

MEMORANDUM



TO: Rafael Payan, Director

FROM: Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager

DATE: April 1, 2008

SUBJECT: Parks Commission Report for March, 2008

Open Space/Ranch Property Management-

The Spring Hunters Who Care UDI trash clean up was held in the Altar Valley March 15 and 16. The event staged out of the NRPR Three Points Veterans Memorial Park. Only about 40 volunteers over the two days turned out giving over 500 hours of time. We focused attention on “hot spots” on Diamond Bell and Kings Anvil ranches. The teams collected about of 2 ½ 40 cu/yd dumpsters of trash.

The Anza Trail dedication for the Canoa Ranch section was just held back on December 14, 2007. The trail is now getting significant daily use by all user types. Use by hikers, equestrian users and bikers continues to increase with the spring weather.

Mid March we completed a year long project to install a new water line, storage tank and 4 solar pump systems at the A7 Ranch. The project is designed to reduce generator fuel costs, staff O&M and water hauling time, reduce need to utilize several natural spring waters for livestock use, provide new year-round water sources for wildlife and provide more dependable waters to increase effectiveness of our rotational grazing system. The system is up and functioning as designed. We now have a dependable water system for livestock and wildlife that covers about 50 square miles of the ranch

Staff conducted spring monitoring on permanent vegetative transects at A7, Six bar and Bar V ranches to measure forage production, plant diversity and general range conditions. Most of the preliminary data shows upward trends in general range conditions.

A public Open House on the development of the Resource Management Plan for the A7 Ranch was held on the evening of February 21, 2008 here at the NRPR complex. A draft document is expected to be completed by early May, 2008. An online survey for public comment is currently available at the NRPR web site-

WWW. Pima.gov/NRPR. until March 31, 2008 along with maps and background information on the plan.

An initial grazing plan and monitoring program is being completed with assistance of Natural Resources Conservation Service for the Bar V Ranch.

Invasive Species/Buflegrass-

Buflegrass Eradication Day was held March 1, 2008. Pima Association of Governments spearheaded this event. NRPR EE staff coordinated activities across our parks as a part of the event. Information is available on www.buflegrass.com on future events. NRPR will host several events on Park lands.

The Weedwackers continue to be very active with monthly volunteer work sessions. Several miles of wash and trail sides were cleared in TMP along Trails End, Yetman Trail and Tucson Estates last month. The Southern Arizona Buflegrass Strategic Plan was released March 3rd. A link to the full report is at buflegrass.org.

Open Space Acquisition-

The Board of Supervisors will soon vote on acquiring a 70 ac. parcel off 36th Street and La Cholla currently owned by Habitat for Humanity and the acquisition of the 30,000 acre Diamond Bell Ranch near Three Points has fully closed.

At the December Parks Commission meeting the members asked about where to access current expenditure information on Bond properties. That information for the 2004 Bond can be found at www.bonds.pima.gov. Look for Bond status report and click on it. At the present time about \$ 89 million of the \$174 million 2004 Bond remains available. There is also \$3.2 million still available from 1997 Bond.

The county is still working on the request to the Arizona State Land Department to auction 320 acres of State Trust Lands at Tumamoc Hill. This process is taking significantly longer than initially anticipated due to ASLD process requirements. Congressman Raul Grijalva has introduced legislation to accomplish the land transfer via Federal action and at significantly reduced cost. By agreement with the State Land Department, the county can withdraw its request for an auction at any time and the auction will be halted.

Environmental Education-

The 14 new NRPR education volunteers graduated from training and are now giving presentations and assisting staff with interpretive programs and events. January was an all time high contact month for the EE program at over 7,000

participants. Over 3,000 participants in interpretive and educational programs during March and the volunteers gave 265 service hours in March. .

As a result of the current freeze on hiring, the EE program will reduce programs until staffing comes back up to full complement.

Over 1,000 entries were received for the sixth year of the River of Words art and poetry contest done in conjunction with Tucson Pima Arts Council for youth 5-19.

NR Parks-

Catalina Park staff participated in finalization of a Community Fire Management Plan for Catalina area and is actively reducing fire fuels on the Park. Vandalism continues to be a concern. There were several incidents last month including tagging of structures, OHV cross country activity and theft of materials from building renovation projects. The old Saul Pond is being renovated and improved as a wildlife habitat and wildlife viewing area. Additional rehabilitation projects are underway at Park to restore natural vegetation after the residences were removed from floodway after Aspen fire. Construction of the initial park facilities including kids play area, three parking and ramada/picnic areas and renovations of White Dog Ranch have started. We hope to have them completed by November of 2008.

Additional multi-use trails are being constructed and laid out by contractors and NRPR staff in the Dove Mountain and Cochise Canyon areas of Tortolita Mountain Park, Arizona Trail, Starr Pass and Sweetwater Preserve. The general trails connectivity is moving right along with the cooperative interaction of the Town of Marana, Town of Oro Valley, Pinal County, Cochise County and the Bureau of Land Management. The Natural Resources staff has established a biological review process for all new trail and trailhead construction projects. Biological assessments were done on trail segments at Sweetwater Preserve, Robles Pass, Arizona Trail and South East Regional Park.

A public Open House was held March 12, 2008 for the Robles Pass Trails Park to present the management planning effort to date and get public feedback on conceptual plans. Very positive response of general development plan was received from community.

Repairs and stabilization has started on a new group of historic adobe buildings and walls down at Canoa Ranch. Funding is coming from a cultural resources Bond project. Additional planning has been initiated to determine addition restoration/stabilization work at ranch with 2004 Cultural Resources Bond funds.

The Gilbert Ray Campground is running at about 85% capacity which is typical this time of year. Ten out-of-state educational groups were accommodated at the Park last month. Our campground hosts organized and conducted a litter pick up along the length of Kinney road inside the park.