BLM proposes three recreational shooting sites near Peoria
By Connor Dziawura, Peoria Times Managing Editor
Aug 29, 2019

Badly Mountain. Photo courtesy BLM

The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management has released the draft environmental assessment for a recreational shooting sports project, which proposes the development of five designated sites throughout Maricopa and Pinal counties.

Three of the sites are near Peoria. Saddleback Mountain will be a minimally developed site approximately 0.8 miles south of State Route 74; Church Camp Road will be a developed site about 0.4 miles north of SR 74; and Baldy Mountain will be a minimally developed site nearly 2.4 miles north of SR 74 and 2.5 miles west of Lake Pleasant.

The draft environmental assessment analyzes the effects the proposals will have on cultural and biological resources, recreation, livestock grazing, public safety and soils, and addresses waste, noise, visual resource management and Native American religious concerns.

It will be open for public review and input through Wednesday, September 4.

Elsewhere, in the Southwest Valley, there will be a site northeast of West Narramore Road, approximately 0.6 miles west of South 339th Avenue and 1.2 miles east of South 355th Avenue.

Even farther south, Box Canyon is a proposed semideveloped site approximately 0.1 mile west of North Hidden Valley Road and south of State Route 238.

Baldy Mountain, the closest to Lake Pleasant, is the newest proposal since BLM conducted a 30-day scoping period this summer.

According to the BLM, the five sites were chosen due to their ease of access and minimal conflict with surrounding activities, land uses and resources.

BLM Phoenix District Manager Leon Thomas said the Baldy Mountain site was added to ensure that, should any others end up conflicting with their surroundings, enough sites will be constructed.

“As we were going through the analysis of the sites, we didn’t know just how many sites would fall off as far as resource conflicts,” Thomas explained. “And so just to kind of ensure that we had the right number of sites and make it all the way through the process, we added another site, which didn’t have the potential of having different resource conflicts like the other sites did.”

The draft environmental assessment reports that each site will have a “facility area” and a “hazardous exclusion area,” the latter of which will be off limits. Because the five facilities will range from minimally to fully developed, amenities and structures will vary. And because the level of development will differ, so will the presence of management.

Some facilities could simply implement safety measures while others could have range masters.

Facility areas, at a minimum, however, must have a designated shooting platform, target zone and parking area, the assessment specifies.

And specific amenities could include target structures, short- and long-range target zones, shooting bays, shotgun sporting clay shooting, concrete shooting platforms, information and education signs, shade structures and restroom facilities. Visitor contact stations could be identified further down the line. (See sidebar for proposed Narramore Road amenities.)

According to Thomas, the formal design process is only 35% complete, so there’s still room for adjustment.

“We have a pretty good sense as to what we want these sites to look like, but we’re still in a sweet spot to be able to get more input,” he explained.

After the draft environmental assessment input period closes September 4, Thomas said officials will analyze comments and make adjustments as necessary, before a final environmental assessment is signed.

Approximately 97% of BLM-managed lands in Arizona are open to recreational shooting. Public lands are also used for activities such as off-highway vehicles, hiking and equestrian use. Those activities will not be affected.

Feedback thus far has been “extremely positive,” Thomas said.

“Most of our feedback is, 'This has been a long time coming. We're really glad that you all are finally..."
finding a way to manage for this activity while not completely shutting it down. We are happy that you’re being responsible with the resources, and they’re very happy that we’ve included them in the conversation,” Thomas explained.

“It has been very, very positive feedback, not only from the community but also from our county supervisors and congressional staffers as well.”

BLM has already begun preparing various plans to facilitate the development process as well as eventual operation. Necessary plans include, but aren’t limited to, operation plans, safety plans, environmental stewardship plans, recreational area management plans and stormwater pollution prevention plans. Business plans could also be needed for any sites that implement fees, which aren’t off the table.

“Outside of this environmental assessment, there’s still a lot of work that needs to be done — we actually have already started — to really get to the way that these sites are going to operate efficiently and safely,” Thomas said.

But the hope, he added, is to get the ball rolling on construction in January. And while the idea is to eventually build all five sites, recreational target shooters may only see a few to start. Which sites those could be, however, has yet to be determined. Cost and funding also have yet to be determined.

And, according to the draft environmental assessment, fully developed sites could start with minimal amenities and eventually be expanded.

“I’m confident that at this stage we will eventually get to five over the next year,” Thomas said. “I’m thinking once we get to about the January timeframe, which was our goal to break ground, we may only be at two to three to start off with, but we know that we’re analyzing all five and we’ll eventually get to build out on at least five.”

For more information or to submit comments, visit https://go.usa.gov/xmfVv. Comments may also be mailed to BLM Phoenix District Office at 21605 N. Seventh Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85027, to the attention of Tyler Lindsey, or faxed to 623-580-5580. Include “Rec Shooting Sports Project” in the subject line.

MCSO taking action after fatal collisions
Aug 29, 199
Fountain Hills Times

Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office is evaluating enforcement needs in the area following two fatal collisions on McDowell Mountain Road just over a week apart earlier this month.

A youth died following a crash on Saturday, Aug. 17, when the car in which he was a passenger went out of control and rolled over in the desert just north of the McDowell Mountain Regional Park entrance. A man died after losing control of his motorcycle on a curve near Rio Verde on Thursday, Aug. 8.

There was a third collision on Aug. 26, when the driver of a pick-up rolled into the guardrail on the curve just east of the Fountain Hills Middle School. Deputies believe impairment was a condition in this incident. There were no injuries.

MCSO Capt. Larry Kratzer, commander for the Sheriff’s District 7 based in Fountain Hills, said both of the fatal incidents are being investigated by the Sheriff’s Vehicular Crimes Unit and no definite cause has been determined for either.

“Speed definitely may have been a factor in one, if not both of the incidents out there that resulted in a fatality so we will put some resources to slow people down,” Kratzer said. “We are adding increased speed enforcement on McDowell Mountain Road…and I am trying to coordinate getting a speed trailer out there to determine if there is a speed issue and if so, time of day and day of the week so we can hit those areas hard.”

The rider’s limited familiarity with the area may have been a factor in the motorcycle crash, according to Kratzer. He went off the road where there is a very tight curve to the alignment.

MCSO would remind anyone using McDowell Mountain Road, whether they are familiar or not, to slow down and be careful. There are a lot of dips and curves on the route and the speed limit is 45 miles per hour.

Aquatic discovery station Sunday, Sept. 1
Aug 28, 2019
Wickenburg Sun

Sunday, Sept. 1, from 8 - 10 a.m., find the ranger out on the trails and learn about the diverse aquatic ecosystem of the Hassayampa River with a discovery station.
allowing visitors an up-close view of some of the preserve’s fish, amphibians, reptiles and aquatic insects. Lots of colorful dragonflies are anticipated to be around too. Identification guides and informative materials will be available to peruse. No registration required.

Friday, Sept. 6, Ranger Eric is hosting an after-hours walk on the Preserve trails to look for and learn about the nocturnal critters that live here as they awaken from their daytime slumber. The walk will take place from 7 - 9 p.m.

Wildlife seen on past walks has included ringtails, foxes, javelinas, owls, scorpions and other cool creepy crawlies. Blacklights will be provided, but guests are encouraged to bring their own flashlight (a few spares will be available).

Space is limited, contact the Visitor Center at (928)684-2772 to sign up for this event. (For guests who were on last month’s night walk, the preserve asks that those guests refrain from signing up this month to allow others to experience one of the night walks, since this is one of the most popular programs and space is always limited.)

Note that guests can always walk the trails on their own during the preserve’s open hours (Wednesday - Sunday, 7 a.m. - 4 p.m. and closed Monday and Tuesday.)

For more walks and future events check the preserve’s Facebook page, click on the “Events” tab on the left side to view their upcoming events and scroll down on each to see the details. Events can also be viewed on the website at: https://www.maricopacountyparks.net/.../hassayampa-river-pre...

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**Lake Pleasant to host ride around lake for Veterans**

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**AUGUST 27, 2019 THINGS TO DO, YOUR LIFE**

*YourValley.net*

![Dave Bray, Sam Fishman, A.J. Larson and Tom DiPietro as Madison Rising perform Sept. 7 in Peoria. (Submitted photo)](image)

The Diving Devil Dogs 2nd annual event to raise awareness for veteran PTSD and anxiety takes place as the Diving Devil Dogs Ruck/Ride/Rock-N-Roll Veterans’ Expo 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 7 at Pleasant Harbor at Lake *Pleasant*, 8708 W. Harbor Blvd.

The event will start with two different activities: a 3-mile ruck through the mountains surrounding Lake Pleasant and a bike run up to Lake Pleasant (starting point not yet determined). The completion of both activities will finish along the Lake Pleasant shore where participants will find live music and food vendors. Madison Rising, a hard-hitting rock band from the greater New York area, and others will be playing live.

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**The New River Fire in north Phoenix grows to more than 250 acres**

*Chelsea Curtis, Arizona Republic*

Published 4:16 p.m. MT Aug. 21, 2019 | Updated 6:40 p.m. MT Aug. 21, 2019

A fast-moving brush fire east of *Lake Pleasant* had grown to about 250 acres Wednesday afternoon near New River and Saddle Mountain roads in north Phoenix, officials said.

Fire officials said forward progress on the fire had been stopped by early evening.

The New River Fire jumped New River Road and crews are working to "catch" it, the Arizona State Forestry Department tweeted around 3 p.m. Wednesday. The tweet estimated the fire at 200 acres, but Phoenix fire officials later said it had exceeded that. No updated figure was immediately available.

The agency previously tweeted around 2 p.m. that the fire was 75 acres with a high rate of spread and 8-foot flames. Westbound traffic on New River Road was shut down at Interstate 17, the Arizona Department of Transportation said.

Nearly 100 firefighters are battling the brush fire, Phoenix Fire Department Capt. Kenny Overton wrote in an email. An air tanker also was called to help suppress the fire.

The Phoenix, Daisy Mountain and Peoria fire departments, as well as the Bureau of Land Management, are among crews battling the fire, according to Overton.

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**New River Fire (Photo: Arizona State Forestry Department)**
Overton said no structures were threatened, however, one firefighter sustained a minor injury and was transported to a hospital in stable condition.

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

Reach the reporter at chelsea.curtis@arizonarepublic.com or follow her on Twitter @curtis_chels.

**Firefighters stop growth of fast-moving New River Fire burning east of Lake Pleasant**

Posted: 2:23 PM, Aug 21, 2019
Updated: 3:06 PM, Aug 24, 2019
By: abc15.com staff

LAKE PLEASANT, AZ —
Officials say a brush fire that ignited Wednesday afternoon north of the Valley is 100% contained as of Saturday afternoon.

According to the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, the New River Fire was burning near New River and Saddle Mountain roads.

The fire is estimated to be 844 acres and moved quickly through the desert grass and brush. Officials say the fire's forward progress has stopped.

The Phoenix Fire Department said nearly 100 firefighters from various agencies were on scene.

An air tanker from California was called in to assist ground crews on scene. Officials say the fire threatened electrical and gas lines in the area.

#NewRiverFire est. 200 acres, E. of #LakePleasant. #AZForestry & cooperators secured NE corner, but fire jumped New River Rd. Firefighters working to catch that. Hand crews & engines being sent from #HillFire. Fire burning actively in dry grasses & brush. #AZFire #MaricopaCounty

One firefighter was taken to the hospital for minor injuries but is expected to be okay.

New River Road was closed between I-17 and the Carefree Highway to allow crews to respond.

Firefighters said no structures are threatened.

The fire was the first of two to ignite north of the Valley on Wednesday. A fire also sparked near I-17, causing the interstate to be closed in both directions north of Sunset Point.

**Neighborhood Meeting to Expand San Tan Area Plan Boundary**

San Tan Valley.com
August 17, 2019

29697 North Desert Willow Boulevard, San Tan Valley 85143, Arizona, Pinal County
Directions
21 August 2019 6023490283

The Pinal County Board of Supervisors is considering whether or not to add 932 acres west of the current San Tan Area plan boundaries. No zoning changes are being requested. The area proposed is located near the San Tan Mountain Regional Park area.

The increase in land will increase the plan area from 71 to 72.5 square miles.

A neighborhood meeting is being held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 21, at Walker Butte Elementary School. The public is invited to attend to share their comments on the proposal.

**Surprise Squad, Scott Pasmore surprise boy with boat ride**

azfamily.com News Staff
Posted Aug 16, 2019
PHOENIX (3TV/CBS 5) --
Machado-Joseph is a terminal, hereditary disease that has afflicted four generations of an Arizona family. When it claimed the life of a young mother, her best friend Janey stepped up to make awesome experiences for the son the mom left behind.

A son that started to show signs of the very same disease just before his mother passed. But, thanks to his mother's "best friend forever," 13-year-old Caleb and his care-giving grandparents got an amazing day of adventure.

“Some surprise nominations ask for cars or money or help for a special person,” said Arizona’s Family’s Scott Pasmore. “But this request is for joy, and that’s exactly what we’re going to provide for this very special young man.”

Pasmore and Arizona’s Family Surprise Squad caught up with Caleb and his family at Desert Ridge Marketplace’s splash pad. After introducing himself to Caleb, his grandmother Margaret and step-grandfather Denzil, he sat down to talk to Janey.

“So, you went to school with his mom?” asked Pasmore.

“I was in sixth grade. She was in eighth grade,” said Janey. “Just a normal childhood then as she got older, she was the cool one in college, off to ASU. That’s when she started showing Machado-Joseph.”

Janey explained that as Margaret got sicker, she would spend time with both her friend and her friend’s son Caleb. On one of those visits Janey’s husband played video games with Caleb. When they left, they told Caleb they would come back to play again.

“Soon,” said Caleb.

Janey said that Caleb is a normal boy. He goes to school, loves video games and loves anything that will give him an adrenaline rush.

Pasmore introduced Rebeca Smith, marketing director for Desert Ridge Marketplace. He thanked her for opening the splash pad early for Caleb. She presented Caleb a gift basket with toys and gift certificates to the Arizona Diamondbacks and Dave & Busters.

Pasmore reached into the basket and tugged on a towel.

“You see this towel, Caleb? Well, you’re going to need it because we’re taking you for a boat ride!” said Pasmore.

Caleb broke out in a huge smile!

Caleb and his grandparents followed Arizona’s Family Surprise Squad to Lake Pleasant.

At Lake Pleasant, the group met up with Pastor John Petri, who kindly donated his boat to give Caleb and his grandparents a boating adventure.

“It’s our blessing to do this,” said Pastor John.

“Anchors aweigh!” said Pasmore as he backed the boat away from the dock and took off.

Pasmore drove the group around the lake, but the real fun came when he put Caleb in the driver’s seat and let him drive the boat! A look of pure joy and excitement swept over his face.

Back at the dock, Pasmore talked to Caleb’s grandmother Margaret about her life of loss due to Machado-Joseph. She credited her faith with getting her through it, as it did her daughter.

On behalf of Arizona’s Family Surprise Squad and Valley Toyota Dealers, Pasmore presented Margaret with a gift of two thousand dollars to help towards future medical expenses and more adventures for Caleb.

Margaret was moved to tears with the gesture. She thanked everyone for the wonderful day on the lake and the much-appreciated financial help.

“It’s nice to see the good in people,” said Denzil.

A special thank you to Pastor John Petri for generously donating his boat.

Lake Pleasant launching country music festival
By Connor Dziawura, Peoria Times
Managing Editor
Aug 12, 2019
Pleasant Harbor Marina is home to Dillon's Bayou, which will be open all three days of the weekend and feature its own lineup of live musical acts. The inaugural Peoria Country Fest is Saturday, October 19.

Deneen Ramirez says Pleasant Harbor at Lake Pleasant officials have big goals for their new country- and western-themed festival, which is set to kick off this fall.

“We do want it to grow to be like a Country Thunder on the west side,” explained Ramirez, who, as the harbor’s events director, is involved in planning the inaugural festivities.

“We have all the camping space out there. It’s not as big as Country Thunder, but it’s that kind of idea, where we grow into a three-day event with big headliners.”

For the time being, however, the city of Peoria, Pleasant Harbor and Dillon’s Bayou will partner for the first annual Peoria Country Fest from 2 to 11 p.m. Saturday, October 19. Gates open at noon.

The music kicks off at 2 p.m. with Hillbilly Deluxe, followed by Chad Freeman at 4 p.m. Josh Roy will take the stage at 6 p.m., and the event will conclude with Rob West from 8 to 10:30 p.m.

And if that weren’t enough, Dillon’s will host other bands throughout the weekend, despite the main attraction being Saturday.

But Ramirez said Peoria Country Fest will be unlike Country Thunder in that it aims to include a variety of western-themed activities, taking it beyond a country music-focused festival.

“This is the whole big round event, where Country Thunder is just the music — and we know that’s a lot in itself — we want to have a little bit more than just music. We want a little bit more substance to our event.”

This includes, arguably most significantly, two live bull riding shows at 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Roadrunner Restaurant and Saloon from New River will provide the shows, Ramirez said.

“It’s quite an experience, and they are right there right in front of you,” she added.

The event will also include “novelty vendors,” Ramirez said, like a cigar bar, a mechanical bull, and cowboy hat making. In addition to corn hole, the activities are billed as a “fan experience.”

But still in the works are plenty of food trucks, Ramirez said, where guests will have the opportunity to satisfy their appetites. Dillon’s, at the marina, will be open for breakfast, lunch and dinner all weekend.

Limited VIP tickets, priced at $45, include two complimentary drink tickets, one meal courtesy Dillon’s, and access to a special seating area with a dedicated cash bar.

Attendees must pay an extra $10 for access to park at Pleasant Harbor.

No coolers or outside alcohol will be permitted at the festival, though attendees can bring unopened plastic water bottles, lawn chairs and blankets.

“I have a feeling it’s probably going to be pretty good,” Ramirez guessed of ticket sales. “The live bull riding is going to be a huge draw, and that has a huge following.”

To pair with the festival, if desired, weekend camping will be available for either full hook-up campsites with electric, water, sewer and internet access, as well as dry
Press Coverage August 2019

Every Wednesday in August at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. It is mandatory to wear a helmet and please bring plenty of water, an extra tube and tools to change a flat tire, and two sources of light; LED rechargeable lights with at least 650 lumen. Why? The desert gets very dark at night. Riders under 18-years of age must complete a Parental Consent form. Meet at the flagpole at 6:50 p.m.

Barrel Racing: 5-10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 16 at Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre, 20464 E. Riggs Road. Free to spectators. For more information, visit qcbra.com.

BEGINNER SKILL LEVEL MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE: 6-8 a.m. Saturdays, Aug. 17, 24 and 31 San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Join us for an exciting beginner mountain bike ride among the beautiful San Tan Mountains. This 5.5-mile ride is open to all ages and skill levels. Our local experts will be available to help you understand your bike’s features and learn the ins and outs of safe riding. Under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Essentials: water, helmet, extra tube, tools to change a flat tire. Meet at the San Tan Trail sign at the main trailhead.

OB CHILDBIRTH PREP CLASS AND TOUR: 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 20 and 27 at Banner Ironwood Medical Center, 37000 N. Gantzel Road, $70. This is a 2-week class that meets two consecutive Tuesdays. Topics include preparing for L&D, body changes, stages of labor, positions for L&D, as well as medical options & practices. Please arrive 15 minutes early and bring a pen. Register at bannerhealth.com/calendar/event-detail?id=B20067XJ&sessionId=B20067XH

Sunset Photography Walk: 6:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 22 at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. This is generally an out-and-back walk that covers no more than two miles round trip. We go out as a group and meander back at our own pace. Have $7 exact cash for the self-pay station or your annual pass. What to bring: Closed-toe shoes, water, camera. Tripods are welcome. Meet at the Main Trailhead map kiosk.

Queen Creek Barrel Racing Association: 5-10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 23 at Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre, 20464 E. Riggs Road. Free to spectators.
For more information, visit qcbra.com.

MAMMA MIA!: 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 23; 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 24; and 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 26 at the Queen Creek Performing Arts Center, 22149 E. Ocotillo Road. Ticket prices vary. The story-telling magic of ABBA’s timeless songs propels this enchanting tale of love, laughter and friendship, creating an unforgettable show. Over 60 million people worldwide have fallen in love with the characters, the story and the music that make Mamma Mia! the ultimate feel-good show. Contact QCPAC for more information at 480-987-SHOW(7469).

DESERT SNAKES: 10-11:30 a.m. Friday, Aug. 23 at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. This indoor class will shed light on both types of snakes: their anatomy, behaviors and important place in the food chain. You’ll even have an opportunity to meet the snakes who serve as Animal Ambassadors in our critter room. Meet in the Nature Center.

TORTOISE FEEDING AND CLASS: 9:30-10:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 24 at the San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Join the Ranger as she introduces you to resident tortoises Santana and Shelly and gives them their crunchy green breakfast. After that, enjoy a presentation in the classroom to learn all about desert tortoises and how they survive in the wild. (We’ll be outdoors for approximately 15 minutes). Be sure to bring water and a hat.

ALL ABOUT SUMMER MONSOONS: 2-3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 24 at the San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. This indoor presentation will explain some of the conditions that bring about this weather, why this season is important to desert plants and animals and how you can stay safe when Mother Nature livens things up. Meet inside the Nature Center.

MORNING HIKE: 6-8 a.m. Friday, Aug. 30 at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Start your day with an early morning guided hike with the Ranger. Our journey will be 4-5 miles long on moderate terrain. We’ll stop along the way for water breaks and to talk about critters and plants of interest. What to bring: Water, hat, sunscreen, closed-toe shoes. Meet at the Main Trailhead map kiosk.

RAPTORS RULE THE SKY: 10-11:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 31 at the San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Learn about some of the coolest birds in our desert skies — raptors. We’ll discuss the characteristics that birds of prey such as owls, hawks and falcons have in common and how they differ in their habits and behaviors. After the talk you can meet and greet some of the Animal Ambassadors in our Critter Room. Meet inside the Nature Center.

Where to see Arizona’s most spectacular scenery

Must-see: no trip to Arizona is complete without a trip to the Grand Canyon CREDIT: GETTY 12 AUGUST 2019 • 11:00AM

As Winnie-the-Pooh once wisely said: “When you see someone putting on his Big Boots, you can be pretty sure that an adventure is going to happen.” Whether it’s hiking through the Catskills, horseriding in Wyoming or climbing in the Rocky Mountains, follow the thoughtful bear’s sage advice and pack your biggest, comfiest boots for a real American adventure.

With year-round sunshine and breathtaking scenery, Arizona is widely considered one of the best places to start. From the epic chasm of the Grand Canyon and the giant Saguaro cact of the Sonoran Desert to the magnificent monoliths that make up Monument Valley, Arizona is the red-hued epicentre of America’s adventure scene.

Of course, one of the biggest draws is the Grand Canyon. One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, it welcomes more than six million visitors each year. However, only one per cent of these stray further than the South Rim viewing platforms, which means the rest are missing a trick.

Hike the seven-mile-long South Kaibab Trail down to the canyon floor, stopping for a breather at the appropriately named Ooh-Aah Point. If you can, visit Havasu Canyon, within the Grand Canyon but accessible separately and not from the Grand Canyon National Park. It’s on land owned by the Havasupai tribes and is renowned for its bluey-green swimming holes and waterfalls.

If that has whetted your appetite, zip over to Peach Springs and navigate Class II- and III-level rapids on a whitewater rafting trip down the Colorado River. But if time is limited, thrill seekers can still get their kicks on an aerial tour of the South Rim, Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam on a pleasure flight by Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters or Grand Canyon Scenic Airlines.

However, Mother Nature has blessed Arizona with more than just the Grand Canyon. A hundred miles north, on the Colorado plateau, is the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument – striped waves of coloured sandstone rippling through an arid landscape. The best way to experience it is to grab a hiking
permit from the visitors’ centre and explore the towering stone cliffs and deep, ruddy canyons on foot as condors glide overhead.

Like much of America, Arizona’s landscape differs greatly from north to south. A hundred miles south of the Grand Canyon is Sedona, a charming, artsy little enclave famous for its huge sandstone formations, which blaze brilliant reds and fiery oranges. It makes a great base for an adventure trip with everything from mountain biking through Red Rock State Park and wild swimming in Oak Creek to sunset hikes around Cathedral Rock.

Further south still is Scottsdale, just east of Phoenix, which also draws a loyal mountain-biking crowd. It offers moderate to advanced trails through this rugged corner of the Sonoran Desert, across Granite Mountain and the McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

Down in the southernmost flanks of Arizona is Tucson, a high desert city sheltered by the Santa Catalina Mountains. It’s worth holing up here for a few days to explore the Saguaro National Park, home of the giant Saguaro cacti. An iconic emblem of South-west America, these spiky beasts can grow to more than 50ft tall.

Take a hike up to the 9,000ft summit of Mount Lemmon and spend the evening at the Mount Lemmon Observatory, a prime spot for stargazing. Alternatively, head north to Oracle and zip-line through the Santa Catalina Mountains. Finally, 100 miles east of Tucson is the Chiricahua National Monument, an ethereal landscape scattered with ancient rock spires. There are 17 miles of hiking trails, each winding through the giant and amazingly balanced boulders, where you’ll follow in the dusty footsteps of the early pioneers of American adventure.

**Events in Queen Creek through Aug 31 include ‘Mama Mia!’ at PAC, morning hikes**

From morning hikes at San Tan Mountain Regional Park (Aug. 9 and 30) and Mama Mia’ at the Queen Creek Performing Arts Center (Aug. 23) there’s a lot going on in Queen Creek. Events include:

**BREASTFEEDING CLASS:** 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 6 at Banner Ironwood Medical Center, 37000 N. Gantzel Road. $25. This one day prenatal class covers all the information you need to get started nursing your baby including breastfeeding techniques, nutrition, breast milk production and going back to work. Please register expectant mom only; one spouse/birth partner is automatically included. Register at bannerhealth.com/calendar/event-detail?id=B20068VX&sessionId=B20068VY.

**NIGHT SHREDDERS MOUNTAIN BIKING:** 7-9 p.m. every Wednesday in August at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. It is mandatory to wear a helmet and please bring plenty of water, an extra tube and tools to change a flat tire, and two sources of light; LED rechargeable lights with at least 650 lumen. Why? The desert gets very dark at night. Riders under 18-years of age must complete a Parental Consent form. Meet at the flagpole at 6:50 p.m.

**PLAY SPOT:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 7-11 and 21 at the Queen Creek Library, 21802 S. Ellsworth Road. Come enjoy an interactive time where families engage in developmentally age appropriate play that encourages healthy brain development. There will be hands-on activities for parents and children 0-5 years of age, as well as take-home activities, brought to you by Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest. No registration required, but space is limited. Please contact Maria Martinez at 480-489-5773 or mamartinez@lss-sw for more information.

**BARREL RACING:** 5-10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 16 at Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre, 20464 E. Riggs Road. Free to spectators. For more information, visit qcbra.com.

**BEGINNER SKILL LEVEL MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE:** 6-8 a.m. Friday, Aug. 9 and 30 at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Start your day with an early morning guided hike with the Ranger. Our journey will be 4-5 miles long on moderate terrain. We’ll stop along the way for water breaks and to talk about critters and plants of interest. What to bring: Water, hat, sunscreen, closed-toe shoes. Meet at the Main Trailhead map kiosk.

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**BEGINNER SKILL LEVEL MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE:** 6-8 a.m. Saturdays, Aug. 10, 17, 24 and 31 San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Join us for an exciting beginner mountain bike ride.
among the beautiful San Tan Mountains. This 5.5-mile ride is open to all ages and skill levels. Our local experts will be available to help you understand your bike’s features and learn the ins and outs of safe riding. Under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Essentials: water, helmet, extra tube, tools to change a flat tire. Meet at the San Tan Trail sign at the main trailhead.

OB CHILDBIRTH PREP CLASS AND TOUR: 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 20 and 27 at Banner Ironwood Medical Center, 37000 N. Gantzel Road. $70. This is a 2-week class that meets two consecutive Tuesdays. Topics include preparing for L&D, body changes, stages of labor, positions for L&D, as well as medical options & practices. Please arrive 15 minutes early and bring a pen. Register at bannerhealth.com/calendar/event-detail?id=B20067XJ&sessionId=B20067XH.

OB TOUR: 6 p.m., 6:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 22 at Banner Ironwood Medical Center, 37000 N. Gantzel Road. Free. Your tour will cover areas such as Labor & Delivery, Recovery Rooms, Nursery and patient rooms. Please register each adult and any child, 13 years or older, who will be attending this free tour of the Labor and Delivery department at Banner Ironwood Medical Center. Register at bannerhealth.com/calendar/event-detail?id=B20067Y7&sessionId=B20067Y3.

SUNSET PHOTOGRAPHY WALK: 6:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 22 at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. This is generally an out-and-back walk that covers no more than two miles round trip. We go out as a group and meander back at our own pace. Have $7 exact cash for the self-pay station or your annual pass. What to bring: Closed-toe shoes, water, camera. Tripods are welcome. Meet at the Main Trailhead map kiosk.

QUEEN CREEK BARREL RACING ASSOCIATION: 5-10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 23 at Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre, 20464 E. Riggs Road. Free to spectators. For more information, visit qcbra.com.

MAMMA MIA!: 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 23; 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 24; and 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 26 at the Queen Creek Performing Arts Center, 22149 E. Ocotillo Road. Ticket prices vary. The story-telling magic of ABBA’s timeless songs propels this enchanting tale of love, laughter and friendship, creating an unforgettable show. Over 60 million people worldwide have fallen in love with the characters, the story and the music that make Mamma Mia! the ultimate feel-good show. Contact QCPAC for more information at 480-987-SHOW(7469).

DESERT SNAKES: 10-11:30 a.m. Friday, Aug. 23 at San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. This indoor class will shed light on both types of snakes: their anatomy, behaviors and important place in the food chain. You'll even have an opportunity to meet the snakes who serve as Animal Ambassadors in our critter room. Meet in the Nature Center.

TORTOISE FEEDING AND CLASS: 9:30-10:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 24 at the San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Join the Ranger as she introduces you to resident tortoises Santana and Shelly and gives them their crunchy green breakfast. After that, enjoy a presentation in the classroom to learn all about desert tortoises and how they survive in the wild. (We'll be outdoors for approximately 15 minutes). Be sure to bring water and a hat.

ALL ABOUT SUMMER MONSOONS: 2-3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 24 at the San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. This indoor presentation will explain some of the conditions that bring about this weather, why this season is important to desert plants and animals and how you can stay safe when Mother Nature livens things up. Meet inside the Nature Center.

RAPTORS RULE THE SKY: 10-11:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 31 at the San Tan Mountain Regional Park, 6533 W. Phillips Road. Learn about some of the coolest birds in our desert skies – raptors. We'll discuss the characteristics that birds of prey such as owls, hawks and falcons have in common and how they differ in their habits and behaviors. After the talk you can meet and greet some of the Animal Ambassadors in our Critter Room. Meet inside the Nature Center.

MCSO: Dad arrested for OUI after daughter thrown from tube, critically hurt

Posted: 8:18 PM, Aug 06, 2019
Updated: 10:31 PM, Aug 06, 2019
By: abc15.com staff

LAKE PLEASANT — A boat driver on Lake Pleasant was arrested Saturday afternoon for operating under the influence after an incident that left his daughter in critical condition.

Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office deputies say Reggie Collazo was driving his boat around the lake while his daughter was riding behind on a ski tube.
Collazo made a left turn which pulled the tube in the opposite direction causing his daughter, Chaylene, to be thrown from the tube.

Chaylene was later found unconscious on the shoreline by passengers on Collazo's boat and other boaters in the area. Deputies say the girl was airlifted to the hospital in critical condition.

Collazo was arrested and booked into jail for operating under the influence and an outstanding warrant.

This is an ongoing investigation, according to MCSO.

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**Usery Mountain Regional Park archery range to close for 2 months for upgrades**

_Rocky Baier, Arizona RepublicPublished 9:07 a.m. MT Aug. 2, 2019_

The archery range and various areas in the campgrounds of Usery Mountain Regional Park near northeast Mesa will be closed for two months starting on Aug. 12, as aging electrical and lighting systems are replaced, according to park officials.

The 25-year-old lighting poles in the archery range will be replaced with vapor-proof LED and high-mast tower lighting at all six courses. The system is more efficient and longer lasting, officials said in a press release.

Lights that point toward the targets will be installed, as well as a new audio announcement system. Park officials said the lights will make it easier to shoot at night, and will potentially attract more tournaments.

"Our team has been working diligently over the past couple of years to update our existing infrastructure and bring new amenities into the parks," said R.J. Cardin, director of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. "I think park visitors will be pleased with the updates that have been made."

Between 700 to 1,000 people use the archery range during the peak season, which is from October to April. The summer is the slow season, so the construction will "minimally impact recreation activities in the park," according to Cardin.

The archery range will be closed for two months while these upgrades are being made.

Other upgrades will be made to the electrical service, distribution board and power panels in the customer service area.

Campsites will receive upgrades, and 30-year-old electrical systems will be replaced to keep up with the increased electrical demands from modern RV's, officials said.

In all, 75 electrical boxes throughout the camping area will be replaced.

"These service boxes get electricity from SRP and disperse it out like a large spider web to smaller units around the park," said Timothy Jackson, the general foreman at Rosendin, the company installing the technology changes.

"Over time, Arizona’s intense heat breaks down the breakers and insulation on the wires, which creates resistance and that breaks down the conductivity of the electricity moving through the wires."

The campsites will remain open during construction, officials said. However, certain areas will be blocked off as a safety precaution.

Rosendin began prepping for construction in May 2018, and this project has been in the works for about five years, officials said.

All construction is expected to be completed in October.

Other county park upgrades are planned for McDowell Mountain Regional Park near Fountain hills and White Tank Mountain Regional Park in Waddel in the next coming years. A year-long project was completed in April at Estrella Mountain Regional Park to upgrade electrical and lighting fixtures at the playground, host area and camp ramadas, officials said.

**Peoria to host country music festival at Lake Pleasant in October**

_By KTAR.com | August 7, 2019 at 4:35 am UPDATED: August 7, 2019 at 8:52 am_

PHOENIX — Boots, beers and boats will invade Lake Pleasant for a new country music festival this fall.

The city of Peoria announced Thursday it is bringing the Peoria Country Music Fest to Lake Pleasant on Oct. 19.

The festival will feature live music from four acts — Hillbilly Deluxe, Chad Freeman, Josh Roy and Rob West — at Pleasant Harbor, the marina on the lake’s southeastern shore.
Food trucks, a beer garden, live bull riding and other attractions will also be featured during the festival’s run time of 2-11 p.m.

“Peoria Country Music Fest is going to showcase some of the best country music around at a one-of-a-kind location,” Peoria Vice Mayor Bridget Binsbacher said in a release. “We are so proud to have beautiful Lake Pleasant in our city with easy access and the perfect spot to kick up your heels for an entire weekend of entertainment and fun.”

Advance tickets can be purchased on the festival’s website for $15. The price increases to $20 at the door and is always $5 for children 12 and under.

A limited number of VIP tickets can be purchased for $45 and include two complimentary drink tickets, a complimentary meal at the harbor’s Dillon’s Bayou Restaurant and access to a special seating area with a dedicated cash bar.

Ticket prices do not include entry into the harbor. Vehicles can enter the harbor for a $10 fee.

No coolers or outside alcohol is permitted, per the release.

Those who want to camp at the lake can purchase a campsite through the festival website.