

# MEMORANDUM



TO: Rafael Payan, Director

FROM: Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager

DATE: October 27, 2008

SUBJECT: Parks Commission Report for October, 2008

.....

## **Open Space/Ranch Property Management-**

In general all of the ranches have received good rains. At this point we anticipate a general upward trend in condition of our environmental monitoring transects that are being read in October.

The final version of Bar V Ranch Coordinated Resource Management Plan prepared in cooperation with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has been signed off on by Arizona Game and Fish Department and State Land Department. We are still waiting for the property Manager to also sign off on it and then our office will finalize it. Once signed this grazing production operational plan will be posted on NRPR web site for public reference.

A renovation of the historic cowboy house at Empirita Ranch is in final stages of competition. This small four room house will be made available for a Site Steward.

Completed biological/sensitive species survey for proposed water line route on Diamond Bell ranch. Line is in and completed.

Staff walked with PAG staff on annual wet and dry mapping survey of the Cienega Creek Nature Preserve.

Worked with PAG to establish a new Wildlife Task Force as a sub-unit of the PAG Environmental Planning Committee as a way to create a forum to discuss and collaborate on a broad range of wildlife specific topics. First meeting will be November 7, 2008

Finalized fencing and local traffic walking gates at the Habitat for Humanity property at 36<sup>th</sup> Street and La Cholla.

A new property boundary fence was constructed between King 98 Ranch and Buckelew Farms to better delineate grazing pastures.

Staff attended a two day workshop on erosion control techniques in open space areas. Staff compiled several site specific biological assessments for trail and CIP projects. NR staff also developed a sensitive cacti ID manual for use by trails operations crews.

Worked on conversion and upgrade of well on Rancho Seco West unit to solar and began discussions with BLM on similar conversion of well on BLM lease property on Rancho Seco east unit. Both upgrades will reduce O&M costs and establish year-round water for wildlife.

### **Invasive Species/Buflegrass-**

NRPR staff and Weed Wackers continue to work on the rugged face of Bushmaster Peak in TMP this month. NRPR staff also worked second year on Greasewood road between Anklam and Speedway, around Tumamoc Hill and along Starr Pass Blvd and 36<sup>th</sup> St and over 22 miles of roadside were treated. Over 60 linear miles of roadway were treated in TMP last past month.

NRPR staff has been working on formation of a Buflegrass Coordination Center that is a 501c(3) not-for-profit entity. The Center will help coordinate mapping data, treatment activities and research on a regional scale. Pima County will be a major contributor. Also, staff worked with utility companies to establish a voluntary procedure to identify, map, control and monitor buflegrass on utility rights-of-way. Commitments have been made by Cox Communications, TEP, SW Gas, TRICO, Comcast and Tucson Association of Realtors.

### **Open Space Acquisition-**

The Conservation Acquisition Commission approved due diligence on acquisition of parts of the historic Sopori Ranch at the September 4, 2008 meeting and the Board of Supervisors will get the acquisition package for acceptance in November. The acquisition will include approximately 4,200 acres of deeded land and 10,500 acres of State grazing lease lands. The acquisition will include most of the Ranch lands in Pima County.

NR Division Staff attended and presented information on county request for final 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. The Parks Board did approve that request.

The Conservation Acquisition Commission approved a recommendation to the Bond Advisory Committee to amend the 2004 Bond language to include new lands recommended buy the CAC for listing as potential acquisitions in next

Bond program. The new lands were determined utilizing the same scientific identification process as the 2004 lands. This decision will increase the flexibility of remaining 2004 Bond funds to be used to acquire high value properties at a reduced cost with current trend in real estate market.

### **Environmental Education-**

The fall programming is beginning to gear up with increased calls and demand for school program scheduling. We hired a new EE specialist in early October. Ms. Yajaira Gray most recently worked for the Desert Museum where she worked on program development and two very successful programs the high school based Invaders Program and the Migratory Pollinators Program. She is a native of Venezuela and has degrees in forestry and ecology. We are most fortunate to have been able to hire someone with the diverse and comprehensive experience base that Yajaira has.

In September we contacted 1,556 people in programs. A new six-week volunteer training session for Feliz Paseos and Tucson Mountain Park started on October 17, 2008. We have 17 new enthusiastic volunteers.

We are working with TUSD and the University of Arizona to set up a Special Use Permit for use of TMP lands for the Camp Cooper education center off Trails End Road. We will be setting up more communication and doing complementary programming to better use our parks and their facility.

### **NR Parks-**

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. Documents related to future water needs on the Ranch restoration and development have been received and are being evaluated. The Park will require use of both well water and effluent to meet the Master Plan design elements.

A public meeting on current planning status of the park was held by Supervisor Day in Catalina from 6-9 pm on October 15, 2008. The meeting was very well attended and generally the plans were very well supported. We are hoping that construction for the currently funded elements of this park will be completed by this time next year. This park will primarily be a passive recreation and natural resource based park.

The spring at Agua Caliente Park is flowing at a seasonal high of 29-32 gallons per minute and allowed manager to reduce supplementary water from wells to maintain water level in main pond. Some of the non native invasive palms around the main pond were thinned out at the Park. Agua staff also worked on fence repair and invasive plant management in Cienega Creek Nature Preserve.

We have been notified by the University contacts that the 4-H proposal to utilize Catalina Regional Park looks like it will not come together in the near future so they will not sign a Management Agreement. The staff at Park added 1,400 feet of security fencing in Park and are going to be putting in additional post and cable along Lago del Oro Parkway this month. A new trail alignment the length of the park is being developed with a local committee and the trail will link to the existing 50 Year Trail to the east of the Park on both ends of the new trail.

The 18<sup>th</sup> annual Los Mesquites Cross County Invitational was held on TMP and was sponsored by Sunnyside High school. A crack seal and slurry seal of Gilbert Ray campground is set to be completed in early November. A DUI accident on Kinney Road generated \$769 dollars of resource damage that was provided to Sherriff's office as part of the accident investigation.