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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 3, 2007
 To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
 From: R.J. Cardin, Director
 Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**



Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the July Director's Summary.

Budget

On June 18, 2007 the Board of Supervisors adopted the County Budget for FY07-08. This included the \$9,354,654 adopted for all of Parks & Recreation. This number is a little deceptive and should further be broken down as:

<u>Parks Operational Budget</u>	
General Fund	\$1,772,629
Spur Cross Conservation Area	692,638
Includes \$250,000 in capital development	
Lake Pleasant Regional Park	1,946,554
Includes \$335,000 for Sunset Ridge Road	
Enhancement Fund	2,864,913
An additional \$205,000 has been added since adoption for new revenue	<u>205,000</u>
Park budget total	\$7,481,734
Less one-time capital	<u>585,000</u>
Basic Operational budget	6,896,734

Other Revenues and Expenditures

Grants	1,794,770
Souvenir Fund	130,000
Donations	160,000
Event Center	63,000
Eliminations	<u>69,850</u>
	\$2,217,620

Many of our hard costs have increased over the past year, such as fuel and utility costs. We continue to monitor the need to keep up with the level of services we are used to providing, as well as to reach out for true Enhancement opportunities. The Systemwide Master Plan will be an opportunity to help direct some of our new revenues.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): The solar oasis project began this month with the excavation of the pool area with the assistance of Town of Cave Creek Public Works Department.

Staff continues to relocate cactus salvaged from the Regional Trail construction to various areas within the park.

With the assistance of the Town of Cave Creek, decomposed granite was placed around our pedestrian-equestrian entry point.

Staff is continuing to work with the Sierra Club with the restoration of the Ironwood Bosque plot.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: July's summary will be included in the August report due to the Park Supervisor being on vacation.

Cave Creek Regional Park: Staff and volunteers are holding limited fitness, early bird hikes and other activities since we are still short an Interpretive Ranger.

Channel 15 was at the park during the rescue of the four hikers, 2 parents and 2 children on July 7th. They were airlifted to the Mayo Hospital for observation and released.

Numerous maintenance projects have been completed; these items were identified with the Safety Inspection performed by Risk Management.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: McDowell held the second Mountain Bike by the Moon Light event. The combination of the maturation of the event and high temperatures brought out high numbers of riders. The ride attracted 139 riders from all over the valley and included men, women and children.

Brooke Disney began work at McDowell Mountain Regional Park as their Interpretive Ranger.

Rand Hubbell made a presentation to the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce's Monthly Breakfast to talk about the park, annual visitation, recreation opportunities and upcoming special events.

Park Supervisor met with the Fountain Hills Town Manager Tim Pickering to discuss the town's approach and intentions concerning a series of meetings requested by the Ellman Corporation. The Ellman Corporation purchased the two sections of the State Trust Land immediately south of the park. Both the town and the park will meet with the Ellman Corporation to discuss access to the park.

The new restroom, built as part of Phase 2 at the Competitive track at McDowell, was opened in early July. The restroom and bike wash are being well received by the mountain bikers.

In August, work will begin on final plans and building a wildlife viewing blind at the Pemberton Pond with a grant from Arizona Game and Fish Department.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: Enthusiastic visitors attended the "Hiking with the Stars" Moonlight Hike. The group was very social and interested in learning about the plant and animal life. We even discovered a few future park rangers in the group.

The Petroglyph Hike brought in willing hikers who braved the summer heat to see one of the unique petroglyphs at San Tan Mountain Regional Park.

Eager visitors participated in the Desert Tortoise Discovery program learning about the Desert Tortoises and watching them as they were released into the newly constructed habitat at San Tan. The program was designed to announce the tortoise arrival and provide visitors a chance to name the tortoises. Families stayed after for fun arts and crafts activities. As a special treat, they were shown a Sonoran Desert Toad that happened to pay a visit to the visitor center as it tried to see what the ruckus was about.

The Arizona State Trails nomination packets were completed for the San Tan, Moonlight and Goldmine trails.

Souvenir center display units are now set up in the San Tan visitor center.

Buckeye Hills Regional Park: The department is working on a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an organization to operate the public range when it opens in January 2008.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: The irrigation system at the park is doing very well with the addition of a new radio to improve communications between the park and the pumping station at the golf course. With this improvement, the system now waters only at night in order to conserve water. Estrella has had a relatively quiet month for visitation. However, every weekend still sees the baseball players brave the weather and continue league play.

Ranger Armstrong had a short spot run on the Channel 3 evening news for one of her children's programs. She continues to bring diverse family programming not offered anywhere else to the southwest valley.

Supervisor Wilcox came to Estrella along with her staff and brought volunteers to clean up a portion of the Gila River shoreline and part of the landscape along the main park road. The project was very successful. Many thanks to her and her staff for organizing this effort.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: From the 1.5 acre fire a year and a half ago by the Competitive Track, Park Maintenance workers have re-seeded the area in hopes that the monsoon and winter rains will sprout new plants.

Hikers have reported that some of the back country trail markers have been removed by vandals. The report indicated some of the new mile markers have been pulled out as well.

Summer projects continue as staff has been working on portable park signs and redoing some public information signs throughout the park. A Sonoran Desert Tortoise enclosure for public education is also being created.

The North property of White Tank Park had a terrible history of abuse from off road vehicles trash dumping and shooting. Four years ago park staff initiated a "Border and Property Protection Program". Park staff worked to identify and map the border and mark it with signs to create public awareness and to help break generations of old bad habits. Park staff partnered with State Trust Land officials and MCSO to educate and warn the public of violations. Two years ago the north border was fenced for the first time in 50 years. Astonishingly the fence has received very little damage in two years time. As housing developments have begun to surround the park the pressures, damage and fence cutting issues are now returning.

The Waterfall Trail remains closed as the trails and construction crew continue work on that trail.

The Arizona Game and Fish department is doing a deer migration study to evaluate the movement of deer in and out of the White Tank Mountain Range. There are corridors where the deer move heavily out of the cover of the mountains and feed along the washes. Most of the corridors on the west side of the park are to be built over by housing. There is a worry that if east side areas are also cut off by Jackrabbit Road or houses that in drought years the vitality of White Tank Mule Deer herd could be damaged.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Plans are in the works to start a park-sponsored, annual, amateur cook off to be held in the group campground. The competition menu will change each year. This year's cook off will be chili, stew, and desserts. This event is planned in lieu of the Autism BBQ Cook off held here last year, but is being held at Rawhide this year. Last year's event was a professional cook off and was very well attended.

The floating restroom has been installed in the Honeymoon Cove area for the public as well as guests of the Desert Outdoor Center.

Desert Outdoor Center: On July 12 the Boy Scout "Lake Pleasant Camp" ended its 5-week program for aquatics merit training and 1-week "Trail to Eagle" camp. A total of 180 Scouts attended the aquatics camp and 47 attended the Eagle camp (total 227). A de-briefing meeting next month will explore marketing and outreach strategies that need to be revised to enhance attendance.

Vulture Mountain Regional Park: Still in a holding pattern pending Bureau of Land Managements review of Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. They are having their legal department in Washington, D.C. review the Act to determine the impacts it may have on the management use agreement.

Marketing Update

Media - July 16 – Staff spent the morning providing Arizona Republic editorial writer, Kathleen Ingley, with a tour of the Agua Fria conservation area. Story will run in print and on www.azcentral.com (with a slide show).

July 11 – The crew from Good Morning Arizona (Brad Perry and Scott Pasmore) joined the staff at Lake Pleasant Regional Parks for the morning show (5 a.m. to 9 a.m.). The show featured three segments hosted by staff. The segments focused on water safety, the Pleasant Paddlers Program, and the Pack-It-In/Pack-It-Out campaign. Live shots aired every 15 minutes.

Website – Parks has added a “What's Happening in the Parks” section on the home page. This section features linkable photos to upcoming events.

Contract Updates

Paradise Valley - Bow Tie Property: Parks entered into an agreement through the County Real Estate Division and Meadow Valley Contractors, Inc. They are a contractor for the SR51 HOV Project. Meadow Valley Contractors, Inc. desires to use the land for staging of a concrete plant. The contractor will pay Parks \$20,000; conduct weed control; and restore the property upon completion in approximately 12 months.

Casey at the Bat: A Pre-Proposal Conference is scheduled for August 7th as part of the RFP process for the selection of a concessionaire to operate, manage and maintain the existing concession effective 2008.

The Board of Supervisors approved Amendment One to an IGA between County and the Board of Regents on behalf of Northern Arizona University to extend the basic Agreement until September 30, 2007. The Agreement permitted the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University to implement and analyze burn area management at Cave Creek Regional Park.

Grant Updates

McDowell Mountain Regional Park - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has entered into a Private Lands Agreement with McDowell Mountain Regional Park. They are joint participants in a Wildlife Management Program for Native Fish Refugias at Nursery and Pemberton Pond. Pemberton Pond will have educational outreach signs designed and placed at the pond and vegetation will be added. Both ponds will eventually be stocked with Desert Pupfish and Gila topminnow fish. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will contribute \$3,000. Parks and Recreation will provide the match in labor and materials of \$2,800. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$5,800.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

We are currently recruiting for the following positions, Park Office Assistant (Bi-lingual English/Spanish) at Estrella Mountain Regional Park and an Electrician with the Construction/Trails Headquarters.

Interviews were held on August 1st and 2nd for the Procurement Specialist at Headquarters.