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MEMORANDUM

Date: January 31, 2007
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners
From: William C. Scalzo, Director *WCS*
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

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

Superintendent Report

Desert Outdoor Center: Staff coordinated with the Boy Scouts of America to plan the summer aquatics education program, focusing on equipment, staff needs, and seeking watercraft and other aquatic supplies donations. Communication with Tempe Parks and Recreation continue to lead in the direction of potential cooperative joint aquatics programming based out of the DOC.

At a meeting in January APS expressed its intent to continue supporting the DOC by funding our "Earth Energy" class (\$5,000 annually), and signage/displays that are part of our passive education efforts.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: The White Tank Entry Station has walls and roof framing. The septic tank is in and the evapotranspiration (ET) bed is being built at the end of January.

Attendance is up 16%, many hikers have been taking advantage of the cool, but sunny weather.

The White Tank Park Interpretive program is going strong with 42 public programs in December and January combined. The public is further serviced with several outreach programs, private group programs and multiple daily "mini" programs in the Visitor Center.

The New Restroom at Area # 7 has a floor, walls and most of the roof completed.

The cool weather brought people out who test the boundaries of the park with off road vehicles. Several fence repairs have been made on the 7 mile long fence on the east boundary and the 9 mile long fence on the north boundary.

This year, more people have discovered that White Tank is a great place to camp. Camping revenue has increased 18% over last year, year to date.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: January has been a busy month for park projects. The office remodel is now in full swing and making good progress thanks to the outstanding work of the park hosts.

The shade structures for the park playgrounds are complete and the new park entrance station has walls, roof and the beginning of an interior. The staff is looking forward to its completion. The end of January should see the completion of the park's irrigation system project. Staff will be trained on the new computerized watering system to ensure that Estrella's turf area is green once again.

Park programming has been going very well with both public and requested programming. Interpretive Ranger, Patricia Armstrong, recently conducted a well-received program for 30 home school children. On January 20, the park was pleased to welcome both Rich Glinski and Liberty Wildlife for an outstanding program on eagles and other raptors as part of National Bald Eagle Appreciation Day.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: ADA Compliance Projects - The maintenance staff is in the process of installing ADA van accessible parking spaces and signage at Cottonwood Day Use area, four lane parking lot and at the Operations Center.

Table Mesa /Agua Fria - The park supervisor, maintenance supervisor, park designer and interpretive ranger conducted a site visit at Table Mesa. The visit was to identify the park boundary and to determine future operations of the area. Discussions with the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, State Trust Lands and Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department are in the process to determine the appropriate recreational activities as well as controlled access to the area.

On January 24th, the Maintenance/Nav-Aid Supervisor, Bob Cooper, attended the Signing Ceremony for the Conservation Agreement for the Bald Eagle Program held at the Phoenix Zoo. Over the past several years the Lake Pleasant staff has been part of the Southwestern Bald Eagle Management Committee and has developed a strong partnership with Arizona Game and Fish Department to ensure the success of the long-term conservation of the bald eagle in Arizona.

The Events Coordinator, Ruth McCormick, has been extremely busy scheduling events for 2007. The Dam, Good Run, Walk and Hike is back by popular demand and is scheduled for April 1st at 9:00 a.m. Participants have the opportunity to download the online application from our website.

Skipper Marine extended an invitation to the Park to share a booth at the Arizona Boat Show held January 24th - 28th. Ruth will be in attendance throughout the show distributing Park information.

Staff has been coordinating a Welcome Weekend with the Bradshaw Coalition for February 10. The Coalition along with Maricopa County Sheriffs Office will be educating the OHV operators on the legal areas to stage and ride.

Telecom is in the process of installing additional phone lines at the main entry station to allow credit card payment capability.

Cave Creek Mountain Regional Park: The campground at Cave Creek is at capacity regularly. The Contact Station is progressing well and the roof is now on. The cold spell froze and broke many water lines at Cave Creek and Adobe Dam Regional Parks.

Cave Creek Park Supervisor position and Office Assistant recruitments are open and hopefully will be filled shortly. Mark Lansing, who is acting Park Supervisor, will be recognized for his 30-years of service with the County at the Board of Supervisors on February 21, 2007; Mark will be retiring in April.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: Interviews were conducted for park maintenance worker and the interpretive ranger in January. Two park maintenance worker positions and the ranger position were successfully filled.

The Wildlife Viewing Area project with the AZ Game and Fish grant has begun. The pond is being constructed by a certified aquascape contractor and will be completed in February. Wildlife viewing blinds and benches will be the next step, as will be the kiosks.

The park hosts and park supervisor conducted 16 interpretive programs in January. The surprise hit of the month was the "New to Arizona?" program where an enthusiastic group of 50, yes, 50 park visitors on a Wednesday morning hiked up to Cat Peaks Pass Overlook on a 3-mile introductory experience to the Sonoran Desert.

The host volunteers at Usery have made it possible for a full calendar of interpretive programs for our visitors in the absence of a ranger. These volunteers are dedicated to the interpretive ranger program, its philosophies and what we offer to the public whether it is plants, animals, kids, dogs, seniors, fitness or moon hikes, they are there to lead or to assist!

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: McDowell was hit hard by the freezing temperatures around the valley in January. Five pipes burst on January 14.

On January 27th McDowell hosted the first race in the Mountain Bike Association of Arizona (MBAA) state championship series.

Work began on Phase II construction projects at McDowell, a new restroom at the Competitive Track and a restroom replaced in the North Loop of the Family Campground.

February 28 is the Park Host Appreciation Luncheon with McDowell Mountain Regional Park serving as host. The luncheon will recognize the work that our park hosts do, and is just a small token of our appreciation for their hard work.

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area: Staff continues to provide the Park level overview of the work currently being performed by Regional Trail contractor; Staff is impressed with the quality and quantity of work thus far.

The Park Supervisor facilitated that portion of the Audubon Annual Christmas Bird Count that occurred on the Conservation Area.

Staff met with the leadership of the Sonoran Chapter of the Sierra Club to plan a Conservation project.

The temporary Park Maintenance Worker has made significant progress in treating a significant noxious weed infestation (Star Thistle) that is occurring on the Conservation Area.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: Interviews were conducted for park supervisor position and were successful with the hiring of David Jordan; in addition, the interviews were also successful for the park maintenance worker position with hiring of Tony Botwinis.

Two ranger programs were held including Digital Desert with more than 35 visitors participating and a full moon hike with volunteers guiding the hikers.

Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: The decision on the "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) was delayed by BOR; hence the permitting process can not begin. One key factor has surfaced pertaining to air quality. Further research and test modeling is being conducted.

Adobe Dam Regional Park: Development continues on the new Request for Proposal pertaining to a new concessionaire for the aquatic facility at Adobe Dam Regional Park. Refinement of Fair Market Value is the last remaining element needed before final staffing. Tentative release date is March 2007 for the RFP which the new Agreement would be effective October 1, 2008.

Negotiations continue with possible concessionaires as a result of the recent RFP for additional recreational opportunities at Adobe Dam.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: The Use Management Agreement is being finalized between County and Sprint for a cell tower site at Estrella Mountain Regional Park.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Sportsfield Complex at Estrella was released and the Pre-Proposal Conference conducted on December 14, 2006. Proposals were due Parks January 11, 2007 and no proposals were received. Parks is reassessing its overall strategy dealing with Estrella and additional concessionaire opportunities to include expansion of the existing golf course.

Parks entered into a Use Management Agreement with Sprint for construction of a communication site. This will provide improved communication to Sprint customers in that part of the Valley in addition to generating additional revenue for Parks.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: The Use Management Agreement is being finalized between County and Verizon for a cell tower site at Usery Mountain Regional Park.

Other: Parks, in coordination with the Arizona Zoological Society, a.k.a. Phoenix Zoo, is exploring Heritage Grant opportunities. The required Memorandum of Understanding to support the grant application is being staffed.

Discussions are on-going with Bureau of Land Management and Supervisor Wilson pertaining to Vulture Mountain – Hassayampa Preserve. A draft MOU is being staffed and will discuss at an upcoming meeting between BLM, Parks and The Nature Conservancy.

Grant Updates

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: An Urban Wildlife grant application was submitted to Arizona Game and Fish for construction of a camouflaged viewing blind enclosure for park staff and visitors. The purpose of the enclosure is to be able to observe and digitally record the variety and numbers of wildlife species present in the parks and around the newly created Pemberton pond. Notification of funding awards will be made in May 2007.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: The Pond Gnome started work on the wildlife viewing pond January 7, 2007. Weather permitting; the project should be complete in 7-10 business days. This new site should attract many birders and wildlife enthusiasts along with educators in the East Valley.

San Tan Mountain Regional Park: The fencing project is 100% complete for both the North and South finger section. The fencing was made possible by a \$250,000 grant funded by the Gila River Indian Community in September 2005.

Marketing Updates

Media: Maricopa Trails System - The Department is pleased to report that the press release issued on the Maricopa Trails System sparked a lot of interest from the media. We have included several of the articles we were able to locate in your packets.

ASU Summer Session Publication: Information about Maricopa County's park system can now be found in ASU's Summer Session publication.

Print: Cave Creek brochure - The Cave Creek park brochure has been completed and is on its way to the printers. The new brochures should be available at the park sometime in February.

Events: The Department is also working on several collaborative efforts with other cities and agencies to promote the park system. Two examples include:

Luke West Valley Recreation Expo - The Recreation Expo will be held on Saturday, February 10th from 10 am to 1 pm at Copper Canyon High School which is located at 9126 W. Camelback Road in Glendale. The goal of the event is to introduce the Passport Program to local residents.

- About the Passport Program: The program is a great way to reward west Valley residents as they experience different types of activities (concerts in the park, holiday events, art festivals, hiking program, etc.) through our park system. Residents are invited to attend any event that has been identified as a passport event and receive a stamp in their passport book for the event. Once a person has collected five (5) stamps on their passport, they are eligible for a special prize. The passport may then be turned in to any participating Recreation Department to be entered into a drawing for a Grand Prize

The Recreation Expo is aimed at families and the committee has secured several west Valley recreation vendors and entertainment groups to showcase their wares and talent. Parks will have a booth at the event and Ranger Talboys, White Tank Mountain Regional Park, will be providing short presentations on *Hiking Safety Tips*.

Keep Phoenix Beautiful (KPB) - Parks is currently working with KPB to arrange several "community improvement activities." Possibilities include:

- o Corporate Group – KPB has a corporate group located in Goodyear that is looking for a park in the area to clean. Estrella Mountain Regional Park is currently being considered for this project.
- o Earth Day – KPB would like to do an event on either April 21st or 22nd to celebrate Earth Day. McDowell Mountain Regional Park has been recommended for this project. In addition, there is a strong possibility that Target may also be looking for a site to clean, in the event they are, they will focus their efforts on Usery Mountain Regional Park.

Mr. Clean Day – KPB's advertising agency has partnered with Mr. Clean and they're looking for the "perfect" location to host a major event. Lake Pleasant Regional Park or Adobe Dam Regional Park has been recommended for this event so they may showcase their products effects on a structure.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The following people have been hired at Parks; Kathy Goodhart, Park Maintenance Worker at Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area; Constance Sinclair, Accounting Assistant at Headquarters; Chuck Gehrke, Park Maintenance Worker at Usery Mountain Regional Park; Glenn Hudson, Park Maintenance Worker at Usery Mountain Regional Park; Tony Botwinis, Park Maintenance Worker at San Tan Mountain Regional Park; Erin Simmons, Recreation Assistant (Temp-Intern) at Headquarters.

We are currently recruiting for; Trades Specialist – Electrician with the Trails/Construction Crew; Park Supervisor for Estrella Mountain Regional Park; and Park Supervisor for Cave Creek.