

MEMORANDUM



TO: Rafael Payan, Director

FROM: Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager

DATE: August 22, 2008

SUBJECT: Parks Commission Report for August, 2008

.....

Open Space/Ranch Property Management-

A7 herd calf crop is up and all cattle are in excellent health. Summer rains have brought on good native grass growth. In general all of the ranches have received good rains. At this point we anticipate a general upward trend in condition of our monitoring transects that will be read in October.

The final version of Bar V Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Plan prepared in cooperation with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is out for final adoption by agency partners- State Land, Arizona Game and Fish, NRCS, Pima County and site manager. Once signed off on the production operational plan will be posted on NRPR web site for public reference.

Several fencing projects have been coordinated and approved with State Land to improve grazing rotation capabilities and better manage different ranch pasture elements. Also, on several ranches grazing lease documentation is being completed to consolidate multiple leases into a single lease for the property and convert inactive agriculture leases into less expensive grazing leases. We are testing "elk jump" fence designs from northern Arizona ranches as a way to minimize damage from UDI traffic on our ranch pasture fences. Some pastures can't be utilized effectively because perimeter fences can't be maintained and cattle movement controlled.

NR Division staff is working on development of a standardized solar well pump, storage and drinker package system that can be used on our ranch properties. The package will reduce maintenance costs, separate wildlife and livestock use of waters, eliminate need for fuel based generators or replace old windmills, establish more year-round water dependability, reduce repeating design efforts for similar water source solutions and bring historic wells up to current state standards. The package will be developed as almost a kit that can be purchased in unit quantities and can be used for habitat improvement grant applications.

Routine storm damage cleanup is still needed on many properties and is ongoing. Staff has finished three major projects on King 98, Empirita and Rancho Seco.

Staff conducted bat netting surveys at Cienega Creek and did Pima pineapple cactus surveys on future Ryan Field Park property.

NR Division co-hosted a workshop for over 50 biologists on new GIS tools to identify and evaluate wildlife corridors and linkages created by Dr. Paul Bier of Northern Arizona University. Several active Pima County corridors between Catalina Mountains, Tortolita Mountains and Tucson Mountains were used as models for demonstration purposes. A follow up workshop is set for October. Efforts will continue to generate a comprehensive map of the most critical corridors and linkages for Pima County as a whole with many of the members of the workshop.

Invasive Species/Buflegrass-

NRPR operations staff has been working on control of buffelgrass in urban and River parks. We hope to get 100% treatment within urban Parks this summer.

NRPR staff and Weed Wackers conducted several work days and the 101 volunteers worked 309 hours and removed 244 bags of grass. NRPR staff also worked second year on greasewood road between Anklam and Speedway, around Tunmamoc Hill and along Starr Pass Blvd and 36th St. All of roads in TMP were treated as well.

The Southern Arizona Leadership Council has developed a summary for their members on impacts of both biological and economic systems in Tucson basin and how they must take a more visible and active role in control efforts. Work is ongoing to establish a new 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit to coordinate buffelgrass control efforts in Pima County. Work by County is under way to include buffelgrass and other invasive plants as environmental nuisances within current County code. Thus action on significant infestations on private lands in unincorporated part of County could be addressed legally.

Open Space Acquisition-

Staff is working on site security on several recent acquisitions. The largest is the Habitat for Humanity lands on 36th St and La Cholla. A perimeter fence and walking trail access gates are being put in place.

Staff has done a biological assessment on Bloom property near Sweetwater Preserve in anticipation of acquisition movement. Preliminary work has also been started on parcel at Campbell and 36th St. This is a City of Tucson community open space request.

A request for the Conservation Acquisition Commission to approve due diligence on acquisition of parts of the historic Sopori Ranch will go before the committee on September 4, 2008.

Staff attended a session of the State Parks Board sub-committee for Growing Smarter Funds. The County gave a presentation and received approval for up to \$3.5 million dollars to match appraised value of 320 ac. parcel of State Land associated with Tumamoc Hill that will come up for auction late in the fall.

Environmental Education-

The fall programming is beginning to gear up with increased calls and demand for school program scheduling. We should be hiring a new EE specialist position in mid September. Our pilot summer schedule showed that we can attract good program participation for early morning and evening programs. Our partnership with the libraries has also generated excellent participation and interest in our other programs. In July we contacted 1, 498 people in programs.

NR Parks-

Tucson Mountain Park had several significant water line breaks affecting our ability to deliver water to Old Tucson and Desert Museum. All were repaired in less time than anticipated by efforts of park and operations staff.

Significant work continues on layout, biological/cultural evaluation, construction and grooming of new trails in Robles Pass trails Parks. A ribbon cutting for Sweetwater Trails Park is being planned for part of a Tucson Mountain Association event in October.

Staff is installing a drip watering system to key legacy plants at the historic Canoa Ranch headquarters to keep them alive pending allocation of Bond funds for the facility development. The Canoa Advisory Committee plans a fall roundup at the Park on November 8, 2008 from 1-5pm. The invitation only event will work to provide a reunion to capture stories, documents and artifacts from those who lived and worked on Canoa over the decades for use in future interpretive and exhibit projects. On November 1-3, individuals and livestock will come to the Ranch to recreate the 1st night Anza camp and expedition for a historically accurate video production in the works.

Summer flows of the spring at Agua Caliente park are up from last year but we still have to augment the flow with well water to just keep the main pond full.

Weed control efforts are underway on all the parks. At Catalina Regional we have established some test and control plots and are doing some research on the best control methods available to us. At Catalina Regional we are also reevaluating the concept design for the park to maximize improvements for the available funds left for the park start up. Actual construction is anticipated to start in late fall and

be completed by summer of next year. The park staff at Catalina discovered a network of paved drives on one of the parcels in the park that had been covered by 2-4 feet of sediment after the fire floods in 2002. They have been cleaning the area up and plans are being developed to utilize the find for a universal access plant and wildlife viewing trail.