

MEMORANDUM



TO: Rafael Payan, Director

FROM: Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager

DATE: December 28, 2009

SUBJECT: Parks Commission Report for January-2010 Meeting

Open Space/Ranch Property Management-

Annual fall vegetative and forage use transect monitoring and analysis is going on for the ranches.

General drought and minimal monsoon conditions continue to have operators looking at current cattle numbers. We anticipate additional reductions in herd sizes this fall. NRPR staff is doing more spot site monitoring to look for pasture uses that need to be addressed. In mid December the federal Drought Monitoring program that Pima County had been in severe drought conditions for over 10 weeks straight and this triggers some possible federal relief for some of our operators.

The NRPR rangelands program put out a DRAFT Standards and Guidelines document for public review in late November for public comment. This document outlines the methods and strategies the county grazing program will be managed on the open space lands. Comment deadline is December 31, 2009. Copies of the Draft document were available on the NR Division portion of the NRPR web site.

NRPR was awarded a small grant from the Arizona Game and Fish Department Bat Management Program. The grant will help NRPR acquire some basic equipment to monitor bat populations and begin to do baseline surveys on bat habitats found on new open space properties. Bats are considered an indicator species and the presence and stability of bat populations tends to indicate a well functioning ecosystem.

John L. Sullivan, our Rangelands Program manager was recently selected by the Arizona Chapter of the Society for Range Management to receive the 2010 Professional and Technical Guidance Award. He will get his award at their 2010 meeting in Prescott on January 19.

At a recent UDI trash clean up, over 50 cubic yards of trash were cleaned from one small drainage on the Marley Ranch. About 30 volunteers participated.

Invasive Species/Buflegrass-

NRPR staff are involved with planning additional work projects for the spring 2010 Beat Back Buflegrass Day being sponsored by Southern Arizona Buflegrass Coordination Center.

In 2009, over 1,000 Weedwacker volunteers put in over 4000 hours of time in Tucson Mountain Park.

NRPR is working with the Southern Arizona Buflegrass Coordination Center on a regional mapping project. Some new fire models have been developed looking at the impacts of buflegrass infestations on fire behavior in mountain foothill areas that confirm expected potential for rapid and catastrophic fires within next 3-5 years with no control action.

Open Space Acquisition-

The 900 ac. Clyne Ranch acquisition second phase adjacent to our 5,200 ac. Sands Ranch property should close in early January.

The county was successful in acquisition of Valencia Site, one of only three known Hohokam ball courts in Tucson area, at a recent State Land auction.

Current discussions in the Bond Advisory Committee still are considering recommending to BOS over \$100 million for Open Space acquisitions in the next county Bond package. \$80 million is needed to complete the Marley Ranch acquisition.

Environmental Education-

In the past two months the EE program has worked with over 4,000 residents and visitors in programmed events.

The EE section will be assisting with outreach efforts on Beat Back Buflegrass Day in February, 2010.

NR Parks-

TMP is getting into its busy season. Campground hosts are in place and assisting with registration activities and general campground O&M.

Water flow from the spring at Agua Caliente Park continues to be at historic lows. Similar low water flows are being seen in Cienega Creek Nature Preserve and other shallow wells in the area. Based on a 10 year trend review of water flows and pond water demands, the main pond at Agua Caliente will not get enough flow from the spring to keep it up. Supplemental water will be more and more necessary. Long-term management strategies need to be generated and reviewed. Unless we see a significant increase in rainfall, we can expect more periods where mud flats are exposed at AC Park.