jackets and basic swimming techniques are needed before going into unknown waters is extremely important.

“Life jackets can greatly improve your chances to survive a boating or swimming accident,” Mr. Jordan said. “Even the most experienced boater or swimmer can have a bad day, have an unexpected medical emergency, or be put in a situation they may not be ready for. A life jacket will help to you the best opportunity for a safe and pleasant day at the lake.”

According to the 2016 Recreational Boating Statistics report, published by the U.S. Coast Guard, among the
486 drowning deaths in 2016 where life jacket use or non-use was known, 83% of the individuals were reported as not wearing a life jacket.

In addition, the average life jacket wear rate for all boats and boaters combined for 2017 was 24.8%, the highest rate observed since the beginning of the study in 1999.

However, when it came to the exclusion of personal watercrafts, only 12% of adult boaters wore life jackets in 2017. That was still the best rate in the last 19 years. For youth boaters 17 and under, 72% of them wore life jackets.

The Coast Guard reports that hazardous weather, water, and waves were among the top ten known contributing factors of boating accidents in 2016. And several environmental factors may place boaters at a heightened risk for drowning.

In the event that a boater falls overboard, cold water and air temperatures can place severe strain on the body, leading to possible hyperventilation, swim fatigue, loss of function, or hypothermia.

Environmental conditions such as restricted visibility and poor weather increase the difficulty of navigating and operating boats, which may lead to capsizing, falling overboard, and difficulty searching for and rescuing boaters who have entered the water.

Strong winds that create large waves and harsh or quick-changing weather patterns can also increase the possibility of entering the water unexpectedly. Even a moderate current can exert a force of several tons against a boat and cause its operator to lose control and capsize.

Then there are people who are already in the water swimming or wading.

The Arizona Game & Fish Department has been conducting life jacket exchange events the first half of 2019, as well as a very successful 2018 of providing updated equipment to water recreationists. Children 12 and under are required to wear life jackets at all times in the water.

Multiple Valley cities offer swimming lessons, and people looking to head out to big bodies of water without basic training are doing so at their own risk, and at the risk and cost of agencies attempting to help them in the aftermath of a drowning or other accident.

People are also encouraged to take part in boating safety courses before heading out for a day of boating. The courses help people better understand the expectations as a vessel operator, to be better prepared and knowledgeable about potential emergency situations, and how to respond in a crisis situation.

“Anytime someone steps foot in the water, respect should be given for the recreation activity they are about to incur — whether it be swimming, boating, scuba diving, or other recreation activities,” Mr. Jordan said. “The more people, the greater the chance for something unfortunate to occur.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park is the only lake within the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department park system. The department works in tandem with the Arizona Game & Fish Department, installing life jacket loaner stations at the 10 Lane and Castle Creek Boat Ramps to help spread the word about water and boating safety. They also provide life jackets for people who may have forgotten to bring one.

MCSO, the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, and the AZGFD regularly patrol the waters to help educate recreation users on proper “dos and don’ts.”

Mr. Jordan added that during this time of year, vessel inspections are performed most weekends by the Phoenix Sail and Power Squadron, the U.S Coast Guard Auxiliary, Game and Fish, and others.

Advice before heading out to the lakes include: Develop a pre-departure checklist for the activity you are about to embark on; be aware of your surroundings; know the rules of the land and water; always swim or boat with a knowledgeable buddy; watch your children around water at all times; take part in local programs such as swimming lessons, boating safety courses and other recreation programs; know your emergency protocols for various incidents that may occur; learn basic first aid and CPR; and develop a float plan. Don’t drink alcohol while swimming or boating; and always wear a life jacket around water.

Also, know what the weather is supposed to be like before heading out, and expect the unexpected. If a storm arrives while you are out on a boat, find a quiet cove and ride out the storm, instead of trying to tie up to a dock or trailer your boat.
“For anyone coming out to the lake, it is very important to become knowledgeable about the recreation activity they are about to participate in and practice to become more proficient in controlled environments before heading out to a large body of water,” Mr. Jordan said. “It’s hard to learn something you don’t know. One of the best ways to learn is thru the assistance of others well-versed in the recreation activity and take lessons from an expert.”

If you come across an emergency, do what you can to assist without putting your life in danger.

Before heading out to the waters, create or maintain contacts for the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office at 602-876-1011 or Lake Pleasant Regional Park staff at 602-506-2930. Call those numbers if you see something happening at the lake that you feel is unsafe or a potential danger.

As always, call 911 for life and death emergencies.

“During holiday weekends, folks may have a tendency to let their guard down,” Mr. Jordan said. “We want you to have fun and enjoy the day, but please do so responsibly and be aware of the potential dangers.”

Reporter Chris Caraveo can be reached at 623-876-2531 or ccaraveo@newszap.com. Follow on Twitter @ChrisCaraveo31.

**Campaign kicks off in Phoenix parks to combat an invasive species**

**Gabrielle Olivera and Dylan Simard, Cronkite News**

Posted May 29, 2019

Photo by Gabriella Olivera/ Cronkite News

PHOENIX (Cronkite) – Every week, thousands of hikers climb Piestewa Peak to take in the views and get in some exercise. In early April, hikers started to see plants splashed with bright blue chalk. It’s part of an effort to raise awareness about buffelgrass, an invasive species that worsens a problem many Arizonans are already familiar with. Buffelgrass makes excellent kindling for summer fires, and it’s prone to burning fast, hot, and often.

Ranchers introduced the shrubby grass into Arizona in the late 1930s, hoping it would reduce soil erosion and feed cattle. The plant took off in Tucson, and has spread north to Phoenix in the decades since.

There’s a new education campaign around Piestewa Peak to raise awareness about buffelgrass. It’s an invasive species that spreads quickly and is a fire risk.

Now the Buffelgrass Blues campaign aims to raise awareness about the problems with buffelgrass. The Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department, the Desert Botanical Garden and the Central Arizona Conservation Alliance are all involved in the effort. Organizers hope to highlight how Pennisetum ciliare, which is native to South Africa, is outcompeting native plants for water and eliminating food sources for native wildlife, including desert tortoises.

Buffelgrass produces many seeds, which are easily spread by wind and water, according to the National Park Service. In addition, each seed has bristles that allow it to hitch a ride on passing humans and animals.

“This grass can have a lot of negative impacts on this landscape,” said Annia Quiroz, with the Buffelgrass Blues campaign. “First and foremost is fire. This grass carries the fireload that is very heavy, and can burn up to 1,600 degrees Fahrenheit, which is pretty much in the same range as lava.”

Since the campaign launched last fall, dozens of volunteers have attended Buffelgrass Bootcamps, where volunteers and Phoenix park rangers learn how to use an app called Collector to map areas where buffelgrass is prevalent so it can be removed on “pulling days.”

Pulling is a bit of a misnomer, though, because removing buffelgrass properly requires a pickax and hours of painstaking labor. Clearing a 10-by-10 foot patch of buffelgrass is a three-hour process.

Because it’s such a strenuous process, Buffelgrass Blues won’t hold any pulling days until the fall when it cools down. Buffelgrass Bootcamps and mapping days still will take place over the summer, however.

For removal in the most heavily infested areas, options are limited. There’s chemical spraying by helicopters and manually removal the plants, Quiroz said. But both are expensive and disrupt the local wildlife she explained.

“It’s up to the cities to best determine how they want to handle their invasives problem,” she said.
Sandy Bahr, the chapter president of the Sierra Club of Arizona, has volunteered to remove buffelgrass in the past. “It will crowd out other plants and before you know it, you have a field of buffelgrass instead of our beautiful Sonoran Desert vegetation, and also creates unnatural fire conditions,” Bahr said. “I guess it’s just a reminder that we need to be careful about what we bring into our environment.”

Other organizations are joining in. The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and Maricopa County Parks and Recreation also are involved with Buffelgrass Blues. Maricopa County Parks and Recreation calls their program Desert Defenders, but it’s the same training with the same app.

Quiroz will lead a training session for the county at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 1, at the White Tank Mountain Regional Park Nature Center.

More Information
White Tank Mountain Regional Park
20304 W. White Tank Mountain Road
Waddell, AZ 85355
602-506-2930, ext. 5

20-year-old man who drowned in Lake Pleasant identified
Posted: 11:21 AM, May 28, 2019
Updated: 11:21 AM, May 28, 2019
By: Associated Press

LAKE PLEASANT, Ariz. (AP) - Authorities have identified a man who drowned in Lake Pleasant over the Memorial Day holiday.

Maricopa County sheriff’s officials say 20-year-old Ovidio Ramirez Gomez was swimming with family and friends on Monday afternoon in Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

According to witnesses, Gomez was in Operations Cove when he decided to swim farther out. He then became distressed and went under.

Bystanders tried to swim to him but couldn’t make it.

Sheriff’s deputies patrolling the lake on boat saw him in the bottom of the water and pulled him out.

Firefighters attempted life-saving measures but Gomez was pronounced dead.

Deputies found no signs of alcohol or drugs being a factor.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office will conduct an autopsy.

Lake Pleasant is about 40 miles north of Phoenix.

The spirit of Spur Cross rises again
By Sonoran News
May 28, 2019

Johnny Ringo and Melissa Paxton were among those who worked to preserve Spur Cross and are now trying to preserve Harmony Hollow.

A group of approximately 50 citizens met at the Desert Foothills Library on Saturday, May 23 to explore ways to add almost 30 acres of the Harmony Hollow property to the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.

20 years ago, the citizens of Cave Creek voted for a one-time property tax to preserve the Conservation Area. The property tax sunset in 2012. At present, there is no Town of Cave Creek property tax.

Harmony Hollow includes land adjacent to the entrance to the Conservation Area and the brown house that is visible across Cave Creek from the main parking lot. It includes a broad area of bottom-land within and adjacent to the creek, a stream-level crossing, as well as higher ground on both sides of the creek.

Harmony Hollow is nearly surrounded by the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. It would make a logical addition. But if it is sold to a private person or to investors, there is a possibility of four to five new homes on the property.

The Town of Cave Creek, Maricopa County and the State of Arizona each provided about a third of the $21 million to purchase the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. At the current asking price, however, none of these previous partners can purchase Harmony Hollow.

However, if a private person or group could purchase Harmony Hollow and gift it to one of these partners, there could be significant tax advantages for the donor.

The Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area is approximately 3 square miles and includes Elephant Mountain, the Jewel of the Creek and land surrounding the Phoenix Mine site. The town owns mine site itself, now used for Conservation Area parking and the Spur Cross Stables. Unique among the County Park...
System, the Spur Cross Ranch Conserving Area is dedicated to natural habitat preservation, hiking trails, equestrian and educational use. It also provides non-motorized public access to the Tonto National Forest north of the Conservation Area. According to its master plan, Spur Cross will never include a camping area or other recreational facilities.

Guided hikes are available by Ranger Kevin Smith and his docents that include visits to Native American petroglyphs and habitation sites, 18th and 19th century history, plant and wildlife, geology, hydrology, star gazing and other educational events. Most outdoor activities take place in the cooler months. For schedules, visit the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation web site or the Spur Cross Facebook page.

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Submitted by Thomas McGuire

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Volunteers clean up litter at Lake Pleasant after Memorial Day weekend

12 News
Published: 5:12 PM MST May 28, 2019
Updated: 5:12 PM MST May 28, 2019

If you're planning a visit to Lake Pleasant as the weather warms up, please remember to pick up after yourself.

When you take your party supplies and go somewhere for a day of fun, it's generally understood that you pack out what you pack in. However, it appears some visitors to Lake Pleasant over Memorial Day weekend never got that memo.

A group of volunteers spent Tuesday picking up litter at Lake Pleasant after piles of trash were left behind over the long weekend, according to park officials.

The park posted a photo of "a SMALL sample" of the mess on its Facebook page, asking visitors to remember to pick up after themselves.

Photo by: Lake Pleasant Regional Park - A big shout out to our team at Lake Pleasant Regional Park who will be spending their day picking up litter. This is just a SMALL sample of what was left behind this Memorial Day weekend. Please pack out what you've packed in when you visit the park.

Park officials said Lake Pleasant will likely be facing the same litter problem after the Fourth of July and Labor Day weekend. If you're interested in volunteering to help clean up, email parkvolunteer@mail.maricopa.gov.

Authorities identify man who drowned in Lake Pleasant on Memorial Day

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS
MAY 28, 2019 AT 10:40 AM

PHOENIX — Authorities have identified a man who drowned in Lake Pleasant over the Memorial Day holiday. Maricopa County sheriff’s officials say 20-year-old Ovidio Ramirez Gomez was swimming with family and friends on Monday afternoon in Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

According to witnesses, Gomez was in Operations Cove when he decided...
to swim farther out. He then became distressed and went under.

Bystanders tried to swim to him but couldn’t make it.

Sheriff’s deputies patrolling the lake on boat saw him in the bottom of the water and pulled him out.

Firefighters attempted life-saving measures but Gomez was pronounced dead.

Deputies found no signs of alcohol or drugs being a factor.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner’s Office will conduct an autopsy.

Lake Pleasant is about 40 miles north of Phoenix.

**Places to celebrate nature in the West Valley**

by Sarah Inafuku, Glendale Star Contributing Writer

May 28, 2019

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Estrella Park, with more than 33 miles of multiuse trails, became the first regional park in the Maricopa County park system and has some of the nicest views in the Valley. The Baseline trail is a great 2.6-mile loop for those casual hikers looking to get outside without breaking too much of a sweat. Feel free to bring a dog along for the fun; just make sure to keep him or her on a leash.

Bird watch in Thunderbird Conservation Park in Glendale

There are more than 50 wildlife species that call the 1,185-acre park home. Four viewing blinds are easily accessible and provide a great, peaceful setting to see all the incredible birds that the park has to offer. It makes for a nice day of relaxing and enjoying some quality time outdoors.

Mountain bike in *White Tank Mountain Regional Park* in Surprise

The 6.5-mile competitive track in the White Tanks is not for the faint of heart, but those seeking some challenge and a thrill can grab a helmet and go. The White Tank Mountain Regional Park is the largest in the county, with nearly 30,000 acres of rugged terrain with trails that can be hiked or biked by all skill levels.

Paddleboard on *Lake Pleasant* in Peoria

Lake Pleasant is home to many great recreational activities, including paddleboarding. With more than 10,000 acres of space to discover, Lake Pleasant makes for a great escape from the desert sun. Whether doing one or all of the above, remember to bring water and apply sunscreen.

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**Muere ahogado joven de 20 años en Lake Pleasant**

Por TELEMUNDO ARIZONA

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MCSO: Man dead after he was pulled from Lake Pleasant

By FOX 10 Staff

Posted May 27 2019 05:18PM MST

Updated May 27 2019 09:22PM MST

LAKE PLEASANT, Ariz. (FOX 10) -- Officials with the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office said a 20-year-old man is dead after he was pulled from Lake Pleasant Monday.
According to a brief statement by MCSO, the man was swimming at the Operations Cove at Lake Pleasant when he began to struggle and went under the surface. Deputies who later arrived at the scene were able to find the man, and pulled him out of the water.

In a separate statement, Peoria Fire officials said the man, who was not seen for about 10 to 15 minutes prior to the incident, was found about 30 yards off the shoreline, and crews performed CPR and advanced life support measures.

The man, according to officials with MCSO, was declared dead at the scene by paramedics. An investigation is ongoing.

**MCSO: 20-year-old man drowns at Lake Pleasant**

BrieAnna J Frank, Arizona Republic
Published: 5:53 p.m. MT May 27, 2019 | Updated: 5:54 p.m. MT May 27, 2019

A 20-year-old man drowned at Lake Pleasant on Monday, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said.

The man was swimming in the lake when he began struggling and went under the surface, MCSO spokesman Sgt. Bryant Vanegas said.

Deputies pulled the man out of the water and performed life-saving measures until Peoria fire crews arrived and pronounced him dead on the scene.

The man was not wearing a personal flotation device, Vanegas said.

An investigation is ongoing.

Reach the reporter at bfrank@arizonarepublic.com or follow her on Twitter @briennafrank.

**20-year-old dies after drowning in Lake Pleasant on Memorial Day**

Deputies pulled the man from the water but were not able to revive him.

Author: 12 News
Published: 5:17 PM MST May 27, 2019
Updated: 10:28 PM MST May 27, 2019

MARICOPA COUNTY, Ariz. - A 20-year-old man died Monday after he was pulled from Lake Pleasant after drowning, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

MCSO says the man was swimming in the Operations Cove at Lake Pleasant when he began to struggle and went under. He was not wearing a flotation device.

**20-year-old man who drowned in Lake Pleasant identified**

Posted: 11:21 AM, May 28, 2019
Updated: 11:21 AM, May 28, 2019
By: Associated Press

LAKE PLEASANT, Ariz. (AP) - Authorities have identified a man who drowned in Lake Pleasant over the Memorial Day holiday.

Maricopa County sheriff's officials say 20-year-old Ovidio Ramirez Gomez was swimming with family and friends on Monday afternoon in Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

According to witnesses, Gomez was in Operations Cove when he decided to swim farther out. He then became distressed and went under.

Bystanders tried to swim to him but couldn't make it.

Sheriff's deputies patrolling the lake on boat saw him in the bottom of the water and pulled him out.

Firefighters attempted life-saving measures but Gomez was pronounced dead.

Deputies found no signs of alcohol or drugs being a factor.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office will conduct an autopsy.

Lake Pleasant is about 40 miles north of Phoenix.

**20-year-old dies after drowning in Lake Pleasant on Memorial Day**

May 27, 2019
Cal Washington

MARICOPA COUNTY, Ariz. – A 20-year-old man died Monday after he was pulled from Lake Pleasant after drowning, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office.

MCSO says the man was swimming in the Operations Cove at Lake Pleasant when he began to struggle and went under. He was not wearing a flotation device.

Deputies were able to pull the man from the water and began life-saving measures. Peoria Fire-Medical arrived and took over, but they were not able to revive the man.

This is a developing story, we will update with new information as it becomes available.
The Latest: Arizona lawmakers OK new initiative requirements

Updated 11:19 pm PDT, Friday, May 24, 2019

PHOENIX (AP) — The Latest on action at the Arizona Legislature (all times local):

Legislation imposing new requirements for initiative petition circulators is headed to Gov. Doug Ducey.

The measure approved late Friday requires paid circulators or those from other states to sign a notarized form and supply contact information before collecting signatures, among a variety of other new requirements. Providing false information would be a misdemeanor.

It's the latest hurdle for initiatives promoted by Republicans and business interests that have seen voters approve ballot measures that the GOP-controlled Legislature opposes. Democrats say complying with all the requirements added in recent years makes it harder and more expensive for citizens to exercise their direct democracy rights.

Republicans say rich donors have been able to subvert the populist initiative process.

The bill no longer gives the attorney general the power to rewrite the ballot language describing an initiative. That provision was pulled out for lack of support in the Senate.

The sponsor of one of two competing tobacco and vaping regulation bills at the Arizona Legislature says he's giving up on his proposal in the face of opposition from anti-smoking advocates.

Republican Rep. John Allen said Friday he just couldn't get the votes to back his measure raising the age to buy tobacco or vaping products to 21. The bill also contained a clause barring cities and towns from further regulating tobacco or charging licensing fees to retailers. It was backed by the tobacco and vaping industry.

6:30 p.m.
Arizona lawmakers decided not to name a mountain peak west of Phoenix in honor of a fallen Navy SEAL.

The House voted 45-15 to reject a bill to name the tallest peak in Estrella Mountain Regional Park after Charles Keating IV.

Keating was killed in 2016 in Iraq during a battle with Islamic State fighters.

Republican Rep. Walter Blackman, an Army veteran, says it's offensive to ask lawmakers to honor one veteran over another. Democratic Rep. Lorenzo Sierra has the peak in his district and says there are local heroes worthy of the honor.

The Gila River Indian Community also opposes the change, saying the mountain range has religious and cultural importance. One of the tribes that make up today's Gila River Indian Community rejects naming landscapes after people who've died.

12:30 p.m.
The Arizona Legislature is finishing its yearly work and just approved a plan that phases out 20 percent annual increases to a corporate tax credit that funds private school scholarships.

The House voted unanimously Friday to scale back the growth over four years and then increase it yearly by 2 percent or the inflation rate.

The tax credit funds so-called School Tuition Organizations that distribute the corporate cash they receive to private school students. The program started at $10 million in 2008 but now allows corporations to divert more than $100 million yearly to the school organizations and get credit toward their income taxes. Under the bill now on its way to Gov. Doug Ducey's desk the maximum credit in 2024 would drop from about $220 million to $145 million.

MCSO recovery team search for man who fell off jet ski at Lake Pleasant

azfamily.com News Staff
Updated May 26, 2019 | Posted on May 26, 2019

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS5) -- A man has not resurfaced after falling off a jet ski at Lake Pleasant, reported Peoria Fire-Medical Department.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office initially received the call about the jet ski incident.

Greg Serrano of the Peoria Fire-Medical Department said members from his department were sent to the 10-lane boat ramp at Lake
Pleasant Regional Park and were treating the incident as a drowning.

The scene has since been turned over to MCSO and its recovery team, Serrano also reported.

MCSO said drivers resumed the recovery mission on Monday around 9 a.m. As of 2:30 p.m., they have yet to find the body. MCSO said divers are dealing with extreme water depth, which is making it hard to find the body.

A woman who was at the lake claims the missing man is her husband. She said she is very worried and just wants to see him. They were visiting from Los Angeles, she added.

Ester Lopez, a woman who was swimming at the lake when the search began, expressed her fear.

"I was scared," said Lopez. "I didn’t know what was happening, because when I was swimming the helicopter was so close to us, and it was scary."

Steven Cordovana, a boater at the lake, didn't seem surprised by the incident.

"It’s kind of the holiday weekend, so I guess maybe you would expect something to go wrong," said Cordovana. "But it’s pretty sad to hear it’s an actual missing person."

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| Dive Team to search for man who reportedly fell off jet ski in Lake Pleasant |
| Author: 12 News |
| Published: 4:41 PM MST May 26, 2019 |
| Updated: 6:12 PM MST May 26, 2019 |

MARICOPA COUNTY, Ariz. - The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Dive Team will be searching for the body of a man in his late 40s after he fell off his jet ski in Lake Pleasant Sunday and never surfaced, Peoria Fire-Medical said and MCSO said.

Peoria Fire-Medical crews said they were dispatched to the 10-lane boat ramp at Lake Pleasant Regional Park for the drowning call and have since turned the investigation over to MCSO and its recovery teams.

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| Fast moving Hot Springs fire consumes 200 acres near Lake Pleasant |
| azfamily.com News Staff |
| Posted May 25, 2019 |

PHOENIX (3TV/CBS5) – State Route 74 has re-opened after a brush fire near Lake Pleasant caused a temporary closure of the road. So far the Hot Springs fire has burned an estimate of 200 acres.

Officials with the Bureau of Land Management say the Hot Springs fire was first reported around 1 p.m. Saturday. The fast moving fire quickly spread through the desert environment south of the SR74.

Due to firefighting efforts, both directions of SR74 were closed at milepost 17, near Christian Church Camp Road as retardant was dropped on the burning area.

Drivers were asked to use alternate routes, such as Interstate 17, Loop 303 and US 60 to detour around the closure. Heavy delays built up for travelers along SR74 in the area of Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

By Saturday evening, The Bureau of Land Management said the fire is 50% contained. A representative said firefighters stayed on the scene throughout the evening, securing the perimeter. BLM said no one was hurt, and no structures were damaged.

John Malmos said he couldn't get back to his campsite for hours while crews closed SR 74.

"Major adjustment," said Malmos. "I mean you don't have a travel plan if the road is closed."

Another driver traveling to Vegas had to re-route to get to her destination.

Crews opened SR 74 by 7 p.m. Saturday.

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| Cooler weather means fewer campfire restrictions in Arizona, but officials ask campers to be cautious |
| Uriel J. Garcia, Arizona Republic |
| Published 4:08 p.m. MT May 24, 2019 |

Over the Memorial Day weekend last year, strict campfire restrictions were in effect across a big swath of Arizona.

This year, almost no restrictions exist.

Still, as people head to state land and national forests for the holiday, forest and parks officials advise caution.

"There is still a possibility of wildfires," said Dolores Garcia, a Phoenix-based spokeswoman for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Currently, no fire restrictions exist on federal and state-owned land.
The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department has a lower-level restriction, which started on May 1. The county restrictions prohibit people from starting a campfire, using fire pits and charcoal grills. But it is acceptable to use gas and propane grills in designated areas and developed camping sites.

“Given the abundance of rain we’ve received this year, we’ve had an outstanding wildflower season,” said R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation director. "Unfortunately, as the blooms and brush die off and dry out, the parks are left with dangerous levels of fuel loads on the ground that can ignite a wildfire with just a small spark."

This year’s wildfire conditions present a stark contrast from 2018, when experts predicted a bad fire season and federal and state agencies implemented fire restrictions earlier in the year than usual.

Garcia said that around Memorial Day, fire restrictions usually are in place. But recent cooler temperatures and high humidity have meant that no campfire restrictions are warranted, she said.

That likely will change as temperatures continue to rise as we move closer to the Fourth of July, Garcia said.

Tiffany Davila, a Department of Forestry and Fire Management spokeswoman, also noted the a big difference in this year's fire season from last year.

"Last year at this time, we had Stage II restrictions along with state land closures to 95 percent of the state," she said in an email.

And in previous years, there were always fire restrictions this time of year, she said.

"So a huge difference as compared to years past. Even the year before, we were already in fire restrictions at this time," she said.

"However, we are cautiously optimistic as we know these cooler temperatures aren't going to stick around for long and as the weather heats up," she said. "The vegetation will start to dry out and we will start seeing an increase in fire activity, mainly in Southern Arizona and desert areas."

Motorists should make their tow chains secure and make sure their vehicle is good working condition, she said.

"While we haven't seen an increase in fire activity yet, we are still responding to multiple calls of wildfires daily," she said. "They've typically been smaller in size, but once conditions dry out, that could all change."

Stage 1 restrictions mean:
No wood or charcoal fires except in a developed recreation area where fire rings or grills are provided.
No smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site or while in an area at least 3 feet in diameter that is cleared of all flammable materials.
No shooting firearms except while engaged in a lawful hunt.

Stage 2 restrictions mean:
All fires are prohibited, even in developed recreation areas.
Smoking is prohibited except in a building, an enclosed vehicle or a developed recreation site.
Use of items such as chainsaws that are powered by internal combustion engines is prohibited between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.

No welding or use torches with open flames.

No shooting firearms except while engaged in a lawful hunt.

The Latest: Arizona lawmakers OK new initiative requirements
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initiative. That provision was pulled out for lack of support in the Senate.

7:45 p.m.
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Republican Rep. John Allen said Friday he just couldn't get the votes to back his measure raising the age to buy tobacco or vaping products to 21. The bill also contained a clause barring cities and towns from further regulating tobacco or charging licensing fees to retailers. It was backed by the tobacco and vaping industry.

A competing bill championed by Republican Sen. Heather Carter of Cave Creek remains alive as the Legislature moves to adjourn, but its fate is unclear. It would reclassify vaping products as tobacco and place them under the voter-approved Smoke-Free Arizona Act, which bars indoor tobacco use.

Carter opposed Allen's bill, saying it would lock in rules favoring the tobacco industry.

6:30 p.m.
Arizona lawmakers decided not to name a mountain peak west of Phoenix in honor of a fallen Navy SEAL. The House voted 45-15 to reject a bill to name the tallest peak in Estrella Mountain Regional Park after Charles Keating IV.

Keating was killed in 2016 in Iraq during a battle with Islamic State fighters.

Republican Rep. Walter Blackman, an Army veteran, says it's offensive to ask lawmakers to honor one veteran over another. Democratic Rep. Lorenzo Sierra has the peak in his district and says there are local heroes worthy of the honor. The Gila River Indian Community also opposes the change, saying the mountain range has religious and cultural importance. One of the tribes that make up today's Gila River Indian Community rejects naming landscapes after people who've died.

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Under the bill now on its way to Gov. Doug Ducey's desk the maximum credit in 2024 would drop from about $220 million to $145 million.

Visitor center closed for Memorial Day
May 22, 2019

Why Small Businesses Have the Social Media Marketing Advantage

As a small business owner, you’re constantly looking for new ways to get your company’s brand on the radar of potential customers. If you don’t already, using social media in business is a great way to engage with current customers as well as attract new ones. Small business social media marketing strategies actually have an advantage over big companies. Call chamber staff at (928) 684-5479 to learn more about this important marketing tool, register for Chamber 101 on June 12th at 12 noon. Bring a sack lunch, we’ll provide drinks.

Business after Hours Mixer – members and their accompanying guests are invited to this special mixer on June 19th hosted by Desert Cypress Mobile Home & RV Park from 5:30-7 p.m. Cost is $7 – Quarterly Membership Luncheon- Join us for an informative luncheon on June 20th at 12 noon, location is Los Caballeros Golf Club Grill. Cost is $20 advance reservations, $25 at the door. Speakers include: R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks to discuss the Vulture Mountains Regional park progress; Charlie Petersen, Wise Owl Senior Center to update on upcoming renovation of commercial building into senior center services; member sharing, and information about chamber programs and events.

Businesses over Breakfast- Mark your calendar now and please join us on July 17th for our second of three morning breakfast meetings. Hosted by UMB Bank, where you will learn about bank services and hear from member businesses and chamber programs. Fast paced 55 minutes. Free breakfast – RSVP 684-5479

Congratulations to Wickenburg High School and WCA area schools 8th grade students promoting. We wish you well!

Memorial Day May 27th
It was originally called decoration day in order to honor the Civil War Soldiers that lost their lives. After WWI it became Memorial Day to honor all who have lost their lives serving our country.
Let’s remember it’s not just a holiday for some and always thank a Veteran, Policeman, Fireman and all other service providers our paths may cross.

NOTE
The Chamber Offices & Visitor Center will close on Friday, May 24th at 3 p.m. and re-open on Tuesday, May 28, 9:00 a.m. in observance of Memorial Day.

One voice: Scottsdale pursues citizen relief from disruptive commercial flight patterns
May 22nd, 2019 · by Melissa Rosequist · Comments: 3

Flights arriving and departing Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport are using paths regulated by a 2014 satellite-based navigation system coined NextGen. The changes are disruptive to local residents, officials say. (Photo courtesy of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport)

After nearly five years and hundreds of thousands of loud flights to the chagrin of Scottsdale residents, the local municipality is submitting comments to the Federal Aviation Administration regarding redirected Sky Harbor Airport traffic.

On Tuesday, May 21, Scottsdale City Council voted unanimously to approve a resolution authorizing Mayor Jim Lane to submit comments on behalf of the City of Scottsdale to the FAA regarding issues arising from airplanes arriving and departing Sky Harbor Airport, which has detrimentally affected local residents.

On Sept. 18, 2014, the Federal Aviation Administration implemented changes in flight paths using NextGen satellite-based navigation as part of an effort to streamline departures and arrivals of the estimated 1,200 daily flights to and from Sky Harbor Airport.

NextGen, short for Next Generation Air Transportation System, is a national procedure aimed to improve the National Airspace System. With the implementation of NextGen, the FAA made significant changes without a proper environmental assessment or notification to the public.

Ultimately, the new routes condensed and lowered flight corridors over thousands of homes, natural preserves and parks.

(Night courtes of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport)

The changes were made without notifying the community, officials say.

Since that time, the City of Phoenix filed a lawsuit on behalf of all Phoenix neighborhoods, which was followed by a suit brought by several historic Phoenix neighborhoods. The court joined the two lawsuits together.

In August 2017, the court issued an unprecedented opinion and a judgment that FAA violated federal law when implementing the new flight paths in September 2014. The order indicates the FAA will need to return to the routes in place prior to September 2014 until it conducts a new environmental process.

The ruling, however, only applies to westbound flights. Eastbound flights, which are affecting Scottsdale and Town of Paradise Valley homeowners, are still using the NextGen regulations.

The FAA says NextGen’s goal is to increase the safety, efficiency, capacity, predictability and resiliency of American aviation. This overhaul brings together innovative technologies, capabilities, and procedures that improve departure and arrival operations, the FAA government website states.

According to Sky Harbor Airport’s 2018 annual noise report, the city of Scottsdale had 11,584 complaints Valley-wide, yielding 7,925 noise complaints stemming from 36-74 households. Scottsdale had the second most complaints behind Phoenix.

Additionally, the north Scottsdale ZIP code of 85255 was the second highest reporting complaint area Valley-wide, yielding 7,925 noise complaints stemming from 36-74 households.

Prior to the NextGen implementation, Sky Harbor Airport received 44 complaints Valley-wide in 2013. In 2017, they reached a peak of 102,110. Since Phoenix’s lawsuit, and westbound changes reverting back to pre-NextGen paths, the

Flights arriving and departing Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport are using paths regulated by a 2014 satellite-based navigation system coined NextGen. The changes are disruptive to local residents, officials say. (Photo courtesy of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport)
complaints have lessened to be 53,280 in 2018.

In the airport’s most recent report, for April 2019, 85,255 is still among the highest complaining areas, with 11-16 complaints in the area for one month.

**Scottsdale's proposed changes**

Scottsdale contracted with Washington D.C.-based Covington & Burling law firm in July 2018 — the agency has experience dealing with federal regulatory matters, and specifically the FAA, city officials contend.

They also contracted with JDA Aviation Technology Solutions in November 2018, a nationally recognized expert in aviation issues to help the city find a way to assist its citizens in dealing with concerns. Earlier this year, the FAA held a series of workshops, providing residents with information on changes made to Sky Harbor flight paths, and soliciting comments from the public on any concerns about the current paths.

It also accepted public comments through an online portal or by mail.

At the workshops, the FAA presented “concepts” for changing some of the flight paths for Sky Harbor air traffic. The organization, however, emphasized there was no commitment to implement the two concepts, and that it would wait until after the public had a chance to comment before deciding to take further action.

According to City Attorney Bruce Washburn, the concepts presented by the FAA would, if implemented, provide some relief to a number of Scottsdale residents. The city, with its hired partners, has worked to develop a proposal to submit to the FAA that builds on the their concepts, but which, in the opinion of JDA, would be substantially more beneficial to the city’s residents.

The city is proposing modifications that would route much of the departing traffic further to the east and would reduce the channelization of the flights that occurred as a result of the changes made by the FAA in 2014.

The two preferred modifications presented by city officials would move the departure traffic almost entirely out of Scottsdale; with the second modification moving it not as far east, but over less-populated areas of the city.

“Essentially coming out of Sky Harbor, one of the flight paths, one of the departures, comes basically right up the middle of Scottsdale and up through north Scottsdale,” Mr. Washburn said, pointing to a flight path titled MRBIL. “This is really the bulk of the traffic departing from Sky Harbor.”

Flight paths in the Phoenix metro area include names such as MRBIL, ZEPER and QUAKY.

The primary alternative for departing flights, as suggested by Scottsdale and its experts, is for Sky Harbor traffic coming out of the airport go further to the east along the south boundary of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, before going north.

“This basically gets the departing flights — and we would suggest that except for those going out through ZEPER, this would be all of them — they all move this far east. There’s very little population, if any, they would be going over,” Mr. Washburn said, noting how the Valley of the Sun has more expansive land for the FAA to utilize than an east coast city.

“We think it’s an appropriate trade-off to add a few more miles rather than channelize all this traffic over the populated areas of Scottsdale.”

A second modification has been created as well, Mr. Washburn says, which doesn’t take the flights quite as far east. He says the second option would be acceptable, but a lot of the traffic would be diverted over other residential areas in Fountain Hills and the McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

“It also accepted public comments through an online portal or by mail.”

“‘A lesson learned’

D.C. Ranch Community Council Public Affairs Director, Christine Irish, spoke at the City Council meeting to represent the development’s 7,000 residents.

Ms. Irish says after joining forces with community advocate group SCANA — also known as Scottsdale Coalition for Airplane Noise Abatement — they surprisingly saw the FAA present their concepts, which would lessen the impact to north Scottsdale if implemented.
“DC Ranch is hopeful that you will vote to support the recommended modifications and strongly advocate for their adoption by the FAA,” Ms. Irish said. “If it’s a ‘yes’ vote tonight, DC Ranch will submit their official comments to the FAA tomorrow endorsing the City of Scottsdale’s preferred modifications. We will also encourage our residents to submit the same comments, as we know there’s strength in numbers.”

The communication with FAA has been a long time coming, Councilwoman Virginia Korte said at the meeting, giving a public shout-out to SCANA Chairman Bud Kern and resident Jeff Schwartz for their time invested to resolve the issue.

“In 2014 when the whole flight path patterns changed, we received hundreds of complaints and our answer to them was, well the city of Phoenix is suing the FAA and in a lawsuit, so we need to sit back and see what happens,” Ms. Korte said. “Fortunately, the City of Phoenix prevailed and I think that took the FAA a little bit by surprise. And yet, we as a city kind of continued to really not know what to do.”

Councilwoman Kathy Littlefield took time at the dais to publicly state that a lawsuit is not out of the question for Scottsdale.

“I would also like to make it clear and put on the record, that we reserve as a city, the option and we’ll be prepared to sue if necessary to get relief, as Phoenix did,” Ms. Littlefield said. “They did get relief with their lawsuit; we played nice and we didn’t get relief. So I consider this as a lesson learned, and I want to make sure we don’t close that loophole on our options in the future.”

Mayor Jim Lane echoed Ms. Littlefield on her sentiment, stating the city always reserves the right to go further on an issue to effect better change.

“Working and dealing with the FAA, something I have some knowledge of in a past life, is never an easy thing — particularly when it revolves around what they believe to be safety versus anything else,” Mr. Lane said.

Northeast Valley News Editor Melissa Rosequist can be e-mailed at mrosequist@newszap.com or can be followed on Twitter at twitter.com/mrosequist.

**Cool Memorial Day weekend means local parks are expecting big crowds**

By Brian Webb, FOX 10

PHOENIX (FOX 10) -- One of the hot things to do for the Memorial Day weekend is to go camping, and the cool weather makes it even better.

Many area campgrounds are expecting big crowds. Many would be campers area already cruising up the I-17 to find their perfect hideaway, but with the great weather, they won’t have to go far.

For Jed Freemann, camping, sunshine and 70-degree weather is crazy, but in a good kind of way.

"The weather is a little crazy, snowed in Flagstaff I heard. It's been real cold here. Downpours last night, about 20 degrees cooler than we would expect," said Freemann.

Jed his wife Kathy and best friend Dexter are camped out at McDowell Mountain Regional Park, where visitors are up because the temperatures are down.

"We've got really great weather this weekend, and we've seen an increase in people coming out to camp. If you live in Valley, you're like one more weekend," said Park Supervisor Ossana Wolff.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park isn't alone. The Lost Dutchman and Picacho State Parks are seeing anywhere from a 20% to 40% increase in reservations compared to Memorial Day in 2018. Meanwhile, officials at Lake Pleasant are calling it "scary busy".

The State Parks won’t know if they are setting records until after the weekend, but it seems to be heading in that general direction.

For some campers, the colder the weather, the better.

"We get to have campfires and snuggle up, that's why we want to leave the Valley to head up where it's cold," said Sasha Deering.
Things to do in metro Phoenix before it's too hot
11:33 a.m. MST May 16, 2019

GO TO A DIAMONDBACKS GAME: The Diamondbacks offer some of the best deals in Major League Baseball and have plenty of home games. So head out to the ballpark. Try some of the new snacks while you're there.
ROB SCHUMACHER/THE REPUBLIC

TAKE A HIKE: There's a hike for everyone around the Phoenix area. Many, like Skyline Regional Park's Pyrite Trail (pictured), are within an hour's drive of the city center.
MARE CZINAR/SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

LEARN TO PREP FOR A HIKE: If you aren't quite ready to start hiking, head over to Lake Pleasant Regional Park for lessons in preparing for the desert, what to do if you get lost and other helpful information.
CARLOS CHAVEZ/THE REPUBLIC

HAVE A DRINK AT A ROOFTOP BAR: Several Phoenix-area bars, including Floor 13 Rooftop Bar (pictured), around town offer a drink with a bird's eye view of the Valley.
MELISSA FOSSUM/SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

TAKE YOUR POOCH TO A PUP-FRIENDLY PATIO: At some Valley restaurants, you can bring your dog with you as long as they are leashed and well-behaved.
COURTESY OF O.H.S.O. EATERY AND NANOBREWERY

STROLL THE DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN: The garden covers 140 acres and showcases more than 50,000 plants. It's the perfect place for an outdoor stroll.
ANYA MAGNUSON/THE REPUBLIC

VISIT THE JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN: The Japanese Friendship Garden in downtown Phoenix provides a lush garden with zigzagging paths for a moment of quiet in a busy city.
CHERYL EVANS/THE REPUBLIC

GO TO AN ART SHOW: Between the First Friday art walk, Third Friday events and other openings, there are plenty of opportunities to check out Phoenix's diverse art scene.
BEN MOFFAT/THE REPUBLIC

PICK PEACHES AT SCHNEPF FARMS: Schnepf Farms is expanding its peach picking festival over multiple weekends, allowing visitors to pick the ripe fruit over about six weeks from April through May.
DAVID KADLUBOWSKI/THE REPUBLIC
VISIT THE PHOENIX ZOO:
Aside from the typical zoo activities, the Phoenix Zoo offers extra opportunities for visitors to get up close with animals like giraffes and stingrays.
TOM TINGLE/THE REPUBLIC

SHOP THE FARMERS MARKET:
Check out the bounty grown or created by Arizona farmers and artisans at one of the many farmers markets in the Phoenix area.
BEN MOFFAT/THE REPUBLIC

The Oasis at the End of the Dusty Road
The New York Times
By Rebecca Kleinman
May 16, 2019

After more than 40 years, a desert resort where Rockefellers and Roosevelts once wintered reopens, looking to appeal to the ‘Garden & Gun’ crowd.

The saga of Castle Hot Springs resort sounds like a Carl Hiaasen novel if he swapped South Florida for Arizona’s Sonoran Desert. The history of the hard-to-access oasis an hour’s drive north of Phoenix has involved quail-hunting, self-made mogul, Native Americans, new age crystal worshipers, scheming hoteliers and a gun-toting, toothless caretaker who had an enormous pet pig and strategically placed dead rattlesnakes to scare off people — and those are just the recent chapters.

Save for the hunter, all were after its namesake natural resource. Rich in minerals and free of sulfur’s rotten-egg smell, the springs’ water cascades and trickles down mossy rocks at the rate of approximately 200,000 gallons per day into two tiered pools ranging from 95 to 108 degrees Fahrenheit.

“You’ll feel the energy. Breathe it in,” said Gertrude Smith, director of Yavapai culture for the Yavapai Apache Nation in Camp Verde, Ariz., who said the springs had been a place of healing for her ancestors, until they were discovered by Anglo settlers after the Civil War. “Our people would go there when they were injured or pregnant.”

After being closed for more than 40 years, the newly restored resort reopened in February for a brief season — because of the desert heat it will close on May 31 and reopen on October 1. Once recreational vehicles peel off the dirt road for Lake Pleasant Regional Park, ramshackle homesteads are the only signs of civilization until the resort’s sultan-worthy allée of mature date palms appears like a cartoon mirage. A driveway winds past pale yellow cottages and a chapel to the renovated main lodge and a cluster of new, contemporary bungalows.

Spots to celebrate nature abound in West Valley
By SARAH INAFUKU Peoria Times Contributing Writer
May 16, 2019

Looking for some hot hiking spots while the weather is still bearable in Arizona? Here are four of the best places for outdoor adventures in the West Valley:

Hike Estrella Mountain Regional Park in Goodyear
Estrella Park, with more than 33 miles of multiuse trails, became the first regional park in the Maricopa County park system and has some of the nicest views in the Valley. The Baseline trail is a great 2.6-mile loop for those casual hikers looking to get outside without breaking too much of a sweat. Feel free to bring a dog along for the fun; just make sure to keep him or her on a leash.

Bird watch in Thunderbird Conservation Park in Glendale
There are more than 50 wildlife species that call the 1,185-acre park home. Four viewing blinds are easily accessible and provide a great, peaceful setting to see all the incredible birds that the park has to offer. It makes for a nice day of relaxing and enjoying some quality time outdoors.

Mountain bike in White Tank Mountain Regional Park in Surprise
The 6.5-mile competitive track in the White Tanks is not for the faint
heart, but those seeking some challenge and a thrill can grab a helmet and go. The White Tank Mountain Regional Park is the largest in the county, with nearly 30,000 acres of rugged terrain with trails that can be hiked or biked by all skill levels.

Paddleboard on Lake Pleasant in Peoria Lake Pleasant is home to many great recreational activities, including paddleboarding. With more than 10,000 acres of space to discover, Lake Pleasant makes for a great escape from the desert sun.

Whether doing one or all of the above, remember to bring water and apply sunscreen.

Sarah Inafuku is the head of Ottawa University Arizona’s outdoor adventure club in Surprise.

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**KB Home Announces the Grand Opening of Terra de Oro in Goodyear**

*Business Wire* May 15, 2019

Homebuilder offers beautiful new single-story homes in commuter friendly Phoenix-area neighborhood; priced from the mid-$200,000s

KB Home (KBH) today announced that Terra de Oro, its latest collection of new single-family homes in Goodyear, is now open for sales. Terra de Oro’s commuter friendly location offers easy access to Interstate 10 and Arizona Loops 101 and 303.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190515005242/en/

At Terra de Oro, KB Home will construct 52 single-story homes and offer five distinct floor plans. With up to four bedrooms and two baths, and ranging in size from approximately 1,500 to 2,000 square feet, the KB homes at Terra de Oro feature desirable design characteristics like covered patios, dens, spacious great rooms and elegant master suites. Pricing begins from the mid-$200,000s.

Residents of Terra de Oro can enjoy planned community amenities, including a playground and greenbelts. Golf enthusiasts can tee-off at beautiful Eagle's Nest and Tuscany Falls golf courses, adjacent to the community. Nature lovers will enjoy The Wildlife World Zoo, Aquarium & Safari Park, located within a few minutes’ drive, as well as nearby Estrella Mountain Regional Park. Terra de Oro is also close to shopping, dining and entertainment at Palm Valley Pavilions West and several professional sporting venues, including Gila River Arena, Goodyear Ballpark, University of Phoenix Stadium and Chase Field.

“Terra de Oro offers KB homebuyers easy access to some of the best urban, recreational and natural amenities of the greater Phoenix area,” said Kevin McAndrews, president of KB Home’s Phoenix division. “The KB homebuying process, built on a platform of personalization and choice, appeals to buyers who are seeking a simple path to create a home tailored to their own preferences.”

The KB homes at Terra de Oro will be built to current ENERGY STAR® certification guidelines and include WaterSense® labeled faucets and fixtures, meaning they are designed to be more energy and water efficient than most typical new and resale homes available in the area. These energy- and water-saving features are estimated to save homebuyers between $1,536 and $1,704 a year in utility costs, depending on floor plan.

KB Home’s distinct home building process allows buyers to personalize many aspects of their new home to suit their budget and style. After selecting their lot and floor plan, KB home buyers can work with expert design consultants who will guide them through every aspect of the process at the KB Home Design Studio, an exciting showroom where they may select from a variety of design choices, including countertops, cabinets, lighting, appliances and window coverings.

The Terra de Oro sales office is located at 2732 N. 154th Dr. in Goodyear. From I-10 W, take the Pebble Creek Parkway exit. The community is one mile north on the right. The Terra de Oro sales office is open Mondays, 2–6 p.m., and Tuesdays–Sundays, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. For more information about Terra de Oro or KB Home’s other new-home neighborhoods, visit www.kbhome.com or call 888-KB-HOMES.

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**Fire Danger**

By Sonoran News

May 13, 2019

(Editor's note: in order to broaden the reach and serve the interests of our communities, I have treated this letter as a public service announcement, also)

“Not all guests are welcome. This year we have seen an explosion of weeds. This is partly because we had steady rains throughout the autumn and winter. In the water year 2018-
2019 Cave Creek didn’t flow at all through the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. Unusual. But this past season it’s been flowing continuously from October into May. This year’s flowers were beautiful, especially at Bartlett Lake; yellow Mexican poppies and yellow brittle bush mixed with blue lupine. The saguaros are now coming into bloom. With our beautiful High Sonoran Desert, who needs any other flower garden?

But this year we can expect a very dangerous fire season. We have seen an explosion of the round yellow flowers called Globe Chamomile “guests.” It was introduced to the United States from South Africa in the 1980s. In the last year Globe Chamomile has taken over in Cave Creek and Carefree. According to Luke Kautzman in the Cave Creek Town Planning Department, this weed has a special and unwelcome trait. Most weeds sprout where the ground has been disturbed. Globe chamomile doesn’t care. It spreads everywhere. Now those pretty yellow flowers have gone to seed and the plants are left as dry tinder. We can expect the seeds to sprout whole new crop next winter.

Another invasive species is wild oats. Wild oats are native to Eurasia. About a decade ago we noticed a light brown patch at the far end of New River Mesa, visible from Cave Creek 10 miles to the north. Each year the patch has grown larger. This year it’s moved closer to town and makes our beloved Elephant Mountain look like a senior citizen with fuzzy light brown hair on its back. (See the photo.)

These and other dried out weeds are waiting to go up in flame. All it takes is a lightning strike, a cigarette tossed from a car, or a chain dragging sparks down the road. To protect yourself and your neighbors, cut these weeds away from your home and away from trees that they might set on fire. Dispose of the cut weeds to reduce the danger to your home and to your neighbors. Clean up unnecessary wood from your yard. When one home burns, embers can fly to other homes. For the worst case scenario, look at what happened to Paradise, California last year. The town of 26,000 was completely destroyed and 85 people died.

The Cave Creek Complex Fire in June of 2005 burned about 400 square miles from our area northward in the Tonto National Forest. This was Arizona’s third largest wildfire. It was started by lightning above the Tonto Hills development in far north Scottsdale. 11 homes in Camp Creek were destroyed. It’s ready to happen again. A few years later, kids set fire to brush in the Jewel of the Creek. Rural Metro was right on that one and fortunately it didn’t go far. Please. Cut. Remove. Protect yourself and your neighbors. And if you see a fire, call Rural Metro ASAP before it spreads. Because it will.”

The hunt will begin at the trailhead staging area where a park ranger will lead participants on a safe night walk along a trail. Participants will look for scorpions using their eyes only, according to a press release.

The event is open to people of all ages. The hike will be casual and will be about a mile long.

The park encourages participants to wear closed-toe shoes and bring water and a blacklight. Pets will not be allowed on the hike.

**Fire season is off to a busy start already, including close calls in New River, Prescott**

May 8, 2019 Tara Alatorre 62 Views
By TARA ALATORRE

NEW RIVER – The wet winter and heavy rains brought an amazing superbloom to the Sonoran Desert, but it’s not all daisies anymore now that wildfire season is upon us.

Because when the blooms fade, yesterday’s flower fields transform into a tinder box that is a ticking time bomb just waiting for a spark to ignite brush or wildfire. This year’s fire season is already off to a strong start in Arizona, with the Maricopa County Parks and Phoenix Parks and Recreation already implementing its fire ban on May 1.

“Given the abundance of rain we’ve received this year, we’ve had an outstanding wildflower season. Unfortunately, as the blooms and brush die off and dry out, the parks are left with dangerous levels of fuel loads on the ground that can ignite a wildfire with just a small spark,” R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Director said.
The fire ban includes the use of campfires, fire pits and charcoal grills. Park visitors will still be permitted to use gas/propane grills in designated areas like ramadas, semi-developed and developed camping sites.

“As a land manager, we believe the decision to implement sooner rather than later is the responsible thing to do to ensure park visitor and park resource safety,” said Cardin.

That ban also includes campfires along the shoreline at Lake Pleasant Regional Park due to higher than usual water levels and dried brush along the shoreline. Any violations of the fire ban can result in a citation, according to Maricopa Parks.

Smoking in Maricopa Parks is permitted but discouraged, and cigarettes need to be properly extinguished and thrown in a garbage receptacle.

However, smoking in Phoenix Parks is not prohibited during the fire ban while you are in an enclosed vehicle. Smokers are asked to practice extreme caution and dispose material in their vehicle’s ashtray, according to Gregg Bach a spokesman for Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department.

Bach recommends that residents living near the borders of City of Phoenix’s parks and preserves should remove any dried brush, shrubs, weeds, grass or trees surrounding their property.

The area was remote, so DMFM firefighters could only get the truck less than a mile to the fire’s location. Crews extinguished the remaining of the fire by hiking out to the locations with bladder bags and hand tools.

“The fire was in a very bad area, and we were fortunate that we did not have a significant wildfire as a result of it,” DMFM’s Public Information Officer Brent Fenton said.

He believes the fire was probably left by a transient and not a camper.

“There was very thick, dry dead brush within inches of the fire to the north, with a significant wind coming out of the south. Just north of where the fire was, is thousands of homes off of Circle Mountain Road,” Fenton said. “Fortunately, a vigilant hiker located the fire and called 911 and avoided a potentially catastrophic event.”

DMFM is cautioning residents in the area to not have a fire for any reason due to strong fire conditions.

“We recommend at minimum, a 30-feet clearing surrounding any structure and making sure that there is no debris piles or wood piles next to the home,” Fenton explained. “Ideally, clearing 100-feet around your home or property is the best for protection from the effects of wildfires.”

On May 5, about three acres of ponderosa pine and chaparral forest burned approximately seven mile south of Prescott near Mount Tritle. The fire was extinguished by the Prescott National Forest Engines, the Prescott Hotshots, a Type 3 Helicopter, Groom Creek Fire Department and the Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office direction traffic.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.
A date for when the City of Phoenix and Maricopa County will lift the fire ban has not been announced yet. Also, residents should expect National Forests to announce fire restrictions and bans in the upcoming weeks.

These are the Maricopa County parks affected by the fire ban:
- Adobe Dam Regional Park
- Buckeye Hills Regional Park
- Cave Creek Regional Park
- Estrella Mountain Regional Park
- Hassayampa River Preserve
- Lake Pleasant Regional Park
- McDowell Mountain Regional Park
- San Tan Mountain Regional Park
- Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area
- Usery Mountain Regional Park
- Vulture Mountains Recreation Area
- White Tank Mountain Regional Park

These are the City of Phoenix parks and preserves affected by the fire ban:
- Camelback Mountain
- Deems Hills Recreation Area
- Papago Park
- Phoenix Mountains Park and Recreation Area
- Phoenix Mountains Preserve
- Phoenix Sonoran Preserve
- North Mountain Park
- Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area
- South Mountain Park/Preserve.

The ban does not apply to traditional city parks

If you have any questions regarding the fire ban, call the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department at 602-506-2930, or visit maricopacountyparks.net. For general information regarding removing vegetation, residents can contact a Phoenix Park Ranger at 602-495-5458 or email: natural.resources.pks@phoenix.gov.

Lake Pleasant: Diver goes missing, suicidal man with rifle shuts down park this weekend
May 8, 2019 Tara Alatorre 52 Views
By TARA ALATORRE

PEORIA – A man threatening suicide while wielding a rifle in the desert area near the entrance of the Lake Pleasant Regional Park caused officials to close the main north park entrances around noon on May 5, according to Peoria Police Department.

From noon to 6 p.m. Maricopa County Park officials say park entrance to Lake Pleasant remained closed along with nearby roadways in both directions in cooperation with local law enforcement trying to locate the distressed man.

“This male had a rifle and out of a concern for the safety of the public traffic was closed in both directions in and out of the lake,” Peoria Police Officer Brandon Sheffert stated in an email to The Foothills Focus. “We utilized negation and our SWAT team to detain the subject and transport him to the hospital for treatment.”

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office, the Arizona Department of Public Safety and Glendale Police Department assisted Peoria Police with various aspects of the incident.

“We appreciate the public’s understanding and patience as we dealt with this potentially violent encounter,” Sheffert said.

Law enforcement officials are also trying to recover the body of a missing diver that never resurfaced at Lake Pleasant this weekend. The missing adult man was diving with two other people on the afternoon of Saturday, May 4, when he never resurfaced, according to local news outlets.

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO) Lake Patrol had divers in the water on May 6, and were assisted by Commercial Divers International out of Goodyear, Ariz., according MCSO Sgt. Joaquin Enriquez’s Twitter.

At the time this was written the body had not been recovered and the victim’s name was not yet released.

Diving community remembers young father who died at Lake Pleasant
Lauren Reimer
Posted May 8, 2019
AZFamily.com

PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) - "Every time we dove together was a good time," said James Riley.

Riley and the entire Arizona diving community is mourning the loss of one of their own.

"Josh was just a pretty amazing guy, in a lot of ways," said Riley.

Thirty-one-year-old Joshua Rosen lived in Tucson. The former Marine
and his wife recently had their first child.

"Which just adds to the tragedy to lose him just as his son is just coming into this world," said Riley.

This past weekend, Rosen came to Lake Pleasant to dive around the old Waddell Dam.

Other experienced scuba divers say the area takes skill.

Under 200 feet of water lies piles of rebar and concrete. Divers compare it to a shipwreck.

Something happened, and Rosen never resurfaced. His body was recovered Tuesday night.

"Yeah, it's been a rough couple of days, not the days we expected to have," said Riley.

Exactly what happened is still being investigated. Riley asks others not to make guesses.

"A lot of those theories end up being pretty painful," he said.

For now, he says they're just trying to support Rosen's wife and infant son. Another friend has set up a GoFundMe page to help them during this difficult time.

"I think the biggest thing was the passion for life and for diving and for learning. I remember going through tech class with Josh and I learned a lot from him and his energy and his desire to learn," said Riley. "Smart guy as well."

### Body of a missing Tucson diver recovered at Lake Pleasant
 Associated Press
 May 8, 2019 Updated May 8, 2019

 PEORIA — Maricopa County Sheriff's officials say the body of a missing diver at Lake Pleasant has been recovered from water about 200 feet deep.

They say MCSO Lake Patrol divers and Commercial Divers International from Goodyear made the recovery around 3 p.m. Tuesday.

Sheriff's officials say 30-year old Joshua Rosen of Tucson went missing Saturday evening while conducting a technical scuba dive with two companions on the Old Waddell Dam.

They say Rosen's death is being investigated, but there's no indications of suspicious circumstances.

The county medical examiner will determine the cause of death.

Lennar Grand Opens The Parks with Success!
 5/7/2019 8:25:02 PM

(MENAFN - PRLog) Lennar celebrated a successful Grand Opening event for two new collections at The Parks in San Tan Valley – Arbor and Discovery. Hundreds of home shoppers came out to enjoy complimentary bites, a vibrant atmosphere and tour the new models showcasing single and two-story new home designs, including a multigenerational Next Gen® layout and an array of Everything's Included® features. If you missed the event – don't worry. Interested buyers can now visit the Welcome Home Center at The Parks to tour the model homes.

"We could not be happier with the turnout and feedback we received from home shoppers, many of whom were impressed with the range of designs available and Everything's Included® features," said Alan Jones, Division President for Lennar Phoenix. "In addition, as multigenerational living continues to rise, our Next Gen® model home was very popular. This innovative home offers a convenient layout that allows multiple generations to live comfortably under one roof."

New homes in San Tan Valley by Lennar start from the low $200,000s. Arbor ( https://www.lennar.com/New-Homes/Arizona/Phoenix/San-Tan-... ) offers six single-level designs ranging from approximately 1,739 to 1,968 square feet including three to four bedrooms and two to three bathrooms. Discovery ( https://www.lennar.com/New-Homes/Arizona/Phoenix/San-Tan-... ) presents six single and two-story floorplans ranging in size from approximately 1,392 to 2,903 square feet including three to five bedrooms and two to three and one-half bathrooms.

Floorplans are designed for the way people choose to live today and offer open living areas with large Great Rooms and upscale kitchens, sophisticated owner's suites boasting a spa-inspired bathroom, outdoor living areas and flexible spaces per plan.

Additionally, both collections offer Lennar's unique Next Gen® - The Home Within A Home® (http://www.lennar.com/nextgen)
design created to bring families of all generations together. The design features a main home plus an attached suite complete with its own private living space including a kitchenette, sitting area, bedroom, bathroom and separate entrance. The suite is connected to the home through a dual access door to allow for as much interaction as desired. This layout is an ideal solution for multigenerational families looking to live together without sacrificing anyone’s comfort or privacy.

Best of all, Everything's Included® (http://www.lennar.com/ei) in your new dream home. Lennar has reimagined the homebuying experience by including the most desired new home features and upgrades as standard. Enjoy energy-efficient appliances, upgraded kitchen countertops, high-quality cabinetry, home automation technology and much more at no extra cost.

Residents will have access to a host of community amenities within their neighborhood including a tot lot, ramada, benches, BBQ grill, half-court basketball and landscaped open space. With the San Tan Mountain Regional Park nearby, your new home opens the door to an active lifestyle with hiking, biking, picnicking and other recreational opportunities just outside your front door. In addition, minutes away are shopping centers, delectable restaurants, entertainment, top-rated schools and Queen Creek.

To tour the model homes, visit the Welcome Home Center located at 440 W Pinnacle Ridge Dr in San Tan Valley, Ariz. 85140. For more information, please visit www.Lennar.com/SanTanValley (https://www.lennar.com/new-homes/arizona/phoenix/san-tan-valley) or call 800-864-1058.

Lennar Corporation, founded in 1954, is one of the nation's leading builders of quality homes for all generations. Lennar builds affordable, move-up and active adult homes primarily under the Lennar brand name. Lennar’s Financial Services segment provides mortgage financing, title insurance and closing services for both buyers of Lennar’s homes and others. Lennar’s Rialto segment is a vertically integrated asset management platform focused on investing throughout the commercial real estate capital structure. Lennar's Multifamily segment is a nationwide developer of high-quality multifamily rental properties. Previous press releases and further information about Lennar may be obtained at the “Investor Relations” section of Lennar's website, www.lennar.com.

Body of missing diver recovered from Lake Pleasant, per MCSO
David Baker
Posted May 7, 2019

By FOX 10 Staff
Posted May 07 2019 05:49PM MST
Updated May 07 2019 06:42PM MST

LAKE PLEASANT, Ariz. (FOX 10) -- Officials with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said late Tuesday afternoon that a missing diver has been recovered from Lake Pleasant.

News of the recovery was announced by Sgt. Joaquin Enriquez, on his unverified Twitter account late Tuesday afternoon.

MCSO Lake Patrol divers and Commercial Divers International out of Goodyear Az. have made the recovery of the missing diver from May 4 at Lake Pleasant. Great job to everyone involved as this required specialized technical scuba divers.

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS 5) - The body of a scuba diver who went missing at Lake Pleasant during the weekend has been recovered, the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office said on Tuesday.

The agency said MCSO Lake Patrol divers and those with Commercial Divers International, of Goodyear, recovered the body of 30-year-old Joshua Rosen, of Tucson, around 3 p.m.
His body was found in water that was about 200 feet deep, MCSO said.

Deputies were initially called out to the lake when a group of scuba divers reported Rosen missing on Saturday.

The group was diving near the Old Waddel Dam at the southern end of the lake, MCSO said.

The area where Rosen disappeared is where only experienced divers should explore, experts say.

MCSO said the body recovery required "specialized technical scuba divers" and thanked the expert divers at CDI.

It's unclear why Rosen never resurfaced, but other divers say it can get dark quickly depending on the depth of where the person is diving.

MCSO said the death wasn't suspicious and the County Medical Examiner will determine the cause of death.

Rosen's family and friends have set up a GoFundMe page to help his wife and son during this difficult time.

**Police Detain Man with Weapon at Lake Pleasant**

PHOENIX — The bodies of two men who apparently drowned in Arizona lakes in separate incidents were recovered Tuesday.

Authorities said the body of 30-year-old Tucson resident Joshua Rosen, who had gone diving in Lake Pleasant with friends on Saturday, was recovered in water that was 200 feet deep.

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office said it is investigating the death and does not suspect foul play.

Rosen’s body was taken to the Maricopa County Medical Examiner to determine a cause of death.

In eastern Arizona, a Gila County dive team recovered the body of 68-year-old Dan Boyd of Pine from the Willow Springs Lake.

His body was taken to the Coconino County Medical Examiner’s Office for an autopsy.

Authorities said Boyd was at the lake fishing with family members Monday evening. The family was preparing to leave when Boyd wanted to make another trip out on the lake in a small fishing boat.

It’s unclear how he ended up in the water. Someone tried to rescue Boyd but wasn’t able to pull his limp body to shore.

The situation did take quite a while to resolve, and traffic was at a stand still for hours. Vehicles attempting to enter the park were able to turn around and avoid the jam, but the exit of this park was also closed, preventing anyone from leaving. It is confirmed that the person was “armed”, and thought to be suicidal. It’s unclear why Lake Pleasant was the chosen location for the disruption.

Multiple police departments were called in to try and resolve the situation without anyone getting hurt. However, the person was not detained until around 5:00 pm. Castle Hot Springs road was not re-opened until after 6:00 pm. There was eventually and emergency exit...
road opened for those wishing to exit Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

The Department of Public Safety, Maricopa County Sheriff's Department, and the Glendale Police Department were all on the scene trying to resolve the situation. It took a lot of assistance. Although several road way closings were in place, the armed person did not ever fire shots, as far as reports go. The man was also not reported to have suffered any injuries during the incident. Peoria police kept the public informed via their Twitter account, and urged the public to to avoid the area for everyones safety.

Lake Pleasant is a favorite destination for Phoenix locals, especially during Summer weekends. Although many people were inconvenienced, the most important thing is that nobody was hurt. Incidents like this do not always end so well. With the growing number of mass-shootings in largely populated and public areas, first responders take these calls extremely seriously. Their precautions must expect the worst case scenario, due to the possible danger of an armed individual who appears to be troubled and/or suicidal.

So far there are no follow up news reports on the well-being of the man who was detained. If you are struggling with suicide, please call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255. For the ABC15 news report of this story, please visit https://www.abc15.com/news/region-west-valley/peoria/lake-pleasant-regional-park-temporarily-closed-due-to-police-incident

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Road to Lake Pleasant Regional Park reopens as Peoria police resolve incident

Perry Vandell, Arizona
Republic
Published 2:18 p.m. MT May 5, 2019 | Updated 6:25 p.m. MT May 5, 2019

The road to Lake Pleasant Regional Park reopened Sunday evening after Peoria police resolved an incident near the Carefree Highway.

The park was closed for several hours, but shortly after 5 p.m., police said a man involved in the incident had been detained and was being taken to a local hospital to be evaluated.

Police didn’t say whether the man had suffered any injuries.

The update came at 5:32 p.m. — about three hours and 40 minutes after an initial tweet warning the public about the road closures and to avoid the area. The road was reopened around 6:15 p.m.

Earlier, police said they were dealing with a possibly suicidal person in a desert area near the entrance to Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

In a tweet, police said the person had a weapon but that no shots had been fired. The agency also said several roadways were restricted and urged the public to avoid the area.

The roads outside of (leading to and from) Lake Pleasant Regional Park have been temporarily closed for a law enforcement related need and as a result, led to a temporary closure of the park until the matter is... https://www.facebook.com/LakePleasantPark/posts/1015597892945706 ...

The road to the park was closed for several hours and, as a result, the park was also closed, according to Maricopa County parks officials.

Where to get help
If you or a loved one needs help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or Mercy Care’s 24-hour crisis line at 602-222-9444.

Banner Thunderbird Medical Center’s Department of Behavioral Health offers an intensive outpatient program for adults and teens. People can request a free assessment at 602-254-4357.
La Fontera Arizona/EMPACT - Suicide Prevention Center offers services to children, adults and families across the Valley. Call the 24-hour crisis hotline at 480-784-1500.

This is a developing story. Check back with azcentral for updates.

Reach the reporter Perry Vandell at 602-444-2474 or perry.vandell@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter @PerryVandell.

MCSO searching for body of missing diver at Lake Pleasant

Posted May 5, 2019

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS 5) -- Officials in Peoria say a man with a gun has been taken into custody at Lake Pleasant Regional Park Sunday evening.

Peoria police officials said their officers were talking to a "possible suicidal man" near the Castle Hot Springs entrance of the park.

The park was closed for over 2 hours as the incident unfolded. It has since reopened.

The man was taken to a hospital for evaluation, say officials with Peoria police. There were no reported injuries.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park reopened following police incident

Posted May 5, 2019

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS 5) -- Officials in Peoria say a man with a gun has been taken into custody at Lake Pleasant Regional Park Sunday evening.

Peoria police officials said their officers were talking to a "possible suicidal man" near the Castle Hot Springs entrance of the park.

The park was closed for over 2 hours as the incident unfolded. It has since reopened.

The man was taken to a hospital for evaluation, say officials with Peoria police. There were no reported injuries.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park has reopened after being temporarily closed due to a nearby police incident on Sunday afternoon.

In a tweet, Peoria police say officers responded to a possible suicidal person with a weapon near the entrance to Lake Pleasant.

Roads to and from the park were closed for several hours with multiple agencies on scene attempting to resolve the situation peacefully.

Around 5 p.m., Peoria police say the person was detained and taken to a hospital for evaluation.

The road closures on SR-74 at Castle Hot Springs Road were lifted shortly after 6 p.m.

REOPENING

UPDATE: The suicidal subject has been detained and is being transported to a hospital for evaluation. Traffic restrictions will be

Troopers with the Department of Public Safety, deputies with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department, and Glendale police were on scene assisting.

@PeoriaPoliceAZ are on the scene of a possible suicidal subject with a weapon in the desert area near the entrance to Lake Pleasant. No shots have been fired. Several roadway restrictions are in place for the public's safety, please avoid the area. #PeoriaPD #Peoriapoliceaz

REOPENING

UPDATE: The suicidal subject has been detained and is being transported to a hospital for evaluation. Traffic restrictions will be
Authorities searching for a missing diver at Lake Pleasant
May 5, 2019
The ArgusTop of Form TownNews.com Content Exchange

PHOENIX (AP) — Maricopa County authorities are searching for the body of a diver who went missing at Lake Pleasant.

County Sheriff’s officials say deputies were called out to the lake just before 6 p.m. Saturday when the man didn’t return while diving with two of his friends.

The three were diving near the dam at the southern end of the lake.

Peoria Fire officials confirmed the search is being classified as a body recovery operation at this time.

The man’s name and age haven’t been released.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park Master Plan update moves forward
May 2, 2019
Fountain Hills Times

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors has given its final approval for a McDowell Mountain Regional Park Master Plan Update.

In March the county Parks and Recreation Commission voted to recommend the board’s approval.

The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department began working on the update for McDowell Mountain Regional Park’s Master Plan in 2017. Since that time, staff conducted three public meetings, engaged with stakeholder groups in three meetings, collected online feedback and gathered input from special interest groups and partners.

The 21,099-acre regional park is located four miles north of the Town of Fountain Hills within the lower Verde Basin and is the third largest park in Maricopa County’s regional park system.

“There’s a reason we have the best parks system in the country and that’s because we don’t just rely on what has worked in the past. We change with the needs of our community,” said Maricopa County Board of Supervisor Steve Chucri, District 2. “The original master plan was approved in 1967. Now, the people who use this beautiful space have suggested additional services and activities that make sense for the Maricopa County of today. This plan takes their needs and wants into consideration and will enhance the visitor experience for the next 50 years.”

“While the core foundation of the Park’s Master Plan is to protect the parks open spaces and natural resources has remained steadfast, we’ve incorporated modernized changes into the plan to meet our visitor’s needs,” said R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation director. “Several noticeable changes to the plan include: the footprint for a proposed new nature and wildlife conservation center; additional campites; expansion and upgrades of the event staging areas; a flow trail and bike skills park; and cabins for glamping to accommodate those who would prefer a more luxurious camping experience.”

A copy of the Park Master Plan Update may be found at maricopacountyparks.net. To learn more about Maricopa County’s regional park system, visit maricopacountyparks.net.

Positive buzz with private investment, new businesses
May 1, 2019
The Wickenburg Sun

Kick-Off Your Summer Marketing Right!

Memorial Day is right around the corner which means warmer weather, graduations, grilling burgers, and of course retail sales promotion. Are your special offers set? Events planned? Have you scheduled your email and social media marketing yet?

Don’t fret - there’s still plenty of time! We’re sharing 8 Unique Marketing Ideas that will help you attract more customers, increase sales, and have a fun Memorial Day Weekend.

1. Military Salute – Give a special discount to retired and active military members and their families as a thank you for their gracious service for our country.

2. Stars, Stripes, & Social Media – Use social media to showcase patriotic customers & employees, promote red, white
& blue products, and more. Sap some pictures and get creative!
3. Grateful Giveaway – Show your customers how much you appreciate them with a special giveaway! Have customers enter to win in store and on social media.
4. Let’s Have a Picnic – Team up with neighboring local businesses & community organizations to host a Memorial Day picnic while customers shop.
5. Sunny Sidewalk Sale – Get outside and enjoy the warm sunny weather with a sidewalk sale! Increase foot-traffic by getting neighboring businesses to join you.
6. Summer Essential Sets – Kick off the season by bundling summer themed products together in irresistible sets. Offer a discount when the products are purchased together.
7. Community Days – Celebrate the holiday by participating in community activities, concerts, movies, programs and events. Offer a discount when the products are purchased together.
8. Always Remember – Don’t forget the reason for the holiday. Fly a flag, thank service members, and always honor the brave men and women who have died for our country.

Mark Your Calendar – Chamber Programs
- Business after Hours Mixer, May 13, hosted by Gila Monster Restaurant
- Lunch ‘N Learn Free Seminar – Doing business with the Town, May 21 – 12 Noon – Chamber Board Room
- Chamber University – June 12th – Lunch ‘n Learn – Instagram and digital media – Chamber Board Room

- Chamber 101 – June 26 – 12 Noon – Bring your lunch and we’ll provide drinks.
- Business over Breakfast, July 17 sponsored by UMB Bank. 8-8:55 a.m. RSVP 684-5479
- Biz 2 Biz Expo – Sponsored by West Valley Chamber Alliance, Aug. 22nd – Glendale

Good Things Happening Around Town
- A positive business buzz is happening with private investment being made by existing and new businesses. Creations in Thread continue to add unique retail items to the store, as well as a variety of clothing, and apparel for printing and embroidery. Wickenburg Computers and Shipping has extended their hours and days of service. Open 8:00 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday – Friday and 9:00 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Saturday. Call our three area golf courses to learn about summer specials, along with good places to eat after golf: Los Caballeros Golf Club, Wickenburg Golf Club, Wickenburg Ranch Golf & Social Club. Watch for information from the Town of Wickenburg on their summer recreation programs. A full schedule will be distributed in the next few days, available online and Face Book.
- On May 4, 10 a.m. to noon the Desert Caballeros Western Museum once again will host the Congressional Art Competition for Arizona’s 4th District. Student artists from Yuma to Kingman submit their art for judging and travel to Wickenburg on the last day of the exhibition for an awards ceremony and reception honoring the artists. The winning students will receive scholarships to Arizona colleges, and the top artwork will be displayed in Washington DC for one year. May 12, noon to 4 p.m. – Mother’s Day / 50th Anniversary Commemoration. This is the last day to see the 2019 “Cowgirl Up!” exhibition and sale. Admission will be free for moms and everyone will receive a cookie to commemorate the 50th anniversary of DCWM opening its doors in 1969 (while supplies last).

Mother’s Day and Graduation – Shop Local
- Our local businesses are ready to assist you with choosing a special gift for Mother and the Grad! You’ll find custom Jewelry, cards, leather goods, clothing, gift certificates, automobiles, floral, dorm room items and much more www.wickenburgchamber.com will provide you with direct information to member businesses and their website.

Where did homebuyers flock? Here are the 5 metro Phoenix areas with the biggest increases in home sales
Catherine Reagor, Arizona RepublicPublished 6:00 a.m. MT
Phoenix-area homebuyers flocked north in 2018.

The sprawling north, stretching from Surprise past Scottsdale, includes four of the five ZIP codes with the biggest annual increase in home sales in 2018, according to The Arizona Republic’s Street Scout Home Values.

The Street Scout data comes from The Information Market, owned by the Arizona Regional Multiple Listing Service.

Only areas with at least 50 sales last year were ranked.

Here’s a look at each.

85387: Surprise
This large north Surprise area saw home sales jump 52 percent to 896 in 2018.

The area bisected by U.S. 60 is home to part of Sun City Grand and several newer communities that aren’t age restricted.

Prices might have helped draw buyers because the 85387 area had a 2 percent drop last year. The area’s median fell to $276,928.

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85040: South Phoenix
This neighborhood is hot. Home sales jumped 37 percent in the south Phoenix area that also made the list of ZIP codes with the biggest price increases in 2018.

Last year, 661 homes in the affordable 85040 neighborhood changed hands, while home prices shot up 22 percent to $201,000.

The Valley’s median price is $268,000.

Homes priced below $200,000 are selling "like hot cakes" in South Phoenix as both first-time buyers and investors bid on them,” said Bettina Franco, a real estate agent with HomeSmart.

Find your home's real value!

85263: Rio Verde
Rio Verde is a small area tucked between McDowell Mountain Regional Park and the Tonto Forest in the far northeast Valley.

In 2018, 320 homes sold in the 85263 area, up 36 percent from 2017.

A community that includes a neighborhood for buyers 55 and older called Trilogy at Verde River opened in Rio Verde in 2018, boosting sales.

The median price for homes in this neighborhood is $516,266.

85083: Northwest Phoenix
Home sales climbed 35 percent to reach 729 during 2018 in this neighborhood, near Interstate 17 and Loop 303.

The Deems Hill Recreation Area is in the middle of the area, where the median price reached $365,000 in 2018. That's up 7 percent from 2017.

85054: Phoenix's Desert Ridge area
Home sales were up 29 percent during 2018 in this popular area home to newer houses, apartments, a J.W. Marriott and Desert Ridge Marketplace.

The median home price climbed 13 percent last year to reach $550,000 in the neighborhood bisected by Loop 101.

Land has sold to home builders in the Desert Ridge area for hefty prices in the past year. New home prices could easily climb again this year.