



An electric bike rode into the backcountry. Now there's a nationwide turf war

Dennis Wagner, USA TODAY -
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FOUNTAIN HILLS, Arizona – A gray-haired dude jumped on his mountain bike and began pedaling into the Sonoran desert along a rocky, single-track path.

The trail at **McDowell Mountain Regional Park** wound past towering saguaros, around paloverde trees in blooming splendor and through sand-filled arroyos. There was no sound except the grind of tires on gravel, the gush of a May breeze and the occasional call of sentinel quail.

Mile after mile, the ride seemed easy. Even as he climbed steep hills, 73-year-old Rand Hubbell barely broke a sweat. In fact, thanks to the bike's inconspicuous electric motor, his ascent was relatively effortless: Hubbell could remain seated while a 750-watt battery let him use as much or little leg power as he chose.

Electric mountain bikes, known as eMTBs, are more than just welcomed in this 21,000-acre playground; they're encouraged. The county park's 40 miles of trails include specialized tracks for competition, plus rest stops with air pumps and spare inner tubes. More than half of the visitors are cyclists. A plaque at one canopy urges, "Of all the paths you take in life, make sure some of them are dirt."

Next door, the **McDowell Sonoran Preserve** shares a border with the regional park. It, too is laced with miles of hiking trails.

Yet that park has a giant sign at its entrances featuring a picture of an e-bike with a slash through it: "Electric Bikes Prohibited." It is run by neighboring Scottsdale, where a municipal ordinance bans battery-powered bicycles on all 225 miles of trails.

Adjacent properties. Opposite policies.

Adding to the confusion, numerous trails from the county park lead over the mountain crest and into the preserve's **no-eMTB zone**.

The two grounds might as well be a symbol for the turf war that has emerged with the infusion of electric mountain bikes into America's backcountry.

Over the past five years, smaller and stronger batteries have powered a booming market for **electric bikes**, or ebikes, of all kinds. And, especially since COVID-19 lockdowns, America's backcountry trails have seen a proliferation of the dirt-ready variety.

While there is only partial data on the phenomenon, experts agree that cycling has skyrocketed, with electric mountain bikes the most popular model. Bicycle shops nationwide ran out of inventory during the past two years, with prospective buyers on months-long wait lists. The trend is so powerful that Scottsdale bike salesman Jeff Frost jokes about eMTBs as cycling's "gateway drug."

According to PeopleForBikes, an advocacy organization for manufacturers, suppliers and cyclists, electric mountain bike sales increased by 1,000% from 2015 to 2019. LEVA, another analyst, reported **more e-bikes were sold in the United States last year than electric cars**. Mordor Intelligence predicts the worldwide market for battery-powered mountain bikes,

valued at \$5 billion in 2020, will **double by 2026**.

The onslaught of motor-assisted cyclists has generated a surge of traffic not only on streets, but on trails revered for serenity – trails where, often, motorized vehicles have been considered off-limits.

Thus began the turf wars.

When U.S. Forest Service managers tried to open trails near Lake Tahoe to e-bikes three years ago, the agency wound up in court – sued by the National Horsemen's Association.

When the Department of the Interior announced that eMTBs would be treated as nonmotorized vehicles and allowed on trails in National Parks, government employees filed another lawsuit.

In Utah, America's Mecca for mountain biking, state lawmakers tried to devise a statute this year that would clarify rules on e-bikes and single-track trails. The proposal got battered from all sides, said state Sen. Todd Weiler, who introduced the measure. Laughing, he described what followed as a "show," but with an unprintable adjective.

"My lesson?" Weiler said. "Don't run an electric bike bill ever again."

On Mackinac Island in Michigan, e-bikes are banned unless a rider has what's known as a "**mobility disability**" — a medical condition — or an inability to walk more than 200 feet without stopping.

Back in Scottsdale, when city staffers suggested last year that the Sonoran Preserve might open some trails to e-bikers, conservationists stormed social media and bombarded City Hall with emails — most of them rabidly opposed to any motorized traffic in the parklands.



The proposal was promptly tabled, and no one has dared bring it up since. “It’s a very passionate discussion,” observed Scott Hamilton, manager of the preserve.

During a rest stop, Hubbell mentioned that in 1998 he helped write the city ordinance banning motorized vehicles from the preserve. Later, he served on a commission overseeing its trails. And from 2003-15 he was supervisor of the adjoining county park.

Hubbell said he became an avid mountain biker after retirement. But age and health issues took a toll until the morning rides just sapped his strength: “My wife’s list of to-dos didn’t get done.”

That’s when Hubbell started noticing e-bikes as they passed him on hill climbs, sometimes with older riders. “I thought, ‘That’s pretty cool.’” he recalls. “I’m working hard and these guys are going right by me. And they’re smiling.”

‘Trail punks’

Manufacturers, vendors, riders and other advocates insist that, while eMTBs have motors, they are really just bicycles.

They contend electric bike ownership is dominated by older people who travel slower, with less danger and trail damage. And the battery allows disabled or weak riders to enjoy the great outdoors while getting moderate exercise.

Those who oppose e-bike access to single-track trails include not just environmentalists and hikers, but equestrians and others who argue that eMTBs are faster, heavier, more dangerous and more destructive than regular mountain bikes. The motor also transports cyclists deeper into the outback, with increased impact on nature.

“It’s alarming people because it goes against why some of these places were set aside and protected,” noted the late John Freemuth, a Boise State University land policy expert. “There’s obviously a place for e-bikes... But there are places, perhaps, where they shouldn’t be allowed because other people go to national parks for experiences that don’t include [whipping around on bikes](#) at 20 mph.”

Some of the fiercest eMTB critics are regular mountain bikers — young purists who view the battery boost as “cheating.”

A 2020 article in Gear Patrol pointed out that mountain biking had once been the “drunk uncle” of outdoor activities, with riders disdained as “[trail punks](#)” by hikers, conservationists and horsemen.

After decades of diplomacy and trail-building, regular mountain bikes gradually gained acceptance. “But here we are again,” the article noted, only now e-bikers are the pariahs.”

In Washington state, the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance lobbied for a bill prohibiting eMTBs [from all “natural surface trails.”](#) The reason, as explained in Singletracks magazine, was a fear that if e-bikes are permitted then land managers might close trails to all bicycles.

Amid the sound and fury, government officials have concocted a chaos of rules and policies from Alaskan to Florida, with neighboring Arizona properties as classic examples.

The regulations and enforcement are so confusing, so inconsistent, that even vendors warn customers not to purchase electric mountain bikes until they’ve checked with city, county, state and federal land agencies to learn whether they’ll have places to ride.



© Antranik Tavitian, *The Arizona Republic* via USA TODAY NETWORK. Rand Hubbell's e-bike turns on as he prepares to ride the Pemberton Trail Loop on his e-bike on May 9, 2022, in Rio Verde.

What is an eMTB?

In one sense, the dilemma is like any conflict that arises with disruptive technology: A new product or invention encroaches, prompting backlash.

Years ago, snowboarders fought for access to ski slopes. Today, drone operators struggle with flight regulations aimed at protecting privacy and public safety.

But eMTBs are particularly fraught because the technology places them in a gray area. Are they motorized vehicles, or bicycles?

The dispute has churned up a mini-culture war, which is nothing new. Bicycles were invented in 1817 but did not gain popularity until the 1890’s invention of pneumatic tires allowed for a less bouncy ride.

As women began cycling during the Victorian era, wearing modified bloomers, bikes became a symbol of liberation. Anti-feminists of the day promulgated claims that the two-wheel contraptions made females walk funny, endangered reproductive ability and even caused a [condition known as “bicycle face.”](#)

The first electric bikes also were patented in the 1890s. But, for a variety of reasons, they did not catch on until more than a century later.



Today, e-bikes are ubiquitous in Europe and Asia both as commuter vehicles and outdoor toys. The United States is playing catch-up, especially with knobby-tired mountain bikes.

The modern version features a motor that either assists a rider in pedaling or can provide all the power. Most jurisdictions set a 750-watt limit to the battery and recognize [three levels of eMTB](#):

Class 1: The motor kicks in only when the bike is being pedaled, and a governor caps battery-enhanced speed at 20 mph.

Class 2: A rider can rely fully on the motor, without pedaling. The top speed under battery power is also 20 mph.

Class 3: The motor delivers energy only when the cyclist is pedaling, and only up to a speed of 28 mph. (With wide support from industry groups and cycling advocates, Class 3 bikes are generally banned from natural, one-track trails.)

The e-bike is a techno nerd's dream, with multiple different motor types and software systems. But all draw power from a rechargeable battery which turns a shaft, creating torque [that propels a wheel](#).

Because those mechanics are so small, with batteries concealed in the frame, many e-MTBs are nearly impossible to visually distinguish from regular bikes.

At the road racing world championships in 2016, cyclist Femke Van den Driessche was suspended for six years after magnetic imaging detected a battery-powered motor on her bike. Today, the Union Cycliste Internationale and some mountain biking race organizers routinely check for what's known as ["motor doping."](#)

But there's another x-factor with eMTBs: The governor, which is supposed to limit a bicycle's speed, can be [hacked and overcome](#) with apps that are available at local cycling shops and online. That means the maximum speed may be phony.

"The after-market hacks for eMTBs these days are unbelievable. It's a booming business," said Frost, who works in an Arizona bike shop. "There's nothing illegal about it — until you see one go by at 35 mph."

Anyone who has ridden a non-motorized mountain bike on steep trails knows the sport is demanding, limited to riders in physical shape. Electric motors can dramatically reduce that stress, letting riders decide how hard they want to work during climbs — a godsend to those who have health conditions or limited ambition.

Of course, that advantage comes with a price: eMTBs start at around \$1,000 for a hefty model with relatively cheap materials and parts, soaring to upwards of \$15,000 for a premium ride.

Legislatures and agencies around the country have struggled to define and regulate eMTBs. Most states have designated Class 1 and 2 bikes as nonmotorized, but often with confusing exceptions.

Even cycling organizations seem conflicted, caught between members who bristle at e-bikes and those who love them. The International Mountain Biking Association's [policy position](#) is noncommittal, supporting Class 1 electric bikes in the backcountry unless that means traditional bikes will be banned.

"We want to see eMTB access granted," said Todd Keller, the association's director of

governmental affairs, "but it has to be in a responsible way."

PeopleForBikes, which represents manufacturers and suppliers, touts a [model policy](#) that presumes eMTBs may use trails open to regular bikes — except where prohibited or restricted in the interest of safety.

The state level: Ebikes in Utah

If Scottsdale's adjoining parks epitomize local conflicts over trail use, Utah — the cradle of American mountain biking — has emerged as a fascinating study at the state level.

This year, Sen. Weiler sponsored legislation he thought would simplify the rules, at least on nonfederal lands. One proposed change would have reduced allowable power for e-bikes while allowing them almost everywhere regular mountain bikes can go.

As Weiler tells it, manufacturers and retailers went bonkers over the reduction in battery power. So did hunters, who use eMTBs with trailers to transport their gear and game in the backcountry, and rely on 750 watts to pull those heavy loads.

Weiler said he started trying to tweak the bill, but every change stirred up new opposition. Amputees objected to a ban on e-bikes with throttles. County officials were outraged that the law would take away local control and warned that eMTBs in conservation areas would spur civil suits.

And all of that was heaped atop opposition from environmentalists, Weiler said, plus regular mountain bikers — "the purists who say if you don't work out five hours a day you shouldn't be out there."

Jenn Oxborrow, executive director at Bike Utah, a nonprofit advocacy group for cycling, described other



aspects of the backlash in almost comical terms.

Plans to create a permit system so anyone could be exempt from e-bike bans — even those not legally disabled — riled up the disability community by encroaching on their legal protections.

Meanwhile, search-and-rescue workers warned that electric bikes would put feeble people deep into the wilds where batteries would die or riders would suffer medical emergencies. Even Native Americans were upset, envisioning motorized bikes rolling over sacred sites.

“I kicked a hornet’s nest,” Weiler acknowledged. “Everyone hated the bill. It was cursed.”

Weiler punted the legislation to Rep. Jeff Stenquist, who came up with new guidelines and convened a public hearing, which churned up more resistance.

Eventually, lawmakers adopted legislation that Oxborrow politely describes as a “suggestion,” urging land managers to consider e-bikes when developing trails.

Weiler offers a more candid appraisal: “We ended up passing a nothing burger bill,” he said.



© Antranik Tavitian, *The Arizona Republic* via USA TODAY NETWORK. Hubbell, former Park Supervisor for the McDowell Mountain Regional Park, left, talks with a mountain biker as he passes by on the Pemberton Trail Loop on May 9, 2022, in Rio Verde.

'You're made to feel like an outlaw'

A few years ago, after a couple heart attacks, Steve Spiro of Orange County, California, bought his first electric mountain bike. He gets a workout using pedal power until it's too tough, then lets the battery help out.

“It’s important that I stay active,” said Spiro, a 64-year-old real estate agent, “but not to a point of over-exertion.”

However, as Spiro began taking his mountain bike to public trails, he kept getting turned away by signs and rules banning the electric motor. It was infuriating, he said: “You’ve paid your taxes, and then you’re made to feel like an outlaw or criminal – for riding your bike!”

Spiro discovered there is no consistency in regulations and concluded that policy differences are often arbitrary.

“These land managers are willy-nilly just making determinations,” he grouched. For example, Spiro said, although the Americans Disabilities Act requires accommodations for the disabled, there is no standard for applying that to electric bikes.

“They will intimidate you and tell you to leave,” Spiro said of park rangers. “I’ve been threatened (with citations). I’ve had them yell at me, ‘Get out of here!’”

Spiro said he came to realize that trail policies are based largely on politics, with the loudest voices winning. In many cases, he added, that’s horsemen, hikers, environmentalists and regular mountain bikers.

Spiro decided to fight back, creating the Electric Mountain Bike Association to rally geriatric rides. A third of the U.S. population is age 50 or older, he reasoned, and banning

e-bikes amounts to elderly discrimination.

“My riding buddy Stanley Ramsey is a retired police officer and he is 82 years old,” says Spiro’s online petition. “E-bikes are a new technology that allows older citizens like myself and Stanley to ride a bike again by providing low-power pedal assist. The potential health benefits are enormous... The Future is eMTB.”

About 5,000 have signed so far. Meanwhile, Spiro offers them “mobility disability” labels that can be attached to e-bikes. The stickers have no legal weight, and he doesn’t check whether applicants qualify as disabled under the law.

The goal is to help riders avoid citations. “It’s nothing official,” Spiro acknowledged, chuckling. “They are more, um, educational.”



© Antranik Tavitian, *The Arizona Republic* via USA TODAY NETWORK. One of three break stops on the Pemberton Trail Loop at McDowell Mountain Regional Park on May 9, 2022, in Rio Verde. The stops correspond with five mile markers on the loop and are decorated with plaques and wind chimes.

Why do people hate eMTBs?

Internal combustion engines are banned from single-track trails in the outback, in part, because the engine noise messes with wildlife and destroys solitude.

The e-bike’s power train is virtually silent. So, from an environmental standpoint, there are only a few differences from a regular mountain bike.



The first is that eMTBs can put far more people into wild places and take them much deeper. To date, there are almost no studies on how that affects habitat.

The second difference is the potential for a heavier, faster machine to cause trail damage. Once again, there is little research to go by. The International Mountain Bike Association performed a test years ago, concluding that trail impact from e-bikes is not significantly greater than from non-motorized bikes.

But critics point out that the study involved just one trail and was conducted by an organization that promotes cycling. Randy Rasmussen, director of public lands and recreation for Back Country Horsemen of America, said single-track trails are not designed for motorized use, and the notion that e-bikes won't damage them is a "myth."

Rasmussen added that, on uphill climbs, e-bikes are likely to spook horses from behind, endangering the animal and rider. "Horsemen and women are very alarmed by the advent of motorized bicycles," he added. "They're just clearly a safety concern."

Equestrians also resisted regular mountain bikes years ago, Rasmussen acknowledged, before the two groups arrived at a "happy peace," even collaborating on trail maintenance and development. However, he stressed, any bike with a motor represents "a different qualitative argument," which could open the door to motorcycles on backcountry paths.

"We are worried about the slippery slope here," said Rasmussen. "There's a blurring of lines already."

That fear is not as far-fetched as it might seem. When the BLM sought input on a policy for off-highway vehicles, the Capital Trail Vehicle Association submitted numerous suggestions. Among them:

"Electric motorcycles and electric mountain bikes are here and will completely take the sound issue off the table. This planning action must adequately accommodate the future use of electric motorcycles and mountain bikes on all existing single-track trails as a reasonably foreseeable development."

And then came the lawsuits

If local and state officials ignited controversies over eMTBs, federal authorities in the Trump administration poured fuel on those flames.

In 2019, without public hearings or discussion, Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt announced that electric bikes would **no longer be treated as motorized vehicles** and could use all trails open to regular bicycles on his department. That includes 419 national parks and recreation areas, plus millions of acres overseen by the Bureau of Land Management.

A day later, acting National Park Service Deputy Director P. Daniel Smith echoed that decision in an edict to all park superintendents.

A Colorado Sun report **described the directive** as "one of the most controversial rules in years for the Bureau of Land Management."

The public backlash prompted some 24,000 **emails and letters** to the Park Service from groups and individuals. The American Hiking Society **reaction** was aghast, declaring an official position that "any vehicle that uses either an internal combustion engine or an

electric motor for propulsion is a motor vehicle."

Within months, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility filed suit, identifying 28 National Park Service venues that already were allowing electric bikes on trails set aside for nonmotorized travel. Among them: Everglades, Glacier, and Rocky Mountain national parks.

Peter Jenkins, an attorney with the employee organization, said the Park Service's policy decision in 2019 was spurred by recommendations from an E-Bike Partner & Agency Group. The civil complaint alleges the meetings were conducted in secret and the "illegal committee" was loaded with cycling industry representatives, including PeopleForBikes.

Wilderness Watch and other conservation organizations joined.

In 2021, as the case proceeded, national park superintendents were instructed to reconsider their decisions. Jenkins said only a handful withdrew e-bike access.

Meantime, the Park Service launched a review and was flooded with more than 17,000 public comments. The policy was replaced with a new regulation empowering superintendents to allow eMTBs, but not requiring them to do so. (The rule includes a stipulation that, where e-bikes are allowed, riders may not rely solely on motor power for "an extended period of time.")

The National Park Service did not provide comment when contacted. In court filings, agency lawyers contend the lawsuit is moot because the policy was revoked and superintendents are now required to perform environmental reviews before opening trails to e-bikes.



The U.S. Forest Service, meanwhile, adopted a flip-side policy, but with similar results. In 2019, the Forest Service treated electric mountain bikes as motorized vehicles but allowed individual ranger districts to authorize Class 1 eMTBs on multi-use trails.

Tahoe Ranger District did just that. Without environmental analysis or public hearings, 130 miles of non-motorized trails near Lake Tahoe were suddenly opened to Class 1 e-bikes in 2019. That included the 25-mile Pioneer Trail, a popular ride for equestrians. The Horseman's Association filed suit in U.S. District Court, joined by an unlikely coalition of trail users and environmental groups.

Within months, the Forest Service backed down. The suit was settled. Trails were closed to e-bikers until environmental assessments were done and the public had an opportunity to weigh in.

Today, according to the Forest Service, just 35 miles of single-track paths in Tahoe National Forest are open to e-bikers, along with nearly 400 miles of OHV and single-track motorcycle routes. The Pioneer Trail is not included, but administrators are reviewing changes that could allow e-bikes on some segments.

Rasmussen and others noted that, even where electronic mountain bikes are prohibited, they seem to ride with impunity. For instance, under federal law electric bikes are prohibited from nearly all National Scenic Trails, including the Appalachian Trail and the Continental Divide Trail. But Rasmussen said he encounters them regularly on the Pacific Crest Trail near his home in central Oregon.

Potemkin enforcement

Which brings up the sticky issue of enforcement, with scant evidence

that cyclists who violate e-bike laws face any repercussions.

Agencies post signs with bans, class restrictions and speed limits, but it's not like there are cops lurking in the outback.

Keller, with the International Mountain Biking Association, said he was recently using a trail in Washington, D.C., when he came upon an eMTB rider. In nearly 20 years of riding there, he'd never seen a ranger. He thought about confronting the cyclist, then decided just to pedal on.

Every land manager contacted for this story stressed a focus is on education, rather than prosecution.

The BLM oversees about 12,000 miles of trails nationwide, about half of those open to e-bikes. In an email, bureau press secretary Brian Hines said bureau officers have documented just five electric bicycle violations in recent year. Four resulted in warnings; only the rider near Moab was ticketed.

Jamie Hinrichs, a spokeswoman for Tahoe National Forest, said rangers and law officers there have issued zero tickets to e-bikers.

He and just about everyone else in the controversy agreed that many rangers can't even tell the difference between and electric bike and a regular one. They'd be hard-pressed to say who's violating which rules. And most trail overseers lack staffing to patrol backcountry trails, let alone appear in court over citations.

"I can sum it up in one word," said Rasmussen. "Unenforceable."

Back in the McDowell Mountain Sonoran Preserve, Scottsdale bike salesman Roy Bury estimates that half the cyclists are on eMTBs.

What consequences do they face? Hamilton, the land manager, said volunteer stewards might advise a rider that e-bikes are barred, but that's about it. If the person claims to be disabled, Hamilton added, staffers might respond, "Hey, have a good time." And if they're not disabled but insist on riding anyway? "None of us are law enforcement. We're just educators."

Fussell, with PeopleForBikes, said the dilemma is not unique to mountain biking. Public land managers deal with visitors hiking into restricted areas, failing to pick up dog poop, building illegal campfires. A place shouldn't be shut down just because there are a few scofflaws, she added. The solution is to teach [trail etiquette and ethics](#).

As more Americans turn to the outdoors and eMTBs grow in popularity, Fussell allowed, there's a possibility "we'll love our trails to death." Maybe the most popular venues will limit users and [require permits](#) – a practice already underway in some national parks. But cycling advocates contend the better solution is to build more trails and make sound decisions about who gets to use them.

In her previous job, Fussell was executive director with Stowe Trails Partnership, a nonprofit that constructed 40 miles of bike trails in Vermont.

At first, the partnership was "staunchly anti-eMBT," she said, banning eMTBs entirely. But, as members grew familiar with the technology and got to know riders, hostility dissipated. Today, nearly half of the partnership trails are open to e-bikes.

Pedaling into the sunset

Which brings us back to Rand Hubbell's ride on the Pemberton Trail.



In Arizona, the state Legislature adopted a bill declaring that Class 1 and 2 bicycles are **considered non-motorized**, with access to all trails where regular bikes are allowed.

A Maricopa County spokeswoman said McDowell Mountain Regional Park is "just following the law."

Yet, at the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, Hamilton used exactly the same language, saying managers are "just following the law" in prohibiting eMTBs.

How is that possible?

The statute in question turns out to be virtually meaningless. One sentence after establishing that e-bikes may ride on multi-use trails, it says local agencies are free to ignore that rule — banning battery-powered bikes from pathways.

Hubbell said it could be that the nation's eMTB policies are varied by design. Voters created the McDowell Sonoran Preserve as an open-space conservation area, while the McDowell Mountain Regional Park was developed as a recreation site.

Different purposes, divergent rules.

In fact, there seems to be a consensus among trail users, conservationists and land managers that any blanket policy for electric bikes would prove a dismal failure. From Arizona deserts to Rocky Mountains highs, the logic goes, rules should be based on trail conditions, environmental factors, traffic volume and local politics.

Some day, Hubbell predicted, e-MTBs will be accepted wherever their analog counterparts are allowed, like snowboards on ski slopes. In the meantime, however, he carries a disability letter from his doctor when he cruises through the Sonoran Preserve on his e-bike, just

in case one of the stewards challenges him.

Hubbell climbed back in the saddle and began pedaling. "I ride now more than I ever had before," he said. "I'm 73 and don't see any reason to stop in the next 10 years. Hopefully, longer than that."

Explore a piece of desert paradise in San Tan Mountain Regional Park

May 27, 2022

By Nicole Underwood / NewsBreak Pinal County, AZ



The scenic San Tan Mountain Regional Park Maricopa County Parks

(QUEEN CREEK, AZ) - Arizona always offers a new area to explore for those who are curiously seeking beauty and adventure. Here's one option: consisting of over 10,000 acres, the **San Tan Mountain Regional Park** is a large rural park located in Pinal County, and administered by Maricopa County Parks. The park is just south of Queen Creek and preserves a portion of the San Tan Mountains, making it a beautiful southwest destination to admire the Sonoran Desert.

According to the [Maricopa County Parks website](#), their main focus is to preserve the natural desert for Arizona residents and visitors, allowing its vast open spaces to be enjoyed and protected. They currently govern twelve other parks,

including San Tan Mountain Regional Park, which receives 2.4 million visitors to over 200,000 acres each year. As counties like Maricopa County — and Pinal — continue to steadily grow, it's important to maintain the quality of these spaces for future generations.

The Regional Trail System is a step towards meeting this need, creating goals in the areas of: Land Use, Transportation, Environmental, and Economic Development. They identify goals around the trail systems, metropolitan areas, open space corridors, and trail creation to provide a protected, yet accessible area for all to explore safely and responsibly.

Being part of 12 other types of preserved parks in the state, this rugged, saguaro-covered terrain is a classic landscape to experience what makes the desert so magical. You can wander the non motorized trails with ease, taking in the gorgeous landscape and beauty of the area. The most beautiful part of this area is being connected to the past. The park has many locations to see ancient petroglyphs from the Hohokam peoples, dating back to 1100-1450 A.D. However, be mindful to respect these sacred spaces and refrain from touching when you are on your hike.



Sunset in San Tan Mountain Regional Park San Tan Mountain Park Facebook



San Tan Mountain Regional park is perfect for many recreational activities. Whether you are into horseback riding, cycling, or classic hiking, the park has a plethora of trails to venture into. In total, the park includes nine multi-use trails ranging from 20 miles exploration, from less than a mile to over six miles depending on the trail you choose, ranging from 78 to 1,286 feet in elevation gain. Many of the park's trails were actually constructed from old mining roads, making them the perfect width for large groups, or cyclists and hikers to share the trail.

Some of these create trails include Little Leaf Trail, Stargazer Trail, the Hedgehog Trail, Moonlight Trail, San Tan Trail at 6.4 miles and the Goldmine Trail that takes you to the highest peak of the entire park. All these popular trails offer something for hikers and bikers on every level, while giving you access to the gorgeous views and desert wildlife. For those who are social, you can connect with local hiking groups or mountain bikers, like the [San Tan Shredders](#), to join one of their organized adventures.

Looking for an easy, short hike? Then, place the Moonlight Trail at the top of your list. At just over a mile, you can both get your Sonoran scenic fix with a relatively mild length. However, if you are wanting a fuller day with more difficulty, explore the park along the San Tan Trail. There, you can soak in the mountain views along Rock Peak while also having access to the central area of the park to get the complete experience. [All Trails](#) is a great resource to explore these trails in full, and read feedback from outdoor enthusiasts who have tips and feedback about their journeys.

Want to schedule a day to explore? Lucky for the locals, the park and trails are open year-round. Visitors

may enjoy the park from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays. On Fridays and Saturdays, the hours change from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The park offers activities for the community as well, such as bird watching and fun science days for the family. [Recently on May 14](#), annual spring Global Big Day, the regional park staff hosted a 24-hour event for Arizona birders to submit checklists of bird species they find within the park. Global events like this help scientists collect important data to help monitor bird populations and migration.

[Check out their Facebook](#) for upcoming events this summer and any tips on hiking safely as temperatures increase.

Valley expert shares lake safety tips for Memorial Day weekend

May 27, 2022, 4:45 AM



(Facebook File Photo/Lake Pleasant Regional Park
BY LUKE FORSTNER
KTAR.com

PHOENIX — People looking to cool off at a lake this Memorial Day weekend are asked to do so safely after a string of drownings.

There have been four drowning deaths at [Lake Pleasant](#) alone this year, with the most recent being earlier this month.

When thinking of a drowning, people might picture a small child tragically falling into an unattended pool.

Rob Marske, a detective with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office's Lake Patrol Division, said lake drownings are different in many cases.

"They're not toddlers," he said. "They're [in their] late teens and mid 20's."

Woman dies in Lake Pleasant boating accident

Associated Press

May 23, 2022 Updated May 23, 2022



PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) — Authorities say a woman has died after she was critically injured in a boating accident at [Lake Pleasant](#).

Maricopa County Sheriff's officials say 32-year-old Tehanah Smith was airlifted to a hospital Saturday evening after one of her legs was cut off while she was waterskiing on the lake's north end.

They say Smith was hit by the boat's propeller and she died from her injuries Sunday.

An investigation into the death is underway, but sheriff's officials say there are no signs of impairment or foul play at the time of the incident that involved a single boat.

5 tips for a safe trip to Arizona's lakes

It's not even summer yet, and five people have died at Lake Pleasant in as many weeks.

Author: Rachel Cole



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PEORIA, Ariz. — For the fifth weekend in a row, someone has lost their life at **Lake Pleasant**.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office says 32-year-old **Tehanah Smith** was hit by a boat propeller over the weekend. Her leg was amputated in that accident, and she later died.

Lake officials like Heather Austin with Scorpion Bay Marina are hoping to help people understand a few precautions they can take ahead of going out to any of the lakes this summer.

She says while some of the safety measures seem simple, it never hurts to be reminded of the things you can do to safely enjoy the recreational sites.

"Our priority is always the safety of members and guests who come to Scorpion Bay Marina or anywhere on the lake," she explained.

Here are five tips to help your next trip:

1. **Check** the conditions: "The weather in Phoenix is not the weather up at Lake Pleasant. If there's any indication of high winds, it's a good idea to reschedule your trip and come at a different time."
2. **Get out early**: "Sometimes people are surprised when they get a line when they come to enter the park or the marina.

Arrive early so you don't feel rushed, and so you're taking your time to do your safety checks."

3. **Have fitted**, Coast Guard approved, life jackets: "Make sure everyone in your group has their life jacket, has been hydrated, has their sunscreen on, and is ready to go."
4. **Designate a captain**: "This person is like your designated driver. They are the team leader. They make sure that everyone gets home safely, so they're not drinking. It's very important that they keep everyone on track and keep everyone safe, know where everyone is, and make sure it's a safe experience for everyone in their group."
5. **Boat safety classes**: "They need to have that flag up when someone's in the water. They need to make sure the rope isn't wrapped around a part of the boat that it's not supposed to or someone isn't holding it casually, getting to those specifics about how you wakeboard or how you water ski, those boater safety courses are very important for someone who's a new boat owner."

[Click or tap here](#) for boating safety courses:

Woman dies after boating accident at Lake Pleasant

May 22, 2022, 7:00 PM
BY KTAR



(Facebook File Photo/Lake Pleasant Regional Park)

PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) — A woman has died after she was critically injured in a boating accident at **Lake Pleasant**, authorities said Sunday.

Maricopa County Sheriff's officials said 32-year-old **Tehanah Smith** was airlifted to a hospital Saturday evening after one of her legs was cut off while she was waterskiing on the lake's north end.

They said Smith was hit by the boat's propeller and she died from her injuries Sunday.

An investigation into the death is underway, but sheriff's officials said there were no signs of impairment or foul play at the time of the incident that involved a single boat.

Family-friendly hikes without climbing a mountain

In the city of Phoenix alone, there are more than 200 miles of designated trails.

By: **Justin Pazera**, ABC15

Posted at 3:00 AM, May 18, 2022

PHOENIX — David Olson knows the trail system in Phoenix. He's been a park ranger for years.

"We all know about the main popular trails but there is so many other trails that are out there," said Olson.

In the city of Phoenix alone, there are more than 200 miles of designated trails.

"There's no need to go to the top of a mountain to hike," said Olson.

David showed ABC15 the Esplanade Trail at the Sonoran Preserve in North Phoenix.



It's far enough away from Interstate 17 that you'll feel removed from the city, even though you're not.

It's almost 3.5 miles long and the elevation change is only 127 feet. To give you perspective, Piestewa Peak is a steep 1,200 feet.

Lookout Mountain Circumference Trail is considered moderate to difficult. The elevation change is 150 feet.

You'll get views of north Phoenix and east towards Scottsdale. It's just over a two-mile loop that generally takes people about an hour to finish.

"Because the trail might be five miles long it doesn't mean you have to do the whole thing," said Olson. "If you start it and you say it's going to get tougher - where you feel it's tough, it's maybe a good time to turn around and try it in the next couple of days and just work your way up to do the whole thing at a different time."

Maricopa County Parks and Recreation also has family-friendly trails that are shorter in length.

Even though they're considered easy, you'll still get your fill of nature.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park's Nursery Tank trail in Fountain Hills is only about half a mile long but it's in the county's largest park at 21,000 acres.

It'll take you about 13 minutes to walk and it's popular for bird watching and trail running.

Usery Mountain's Merkle trail near Apache Junction is also family-friendly - no mountain to climb on this one.

It'll take you about 23 minutes to finish the loop. It's also good for bird watching.

Then in the West Valley in White Tank Mountain Regional Park, the Black Rock trail is just over a mile.

It'll take you about 30 minutes to hike. The area is a very popular area so expect to see other people.

And the Waterfall trail is a bit longer, close to two miles but is great for walking and trail running. It'll take about 45 minutes to finish.

The key though on any trail, make sure you're prepared with the proper shoes and of course, plenty of water.

"A lot of the tourists that come here, or people that are not from the desert may not think about that," said Olson.

"They just see this big mountain over there and then when I get to the top. Well, you have to be careful."

Mesa steps out of the shadow of nearby Phoenix

by E'Louise Ondash
May 17, 2022641

It's a glorious late-April day in this patch of the Sonoran Desert in Mesa, Arizona. We are hiking the **Wind Cave Trail in Usery Mountain Regional Park.**

The twisty-turny, gently ascending path puts us smack in the middle of a lush landscape — a palate of blooming palo verde trees and multiple cactuses that, with their soft greens and yellows, mimic an impressionistic painting.

A hiker on his way down declares, "I'm great, thanks. My front yard in South Dakota is filled with snow right now, but I'm here."

At the top of this popular, 2.9-mile, out-and-back trail, we behold the seemingly endless Valley of the Sun. The panorama includes the homes of some half-million residents who live in Mesa, Arizona's third-largest city. Sometimes overshadowed by neighboring Phoenix, Mesa and nearby points east nevertheless offer plenty for visitors, and lodging there provides a better bang for your buck.



The popular Wind Cave Trail in Usery Mountain Regional Park in Mesa takes hikers through lush Sonoran Desert and affords an expansive view of the Phoenix Metro area's Valley of the Sun. Photo by E'Louise Ondash

Although we've made numerous visits to Arizona, this is our first close encounter with Mesa — its outdoors, historic and educational destinations, and the area's thriving agritourism. Here are some of the not-to-miss destinations:

Hawes Trail System — Thanks to monetary donations and the work of many volunteers, residents and visitors alike can bicycle, hike and horseback ride through 62 miles of trails that weave through the Tonto National Forest in northeast Mesa.

Arizona Museum of Natural History — Fun for all ages but particularly for dinosaur lovers. Features numerous life-size dino skeletons and the multi-level, 75 million-year-old Dinosaur Mountain, complete with animatronic animals and powerful waterfall. Second floor: an exceptional exhibit of exquisite Native American artwork fashioned from beads, bones, yarn, leather, grasses and shells.



Downtown Mesa — Thanks to the Central Main Plan, enacted in 2012 by the Mesa City Council, Mesa’s urban core has experienced a revival. The **Valley Metro Light Rail** runs down the center of a well-appointed thoroughfare that includes new restaurants, shops, breweries, outdoor amphitheater, performing and arts complex, and academic center for Arizona State University students.

Organ Stop Pizza — This Mesa icon (opened 1975) features the multi-talented organist Glenn Tallar who makes seats rumble and walls vibrate when he goes full-throttle on the Mighty Wurlitzer. The largest of its kind in the world (6,000 pipes powered by four huge turbine blowers), the organ also delivers an impressive light show. Tallar’s repertoire includes pop songs, show tunes, movie scores and patriotic pomp and circumstance. Menu includes gluten-free pizza. Jalapeno Bucks in Mesa is a favorite of locals who come for the signature salsas and barbecue sauces. Fresh citrus is sold in season next door. Photo by Jerry Ondash

Agritourism — Mesa’s roots are in agriculture, and the popularity of fresh and locally sourced food has propelled the development of the area’s **Fresh Foodie Trail**. This includes “bougie-rustic”

Queen Creek Olive Mill — Arizona’s only working olive farm and mill. Visitors can enjoy a relaxed lunch under the covered, misted patio, then join an Olive Oil 101 class that explains the process of growing, harvesting and pressing olives, and how to discern high-quality olive oil from the mediocre. The farm has 7,000 trees on 100 acres. The market offers gourmet foods and (hooray) gelato. Multiple tables in an adjacent grove offer plenty of picnic tables.

Agritopia — Just southeast of downtown Mesa in Gilbert, nestled in the bend of the 202 Loop, is this 166-acre former homestead that has been parlayed into a planned community with space preserved for an urban farm (sells certified organic produce), restaurants, breweries, wineries and a market that sells locally handcrafted goods and foods. Wine for breakfast? **Garage East** has it. It’s citrusy, fizzy, refreshing. If barbecue is your thing, head for **Jalapeno Bucks**, immensely popular with locals who come for a fix of Bucks’ signature salsas and sauces. Fresh local citrus sold in season next door.

Family of drowning victim wants to see changes at Lake Pleasant

“The lake should be closed”
By [Kim Powell](#)
AZFamily.com
Published: May. 17, 2022 at 5:53 PM MST | Updated: 13 hours ago

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS 5) — The family of one of the four recent drowning victims at **Lake Pleasant** wants to see serious changes at the lake to prevent future tragedies. “Something needs to be done like closing the lake, paying people emotional damage, moral damage,” said Svetlana Aranbayeva. “Let’s say if you’re speeding on the road, and we don’t get a ticket, we don’t get punished, we’re never going to improve. The same thing here.”

Aranbayeva’s 20-year-old son, Neria, drowned at Lake Pleasant on April 24. The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office says Neria jumped off a boat and swam to the shore. While swimming back to the boat, he went underwater and never came back up. “This happened to someone who was following all the rules, who was

athletic, literally this shouldn’t have happened to him. He was young, he was healthy, there was nothing wrong with him,” said Irina Sulay, Neria’s sister.

Children under 12 years old are required to wear life jackets in the lake and on a boat. MCSO says there is zero tolerance when it comes to that law. However, for everyone else, they’re not required to wear a life jacket. If you’re on a boat, the vessel has to have enough life jackets for each person on board, but they do not need to be wearing them. “It seems we can’t do this enough for the public and there’s (sic) many questions--what can we do to prevent this? We’re doing it right now. We’re trying to give you guys the tools and the necessary information,” said Sgt. Joaquin Enriquez with MCSO’s Lake Patrol Division.

MCSO is sounding the alarm on water safety after the recent drownings at Lake Pleasant. “The last four weeks, we had four drownings, right behind me. That’s unheard of,” said MCSO Detective Rob Marske. “Drownings are preventable. I don’t care what anyone says, but they are preventable and if these individuals were wearing a life jacket, they’d be with us today.”

However, Neria’s family says it’s not that simple. They want to see more oversight on the lake. “Some kind of maybe supervision, or whatever rules would be, so people would know there is a very dangerous lake and they should not jump in the water, things would be different,” said Aranbayeva. “Because there’s no price to pay, they only make money. Things are never going to change.”

Aranbayeva believes the lake should be closed as its already taken too many lives. “I personally think the lake should be closed because



something mystic in this lake happens. It just swallows. The water just swallows people," Aranbayeva said.

Sulay also says boat rentals should require a certification or boating license. She wonders if that could have saved her brother. "They gave these boats to young children who didn't know what they were doing. We don't even know what exactly happened there," Sulay explained. "Had they known how to operate the boat properly, would they have been able to come save him on time?"

MCSO says they patrol the lakes in Maricopa County every day. They also lend life jackets out to boaters or water users if they do not have enough onboard.

5 deaths in 4 weeks: Maricopa County Sheriff's Office urges lake safety as Memorial Day approaches

Haleigh Kochanski
Arizona Republic
May 17, 2022

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is now urging Arizonans to practice water safety at lakes in preparation for Memorial Day weekend after Lake Pleasant's fourth drowning of the year.

"Drownings are preventable. If these individuals were wearing a life jacket, they'd be with us today," said Detective Rob Marske with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. "**Lake Pleasant**, all of our lakes here, are large open bodies of water. What we're seeing in these drownings are young men that traditionally think they're better swimmers than what they are."



Throughout April and May, five people died at Lake Pleasant.

On April 24, the body of Neria Aranbayev, 20, was recovered after he went underwater and never resurfaced in the Agua Fria area at Lake Pleasant.

Deputies also found the body of a **man who was swimming** at Lake Pleasant and didn't resurface on May 2.

On May 8, Rosario Benitez, 83, died after she was **thrown from a boat at Lake Pleasant**. On the day of the incident, several other people were also thrown from their boats due to harsh waves caused by windy conditions.

An **18-year-old man was swimming** near Sunset Ridge at Lake Pleasant on May 15 when he went under the water and didn't resurface.

Tehanah Smith, 32, died at a hospital after her leg was amputated in a boating accident at Lake Pleasant on May 21.

In February, Arimus Nazareth, 22, and his 14-year-old brother **died of hypothermia** after their canoe flipped near Waddell Dam in Lake Pleasant.

According to Marske, two of the drownings happened near the shore. Both young men drowned about 100 feet apart. One was in 19 feet of water and the other was in 26 feet of water.

Marske said that the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is

encouraging people to take swimming classes and prepare for a day at the lake.

"I want to stress that this is not a life-saving device," said Marske, holding up a circular floatie. "Way too many people are bringing these out to the lake to float on and treat it as a life-saving device. It is a toy. These are super thin and are meant for your backyard pool."

In addition, Marske said that the Sheriff's Office is appropriately staffed out on patrol boats to enforce boating laws.



"As far as being more proactive, I don't know what more we can do," Marske said. "I think the more of the issue is at home, before you come out here and in preparation. People think they're better swimmers than what they are."

The Drowning Prevention Coalition of Arizona has partnered with the Ryan Thomas Foundation and Arizona Game and Fish Department for a **lifejacket loaner program**, which was created to make lifejackets available lakeside at 18 kiosks statewide.

The program will offer stations located near the dock of each lake and will allow boaters to use a life vest from the loaner station and return it at the end of the day.

Sgt. Joaquin Enriquez with Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said that Memorial Day weekend is the busiest time of year for lakes in Arizona.



"We will be citing for anybody not wearing a life jacket, Coast Guard approved, that's 12 years and under," Enriquez said. "We will be doing boat checks on the water. Honestly, it's to keep everybody safe. Alcohol enforcement will be done on the water."

For swimmers, Maricopa County Parks and Recreations advise these [safety tips](#):

- Always swim with a partner. Swimming alone can be unsafe.
- Never leave young children unattended near water, and do not ask another child to supervise your children near water.
- Avoid distractions when supervising children near water.
- If a child goes missing, always check the water first.
- Non-swimmers and inexperienced swimmers should always wear a life jacket or personal flotation device.
- Protect your skin. While you're busy cooling off and having fun in the water, your skin is also soaking in the sun. Apply and reapply sunscreen frequently.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses to keep the sun off of your face and out of your eyes.
- Drink plenty of water regularly, even if you're not thirsty, to avoid dehydration. Just because you're floating in a cove of water does not mean your skin is absorbing enough to maintain your bodies water levels. Avoid drinks with caffeine and alcohol in them.

Rescuers recover missing swimmer's body at Lake Pleasant

By KTVK KPHO Staff
May 16, 2022

LAKE PLEASANT, Arizona (KTVK, KPHO) — Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies were able to recover the body of a swimmer who went missing at Lake Pleasant late Sunday afternoon. Authorities were called out around 5 p.m. after someone reported a possible drowning at Sunset Ridge on the south side of the lake.

MCSO Sgt. Calbert Gillett says investigators believe an 18-year-old man was swimming when he went under and didn't resurface. Later that night, search team divers were able to recover his body but officials provided no other details. The name of the victim has not been released.

It's the fourth week of deadly accidents in the water at Lake Pleasant. Last week, a man in his 20 resurfaced near Jet Ski Point and late last month, a 20-year-old who went swimming was found 21 feet below the water's surface on the lake.

Please note: This content carries a strict local market embargo. If you share the same market as the contributor of this article, you may not use it on any platform.

MCSO divers recover body of 18-year-old from Lake Pleasant

May 16, 2022, 8:42 AM
KTAR



(Facebook Photo/Lake Pleasant Regional Park)

PHOENIX – Authorities have recovered the body of swimmer who went under at Lake Pleasant near Peoria on Sunday.

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said Monday divers found the body of an 18-year-old man in the evening.

He was reported missing shortly before 5 p.m. the previous day in the Sunset Ridge area on the lake's south side, deputies said in an email.

The teenager went into the water but didn't resurface, witnesses said.

Body of 18-year-old missing swimmer recovered after 'possibly drowning' at Lake Pleasant

Haleigh Kochanski, Arizona Republic - May 16
MSN

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said an 18-year-old was missing after "possibly drowning" near Sunset Ridge at Lake Pleasant on Sunday night.



© Roger Naylor/Special for the RepublicLake Pleasant Regional Park

Deputies responded to the area around 5 p.m. where they learned that an 18-year-old man was swimming, went under and didn't resurface.



Divers with Maricopa County Sheriff's Office were able to recover the body of the missing swimmer Sunday night. His name was not released.

There have been three deaths within a short timeframe at Lake Pleasant.

On May 8, Rosario Benitez, 83, died after she was thrown from a boat at Lake Pleasant.

On April 24, the body of Neria Aranbayev, 20, was recovered after he went underwater and never resurfaced in the Agua Fria area at Lake Pleasant. Deputies also found the body of a man who was swimming at Lake Pleasant and didn't resurface on May 2.

Searchers recover 18-year-old man's body at Lake Pleasant

Associated Press
May 16, 2022
KOVA



FILE — **Lake Pleasant Regional Park** - Large outdoors recreation area straddling the Maricopa and Yavapai county border northwest of Phoenix, Arizona.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park PEORIA, Ariz. (AP) — Authorities have located the body of an 18-year-old man who went missing while swimming at Lake Pleasant.

AZFamily.com reported Monday that Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies recovered the body, making it the fourth fatality in the past month at the lake.

They were called around 5 p.m. Sunday about a possible drowning on the lake's south side at Sunset Ridge.

A sheriff's spokesman says the man suddenly went under and never resurfaced.

A team of divers worked into the night but initially weren't able to find him. His name has not been released. In the past month, an elderly woman and two men in their 20s died in water-related incidents.

4 drownings in 4 weeks: Maricopa County Sheriff's Office urges lake safety as Memorial Day approaches

Haleigh Kochanski
Arizona Republic
May 17, 2022

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office is now urging Arizonans to practice water safety at lakes in preparation for Memorial Day weekend after Lake Pleasant's fourth drowning of the year.

"Drownings are preventable. If these individuals were wearing a life jacket, they'd be with us today," said Detective Rob Marske with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. "Lake Pleasant, all of our lakes here, are large open bodies of water. What we're seeing in these drownings are young men that traditionally think they're better swimmers than what they are."



An 18-year-old man was swimming near Sunset Ridge at Lake Pleasant on Sunday when he went under the water and didn't resurface.

On May 8, Rosario Benitez, 83, died after she was thrown from a boat at Lake Pleasant. On the day of the incident, several other people were also thrown from their boats due to harsh waves caused by windy conditions.

On April 24, the body of Neria Aranbayev, 20, was recovered after he went underwater and never resurfaced in the Agua Fria area at Lake Pleasant.

Deputies also found the body of a man who was swimming at Lake Pleasant and didn't resurface on May 2.

In February, Arimus Nazareth, 22, and his 14-year-old brother died of hypothermia after their canoe flipped near Waddell Dam in Lake Pleasant.

The program will offer stations located near the dock of each lake and will allow boaters to use a life vest from the loaner station and return it at the end of the day. Sgt. Joaquin Enriquez with Maricopa County Sheriff's Office said that Memorial Day weekend is the busiest time of year for lakes in Arizona.

"We will be citing for anybody not wearing a life jacket, Coast Guard approved, that's 12 years and under," Enriquez said. "We will be doing boat checks on the water. Honestly,



it's to keep everybody safe. Alcohol enforcement will be done on the water."

Safety tips for lakegoers

For swimmers, Maricopa County Parks and Recreations advise these **safety tips**:

Always swim with a partner.

Swimming alone can be unsafe.

Never leave young children unattended near water, and do not ask another child to supervise your children near water.

Avoid distractions when supervising children near water.

If a child goes missing, always check the water first.

Non-swimmers and inexperienced swimmers should always wear a life jacket or personal flotation device.

Protect your skin. While you're busy cooling off and having fun in the water, your skin is also soaking in the sun. Apply and reapply sunscreen frequently.

Wear a hat and sunglasses to keep the sun off of your face and out of your eyes.

Drink plenty of water regularly, even if you're not thirsty, to avoid dehydration. Just because you're floating in a cove of water does not mean your skin is absorbing enough to maintain your bodies water levels. Avoid drinks with caffeine and alcohol in them.

"We want everybody to have fun, don't get me wrong. But at the same time, we want everybody to get home and we want to avoid these tragedies," Enriquez said. "This Memorial Day weekend, be safe, make smart choices and don't come out here doing things you wouldn't do on any other day."

Reach breaking news reporter

Haleigh Kochanski

at hkochanski@arizonarepublic.com or on Twitter [@HaleighKochans](https://twitter.com/HaleighKochans).

Agencies break ground on Vulture

Mountains Recreation Area

May 10, 2022 11:00 PM

Wickenburg Sun

In 2019, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors and Bureau of Land Management signed a lease agreement allowing the Parks and Recreation Department to enter into a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) lease with the BLM Hassayampa Field Office. Under the lease, the parks department manages approximately 1,046 acres of public lands within a much larger BLM designated recreation area near Wickenburg.

"The lease allows for the construction and operation of recreation facilities, including a park entry station, parking, picnic and campground facilities, nature-themed playground, restrooms, trailheads and trails, a nature center, and an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) staging area in the **Vulture Mountains Recreation Area**," said Maricopa County Board of Supervisor Clint Hickman, District 4. "However, before we can begin construction on the recreational phase of the project, several other improvements must occur in the area."

Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will begin Phase I of the multiphase project. Over the next year and a half, MCDOT will construct park roadways, realign Vulture Mine Road and help to bring limited utilities to the area. Much of the work will be done adjacent to the roadway and will have minimal impact on vehicles traveling through the area.

"We are excited to be part of this collaboration that will connect residents and visitors to this recreational area," said Maricopa County Department of

Transportation Director Jennifer Toth. "Please know, safety is our number one priority. As we begin construction, drive safely and be aware of workers, trucks and equipment on Vulture Mine Road." R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department director, added, "Once MCDOT has completed Phase I, we will move into Phase II and III, which focuses on day-use and camping facilities. This project has been in the works for nearly two decades with several government agencies, the town, chamber, various stakeholders, and local community members providing guidance. While we have begun moving forward on Phase I, we are also focused on securing funding for additional phases."

To learn more about the roadway project, visit the Maricopa County Department of Transportation's roadway website at www.maricopa.gov/5807/Vulture-Mountains-Recreation-Area. Updates on facilities and recreational services being developed by Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department can be found at VultureMountainsRecreationAreaParkProjects.

The 20 Best Things To Do in Casa Grande, Arizona

Lily Wordsmith, Money Inc.
May 10, 2022

Casa Grande is a lovely city on your way from Tucson to [Phoenix](#), It marks the approximate halfway point if you're traveling from one city to the other. It's a popular tourist destination in the [state of Arizona](#) with the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument and other local attractions. If you're planning a trip to Casa Grande, whether on business, to visit family, or on vacation, the moderate-sized city has a lot to offer visitors. We've put



together a list of the twenty best things to do in Casa Grande so you don't miss out on a good time and making lifetime memories.

20. Visit the Domes of Casa Grande
The Domes of Casa Grande is a group of buildings in interesting shapes, erected by InnerConnTechnology Incorporated in 1983. The company produced computer circuit boards. It's a site that you can view from a distance, but visitors are not allowed to go inside the complex. The site has a rich history and it is rumored to be a place where satanic worship rituals were held. You can see the futuristic ruins of the old complex with fascinating graffiti and murals that comprise the street art that the attraction is best known for.

19. Play golf at Francisco Grande
If you're a golfer and you've dreamed of playing at a legendary course, Francisco Grande is one of the most iconic in Arizona. You'll find the course in the center of the city of Cas Grande. It's a lovely golf course that attracted many famous golfers including John Wayne, a legendary film star. At the course, you can play on the 7,400-yard course with more than 1,500 mature trees and three lakes. It's an oasis in the desert that offers golfing on a premium course, dining at the Legends Restuarant, or cocktails at Duke's Lounge, named for the film star. You can also enjoy a full-body massage with an herbal body wrap and other spa services.

18. Enjoy an afternoon at the Pinal County Fairgrounds and Events Center
The Pinal County Fairgrounds and Event Center is a great place to visit to attend the many cultural and social events held there. The Fairgrounds and Event Center hosts numerous agricultural events and workshops with educational activities for everyone in the family.

It's the venue for the Pinal County Fair, the Arizona Classic Jackpot & Farm Show, the Agri-County Bluegrass Festival, and the Lantern Fest. It's a good idea to visit the website in advance of your visit to learn more about what's going on during the time of your stay in Casa Grande.

17. Tour Caywood Farms
Caywood Farms is a farming business in Casa Grande that has been in operation as a family farm for four generations. They welcome visitors and are happy to show you how they raise their crops of cotton and prepare the crop for production. They provide fun and educational tours of the farm with presentations, a demonstration of cotton picking, a hayride, and allowing visitors to pick cotton to take home as a souvenir. They also offer a barbecue, pumpkin carving, face painting, and corn trails.

16. Play the Mission Royale Golf Club
The Mission Royale Golf Club is another [iconic course for golfers](#) to enjoy. It's the creation of designer Greg Nash. It's a combination 18-hole golf course with other amenities including the Mission Royale Pro Shop, offering rental clubs, carts practice balls, and professional PGA golf instructors offering private lessons. You can also enjoy a meal at Hogan's Restaurant. Golfers of all skill levels from beginner to pro are welcome at the Mission Royale Golf Club.

15. Visit the Western Trading Post
If you want to take a step back in time, The Western Trading Post is an attraction you won't want to miss. It's located in the historic district of Casa Grande and goes back to its establishment in 1877. Tour the family-owned and operated museum to see the collectibles and antiques from Native American Indians, the southwestern region of the old west,

and cowboy memorabilia. It's a retail store that offers these priceless items for sale to take souvenirs of your trip home with you. The Western Trading Post also sponsors a monthly live auction that you can attend in-person or online.

14. See the Neon Sign Park
The Neon Sign Park is another popular attraction in Casa Grande. The park displays restored neon signs once displayed decades ago. It gives you an overview of the history of Casa Grande from the mid-century with educational components. It's a collection of neon signs that were used to advertise businesses on Highway 48. It's like taking a peek into the past. If you're a neon sign collector this park is a must-see. You'll find an old Dairy queen sign, and signs from Valley National Bank, Arizona Edison, The Sacaton Hotel, and many others. The park opens early in the mornings until 11 pm so you can catch a glimpse of the signs lit up during the nighttime.

13. Visit the Museum of Casa Grande
The Museum of Casa Grande is a great place to visit if you have a few hours to spare. It takes visitors back to the early days of Casa Grande. The museum was founded in 1964. It's loaded with memorabilia that details the history of Casa Grande with photos, artifacts, and documents. It chronicles the history of the city and shows visitors how the city evolved from its humble beginnings. Many of the 50,000 items go back to prehistoric times, found in archaeological expeditions and digs. The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday. It opens at noon and closes at 4 pm.

12. Visit the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument
The Casa Grande Ruins National Monument is a prehistoric structure that is carved into the desert by



ancient people from the Sonoran Desert. It's one of the oldest known manmade structures in Arizona. The Ruins is an unforgettable visit that features a look into the history of the widespread trade connections and an irrigation farming system. The prehistoric site was where people gathered to trade and connect until 1450 AD. It gives us a look into the life of ancient Sonoran Desert People. You can visit the Ruins from Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 am to 4 pm. It's filled with educational outdoor activities and a Junior Ranger Program.

11. Spend the day at the Palm Island Family Aquatics Park
If you're in Casa Grande with the family, one of the most enjoyable things to do on a hot day is to visit the Palm Island Family Aquatics Park. The Park offers a zero-depth entry pool with spray devices, lovely fountains, a two-story slide, and many more amenities. The Park also offers swimming camps and classes for beginners. It's a great way to cool off from the Arizona heat and have fun while doing so. The [aquatic center](#) is also available for rental if you want to hold a private event.

10. Visit the Paramount Theatre
The Paramount Theatre is one of the city's most popular attractions. It's operated by the Paramount Foundation. You'll enjoy the Egyptian them of the theater with seating for small crowds. It's the premier venue for music in Casa Grande, centrally located in the downtown area near some of the best restaurants and eateries. The theater is a cozy venue that sponsors a broad range of nationally touring musical acts. It's a great place to go for an evening of musical entertainment and relaxation.

9. Catch a movie at Harkins Casa Grande 14
If you're running out of things to do and you want to catch a movie, one

of the best theaters in the state is the Harkins Casa Grande 14. It's a good-sized venue that offers fourteen auditoriums to accommodate movie-goers. The theater offers a choice of fourteen first-run feature films with high-quality digital projection and sound for a thrilling viewing experience. Additionally, the theater offers Ultimate Rocker seats, 3D movies, and stadium seating. There's a generously sized snack bar to get your food and drinks before the movie starts.

8. Burn some calories at the Cotton Bowl
The Cotton Bowl is a popular hangout for local bowlers. The Cotton Bowl is a combination bowling alley with an entertainment center. It's known for hosting tournaments, but they also offer open bowling to visitors. It's an entertainment venue that frequently hosts live music and other special events. It also has a bar to get your favorite adult beverages.

7. Tour the Rooster Cogburn Ostrich Ranch
The Rooster Cogburn Ostrich Ranch offers fun for the entire family. It's an ostrich ranch that features a host of other animals that children and adults can feed and pet. The venue also offers monster truck tours to learn about the massive ostrich ranch and how it works.

6. Visit the Casa Grande Art Museum
The Casa Grande Art Museum is a lovely way to spend an afternoon relaxing and soaking in the beauty of the works of local artists. The building was once a family residence, built-in 1929. It houses the works of artists from Arizona, including a sculpture garden.

5. Spend a day at Picacho Peak State Park
Picacho Peak State Park offers a respite from the busy city in a

relaxed, natural environment. Picacho Peak is in the Picacho Peak State Park. It's one of the most prolific landmarks in the region. If you enjoy hiking, there are plenty of well-maintained trails to walk. The venue occasionally offers cultural and civic events like a Civil War Battle Re-enactment.

4. Catch a flick at the UltraStar Multi-tainment Center at Ak-Chin Circle
Maricopa is a short drive from Casa Grande. The Ultra Star is a combination movie theater with 12 bays but there is so much more to enjoy there. The venue is also the home of a laser tag arena, an arcade, and a bowling alley. You can also dine at one of the five restaurants on the premises.



3. Visit the **San Tan Mountain Regional Park**
The San Tan Mountain Regional Park offers ten thousand acres of lovely outdoor views and hiking trails. It's an exceptional place to go to get away from the crowds. The wildlife division of the park provides educational opportunities about the local wildlife. It's a place where everyone in the family can unwind, relax, and get close to nature.

2. Ride horses at D Ranch
While enjoying the San Tan Mountain Regional park, why not do it on horseback? The MD Ranch offers riding adventures through the local desert and mountain landscape. Guides work with novices to give them a crash course on horseback riding before the ride begins.



1. Visit the Pinal County Historical Museum
Nearby Florence offers an opportunity to learn about the history of Casa Grande and the local area. The museum was founded in 1959 to represent the history of Pinal County. The main focus is on the history of the local area with exhibits of Native American life through the centuries, along with other artifacts from prison and other notable features of the county.

Fire Ban Now in Desert Parks and Preserves

MAY 9, 2022 8:00 AM

The Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department will put into effect its annual ban of open fires in the city's desert parks and mountain preserves starting Sunday, May 1. **The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department's** annual fire ban goes into effect the same day.

In consultation with the Phoenix Fire Department, smoking and charcoal fires are included in the ban due to the extreme fire danger that the combination of low humidity, increased temperatures, excessive dry vegetation, and frequent high winds create each spring.

The ban applies to Camelback Mountain, Deem Hills Recreation Area, Lookout Mountain, Papago Park, Phoenix Mountains Park and Recreation Area, Phoenix Mountains Preserve, Phoenix Sonoran Preserve, North Mountain Park, Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area, and South Mountain Park/Preserve.

Glendale family recognized for brave act of

rescuing Lake Pleasant boaters in deadly incident

By [Nicole Garcia](#) and FOX 10 Staff
Published May 8, 2022
Updated May 17, 2022

Woman thrown from a boat on Lake Pleasant fighting for her life, authorities say

MARICOPA COUNTY, Ariz. - An 83-year-old woman died after a boating incident on **Lake Pleasant** on May 8, but those who did survive the incident were saved by a brave family who is now being recognized.

Kurt Walker with Peoria Fire and Medical says when crews arrived, they found a woman who had been thrown out of the boat from a "large wave from the wind." Others were thrown from the boat but she was the only person badly injured.

The woman was taken out of the water and loaded onto a rescue boat. She was then taken to the hospital in very critical condition, Walker says. She died not long after and her name is Rosario Benitez and family says she was visiting from Mexico.

This marked the third week in a row that crews responded to Lake Pleasant for a serious incident.

Prior to this incident, **20-year-old Neria Aranbayev** was found on the night of April 24, about 21 feet below the surface of Lake Pleasant. **A week later, on May 1**, an unidentified man's body was found 25-feet underwater near Jet Ski Point.

'Who knows what would've happened'

Glendale family recognized for brave act of rescuing Lake Pleasant boaters in deadly incident

Weeks later, a Glendale family is being recognized for their efforts in helping to rescue three others incident, while trying to rescue Benitez before she passed away.

An off-duty Glendale Fire Captain and his family were enjoying Mother's Day evening on their pontoon boat when they happened to come upon the science. All six of the family members jumped into action and on May 17, they were each honored by the Peoria Fire and Medical Department.

"While visiting Lake Pleasant, you immediately responded to an adult in the water who was not breathing. You immediately responded while putting yourself in danger knowing the victim needed help," said the Peoria Fire Chief.

The two men in the Valverde family are first responders and put their skills to use after a boat ride turned into a rescue.

"They took a big wave on, knocked her off. The way she was positioned in the boat, her leg was entangled, and she couldn't keep her head above water. She was wearing a flotation device, but it was pushed up because of the current," said Anthony Valverde, a Glendale Fire Captain. "We all grabbed a piece of her body and held on to her until the fireboat got there, and we were able to pass her off."

Christian Valverde with the Buckeye Fire Department adds, "I was on the floor hanging over the boat, just holding her arms. So just kind of trying to keep her up in that safe area."

Peoria Fire officials say it was extremely windy that day, calling it white cap conditions and the waves were ferocious. They were able to keep the woman's head above water until the on-duty rescue boat arrived.



The three survivors were taken to shore on the Valverdes' boat.

Devastated and terrified, Micaela Valverde calmed the victims who spoke Spanish and helped them communicate with investigators.

"I'm glad we were able to help the rest of them because they were in a really small boat, taking in a lot of water and who knows what would've happened if we hadn't come around that corner and saw them," Micaela said.

83-year-old dies after being thrown from boat at Lake Pleasant

An 83-year-old woman and several others were thrown from their boat due to waves at Lake Pleasant Sunday night.

By: [Kasey Brammell](#)

Posted at 9:06 PM, May 08, 2022 and last updated 7:05 PM, May 10, 2022

PEORIA — An 83-year-old woman and several others were thrown from their boat due to waves at **Lake Pleasant** Sunday night.

Officials say the woman was taken to the hospital with life-threatening injuries after being rescued by other boaters.

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office confirmed the woman, Rosario Benitez, died from her injuries later Sunday night.

This is the third drowning call at Lake Pleasant in the last three weeks.

No other injuries have been reported.

The incident is currently under investigation.

Top new home builders in Phoenix

Michelle McNally May 6, 2022



Photo: [Dreamframer](#) / [Adobe Stock](#)

When shopping for a new construction property, your first steps in the process will likely involve narrowing down a list of new home builders that fit your wants and needs.

Luckily, [Phoenix](#) provides a number of reputable, national home builders that offer new properties in a variety of price ranges, sizes and styles.

Phoenix is [one of the fastest-growing cities](#) in the United States. According to the Census Bureau, Arizona's capital city welcomed more than 160,000 new people over the past 10 years as the population soared 11.2 percent from 1.4 million people in 2010 to 1.6 million in 2020. With the population growing at the quickest pace compared to America's other big cities, the Valley of the Sun is officially the fifth-biggest urban center in the U.S. As more residents move to the desert city, more new homes will undoubtedly need to be built.

According to the latest data from [Livabl](#), there are more than 50 new home developments in Phoenix that are planned, under construction or newly completed. Several of these projects are townhouse or single-family homes, and have a median list price per square foot of \$177.

Many of the new home communities within Phoenix's neighborhoods are located around some of the city's acclaimed parklands and preserves. [Estrell](#), for example, is situated between **Estrella Mountain Regional Park** and the South Mountain Park and Preserve, and has seven new home communities. Meanwhile, in the northern region of Phoenix, the [Desert View](#) neighborhood has six single-family home projects under development, and is adjacent to the Phoenix Sonoran Preserve.

Whether you want to live close to hiking trails or the interstate for easy commuting, there are many communities and builders to choose from in Phoenix. Here, we've compiled a list of 11 new home builders you'll find in Phoenix, as well as some of the developments they offer.

All data and information used can be directly sourced from [Livabl](#) and the builders.

Tierra Montana Discovery Collection



Photo: Taylor Morrison, Tierra Montana Discovery Collection via BuzzBuzzHome
Address: 11608 South 53rd Avenue
Price range: \$466,990 to over \$578,990
Home sizes: 1,579 to 2,974 square feet
For park lovers, the Tierra Montana Discovery Collection is centrally located between South Mountain Park and Preserve and Estrella Mountain Regional Park. In this community, these two- to six-bedroom homes feature two- or



three-car garages and 1,579 to 2,974 square feet of living space.

McClellan Ranch



Photo: Pulte Homes, McClellan Ranch via BuzzBuzzHome
Address: 6741 West Desert Lane
Price range: \$418,990 to over \$529,990
Home sizes: 1,480 to 2,821 square feet

This collection of one- and two-storey homes boasts views of the Sierra Estrella Mountains. Boasting a “light and airy environment,” these single-family homes lend access to multi-use trails, a gated dog park and playgrounds for the little ones. Buyers can pick from the Meadow or Cactus collection for various floor plan and styling options.

Annual fire ban now in effect

May 5, 2022
Fountain Hills Times

The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department initiated its annual fire ban on May 1.

“The department’s annual fire ban dates align with the county’s Air Quality Department burn activity regulations,” Department Director for Maricopa County Parks and Recreation, R.J. Cardin said. “Under these regulations, outdoor recreational fires are prohibited within Area A’s boundaries between May 1 and September 30. This area encompasses all of our regional parks.”

With nearly 60% of the state experiencing severe drought conditions, the vegetation in the parks is dry and ideal for wildfire ignition. As temperatures continue to rise, fuel levels such as dried grasses, brush and fallen leaves will increase.

According to Maricopa County Parks and Recreation, implementing a fire ban limits the possibility of starting a brush fire, which could cause severe damage to park resources, threaten park visitor safety and pose a danger to homes that are near many of the parks.

It is also important to note that during this time of year the National Weather Service often issues red flag warnings across central Arizona to alert land management agencies that conditions are ideal for wildfire ignition. Should this occur before the fire ban, park supervisors are authorized to issue temporary fire bans to ensure public safety and protect the park’s resources.

When temporary fire bans are issued, the information will be posted on the website, and visitors will be notified upon entry to the park. The parks will also stop selling firewood during this time.

The fire ban does not allow campfires, fire pits and charcoal grills, however, it is still acceptable to use gas/propane grills in designated areas such as the semi-developed and developed camping sites.

Campfires along the shoreline at Lake Pleasant Regional Park are prohibited. Those who violate the fire ban may be fined under Rule 314, Section 312.

Smoking in the parks is still permissible, although it is discouraged due to the extremely dry conditions. If you must smoke, be responsible and ensure that all

cigarettes are properly extinguished and placed in trash receptacles. While Sept. 30 is the traditional fire ban lift date, there is a possibility of an extension. Park staff will monitor precipitation levels and vegetation conditions in the parks throughout the summer to determine if an extension is necessary.

Contact the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department at 602-506-2930 or visit maricopacountyparks.net for additional information.

Here's the rest of the story about 1982

Alan Cruikshank, President
Fountain Hills Times
May 4, 2022

While the roads and talk of future government options dominated the 1982 headlines, there were many more news items that occurred that year and they are the topics of this week’s Fountain Hills History Lesson.

I was talking about the School District’s loss of Dr. Gary Prosper as the district superintendent. He took a position with Arizona State University. The School Board frantically sought a replacement for him. They also were deciding whether to hire a superintendent or a principal.

More than 350 students attended the elementary school, while 150 high school students were enrolled at Coronado High School in Scottsdale.

During 1982, the School Board was also initiating plans for possible expansion of the elementary school. Computer education classes were becoming increasingly popular, requiring the hiring of an additional instructor. Also being examined were programs for gifted students.



Rubik’s Cube mania hit Fountain Hills. Elementary students sponsored a competition.

Annual celebrations were all successful in 1982. More than 60,000 persons attended 8’s Great Fair in February. Another annual White Castle Day in May drew another 20,000, and 10,000 attended the fireworks show on the 4th of July. The eighth annual Fountain Festival of Arts and Crafts was called the “best ever” by artists and visitors alike. It drew 30,000 spectators.

Another special event that began in 1982 was Merchants Awareness Day. Held in the covered parking lot of MCO Properties, the Trade Show was an instant success. Local retail business owners often complained that they were scattered throughout the community. This event allowed them to show their products and services in one centralized location.

The event was continued by the Chamber as the Business Showcase when the two groups were merged in 1983.

The Merchants Association held a Christmas in July promotion in the summer of 1982, before the merger took place.

In January, Father Paul Slanina of the Fountain Hills Catholic Church of the Ascension, had an audience with Pope Paul II at the Vatican.

Martin Dawson, owner of Fountain Hills LP Gas, was installed as the 1982 president of the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce. Margaret Jeffrey was elected chairperson of the Fountain Hills Sanitary District Board of Directors, and Harold Dill was elected chairman of the Joint Powers Board of the Road Districts. Local State Farm agent, Mike Mayer, was elected chairman of the Fountain Hills Fire District.

Mayer had a knack for conducting the monthly meetings in short fashion. Rarely did a meeting last more than 15 minutes. The Road District meetings were at least two to three hours long.

Doug and Donna Katonak bought Doc’s Mexican restaurant in March and changed the name to Que Bueno.

Dedication of the newly expanded Fountain Hills Library was held in October. The former Model Home Center was converted into the library and an expansion of the building was built through donations of building blocks by the public and volunteer labor by local contractors. Builder Gil Knoll coordinated the construction and was named Fountain Hills Citizen of the Year.

In June, it was announced that a 3.73-mile section of road would be paved from Fountain Hills to **McDowell Mountain Regional Park**, creating the first section of road that would eventually lead to Fountain Hills access to Rio Verde. “This will provide much better access to the park,” Deputy County Engineer Francis Lathrop said at the time. “Right now, Fountain Hills residents that want to go to the park have to go to Shea and Scottsdale Road, then north on Scottsdale Road to Rio Verde.”

But not everyone was happy about the road. “It’s a shame to me that the county is building a useless road like this when the budget is supposedly to be so tight,” said resident Wendell Sherrman. “It’s the pits.” What he was referring to was with all the road problems Fountain Hills was having, the county funds would have been a big help.

That wraps up 1982. I’m going on a month-long vacation to New Jersey to see our East Coast grandkids. I’ll start talking about 1983 happenings when I get back.

Body found of man who went underwater while swimming at Lake Pleasant

By **Dani Birzer**, AZFamily
Published: May. 2, 2022 at 2:38 PM MST



The body of a man who never resurfaced while swimming Sunday afternoon in **Lake Pleasant** without a lifejacket was recovered near Jet Ski Point. (Arizona’s Family)

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS 5) - The body of a man who went underwater while swimming on Sunday at Lake Pleasant and never resurfaced was found Monday morning, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office. He was found around 10:15 a.m. 25 feet below the surface near Jet Ski Point.

MCSO says that they do not believe there was foul play involved. The body has not been identified yet, and deputies are still investigating. On Sunday, officials were called around 4 p.m. about a possible drowning. Deputies learned that a man in his early 20s went swimming in the lake, went underwater, but never resurfaced. He was not wearing a life jacket.

Last week, a 20-year-old went missing while swimming in the Agua Fria area of the lake. The body of Neria Aranbayez was found eventually 21 feet below the water’s surface.



Annual fire ban set to begin in Maricopa County, some Arizona national forests

May 1, 2022, 6:30

AM | Updated: May 2, 2022, 12:52 pm



(KTAR Photo/Jim Cross)
BY KTAR.COM

PHOENIX — As temperatures heat up across the state, city officials have put in place an annual fire ban in desert parks and preserves starting Sunday.

In effect from May 1 through Sept. 30, the fire ban includes the use of campfires, fire pits and charcoal grills.

The fire ban includes Camelback Mountain, Papago Park, South Mountain Park/Preserve and the Phoenix Mountain Preserve. It doesn't apply to city flatland parks.

"The department's annual fire ban dates align with the county's Air Quality Department burn activity regulations. Under these regulations, outdoor recreational fires are prohibited within Area A's boundaries between May 1 and September 30. This area encompasses all of our regional parks," R.J. Cardin, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department director, said in a press release.

Smoking is included in the ban on Phoenix parks and preserves but will still be allowed in county parks.

The bans go into effect due to the combination of low humidity, increased temperatures, dry vegetation and frequent high winds each spring brings on.

While both bans are in effect until Sept. 30, the bans could be extended.

Elsewhere, national forests in central and northern Arizona will soon be implementing Stage 1 fire restrictions, as will the Bureau of Land Management's Phoenix and Colorado River districts.

Starting at 8 a.m. on May 5, the Coconino, Kaibab (Williams and Tusayan ranger districts), Prescott, Tonto and Apache-Sitgreaves national forests will implement fire and smoking restrictions.

Under Stage 1 restrictions, fires, campfires, charcoal, coal and wood stoves are prohibited unless used within a developed recreation site, according to a press release. Fireworks are always prohibited.

Restrictions remain in effect until forest service officials determine conditions have changed enough to reduce the risk of human-caused wildfires.

Deputies searching for man who went underwater while swimming at Lake Pleasant

By [Dani Birzer](#), Arizona's Family
Published: May. 1, 2022 at 7:34 PM MST

PEORIA, AZ (3TV/CBS 5) - Lake Patrol deputies with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office are searching for a man who went underwater

while swimming at **Lake Pleasant** and never resurfaced Sunday afternoon.

According to MCSO, deputies were called around 4 p.m. about a possible drowning. Deputies arrived and learned a man in his early 20s was swimming in the lake and went underwater but never resurfaced. MSCO says the man wasn't wearing a life jacket. The search is ongoing. Additional information was not available.

A week ago, 20-year-old Neria Aranbayez went missing while swimming in the Agua Fria area of the lake. Aranbayev's body was eventually found 21 feet below the surface of the water.

Deputies find body of swimmer who went missing at Lake Pleasant

The man hasn't been identified yet, but police say he was swimming near the Sunset Ridge part of the lake when he went under.

Author: 12 News

Published: 6:54 PM MST May 1, 2022

Updated: 8:34 PM MST May 8, 2022

PEORIA, Ariz. — Deputies have recovered the body of a man who went missing while swimming at Lake Pleasant on Sunday, the [Maricopa County Sheriff's Office](#) said.

Deputies were able to recover the body of an adult male in approximately 25 feet of water in the area of Jet Ski Point at Lake Pleasant, according to MCSO.

The man hasn't been identified yet, but police say he was swimming near the Sunset Ridge part of the lake when he went under around 4 p.m. and never surfaced.



The man wasn't wearing a life vest, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. Deputies said there were no signs of foul play.

This is the second week in a row that a swimmer disappeared at the lake.

Last Sunday, [20-year-old Neria Aranbayev](#) was swimming in the Agua Fria area of the lake with a group of people. He swam to shore and tried to swim back to an anchored boat when he went under.

Aranbayev's body was found the following day.

This is a developing story. Stay with 12 News for the latest updates.

Drowning Prevention Tips:

Drowning is the leading cause of death for children between ages 1-4 aside from birth defects, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Three children die every day as a result of drowning. Here are some tips from the CDC on how to protect children around water:

- Learn life-saving skills.
- Everyone should know the basics of swimming (floating, moving through the water) and CPR.
- Fence it off.
- Install a four-sided isolation fence, with self-closing and self-latching gates, around backyard swimming pools. This can help keep children away from the area when they aren't supposed to be swimming. Pool fences should be completely separate from the house and play area from the pool.
- Life jackets are a must.
- Make sure kids wear life jackets in and around

natural bodies of water, such as lakes or the ocean, even if they know how to swim. Life jackets can be used in and around pools for weaker swimmers too.

- Keep a close watch
- When kids are in or near water (including bathtubs), closely supervise them at all times. Because drowning happens quickly and quietly, adults watching kids in or near water should avoid distracting activities like reading books, talking on the phone, or using alcohol and drugs.