



Maricopa County

Parks & Recreation Department

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Hello,

Over the past couple of months, the country has witnessed and experienced a lot of change. Here at Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department, we've had to quickly adapt our operating procedures to accommodate the ever-changing climate of COVID-19. Now, we find ourselves faced with a different type of change, budget reductions.

After reviewing various budget reduction scenarios and how they will impact the department, regional parks, and park visitors, we have made a difficult decision. Effective July 27, 2020, we will be temporarily closing the Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

This decision was not made lightly. Each year, the Desert Outdoor Center is visited by thousands of students from schools all around the valley. With the expected resurgence of COVID-19 in the fall, educators are transitioning from educational field trips to online learning resources. While we can adapt our business model to some extent to assist them with their needs, the revenue our team would generate does not begin to cover the costs to operate the facility.

We realize educators aren't our only customers. Over the years, we've provided numerous beautiful brides and grooms with scenic backdrops for their dream weddings, had the pleasure of watching families come together for family reunions, enjoyed inspirational messages shared at church retreats, and a myriad of other activities. To our customers, the Center is more than a structure. It's a place where futures begin and memories are made, and we can not thank you enough for allowing us to be a part of these moments!

However, at this time, the future of activities such as these remain uncertain due to COVID-19. According to the phased gaiting criteria outlined in Opening Up America Again, the congregation of individuals in large venues with physical distancing protocols does not resume until Phase Three.

So, until we can safely open our doors and invite the public back to participate in hands-on educational opportunities and celebrate milestones, the Desert Outdoor Center will remain temporarily closed. When that day comes, our team will reach out to the community via our subscription service (<https://bit.ly/DOCSubscription>), website, and social media accounts.

In closing, we would like to thank you for your patronage. We look forward to the time when we can reopen our doors and invite you back!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R.J. Cardin".

R.J. Cardin, Director
Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department