



234 N. Central Avenue  
Suite 6400  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-2187  
Phone: 602-506-2930  
Fax: 602-506-4692  
www.maricopa.gov/parks

## MEMORANDUM

Date: December 29, 2006  
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 November Director's Summary.

### **Superintendent Report**

*White Tank Mountain Regional Park:* The White Tank Mountain Regional Park entry monument sign is fully constructed. It announces the County Park and creates part of a grand entry.

The Temporary Contact Station is fully operational with power, phones and happy hosts. The construction on the new Contact Station at the park entry continues. A new floor is done and block walls are coming soon.

The Park's Interpretive program is full throttle with assistance from every staff member. The entire staff supports programming and hikes in the park and outreach programs in the community.

The Ramadas at Picnic Area # 6, at the Waterfall Trailhead, received a face lift. The maintenance staff worked with 20 community service workers to paint the 2 ramadas.

Restroom # 5 had corrections made to the power meter and the facility should be ready soon. The new restroom at Area #7 is taking shape. The floor has been poured and the walls are 2/3 of the way up.

The public has really been enjoying the expanded animal displays in the Visitor Center. The staff does a good job caring for and giving out information about all the animals. To date the critter list includes: 6 Snakes, a Gila Monster, a Giant Hairy Scorpion, a Tailless Whip Scorpion, a Juvenile Tarantula and a Desert Tortoise.

*Desert Outdoor Center:* New replacement canopy for the SLIF Grant boat dock was installed before the Christmas holiday. Wind screens for host sites are being installed.

DOC staff is continuing to make contacts with other user groups that can take advantage of the boat dock and related Aquatics Education Program. The latest contact is the City of Tempe's Parks and Recreation Department, which will be reviewing the options of holding classes at the DOC.

*Usery Mountain Regional Park:* The Park was significantly busier November in 2006 with an increase in revenue in both camping and day-use of 64%. Park staff is predicting a very busy winter and spring season for hiking and camping.

The interpretive ranger, park supervisor and park hosts conducted 20 programs in November. With the cooler temperatures the fitness hikes and ramada reservations around the Thanksgiving weekend were popular. The Cowboy Poetry Campfire program by park host Longtree Austin was a crowd pleaser as always.

After the resignation of the Interpretive Ranger Amy Roberts, the park supervisor and park hosts conducted 21 interpretive programs in December. The Digital Desert photography program continues to grow along with the monthly senior fitness hike. The hit of December was the "Just for Kids Spy Hike" where the group hiked up to Cat Peaks Pass Overlook. The kids spied on grown-ups on the trails down below through binoculars made of paper towel rolls and found other treasures of the Sonoran Desert along their hike.

*McDowell Mountain Regional Park:* The Parks could hardly begin a list of happenings in November without first mentioning that their Interpretive Ranger Paul "Crash" Marusich accepted an opportunity to become the Interim Supervisor at Estrella Mountain Regional Park. Crash had been at McDowell for 5 years and had established a great relationship with the media in the northeast valley and so many park regulars. Those visitors came out and brought their visiting friends and relatives to hear Crash talk about the park, flora and fauna and perhaps more importantly, tell so many great stories and entertain all who attended. He will be missed at McDowell.

On November 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> McDowell Mountain Regional Park hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Javelina Jundred. This annual 100-mile run filled to capacity 125 runners, 98 of which finished the 100 miles in 30 hours. There were no serious injuries and no reported trail conflicts. The donation given to the park each year from the balance after all race expenses are met was \$9,750.00 for 2006.

The Dust Devil Mountain Bike series that began several years ago by department staff members was held again in McDowell, White Tank and Estrella Mountain Regional Parks. This year the series was promoted and conducted by David Benjes and the series again offered an opportunity for individuals of all ages who were considering a racing career to race in the "Off" season and do so without the pressure associated with the Mountain Bike of Arizona Association state championship series races, also conducted in those three regional parks.

Activity at McDowell Mountain Regional Park picked up this fall camping in October was up 88% over October 2005. In November day use in 2006 was up 3,000 visitors and camping at McDowell was up more than double the number of campers in 2005. McDowell is expecting a very busy and wet spring.

*Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area:* An on-site meeting was facilitated with Arizona Game & Fish, ASU, & US Fish & Wildlife biologists to design the best possible native fish pond (AKA; "solar oasis") on Spur Cross. The Department was successful in obtaining a \$7500 matching grant for this project.

A temporary Parks Service Worker was hired for 19 hours per week, an ASU graduate in Natural Resource Management with a herbicide applicators license. Kathy Goodharts primary focus will be treating a significant noxious weed infestation (Star Thistle) that is occurring on the Conservation Area.

Another meeting was requested with Arizona Game & Fish/Game Branch to continue the ongoing dialogue to re-introduce bighorn sheep to the Spur Cross-New River Mountain area.

The Park Supervisor provided, at the request of the Town Manager, a weekend interpretive hike to some foreign guests.

*Cave Creek Mountain Regional Park:* The campground has been at capacity over the holidays. Many park visitors are driving through to see the campers and hosts' holiday lights after an article in *Arizona Republic*.

Cave Creek Horse Trail rides have been busy over the holidays with a record 140 riders on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Construction on the new contact station and playground shades has been started.

*San Tan Mountain Regional Park:* Four (4) separate Ranger programs were conducted with visits by Ranger's Amy and Crash. Crash provided 2 programs that included a moonlight hike and a special fitness hike for the Gila River Indian Reservation. Amy introduced the Digital Desert hike which is proving to be a very popular program. Over 50 visitors came out and gazed at the stars for an evening.

The Nathan Marten's Memorial Dedication Ceremony was very successful with over 400 visitors coming to the park and paying tribute to our own fallen heroes of the Afghan and Iraq war.

The hosts have returned to San Tan. The park will actually have a full compliment of two (2) sets of hosts at the beginning of the year. The contact station will be manned six (6) days per week, eight (8) hours per day.

*Estrella Mountain Regional Park:* December has been a time for some change at Estrella. The larger projects are all progressing nicely. Many of the shade structures over the playgrounds have been installed and the irrigation system is nearing completion. The 7 Crew did a fantastic job moving the old entry station and the construction of the new station has begun.

Smaller projects are also underway. The park office was in need of some remodeling, so the park staff/volunteers got busy gathering surplus County furniture and supplies to accomplish this goal. The staff is also working with the Citizen's for Estrella Mountain Park in taking in some other donations to complete the task. Park hosts are working on general maintenance needs and have completed striping the parking lots.

Park attendance is down slightly from last year at this time. The difference appears to be in general day use and ramada reservations. In an effort to bolster park use, park event offerings are very diverse as Patricia continues to expand the types of programs offered. The Dust Devil race also went well.

### **Contract Updates**

*Lake Pleasant Regional Park:* Bureau of Reclamation is expected to make its decision regarding the Environmental Assessment, released in October 2006. If the finding is a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) the permitting process can begin. The Developer still desires to begin construction as soon as possible. Unfortunately, in the event a FONSI is not obtained or legal actions preclude permitting from going forward, additional delays will occur. The approximate timeline for the final decision remains the first of the year (2007). One stipulation that will occur is that Parks will be obligated to conduct a Recreation Demand and Capacity Study for Lake Pleasant Regional Park. Concurrently, the County will develop policies and guidelines, referred hereinafter as the Lake Pleasant Management Plan that will be implemented upon completion of the Study.

The Board of Supervisors approved the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the City of Peoria. The IGA outlined responsibilities in regards to planning and zoning; public safety and emergency response; and general provisions, e.g. term. Completion of the IGA was a critical step in the review and permitting process which is on-going.

Oral arguments were heard in the Court of Appeals on November 21, 2006 resulting in a favorable for Parks with the current Pensus litigation.

*Adobe Dam Regional Park:* Essential Services and Programs completed the appraisal of non-real estate items at Waterworld Safari from which a Fair Market Value was determined for property and equipment. Completion of valuation process allows continuation of the development of the new Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit for a new concessionaire can continue effective October 1, 2008. The intent is to release the RFP during the February-March 07 timeframe.

Five (5) Proposals were received as a result of the RFP soliciting for additional concessionaires at Adobe Dam Regional Park of which two (2) were rejected. Negotiation of the Use Management Agreement with the three (3) successful Proposers are on-going.

*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 RFP for a Sportsfield Complex at Estrella was released and the Pre-Proposal Conference conducted on December 14, 2006. Proposals are due to Parks by January 11, 2007, at which time the evaluation process will begin. The RFP required renovation of the existing ball fields and expansion of the facilities similar to Victory Lane Sports Complex at Adobe Dam Regional Park.

*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.

**Coming and Going in Human Resources**

Please welcome the following to our department; John Kelly, Contact Station Assistant (Temp) at the Lake and Anthony Yearack, Park Maintenance Worker at the Lake.

We are currently recruiting for the following positions; Park Maintenance Worker at San Tan, Park Supervisor at San Tan, Trades Specialist – Electrician for Trails/Construction Crew and Interpretive Ranger at Usery.

Interviews were held for the Accountant Assistant at HQ and the Park Office Assistant at Cave Creek, we are waiting for an offer to be made in regards to both. Interviews will be held on January 2 and January 3, 2007 for Park Maintenance Worker at Usery and interviews will be held on January 4, 2007 for Park Supervisor at San Tan. Interpretive Ranger interviews will be scheduled soon for Usery.