

MEMORANDUM



TO: Rafael Payan, Director

FROM: Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager

DATE: June 30, 2008

SUBJECT: Parks Commission Report for June, 2008

Open Space/Ranch Property Management-

We are transitioning from driest part of year to hopefully a strong summer rains season. Conditions on several ranches are very dry and general range conditions are poor in some pastures.

NR Staff is finalizing Willow Flycatcher surveys in Cienega Creek, locating and tagging endangered Pima Pineapple cactus on new acquisitions and monitoring the burrowing owl reintroduction at Canoa Ranch.

NRPR staff and Arizona Game and Fish staff met to discuss potential wildlife habitat and livestock improvement projects associated with wells on Rancho Seco. Strategic outcomes include more dependable and usable water for wildlife, conversion to solar systems to reduce O&M costs and requirements, location of new waters, upgrades of existing waters and appropriate wildlife/livestock enclosure fencing projects.

Routine monthly well water quality sampling was accomplished and required quarterly lead and nitrate sampling at Canoa and Youtcy Ranches was done.

Ranch properties were visited and the range resource specialist rode to monitor actual range conditions and livestock utilization in different parts of the properties. Several project applications for new fences and waters and conversion of Agriculture leases to grazing leases were processed through State Land Department.

Invasive Species/Buffleglass-

NRPR conducted training of its operations staff in May so they can be prepared to treat parks after monsoons start. We hope to get 100% treatment within urban Parks this summer.

NRPR staff and Weed Wackers conducted several work days and generated over 140 hours of volunteer time in June.

Staff generated a response to letter from Southern Arizona Leadership Council on status of buffelgrass for County Administrator. SALC had requested detailed information about status of buffelgrass in Pima County of all major jurisdictions and agencies. SALC has scheduled a meeting on July 10, 2008 to bring together community leaders to look at buffelgrass coordination.

NR field staff will be focusing much of available time on buffelgrass spraying in Parks and along major roadways over next three months.,

Open Space Acquisition-

A new 290 acre property acquisition at the mouth of Cochie Canyon in Tortolita Mountains closed during the month. Also, a 78 acre parcel platted for 180 residential lots was acquired at corner of 36th St and Cholla. A third 108 acre parcel south of Three Points and recently acquired Diamond Bell Ranch has all due diligence done and we just wait for final acceptance of the owner of acquisition Agreement.

Environmental Education-

Programming is beginning to wind down with increased temperatures. We still had over 2,400 attend programs. Summer programs for kids and adults will start after school gets out. Schedules for July will be handed out to Commission. Volunteers gave over 315 hours last month.

NRPR has received a draft Lease Agreement to review covering location of the Native Seed Search office/processing complex at Brandi Fenton as a part of the area set aside for proposed River Bend Conservation Education Center.

NR Parks-

Tucson Mountain Park hosted three major film crews last month. Two weddings were held at Gates Pass. There was extensive graffiti damage at Gates Pass to rock walls of restrooms and retaining walls. Also, at same time we got graffiti at nearby Feliz Paseos Park. Staff spent four days removing paint with sand blaster. Several accidents caused over \$2,000 damage to Park roadside vegetation at TMP.

Significant work continues on layout, biological/cultural evaluation, construction and grooming of new trails in both Sweetwater and Robles Pass trails Parks.

Water was hauled to wildlife guzzlers on the CAP mitigation corridor adjacent to TMP.

The spring at Agua Caliente is dropping output as summer temperatures rise and is down about 20% from last month. Supplemental pumping is necessary to maintain Pond one levels and has started. Additional signage has been purchased to finish out the AZGFD Heritage grant on feeding wildlife and abandoning pets at the park.

A program to reduce potential fires through weed management at Catalina Park has been initiated. Additional watering systems for non native trees left in the park is being developed to protect the key mature and valuable shad trees. Improvements to White Dog Ranch continue and construction of the first phase of the Capitol Improvement Project should start in 30-60 days. This will include play area, parking lots, Ramadas and trailheads. Improvements have been made to the Park to encourage use by native wildlife through plantings and reconstruction of water sources.

The University of Arizona has a draft Management Agreement on their proposed use of the White Dog Ranch portion of Catalina Regional Park as an equestrian center and 4-H educational facility.

NRPR is finalizing a detailed historical identification and analysis of all Park lands under Board of Supervisor designation and will be updating the list to include lands added to the system informally to ensure NRPR Park Rules will be in effect.