

Agua Fria Conservation Area Proposed Management Plan

January 15, 2009



Maricopa County
Parks and Recreation Department



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Executive Summary

Lake Pleasant Regional Park encompasses 23,361 acres of land located in northern Maricopa County, Arizona, including Lake Pleasant. Lake Pleasant is a man-made reservoir formed by New Waddell Dam, which was constructed by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) between 1984 and 1992. Reclamation owns the dam and reservoir, as well as the lands which make up the LPRP. New Waddell Dam is operated for water storage and delivery in conjunction with the Central Arizona Project (CAP); the water level of the reservoir varies annually depending upon the timing and amount of CAP water deliveries that are made. Recreation on and around the lake is managed by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (MCPRD) pursuant to an agreement with Reclamation.

MCPRD developed the Lake Pleasant Master Plan, which established guidelines for development of Lake Pleasant Regional Park and outlined future desired conditions for, among other things, recreation and resource protection. An area in the northeastern portion of LPRP was identified in the plan as the Agua Fria Conservation Area (AFCA) in recognition of the special assemblages of natural and cultural resources that occurred there.

Recreational uses of the lake include fishing, picnicking and camping. At the head of the lake in the AFCA, which is accessed by Table Mesa Road, these uses are relatively unregulated. At times they result in destruction of natural and cultural resources and create unsafe conditions for public use of the area.

In December 2006, several government agencies responsible for the land, recreation and wildlife management of the area agreed that shooting, trash dumping, off-road vehicle travel, vandalism, and criminal activity were degrading cultural and natural resources of the AFCA and creating a public hazard. The agencies recognized a management plan for the AFCA needed to be developed and implemented to ensure protection of the area's cultural and biological resources, and to maintain the area as a viable and enjoyable recreational area. The group also recognized that development of the management plan would require coordination among the agencies having responsibility and jurisdiction over the AFCA and adjacent public lands. This is because any change in land management within the AFCA is likely to shift prohibited activities onto adjacent lands.

To address the immediate concern regarding unlawful activities that were creating unsafe conditions for public use, as well as causing damage to and destruction of resources, MCPRD and Reclamation determined the Table Mesa Road entry to LPRP, through which the majority of vehicles were accessing the AFCA, would need to be closed. After much coordination with the affected agencies and a 30-day advance notice to the public, Reclamation installed two sets of vehicular barricades and on July 1, 2007, MCPRD began to enforce a

vehicle restriction at Table Mesa Road. MCPRD has continued to maintain the barricades and enforce the vehicle restriction.

In addition to implementing the closure, this same group began to address the question of how to develop a long term solution for managing the AFCA which would allow access and recreational opportunities for responsible users while providing protection to the natural and cultural resources of the area. One of the first steps taken in initiating this process was to hold three public meetings to gather user input. At these meetings, the public expressed the desire for protection and restoration of the natural resources within the AFCA, as well as access for responsible users of the area. However, the public did not indicate that any changes should be made to the original recreation management plan for the lake in the absence of increased resources—meaning for the time being, the area should remain a conservation area with limited access

Key findings identified based upon public input included the following:

- Riparian and natural resources have been significantly degraded, and many of the archaeological sites have been disturbed and damaged;
- The general public uses this area, and vehicular access to the water is an important issue to many of the current visitors;
- Increased enforcement and an on-site presence could be a deterrent that would prevent resource damage and unlawful activity in the area; and
- Full or even partial implementation of the recommendations will require significant financial resources.

An issue raised by some agencies and the affected public was maintaining vehicular access for mainly fishermen along Table Mesa Road during the winter and spring when boat access to this portion of the lake is restricted by a Bald Eagle nesting closure on the lake. The July 2007 vehicle restriction would prevent boat access during the winter 2007-spring 2008 Bald Eagle nesting closure. Maintaining a partial vehicle closure during this time of year became the focus of much discussion. During a six-week evaluation period (from April 11, 2008 to May 18, 2008), the Arizona Game and Fish Department provided staff to open the gate for limited daytime vehicle access on Fridays through Sundays, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The purpose of this pilot project was to collect information to determine the type and amount of public use of the area, and estimate the staffing required to oversee that use level. During this evaluation period 62% percent of the visitors were anglers, 29% of the users were land-based and 9% were aquatic-based. This pilot study indicated that limited vehicle use could occur without resulting in substantial damage to the resources, with an appropriate level of staff present to monitor use and educate the public about park rules.

This proposed management plan documents and describes the process used to develop this consensus plan for managing the AFCA. It presents planning and management objectives for short-term and long-term plans, key findings that resulted from input gathered at three public meetings, and a preferred course of

action, based upon the consensus of the agencies that participated in the project. Briefly, the preferred alternative consists of the following three phases.

Phase I includes the following:

- Designating Table Mesa Road within the AFCA as a low maintenance park road, including installation of barriers along the north and south sides of the river to keep the public from traveling off the designated route;
- Maintaining roads with no permanent improvements and only to the level that they are passable;
- Developing a park host compound to house two to four couples, and providing the needed infrastructure;
- Constructing a primitive parking lot and information kiosk;
- Reinforcing existing gates, including upgrading to the AGFD standards if needed;
- Constructing a primary launch ramp at the high-water mark;
- Providing alternative launch ramps for use as the water level drops; and,
- Providing parking, port-a-johns, picnic area and signage in areas of launch ramps.

Phase II includes the following:

- Installing portable structures such as a contact station for visitors, storage facility for maintenance equipment and vehicles; and,
- Installing port-a-johns, portable picnic tables, grills and fire rings.

Phase III includes the following:

- Installing permanent restrooms, including the septic system to sustain them;
- Constructing ramadas and covered picnic areas with limited recreational components near entry;
- Providing, with minimal enhancements and improvements, an area for “pack it in, pack it out,” permit-only camping (south of the Agua Fria River, near an old air strip);
- Developing interpretive areas for archaeology, natural history, cultural history, etc.; and
- Completing the trails master plan to include multiple use of AFCA.

The AFCA would be open seasonally (generally November through May) for day-use (with the exception of permit-only camping included in Phase III), and only when park hosts are present. MCPRD staff would monitor the frequency and source of unlawful entries into the area, as well as any changes to the conditions of cultural and biological resources resulting from public use under this management plan. The interagency team would determine what, if any, adaptations or changes need to be made to achieve the initial goals established for the plan, or to further refine the management plan to establish limits of acceptable change and determine additional steps to be undertaken to achieve the objectives of the plan.

Management Plan Supported by:

Maricopa County Parks & Recreation Department, Director

Date

U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, Area Manager

Date

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Director

Date

Introduction

Lake Pleasant Regional Park (LPRP) (Appendix A is a list of terms used in this document) encompasses 23,361 acres of federally-owned land located in northern Maricopa County (Fig. 1). It is owned by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and operated for water storage and delivery in conjunction with the Central Arizona Project (CAP), a Federal project authorized by the Colorado River Basin Project Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-537). LPRP is managed by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department (MCPRD) pursuant to a recreational management agreement between Reclamation and Maricopa County.

Lake Pleasant is a man-made reservoir reconstructed in 1992 to store CAP water. Lake level varies annually depending on the timing and amount of water deliveries from the Colorado River to down-canal users. Generally the reservoir is at its lowest elevation (about 1680 ft) in October, and its highest (about 1695 ft) in March.

MCPRD developed the Lake Pleasant Master Plan (LPMP), which established guidelines for development of Lake Pleasant Regional Park (LPRP). The LPMP, which was approved by Reclamation in 1997, outlined future desired conditions for, among other things, recreation and resource protection. Certain aquatic and upland areas at the head of the lake (Fig. 1) were identified in the LPMP as the Agua Fria Conservation Area (AFCA) in recognition of the special assemblages of natural and cultural resources that occurred there.

Cultural resources are considered heritage assets by the U.S. Department of the Interior and are protected by several federal laws. Endangered species are also protected by the Endangered Species Act and all wildlife resources in Arizona are managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD). Specific Federal regulations governing public conduct on Reclamation lands are found in 43 CFR Part 423, Public Conduct on Reclamation Facilities, Lands, and Water Bodies. These regulations work in concert with state and local laws governing the use of firearms, off road vehicles, protection of cultural and environmental resources, public activities, and so forth on Reclamation land.

Recreational uses of the lake include fishing, picnicking and camping. Where these activities occur in the developed areas of LPRP, the presence of facilities and enforcement staff direct the behavior of park visitors. Recreational uses at the head of the lake, which is accessed by Table Mesa Road (Fig. 2), are relatively unregulated. In late 2006, the MCPRD and Reclamation became concerned about the destructive activities within the AFCA. Thirty-two tons of trash was removed from the AFCA and surrounding area during October 2006 and the dumping of trash continues to be a problem. In addition, unlawful shooting and off-highway vehicle uses in the area were creating an unsafe environment and causing damage to the desert and riparian areas in and adjacent to the AFCA.

In December 2006, Reclamation, MCPRD, AGFD, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (an adjacent landowner) met to discuss the current condition of the AFCA. Appendix B is a map of land ownership surrounding AFCA. These agencies (the Partners) agreed the AFCA had become an area where shooting, trash dumping, off-road vehicle travel, vandalism, and criminal activity were degrading cultural and natural resources and creating a public hazard.

The Partners also recognized that surrounding lands owned by the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) and BLM were degrading. Management actions taken within the AFCA could affect these lands as well. It became apparent that coordination among the Partners would be needed to ensure protection of the area's cultural and biological resources, and to maintain the area as a viable and enjoyable recreational area.

A major issue among the Partners was closing access to AFCA. During spring when the lake levels are up and fish are spawning at the head of Lake Pleasant, fisherman can access this part of the lake only from Table Mesa Road. A buoy closure on the lake established by AGFD to protect a pair of nesting Bald Eagles prevents boat access to the head of the lake. AGFD wanted to maintain access for fishermen along Table Mesa Road. Trying to maintain a partial vehicle closure at this time of year became the focus of much discussion.

Plan Objectives

This report documents and describes the process used to develop this proposed plan for managing the AFCA. It is a management plan that was developed with the consensus of all the Partners. It is not intended to affect the entire LPMP, but rather amends only that portion of the LPMP relating to the AFCA. In subject areas where this document is silent, the 1995 LPMP document shall govern

The Planning Process

The Partners initiated a series of meetings to address resource degradation and safety concerns expressed by Reclamation and MCPRD. Two critical tasks were identified early in the planning process:

- 1) The need for a short term plan to restrict vehicular access into the AFCA from Table Mesa Road and thus afford immediate protection of cultural and natural resources, and to allow access for activities that the Partners identified as being compatible with the AFCA.
- 2) The development of a long-term plan for managing the AFCA, including identification of the range of activities that should be accommodated within the AFCA, the resources that should be protected, the level of protection

considered appropriate, and methods and resources needed to provide that protection.

The Partners acknowledged that public input would be critical to the success of this effort.

Planning Objectives

The following objectives were identified:

- 1) Determine the desired future conditions for the AFCA through research, analysis, benchmarking, public feedback, focused discussions and other appropriate means.
- 2) Determine steps or management actions to achieve the desired future conditions.
- 3) Determine what types of service MCPRD should provide, including defining acceptable use, standards and limits of acceptable change.
- 4) Identify the level of development that would be appropriate for AFCA (i.e. acres of developed park, open space, facilities and trails) and the steps necessary to achieve those standards.
- 5) Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), clearly listing proposed development improvements for the area and including a concept map.
- 6) Analyze the current operating strategy and make recommendations for improvement, including appropriate levels of partnership staffing needed, including volunteers.
- 7) Identify federal, state and private land surrounding the AFCA and determine if the Partners should take action to acquire the land or ensure actions on the AFCA do not adversely affect those adjacent properties.
- 8) Determine the most appropriate ways that the Partners should fund the development, operation and any acquisitions for the area.
- 9) Provide clear definition of the mission and vision for education, interpretation and recreation programming for the AFCA.
- 10) Identify additional partnership opportunities and if needed enhance existing partnerships to more effectively manage the AFCA.
- 11) Develop an informal advocacy group for the area.

The Short-Term Plan

The objective of short-term planning was to prevent continued destruction while the Partners worked toward a longer term solution. The Partners spent 2-5 months determining how best to enforce a vehicular closure into the AFCA from Table Mesa Road with sufficient infrastructure, public notification and monitoring. They concluded that barricade gates and pipe rail fencing should be constructed. Final placement of this barricade occurred in June 2007. The vehicle restriction went into effect July 1, 2007 and has been monitored on a continual basis as the longer term planning efforts continued.

LPRP staff documented attempts to cut off the gate locks as well as ram the gate itself. Increased presence in the area by the MCSO provided additional closure enforcement. E-mail comments about the access restriction through the Agua Fria website (www.maricopa.gov/parks/lake_pleasant/AquaFria.aspx) were mixed. Many were angry or upset with the restriction. Others were appreciative that something was finally being done, and expressed the opinion that the area should stay closed as a conservation area.

The Long-Term Planning Process

The Partners discussed the need to evaluate the condition of the area, and the importance of public involvement toward developing a long term management plan for the AFCA. To aid in this effort a consultant that was already facilitating the partner meetings assisted in planning and facilitating public meetings for the project. In addition, Arizona State University's Global Institute of Sustainability compiled information and data from the public meetings and interpreted the results for the Partners.

Three public meetings were held to gather input from the public regarding their use of the area and their thoughts on the current condition of the area. These meetings were held at the Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant on September 6 and 12, 2007, and at the Albins Civic Center in Black Canyon City, Arizona, on September 17, 2007. (See Appendix G for more detailed information related to the public meetings.)

The information from the three public meetings, along with quantitative research on archaeological sites and various other surveys, was compiled, evaluated, and discussed among the Partners to determine a long term plan for the area (Appendix F and H).

An additional public meeting was held at the Desert Outdoor Center on November 15, 2007, to provide information on the findings and potential solutions for the long-term plan. Both the public and agency staff agreed vehicular access could not occur in the absence of adequate staff presence and enforcement. Also, prior to moving forward with a management plan, preparation of an environmental assessment could be required depending upon the degree of change proposed to the AFCA's current management and the degree of vehicular access proposed.

Key Findings & Recommendations

Comments at the public meetings expressed the desire for protection and restoration of the natural resources within the AFCA, and also access for responsible uses of the area. The public's responses provided no clear indication that any changes should be made to the original findings of the LPMP,

which is that the area should remain a conservation area with limited access until funding becomes available for any proposed improvements and associated increased staff and enforcement presence.

Some of the Partners questioned if the proposed developments in the AFCA are consistent with the current definition of a conservation area in the LPMP. In response MCPRD explained that the cultural and natural resources of the area are what make it a unique part of LPRP and necessitate management actions for protection. Appendix C presents the Partners' definition of a "conservation area," which is intended to update the 1995 LPMP. Appendices D and E present information on the history of LPRP and the concept of a conservation area.

Table Mesa Road was at the center of discussions related to enhanced management efforts in the AFCA: its periodic closure to the general public, its delineation within the conservation area to prevent excessive and damaging vehicular traffic, its enhancement for boat launches and the accompanying facilities and structures. MCPRD view the road as a "grand-fathered" feature of the park, and that recreational opportunities like fishing and picnicking were already occurring. All the Partners desired to accommodate this existing public recreation. The proposed developments will afford the Partners a management tool to allow this recreation without disturbing the native environment.

Four key findings were identified from public input. These findings and recommendations from the Partners are discussed below:

Finding 1: Riparian and natural resources have been significantly degraded. In addition, many of the archaeological sites have been disturbed and damaged.

Recommendations:

1. Restrict and monitor motorized vehicle access to AFCA along Table Mesa Road.
2. Promote passive, low impact, non-motorized, non-water based uses of the area such as hiking and nature watching.
3. Allow for day-use only in the Conservation Area.
4. Develop a proactive mitigation management plan to restore the area when feasible and resources are available.
5. Organize a "Friends of the Lake Pleasant Regional Park" group.
6. Develop educational materials and an information plan for the area.
7. Install boundary signage by coordinating with adjacent property owners.
8. Develop a trail master plan and opportunities for low impact interpretive trails within the Conservation Area. The trails should be developed around non-water based activities, such as hiking, and viewing wildlife, plants, archaeological and historical sites.

Finding 2: The general public uses this area. Vehicular access to the water is an important issue to many of the current visitors. Many of the anglers and other boaters trailer small boats, canoes and kayaks to launch in the water. Other visitors, such as hikers and picnickers, also find their experience is enhanced

near the water's edge. This access issue is particularly problematic during the bald eagle closure period (December 15 through June 15) when the Agua Fria arm in the northern portion of LPRP cannot be accessed via boat.

Recommendations:

1. Afford primitive access for four-wheel drive vehicles hauling small watercraft to the water's edge from January through May. Minor grading and drainage improvements would make this a viable option. The road will also provide access for hikers and wildlife viewing opportunities near the water's edge.
2. Fence the roadway to keep off-highway vehicles from exiting the roadway.
3. Fence the area to deter cattle and feral burros from accessing the AFCA from adjacent State and BLM lands.
4. Develop primitive boat launches with primitive parking areas strategically located between the high (1695 ft) and low (1680 ft) elevations.
5. Complete an EA prior to making any road improvements or starting construction of any of the fencing.
6. Obtain easements from ASLD if required where the proposed road crosses Arizona State land.
6. Notify the public of the Bald Eagle closure at key locations such as the entry station and boat ramps.

Finding 3: Increased enforcement and an on-site presence could be a deterrent that would prevent resource damage and unlawful activity in the area.

Recommendations:

1. Develop an entry station into the AFCA. One option would be to purchase a private ranch in the vicinity of the Table Mesa entrance to the park. The Ranch has a series of control gates and the main house could be used as an interpretive nature/visitor center. Additional buildings on the property could be used for maintenance and enforcement personnel from the various agencies. Several of the facilities also lend themselves to revenue generation such as trail ride stables and guest cottages. A second option would be to construct an entry station at the park entrance and provide limited space to accommodate multi-jurisdictional use.
2. Develop a staffing plan to provide a presence in the area that will decrease resource damage and encourage fee compliance. Law enforcement staff from MCPRD, AGFD and BLM have been identified as potential contributors in this effort.
3. Explore the use of volunteers and camp hosts to provide an additional tier of oversight once law enforcement agencies have performed initial phase of patrol and enforcement operation.

Finding 4: Full or even partial implementation of the recommendations will require significant financial resources. To achieve any measure of success in restoring the area while providing public access will require a commitment of financial and human resources from all Partners.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to seek funding for projects and facilities through AGFD and Arizona State Parks grants opportunities for capital improvements, law enforcement staffing, and educational materials for the region, etc.
2. Dedicate park fees collected in the area solely for management of the AFCA.
3. Determine the full cost of implementation for both capital improvements and operating expenses, and have agencies seek appropriations toward appropriate scope items over a 3-year phase-in time period. Initial engineering estimates indicated even minor road improvements and fencing to deter off-road travel would cost significant dollars to the Partners.
4. Seek grants and sponsorships to assist with capital improvements.
5. Continue to develop revenue funds from designated Partners.

Six-Week Pilot Program

As part of the long range planning process, MCPRD and AGFD partnered for a six-week evaluation period to determine the type and amount of public use of the area, and the staffing required to meet that use level. AGFD provided the staff to open the gate for limited vehicle access from April 11, 2008 to May 18, 2008, for day use only (6 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily) on Fridays through Sundays.

During the evaluation period 62% percent of the visitors were anglers, 29% of the users were land-based and 9% were aquatic-based (Table 1). Neither AGFD nor MCPRD had the resources to continue staffing the gate. In conclusion, it was determined that limited vehicle use could occur without resulting in substantial damage to the resources, with appropriate staff to monitor use and educate the public about park rules.

Table 1. Results of the four-week pilot project to monitor use of the AFCA. Summaries

| Vehicle # | Activity Type | # of People |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|
| 143 | Fishing w/Boat | 312 |
| 157 | Fishing | 375 |
| 9 | Kayak | 12 |
| 2 | Canoeing | 2 |
| 25 | Swimming | 86 |
| 53 | Picnic | 214 |
| 1 | Birding | 1 |
| | Horseback | |
| 4 | Riding | 11 |
| 19 | Site Seeing | 45 |
| 2 | Biking | 2 |
| 11 | OHV | 14 |
| 1 | Photography | 1 |
| 3 | Dog walking | 4 |
| 7 | Hiking | 10 |

| | | | |
|---------------|-----|------------------------|-------------|
| | 8 | No Charge | 5 |
| | 2 | Locked in | 5 |
| | 5 | Check area for boating | 9 |
| | 1 | Denied Access | 2 |
| # of Vehicles | 453 | | 1110 |
| | | | # of People |

Percentages

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----|------------------------|-----|-------------|
| % of Vehicles | | Angler Activity | | % of people |
| | 143 | Fishing w/Boat | 312 | |
| | 157 | Fishing | 375 | |
| 66.23% | 300 | | 687 | 61.89% |

| | | | | |
|-------|----|----------------------|-----|-------|
| | | Aquatic Based | | |
| | 9 | Kayak | 12 | |
| | 2 | Canoeing | 2 | |
| | 25 | Swimming | 86 | |
| 7.95% | 36 | | 100 | 9.01% |

| | | | | |
|--------|-----|------------------------|-----|--------|
| | | Land Based | | |
| | 53 | Picnic | 214 | |
| | 1 | Birding | 1 | |
| | 4 | Horseback | 11 | |
| | 19 | Site Seeing | 45 | |
| | 2 | Biking | 2 | |
| | 11 | OHV | 14 | |
| | 1 | Photography | 1 | |
| | 3 | Dog Walking | 4 | |
| | 7 | Hiking | 10 | |
| | 8 | No Charge | 5 | |
| | 2 | Locked in | 5 | |
| | 5 | check area for boating | 9 | |
| | 1 | Denied Access | 2 | |
| 25.83% | 117 | | 323 | 29.10% |

| | | | | |
|---------|-----|--|------|---------|
| 100.00% | 453 | | 1110 | 100.00% |
|---------|-----|--|------|---------|

Objectives to Continue

Several planning objectives need additional research and will be addressed and evaluated appropriately. The sections will then be added to this document to further complete and support the plan.

Preferred Alternative

The Partners and Technical Committee (Appendix I) proposed the following as a preferred alternative for managing the AFCA based on the above findings and recommendations. Implementation of each phase is summarized below (see Appendix J for details and Appendix K for conceptual maps):

Phase I:

- **Route Designation** – Formally designate Table Mesa road within the AFCA as a low maintenance park road.
- **North Side Route Designation** - Designate a single lane of traffic by installing double strand cabling along the proposed route with pipe uprights to restrict travel on designated route and protect the archaeological sites and riparian vegetation. Route would be consistent with the current one, and would be delineated with road signs.
- **South Side Route Designation** – Post signs on t-posts to designate and restrict travel on current route, and maintain contingency plan to install cabling and pipe if users do not stay on designated route.
- **Road Maintenance** – Provide no permanent road improvements and maintain roads only to the level that they are passable.
- **Park Host Compound** - Develop a Park Host Compound to house two to four couples, and provide the needed infrastructure including vehicles, park host sites, and operational equipment.
- **Public Parking** - Construct a primitive parking lot with decomposed granite and information kiosk at Table Mesa Road entry station.
- **Gates** – Reinforce existing gates and upgrade to the AGFD standards if needed.
- **Launch Ramp A** - Construct a primary launch ramp at the high-water mark with the following attributes: less than twenty feet wide, and constructed with concrete mat or honeycomb fabric to retain primitive appearance.
- **Launch Ramps B, C, D** - Provide alternative launch ramps for use as water level drops that will be primitive, delineate with signage and route designation signs and structures (cable and pipe) if needed, and address potential water hazards during high water levels.
- **Launch Area Amenities** – Provide parking, port-a-johns, picnic area and signage (removal of trash, area use rules, resource information, etc.) in areas of launch ramps.
- **Access Issues** – Monitor the frequency of unlawful entries into the AFCA from other entry points, identify locations, and implement plan to eliminate unlawful entry points.
- **Monitor Resources** – Monitor and protect archaeological sites, and establish photo plots to document changes in the condition of riparian vegetation that would assist in defining acceptable use, standards and limits of acceptable change.

Phase II:

- **Entry Station** – Install portable structure such as contact station for visitors.
- **Maintenance Building** – Construct building to provide storage for equipment such as OHV, etc.
- **Day Use** – Install port-a-johns, portable picnic tables, grills and fire rings.

Phase III:

- **Restroom at Entry** – Place permanent restrooms, including the septic system to sustain them.
- **Ramadas** – Construct ramadas at entry and covered picnic areas for family gatherings.
- **Playground** – Construct components that blend in with natural setting (e.g. rock or tree-climbing, etc.).
- **Back Country Camp** – Provide, with minimal enhancements and improvements, an area located on the south side of the Agua Fria River near the old air strip, for “pack it in, pack it out,” permit-only camping.
- **Interpretive Areas** – Develop interpretive areas for archaeology, natural history, cultural history, etc. with signage, etc.
- **Trails** – Complete the trails master plan to include multiple use of AFCA.

Conclusion

This planning process was initiated and conducted to meet an immediate need for protecting the natural and cultural resources of the AFCA and at the same time make this area available and safe for public recreation. Even with the extensive outreach and notification for the public meetings, public attendance was minimal, albeit very passionate, in relation to the estimated usage of the area. The Partners plan to continue working together through at least the next level of planning, which will include Reclamation’s completion of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regarding the proposed management plan. Currently Reclamation plans to prepare an environmental assessment; however, a final decision regarding the appropriate level of NEPA documentation will be made after public scoping is completed. The environmental assessment would cover Reclamation’s proposed approval of an amendment to the LPMP that would include a management plan for the AFCA portion of the LPMP. Future areas of cooperation will include developing plans for public uses of lands adjacent to the AFCA as recreational pressure shifts, and discussing solutions for positive uses for the AFCA. This planning process also will assist as a model for addressing management of the remaining Conservation Areas of LPRP, as the need arises.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

AFCA – Agua Fria Conservation Area - Located in the northeast quadrant of the Lake Pleasant Regional Park off Table Mesa Road (see map at Appendix B)

AGFD – Arizona Game and Fish Department

ASLD – Arizona State Land Department

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

CAP – Central Arizona Project

CAWCS - Central Arizona Water Control Study

CAWCD - Central Arizona Water Conservation District

CIP – Capital Improvement Plan

EA - Environmental Assessment – A document prepared pursuant to NEPA that evaluates environmental impacts anticipated to result from a Federal action, or a proposed action that requires Federal approval or involves Federal funds. The Federal decision-maker will use this document to determine whether an environmental impact statement must be prepared or a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate.

ESA – Endangered Species Act

LPMP – Lake Pleasant Master Plan of 1995

MCPRD - Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department – The agency responsible for management, under contract with the Bureau of Reclamation, of the Lake Pleasant Regional Park

MCSO – Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act

OHV – Off-highway vehicles

PM-10 – The US Environmental Protection Agencies standards on reducing the Particulate matter less than 10 micrometers in diameter (PM₁₀) which pose a health concern

Partners-Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, U. S. Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Maricopa County Sherriff's Office

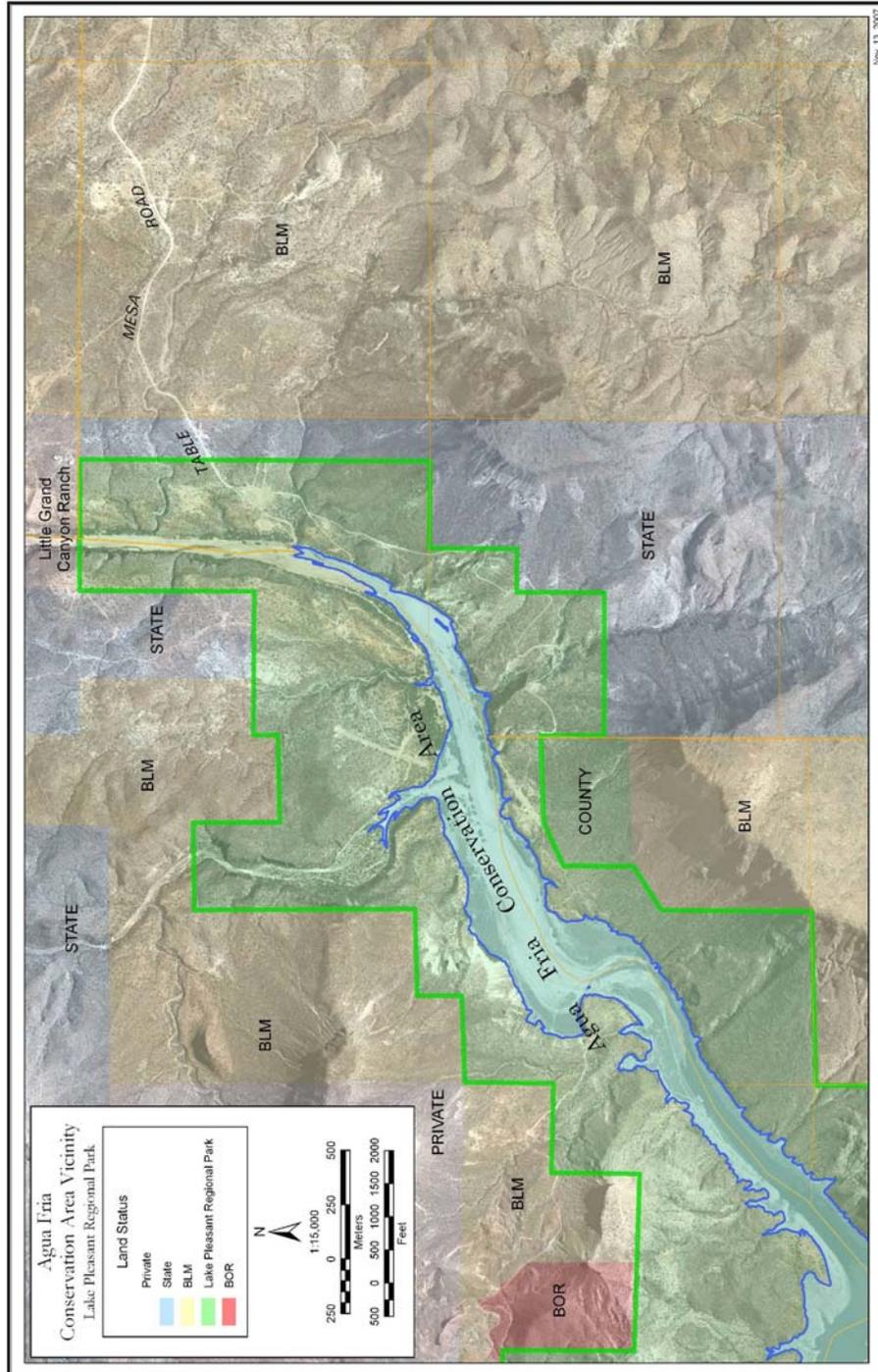
Planning Team - Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, U. S. Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Arizona State Land Department

Reclamation – U. S. Bureau of Reclamation – An agency under the Department of the Interior. Reclamation acquired the LPRP property as part of the New Waddell Dam feature of the Central Arizona Project

TSP - Total Suspended Particulates

Appendix B

Map of the Agua Fria Conservation Area (Planning Area) and Adjacent Property Ownership



Appendix C

Conservation Definition of MCPRD

MCPRD's conservation areas are defined as "natural, environmentally sensitive areas intended to remain relatively undisturbed to preserve the native environment." MCPRD designates conservation areas to conserve, protect, enhance and manage public lands for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The areas feature natural, recreational, cultural, wildlife, aquatic, archaeological, paleontological, historical, educational or scientific resource values.

Appendix D

Brief History of Lake Pleasant Regional Park Master Plan

In 1990, Reclamation entered into a Recreational Management Agreement with MCPRD to manage public recreation at LPRP. MCPRD later hired Cella Barr Associates to develop the Lake Pleasant Master Recreation Plan (LPMP). The LPMP established guidelines for development of the expanded LPRP, based upon a conceptual plan that was initially developed during the Central Arizona Water Control Study, through which the New Waddell Dam feature of the Central Arizona Project was investigated and studied. The LPMP was developed through an all-inclusive process that invited public and private entities, and individual residents to provide input. The LPMP was prepared to establish guidelines for development of the newly expanded LPRP, and provided for the development/replacement of numerous recreational facilities and site amenities while protecting the natural resources of the area. In developing the LPMP, Cella Barr and MCPRD sought to identify existing resources within the park in order to create a development plan that would effectively utilize, enhance and conserve those resources. Specific washes, creeks, springs, and canyons, as well as the north and east sides of the park, were recommended to be designated as conservation areas with limited access and development. This would provide protection to the vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources occurring in these sensitive areas. The LPMP also recognized that rugged terrain and steep slopes along the east side of the lake prohibited access and development (Cella Barr Associates 1995). The LPMP was completed and adopted by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors in 1995; Reclamation approved the LPMP in 1997.

Areas that were recommended to remain relatively undeveloped in the LPMP are referred to as “conservation areas.” The LPMP defines conservation areas as follows: “Conservation areas are natural, environmentally sensitive areas intended to remain relatively undisturbed to preserve the native environment.” These areas along drainageways will be defined as an area 100 ft. beyond the discernible bank on either side of the drainageways, or as locally determined. The area within a 500 ft. radius of Chalky Springs is delineated as conservation area. No development except natural trails will occur in these areas. Some interpretive natural trails will be developed to allow visitors to experience the unique environments offered in the conservation areas. Based upon a demonstrated need, minimum public health and safety facilities will be allowed. (LPMP-Section VII-B. page 10). One of these conservation areas is the AFCA, As part of the 1990 Recreation Management Agreement with Reclamation, the revenue stream for LPRP’s operation and maintenance consists of user fees generated by the park; traditional County taxing mechanisms do not provide any funding for LPRP costs other than for some capital improvements. The Capital Improvement Plan for the LPRP did not provide for capital improvements or staff resources for the conservation areas, since it was assumed operation and maintenance costs would be negligible.

It should be noted the LPMP recognizes it is and is meant to be a dynamic document. Adjustments to the plan are not only possible, but are expected to occur over time to fully respond to the changing needs of the public, park management, and the environment.

Appendix E

Lake Pleasant Master Plan, AFCA

Many of the recommendations of the 1995 LPMP for the high-use areas of the park have been implemented and are providing quality recreation experiences for visitors to the park. This is especially true along the western shore of the lake which was designed to accommodate large numbers of recreationists. The western shore of the lake was planned in detail to facilitate its development. The LPMP only designated the AFCA and provided no specific details other than what has been described in Appendix E.

The LPMP did include some general guidelines for conservation areas in the park. The AFCA encompasses approximately 2,405 acres, or about ten percent of the park. It is located in the northeast quadrant of the park at the end of Table Mesa Road. The plan identifies the following guidelines as they relate to the AFCA:

- *Designate...the north and east sides of the Park as conservation areas with limited access and development which will preserve riparian areas...preserve wildlife habitat (Section VI-C. page5, D. page 9),*
- *A long-term program for monitoring and management of the cultural resources within the Park must be integrated with the long-term management of the Park. The program shall include development and implementation of procedures to ensure protection of these resources, including avoidance of sites, and incorporation of them into the recreational experience through the use of interpretive displays. (LPMP-Section VI-F. page 17)*
- *The remainder of the east portion of the lake shore will remain largely inaccessible by vehicles due to its rugged topography and conservation area status. (LPMP-Section X-A. page 1)*
- *The majority of the north is designated as [a] conservation area with access limited to a few existing dirt roads and jeep trails. Access to these areas may be further limited by obliteration of selected roads, designation of roadless wildlife areas, designation of roads for administrative use only, and renovation of selected roads to trail specifications.(LPMP-Section X-A. page 1)*

Appendix F

Current Site Analysis

Current Site Analysis (as it relates to the Agua Fria Conservation Area)

An updated site analysis was performed in areas where possible. Those topic areas are provided below and include:

- Water Resources
- Vegetation
- Wildlife
- Fisheries
- Cultural Resources
- Land Form
- Geology
- Air Quality
- Existing Zoning
- Opportunities and Constraints

Water Resources: The decline of the AFCA could lead to impacts to water resources. Water resources can be contaminated from several sources: trash and garbage, human and animal waste, lead from bullets, oil and gasoline from ATVs and other vehicles. In addition, vegetation loss and soil destruction resulting from random OHV use, indiscriminant wood cutting, and over grazing can lead to increased sediment deposition from erosion. All of these factors can increase pollution which affects not only fish and waterfowl habitat but also water quality. Over time, lead from bullets may be a potentially serious source of pollution to both animals and humans. (Reference: Pinter, Teresa L., Editor, 2004 Lake Pleasant Regional Park Cultural Resources Management Plan, Maricopa and Yavapai Counties, Arizona. Cultural Resources Report No. 127. Archaeological Consulting Services, Ltd. Tempe, Arizona.)

Vegetation: There is a variety of vegetation types in the park as identified in the LPMP. Along the Agua Fria River, riparian species include salt cedar, mesquite, willow, cottonwood, cattails, reeds, and sedges. In the higher elevations along the river plants typical of the Arizona Upland Subdivision of the Sonoran Desert-scrub Biome are common: blue paloverde, foothill paloverde, ironwood, crucifixion thorn, bursage, and brittlebush. Cacti typical of this area are saguaro, compass barrel cactus, ocotillo, prickly pear, buckhorn cholla, teddy bear cholla, and chain fruit cholla. Most human-caused impacts to vegetation appear along the river where OHVs and tree cutting have resulted in habitat damage. Indiscriminate recreational shooting has damaged saguaro and other cacti and trees in areas away from the river.

Wildlife: Special Status Species: Several species of wildlife that occur in LPRP are considered special status species and have some level of protection under state or federal laws. The Bald Eagle was previously listed as an Endangered Species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973. In June 2007, the Bald Eagle was delisted under the ESA; however, the species is still federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Eagle Protection Act. The

nest at LPRP has consistently fledged young eaglets and is now considered to be one of the most successful breeding territories in the state.

Fisheries: In 1998, the AGFD first documented striped bass in Lake Pleasant. Originally fisheries biologists believed the striped bass would not be able to form a viable population in Lake Pleasant. From 2004-2007, AGFD conducted an extensive striped bass study in Lake Pleasant. As a result of this study the AGFD learned that striped bass are actively reproducing in Lake Pleasant and their population is increasing. Striped bass reproduction success is directly proportionate to flow levels in the Agua Fria River. The study further indicated that striped bass are competing with white bass for food; however, when threadfin shad populations decrease white bass will shift their diet while striped bass will not. This behavior may lead to increased competition for food between white bass and largemouth bass.

Over the past several years, several new species of aquatic wildlife have been documented in Lake Pleasant. During sampling surveys in 2006, inland silversides, a small baitfish, were discovered in the Aqua Fria Arm of Lake Pleasant. Later in 2006, white amur capable of reproduction were discovered in the Castle Creek Arm of Lake Pleasant. Triploid white amur are frequently stocked throughout the state to assist with vegetation control in specific waters.

In January 2006, the Quagga mussel, an invasive bivalve closely related to the Zebra mussel, was discovered at Lake Mead, along the Colorado River. More recently, Quagga mussels have been observed in the CAP Canal and in Lake Pleasant, where they are now common below the low-water mark on rocks and other hard surfaces. They are expected to create severe economic impacts to structures associated with the water management (lake water inlet structures, etc.) as well as potentially catastrophic impacts to aquatic wildlife.

Quagga mussels are a filter feeder. Adult mussels are capable of filtering large quantities of water every day, slowly cleaning a lake. This process removes food and resources from the food chain, effectively starving out other aquatic species that feed on microscopic zooplankton. As prey species died out, larger predatory species are impacted up the food chain. If sufficient quantities of Quagga mussels are present in a reservoir the end result is a sterile lake devoid of other aquatic species. Currently, there are no known measures to eradicate Quagga mussels from a large body of water.

Golden algae is another invasive species that has the potential to have a negative impact on our aquatic wildlife. Golden Algae produces a toxic byproduct which interferes with a fish's ability to obtain dissolved oxygen from the water, causing fish to suffocate.

Special Status Species: The Gila topminnow is an Arizona native that is listed as endangered under the ESA. This live-bearing fish was once widespread throughout the southern part of the Gila River Basin. Introduction of predators and competitors and the elimination of much of its native habitat have driven the

species to near extinction. It is currently known to exist in only a few scattered areas of the State. Although the species is not present in Lake Pleasant, it is known to occur upstream of the lake within a tributary of the Agua Fria River. This population was introduced by the AGFD in 1970. Longfin dace and desert sucker are both Category 2 species found in main tributaries to Lake Pleasant within the LPRP. Reclamation constructed a fish barrier to prevent non-native fish species from entering into the top minnow habitat.

Cultural Resources: In recent years, increased use of the AFCA (both authorized and unauthorized activities) has resulted in the unintentional and deliberate destruction of archaeological sites. Damages to sites include OHVs, defacing petroglyphs, and looting of artifacts. To illustrate the severity of the issue, a 3-ton boulder covered with petroglyphs was stolen from within the AFCA and used as a lawn ornament until its recovery by Federal law enforcement. Two people were convicted of the theft under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act; they were fined \$32,500 and sentenced to serve a total of 100 hours of community service in addition to forfeiting a pickup truck used in the theft.

Of the over 180 archaeological sites recorded in the LPRP, around 50 are located in the AFCA. A site condition assessment completed in October 2007 of 41 of these sites indicates that many sites have been impacted to varying degrees by recreational use of the area. Impacts range from looting, to removal of surface artifacts, driving vehicles through sites, leaving trash on sites, cattle disturbance, and in a couple of instances some construction related (for example, power line) disturbance. The assessment of impacts was based on comparisons with site condition data obtained from the first surveys of the area in the early 1990s.

Land Form: The 23,661 acre LPRP is located on the Agua Fria River about 35 miles upstream from its confluence with the Gila River. It lies in a transition zone from the Mountain Region to the Desert Region of the Basin and Range Biogeographic Province, where the Agua Fria River emerges from isolated mountain ranges onto a generally level basin floor. In general, the topography consists of rolling terrain incised by numerous small arroyos and channels. A series of rugged, steep-sided ridges and mesas rise east of the lake, and the Bradshaw Mountains lie directly north of the park.

The AFCA is approximately 2,400 acres of the high-water land mass that exists on the northeastern part of the park along the Agua Fria River. Some of the larger tributaries of the AFCA include Boulder Creek and Tule Creek. Prominent topographic features in the area include Wild Burro Mesa (2997 feet) and Indian Mesa (2280 feet).

Geology: Underlying geologic conditions, in addition to different soil types and observable drainage patterns, give an area its unique physical shape and characteristics. These characteristics provide the key to potential future

development of any specific area. Geologic data allow predictions to be made concerning the types of problems that may be encountered during site work

The Agua Fria River, the main tributary to Lake Pleasant, flows between the Bradshaw and Hieroglyphic Mountains. The latter are composed of Late Precambrian Period (ca. 2 billion years ago) granite and metamorphic formations capped by Tertiary Period (ca. 65 to 10 million years ago) basalt flows and siliceous rock materials broken into pieces by volcanic or igneous action. In the Tertiary, faulting or lava flows created natural dams, causing lakes to form. As a result, steep limestone canyon walls line much of the narrow river channel. On the edges of the lake are Pleistocene (ca. 1 million years ago) alluvial terraces, comprised of river gravels and conglomerates interspersed with clay and sand deposits.

In many areas of LPRP, soils are thin over bedrock or are ancient and gravelly. The northeastern AFCA and eastern banks of the lake have thin gravelly soils covering volcanic bedrock, similar to the southwestern portion of LPRP. On fan terraces in the southeastern portion of the Park there are very gravelly sandy loams; their high lime content would not have been conducive for agriculture in prehistoric or historic times.

(Reference: Pinter, Teresa L., Editor, 2004, Lake Pleasant Regional Park Cultural Resources Management Plan, Maricopa and Yavapai Counties, Arizona. Cultural Resources Report No. 127. Archaeological Consulting Services, Ltd. Tempe, Arizona)

Air Quality: A section of the lake is included in the Maricopa County Urban Planning Area, which has been designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a non-attainment area for total suspended particulates (TSP), carbon monoxide, and ozone. This means that in this designated area at least one national ambient air quality standard for each of these pollutants is being violated, as shown by monitored data or modeling. Any verification of such an occurrence or any distinguishing of difference in air quality over one part of Lake Pleasant as compared to another part is not possible at this time.

According to the Maricopa County Air Quality Department, ozone is transported across the sky. Whether the AFCA is in an attainment area or not, pollutants can travel into residential areas and should be taken into account. If the AFCA is located outside the non-attainment area, a ban on OHV use in that area will have a positive effect on resolution of PM-10 issues in the non-attainment area. This is due to the high mobility of dust from the OHVs.

Existing Zoning: The AFCA is zoned Rural-43 and Rural-190 (see below) on its east side, and the west side is currently not zoned.

- **Rural-43 Zoning** indicates one acre per dwelling unit, and is further defined as follows: The principal purpose of this zoning district is to conserve and protect farms and other open land uses, foster orderly

growth in rural and agricultural areas, and prevent urban and agricultural land use conflicts; but when governmental facilities and services, public utilities and street access are available, or can reasonably be made available, applications for change of this zoning district to any single-family residential zoning district will be given favorable consideration. Principal uses permitted in this zoning district include both farm and non-farm residential uses, farms and recreational and institutional uses.

- o **Rural-190 Zoning** indicates 190,000 square feet per dwelling unit, and is further defined as follows: The principal purpose of this zoning district is to conserve and protect farms and other open land uses, foster orderly growth in rural areas, and prevent urban and agricultural land use conflicts. The primary purpose of requiring large minimum lots of not less than **190,000 square feet** in this zoning area is to discourage small lots or residential subdivisions where public facilities are not available or could not reasonably be made available, such as water, sewage disposal, parks and playgrounds, and governmental services such as police and fire protection. Principal uses permitted in this zoning district include both farm and non-farm residential uses, farms, and recreational and institutional uses.

Opportunities and Constraints:

Economic Opportunities: MCPRD, including LPRP and the AFCA, are funded through user fees and receive no support from Maricopa County tax monies. Fees at AFCA are currently collected through a self-pay system using what is known as an “iron ranger,” essentially a locked box at the entry point specifically for that purpose.

In Fiscal Year 2007, revenues for the AFCA (Table 2) were calculated as follows:

| <u>Type of entry</u> | <u>Count</u> | <u>Revenue</u> | <u>Per Unit</u> |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Automobile | 3,139 | \$15,695 | \$5.00 |
| Watercraft | 346 | \$692 | 2.00 |
| Miscellaneous | 177 | \$886 | 5.00 |
| Annual Pass | 63 | | |
| | 3,725 | | |
| Attendance Total | 10,976* | \$17,273 | \$1.57 |

* Attendance multiplier = 3.31 to calculate total attendance (3,139 + 177=3,316 x 3.31 = 10,976)

Table 2. Revenues generated in FY07 in AFCA.

Appendix G

Public Meeting Information and Results

The public has been and continues to be an important and integral part of the planning process for the development of LPRP, and for the AFCA at the north end of the lake. For this effort, public participation was heavily solicited via direct mail and e-mail, direct distribution at 129 outlets, including local fishing and boating stores and marinas; and through the media including newspaper, radio and television advertising. In addition to traditional public service announcements, editorial stories were published in two local papers. User organizations were directly invited. Public meetings were held at the following locations to gather initial comments.

- **Thursday, September 6th, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.;** Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant, 41402 N. 87th Avenue, Peoria, AZ 85383 (602) 372-7470
- **Wednesday, September 12th, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.;** Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant, 41402 N. 87th Avenue, Peoria, AZ 85383 (602) 372-7470
- **Monday, September 17th, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.;** Albins Civic Center, 19005 E. K-Mine Road Center, Black Canyon City, AZ 85324 (623) 374-5234

An additional public meeting was held to providing information on the findings and potential solutions for the long-term plan. This meeting was held as follows:

- **Thursday, November 15th, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.;** Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant, 41402 N. 87th Avenue, Peoria, AZ 85383 (602) 372-7470

In addition, a public webpage was set-up on the MCPRD website to explain the issue and allow the public to provide comments electronically. Both the website and public meetings were promoted extensively to reach both targeted and general audiences.

Participants were invited to provide comments at meetings or via e-mail, website or ground mail. Overall, 94 total responses were gathered through electronic means (25 comments), telephone calls (16), and 3 public meetings (53 attendees). The professionally facilitated meetings were structured to educate the public as to the purpose of the plan revision, and to elicit their opinions and feedback. Participation was encouraged by the use of a set of driving questions designed specifically for these meetings. Data were collected by several note-takers as well as via comment cards, and attendees were encouraged both to participate and to sign in so as to facilitate follow up communication with them.

Meetings were organized with two objectives: (1) To orient the public to the planning process for the AFCA; this portion of the meeting consisted of a series of photo and map boards and a brief presentation. (2) To solicit public comment regarding their use of the area and its future.

Public Meeting Information Summary: The three public meetings were held at venues to accommodate those most likely to be regular users of LPRP and the AFCA. These events were publicized for several weeks in advance, through direct mailings; 129 distribution outlets; press releases in the *Arizona Republic* and *Arizona Daily Star*, on radio (KFYI 550 and KTAR 620) and television (ABC 15, KPNX 12, and News 3). The fourth “report-out” event was similarly publicized. Most attendees either saw the press releases in the newspapers (41%), or heard about it, either “word of mouth” or at a store (32%).

Overall, the majority of citizens agreed that the AFCA is an unspoiled natural habitat that needs participation by the partnering land owners and managers (Reclamation, BLM, Arizona State Land Department, Maricopa County, AGFD) to ensure and facilitate its appropriate use and prevent the loss of natural character in the area. The public’s preferred activities in the area include fishing, non-motorized boat use, hunting, hiking, OHV use, horseback riding, camping, and bird watching.

In response to questions about what they like or value about the area, people stated that they value the natural riparian surroundings and the proximity to water; the fact that the area is relatively quiet and shady, attracting wildlife and birds; there are fewer people than are found on the main areas of LPRP; it is an unparalleled fishing area and spawning ground; and there are dark skies at night.

Members of the public who participated in meetings tended to be frequent users of the AFCA, with 81% reporting at least monthly visits, and 15% reporting at least weekly visits. In addition, users reported many years of visiting the area, with 67% reporting they have been regularly visiting the AFCA for 10-15 years. Most of these participants responded that the area has changed significantly since they first started visiting, and that the changes have been largely negative: increased crowdedness, with attendant mess and noise; increased motorized vehicle traffic; and criminal activity in the area. Visitors primarily access the area via Table Mesa Road (71%), with the remainder either via Castle Hot Springs Road, or by boat from the main portion of Lake Pleasant.

Participants expressed concern about unlawful activities in the area – fully 25% of the responding public reported they personally use the area either for motorized travel or target shooting, both of which are unlawful activities in all Maricopa County Parks. Other unlawful activities taking place within the AFCA include dumping of trash, vandalism, and inappropriate public behavior. Public comment as to issues of high importance or desirability in the AFCA was primarily centered on addressing those issues. The top five issues were staffing, increased law enforcement, improved facilities, access to the area, funding, and education.

Specific comments pertaining to staffing were suggestions to clean up the trash and maintain trash receptacles; have a guard shack or station to facilitate fee

collection and increase users' accountability; and to have more of a presence in the park and AFCA in general. Regarding law enforcement, people felt that consistent enforcement of the existing rules would go a long way toward solving problems in the area. Timing was felt to be an important consideration; to maximize efforts and revenues expended, weekend staffing and law enforcement should be the first consideration. The public felt that improved facilities were needed ranging from more trash barrels and picnic tables to entry control items such as guard shacks, fences and heavy-duty gates, and photo ID systems. Fitting into both 'facilities' and 'access' categories, a number of respondents requested facilities to allow the unloading of boats or horses with removal of the vehicle and trailer to a designated parking area. A few people felt that the area should be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant to enable all people to access the area.

Finally, with respect to funding and education, many participants were not aware that the LPRP is funded with user fees rather than tax dollars. This being the case, meeting attendees felt, an improved system for the collection of user fees would be very beneficial. This would also tie in well with the need for an increased staff presence and facilities to manage access to the area.

Discussions during public meetings also concluded there is a need for public outreach information and communications to provide users with an understanding of how the AFCA is funded, staffed and operated, as well as the need for respectful behavior in the AFCA to retain the natural habitat and archaeological resources in the area.

Ideas for improved funding included easier, more convenient user fee payment, establishing an "off-road" sticker to generate revenues, establishing a "Friends of the Agua Fria Conservation Area" group, better posting of boundaries and rules for this and adjacent properties, "huge" signs stating what activities are prohibited in the area, and a general campaign to bring children back to nature.

Public Meeting Results: The public meetings concluded that the AFCA should be given a chance to be restored and saved for future generations to use; at the same time, access for legitimate users should be provided. Based on the public's responses, there is no clear indication that any changes should be made to the original findings of the LPMP; the area should remain a Conservation Area with Limited Access until and any changes to the area will require increased controls and enforcement. As funding becomes available, it is possible that improved facilities, staffing and law enforcement can be put in place to allow a more diverse cross-section of users and access needs.

Appendix H

Market Analysis

Maricopa County residents have a strong relationship with their public parks, preserves, trails, and other recreation facilities. Indeed, for many, the Arizona outdoor lifestyle was a primary reason for moving to Greater Phoenix. The Phoenix area is home to nationally-recognized parks, desert preserves and trail systems. But the fact is that our parks and recreation services are at a crossroads: They can no longer keep up with the demands by Greater Phoenix's growing population. As the demand for new parks and leisure opportunities increase, urban development continues to devour thousands of acres of natural desert lands each year. A major challenge is to plan, finance, and manage park, open-space, and recreation facilities in an environment of rapid growth.

The Current Demand

The demand for recreation opportunities and facilities in Greater Phoenix has undergone tremendous growth and diversification in recent years. Recreation opportunity demand can be measured in terms of desired activities, desired experiences, desired settings/resources and desired benefits. Recently, Arizona State Parks commissioned a study to assess the recreation activities, settings, and benefits most desired by Arizonans. In addition to a statewide sample, the researchers segmented resident populations by county and ethnicity (i.e. Hispanic/Non-Hispanic). The top five activities in Maricopa County were 1) play a sport, 2) outside foot activity (walking, hiking, jogging), 3) ride a bicycle, mountain bike, or horse, 4) drive for pleasure and 5) visit a park, natural, or cultural feature. Other high-use activities were attending an outdoor event, visiting a wilderness area or preserve, picnicking, and swimming.

The 2008 Arizona Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) also studied the perceived benefits provided by parks, recreation, and open space. In the eyes of Maricopa County residents, the top two parks and recreation benefits were tied: promotes a healthy lifestyle/physical activity and provides opportunities for family interaction. The other strongly-perceived benefits include making the city/region a better place to live, providing constructive activities for youth, promoting mental health, increasing community pride, increasing property values and protecting natural and cultural resources..

Maricopa County Park Visitor Profile

In 2005-2006 Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department studied park visitors. The follow represent highlights of the findings of that study.

- There is a certain amount of diversity among visitors; however, the most typical park visitor was a 48 year old white male.
- The racial/ethnic diversity of the park users is growing, especially in the West Valley parks; white respondents comprised 82.5% of the sample and

Hispanics were the largest minority group comprising 11.4% of the overall sample.

- Arizona residents comprise 77.4% of all Maricopa County Park users. Almost a third of all park visitors live outside of the Phoenix metropolitan area. The cities of Phoenix, Mesa and Scottsdale reported the highest rates of participation in the metropolitan area.
- Approximately 77% of the visitors contacted were return visitors. The park being visited was the primary destination of 93.6% of the visitors.
- The typical Maricopa County park user visits a Maricopa County park approximately 10 times a year, during the day (day use), and stays for approximately 3.5 hours.
- The typical Maricopa County Park user visited the park with one other person (group size), most commonly a family member. An average of 2.9 persons is in a vehicle visiting a county park.
- The most participated in activities among Maricopa County park visitors, in order of magnitude, are trail hiking (52.6%), picnicking (34.0%), walking for pleasure (30.7%), watching wildlife (25.1%), RV camping (24.8%), mountain biking (15.8%), and photography (20.5%).
- Visitor responses suggested that restrooms, parking availability, park roads, and park signs and hiking trails were the most important existing facilities to visitors.
- The existing facilities that received the best performance ratings from visitors were park campsites, hiking trails, park roads, parking availability and restrooms.
- The services most important to Maricopa County Park visitors were facility cleanliness, park information, park maintenance, and staff courtesy.
- Park users visited parks for a host of reasons. The most important reasons for visiting Maricopa County Parks were to observe the scenic beauty, relax, enjoy the solitude, enjoy the sounds and smells of nature and get away from everyday responsibilities.

The Challenge

At the core of the challenge to provide parks, open space, and recreation opportunities in Greater Phoenix is the area's dynamic population growth. Maricopa County has grown from less than a million residents in 1970 to 3.77 million in 2006. Between 2000 and 2006, Maricopa County grew by 696,000 residents, the largest net increase of any county in the United States. Already containing the fourth-largest county population in the nation, Greater Phoenix is now expanding into Yavapai and Pinal counties as well.

A historically conservative 3% annual increase of the Phoenix and Maricopa County population between 2007 and 2012 would still yield over 618,169 new residents (a 16% increase) over the next five years. Meeting the parks, open space, and leisure needs of 4.4 million residents will indeed provide many new challenges for all parks and recreation providers. Much of the growth is occurring in newer and less dense suburban communities.

Historical and Projected Population Growth in Phoenix and Maricopa County: 1990-2012

| | 1990 | 2005 | 2012(projected) |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Phoenix | | | |
| • Population | 983,403 ^a | 1,377,980 ^a | 1,806,584 |
| • Percent Hispanic | 20.0 ^b | 41.8 ^b | 49.5 |
| • Percent White | 71.8 ^b | 48.3 ^b | 40.8 |
| Maricopa County | | | |
| • Population | 2,122,101 ^a | 3,648,545 ^a | 4,499,336 |
| • Percent Hispanic | 16.3 ^b | 29.2 ^b | 33.6 |
| • Percent White | 77.1 ^b | 61.2 ^b | 56.2 |
| ^a Source: <i>U.S. Census Bureau, 2007.</i> ^b Tom Rex, Arizona State University | | | |

The challenge of providing parks, open space, and recreation opportunities is also driven by changes in population composition. The Greater Phoenix population is growing more diverse in terms of age, income, and ethnic/racial make-up. The mean age for Maricopa County residents is 33.4 years, nearly three years younger than the U.S. average. While the baby boomers and retirement-aged population are large segments, the youth and young-adult age cohorts are the areas of greatest growth – the 0-34 age cohorts are all larger (proportionally) than the national average. The median earnings of Maricopa County residents are slightly lower than the national average. The poverty rate in Phoenix is slightly higher than the U.S. average, while the rate for Maricopa County is slightly lower.

Perhaps the most pronounced demographic shift has been in the ethnicity/racial changes. Hispanics are moving toward a majority population in Phoenix in the next 10 years. The percentage changes occurring between 2000 and 2005 were projected for the next seven years (2005 to 2012) to provide an estimate of what the ethnic/racial composition might look like in 2012. Clearly, parks and recreation services will be expected to address the needs of the growing Hispanic population segment, particularly in the older areas of Phoenix and the established suburbs.

All of the above forces – continued population growth, a more diverse population, and growing competition for land – place demands on parks and recreation agencies. Additional parks, open space, and recreation facilities are needed, particularly in the growing suburbs and outlying areas. A less visible challenge emerges from existing parks, where facilities need maintenance and infrastructure improvements due to age and rapidly increasing use.

Appendix I

Technical Committee Defined

The technical committee was comprised of MCPRD, Reclamation, and AGFD experts to develop the implementation schedule for the AFCA; they were engineers, park managers, a grant writer, law enforcement managers, environmental (Archaeologists), and wildlife managers.

Appendix J

Implementation Schedule Details

The Implementation schedule is based on a cooperative planning process with all the Partners and the conceptual plan was designed in phases to accommodate the funding opportunities.

Phase I

Park Host Compound

| |
|---|
| 2 Park Host Sites |
| 4 Park Host Sites |
| Electric |
| Water |
| Phone |
| Septic |
| Shade |
| Concrete Slabs |
| Picnic Tables |
| Grills |
| Parking Spaces |
| Radios |
| Decomposed Granite |
| Fence |
| Mobile Mini for equipment |
| Shade for equipment |
| Gate before main gate to detour further entry |
| Trash Cans/Dumpsters |
| Equipment-start up maintenance |
| Vehicles x 2 |
| Service Contract for trash |

Public Parking

| |
|--------------------|
| Information Kiosk |
| Decomposed Granite |
| Fence |
| Primitive |
| Grade and Drain |
| Base |
| Trash Cans |
| Port-A-John |
| Service Contract |

Route Designation on North Side of Main Road in Park

| |
|--|
| Single Lane of Traffic |
| Pullouts |
| Double Strand Cable / 50 spread with splices |
| Reflective Devices |
| Pipe uprights |
| Concrete footings at 30 foot spreads |

Route Designation of South Side of Main Road in Park

| |
|---|
| Education Plan |
| Direction Signs |
| T-posts |
| Contingency to make like North side if needed |

Gates

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Reinforced by Game and Fish |
|-----------------------------|

Launch Ramp A

| |
|---|
| Under 20 feet wide |
| Higher than high water |
| Fill and Divert before ramp entrance |
| Tree pruning |
| Ramp |
| Retaining Wall |
| Concrete Mat |
| Honeycomb Fabric |
| Parking Spaces |
| Decomposed Granite |
| Signs |
| Trash Cans |
| Port-A-John |
| Pre-Fabricated restroom down the road if acceptable |
| Portable Picnic Tables |

Alternate Ramp

| |
|--------------------------|
| Non-improved |
| Closed when water is low |

Launch Ramps B, C, and D

| |
|--|
| Non-improved |
| Primitive |
| Direction Barricades |
| Signs |
| Designate ramps only |
| Maybe fence if above high-water |
| Contingency to make like route designation |

Road Maintenance

| |
|---------------------------|
| Minimal |
| No permanent improvements |

Access Issues

| |
|---------------------------|
| Fence trouble spots |
| Protect Archaeology sites |
| Tule Creek Fence and Gate |

Phase II

Entry Station

| |
|---|
| Start with Mobile Mini |
| Long Term- Developed entry station- permanent structure w/ offices-multi agency concept |
| Drive by |
| Turn around from RV |
| Iron Ranger |

Day Use

| |
|------------------------|
| Portable Picnic Tables |
| rash Cans |
| Portable Fire Rings |

Phase III

Restroom at Main

| |
|----------------|
| Pre Fabricated |
| Infrastructure |
| Electric |
| Water |
| Septic |

Ramada

| |
|----------------|
| Covered |
| Concrete Slabs |
| Electric |
| Lights |

Playground

| |
|---------|
| Natural |
|---------|

Back Country Camp

| |
|-------------------------|
| Non-improved |
| Pack it in, Pack it out |

Interpretive Areas

| |
|-------|
| Signs |
|-------|

Watchable Wildlife

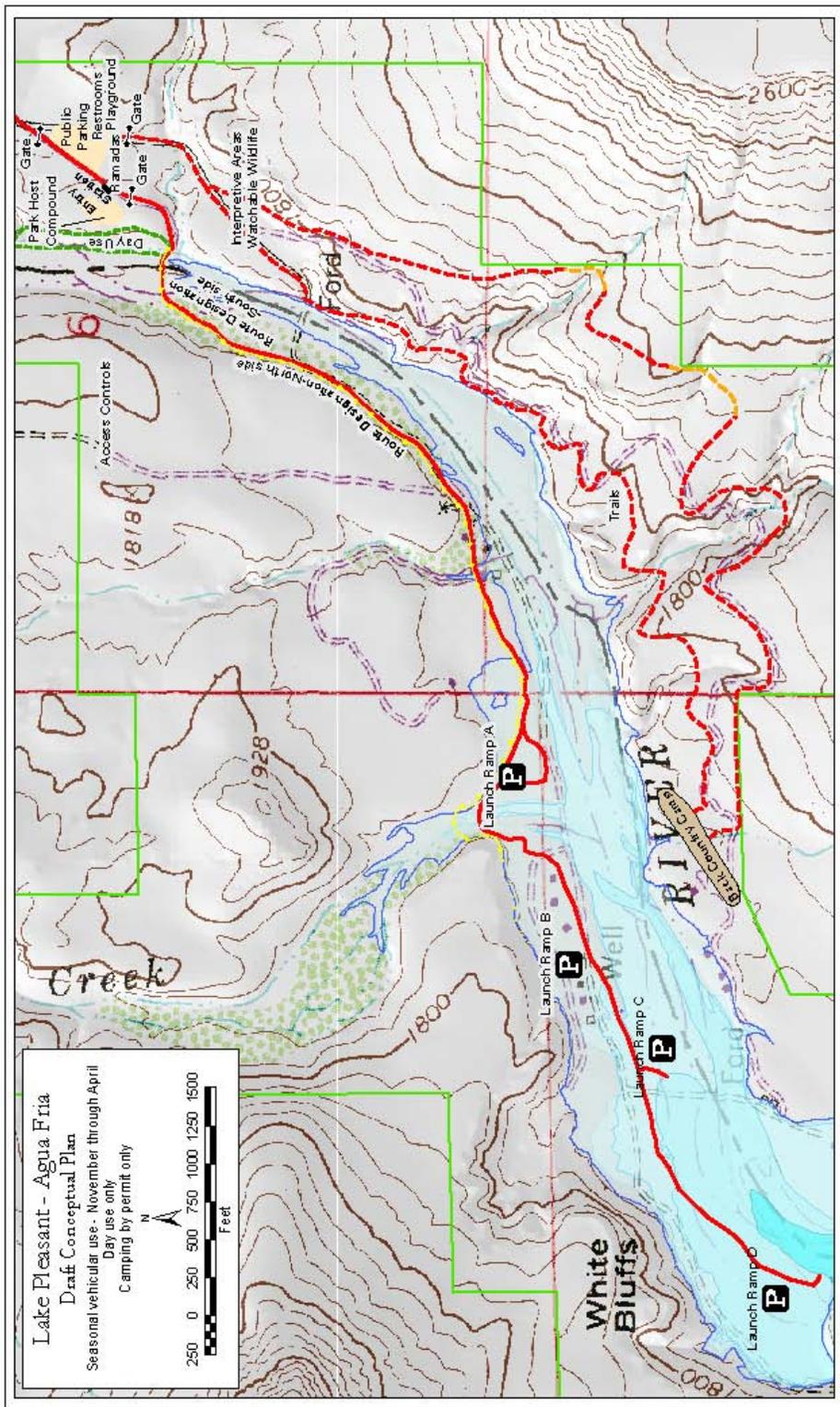
| |
|--------|
| Blinds |
|--------|

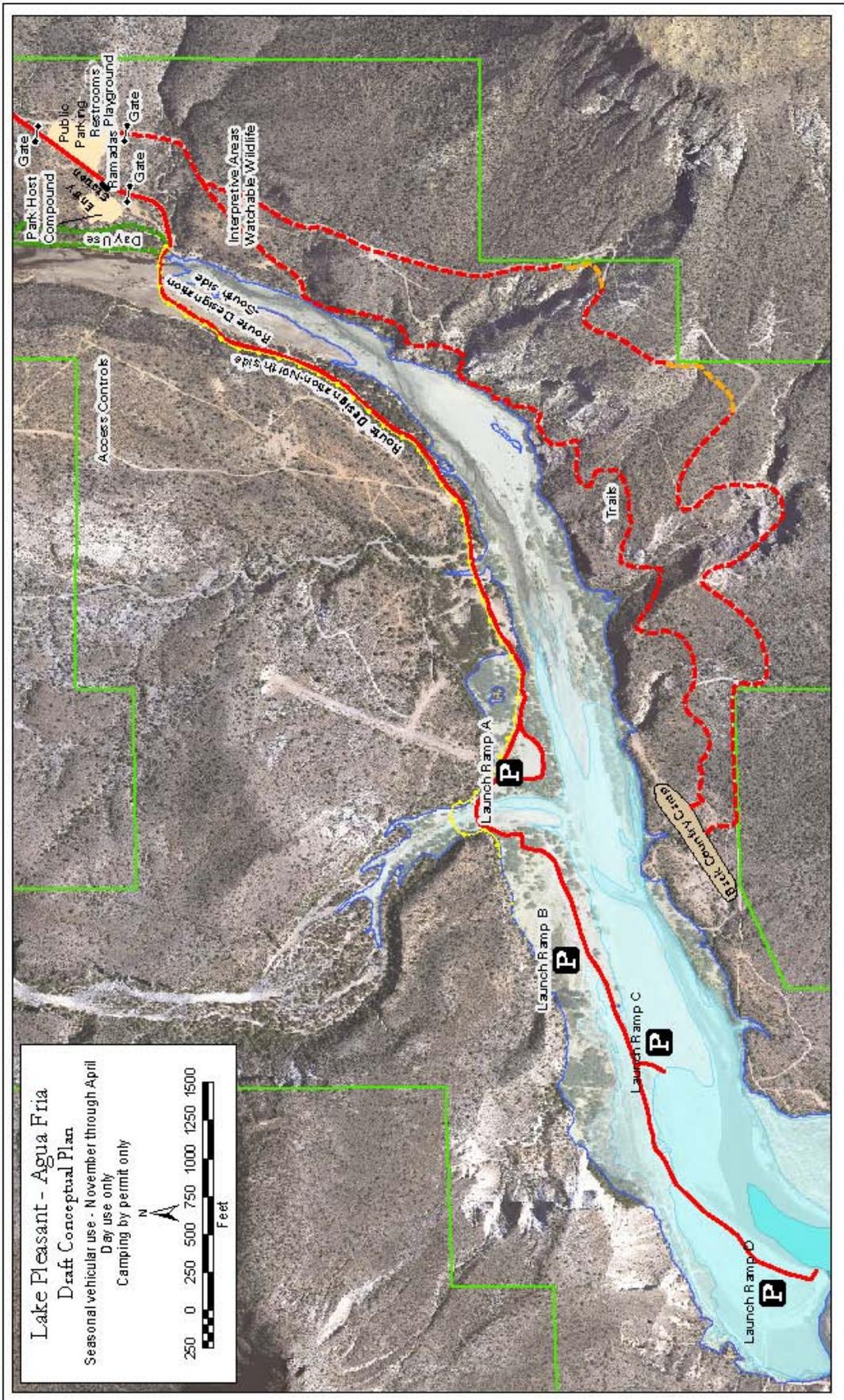
Trails

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Multi-Use |
| Trail Master Plan |
| State Land Issues |
| Trail Construction per Mile |

Appendix K

Conceptual Plan Maps (Page 37 and 38)





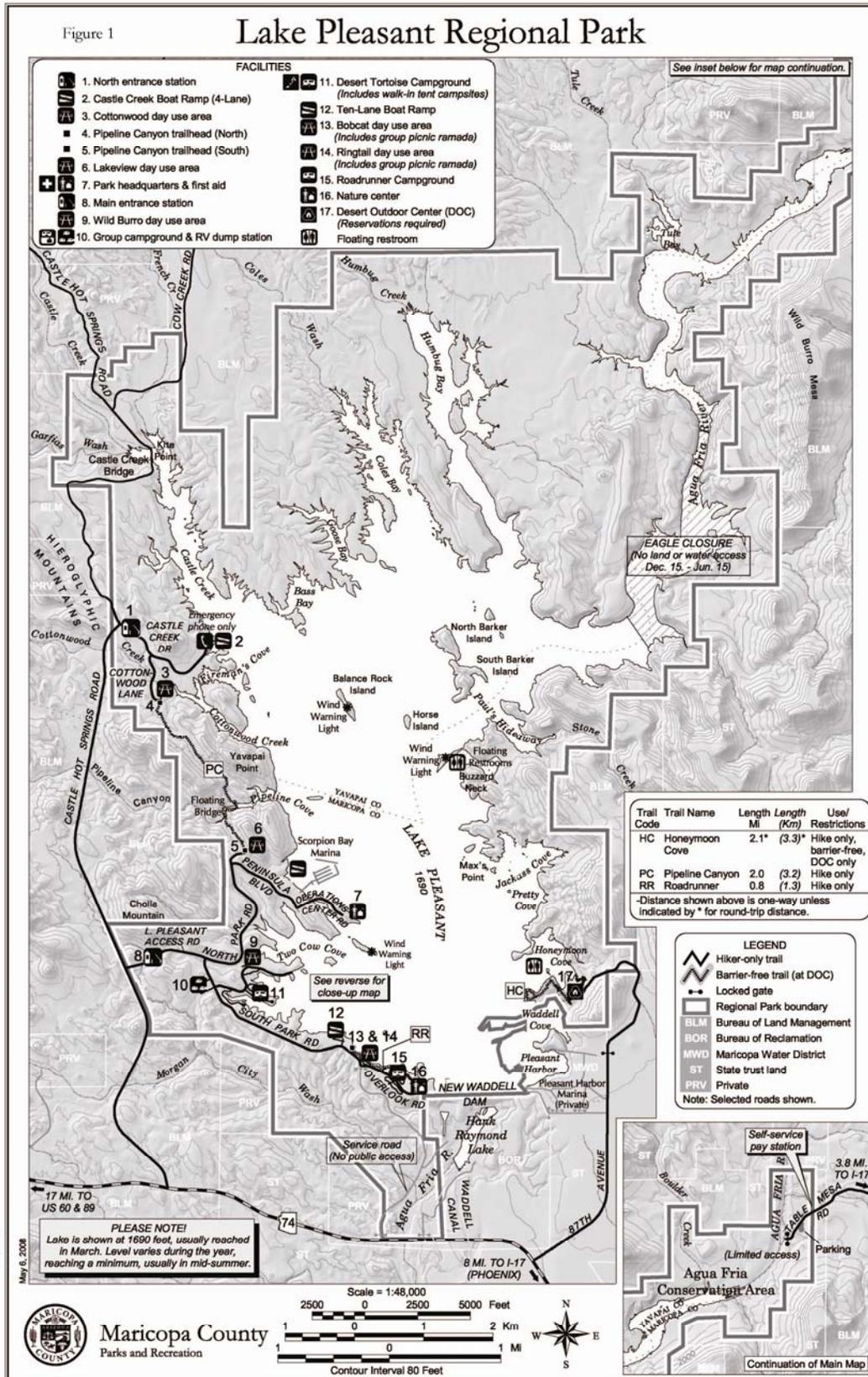
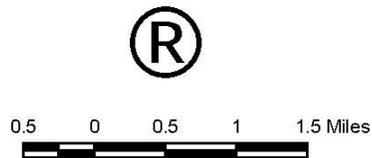
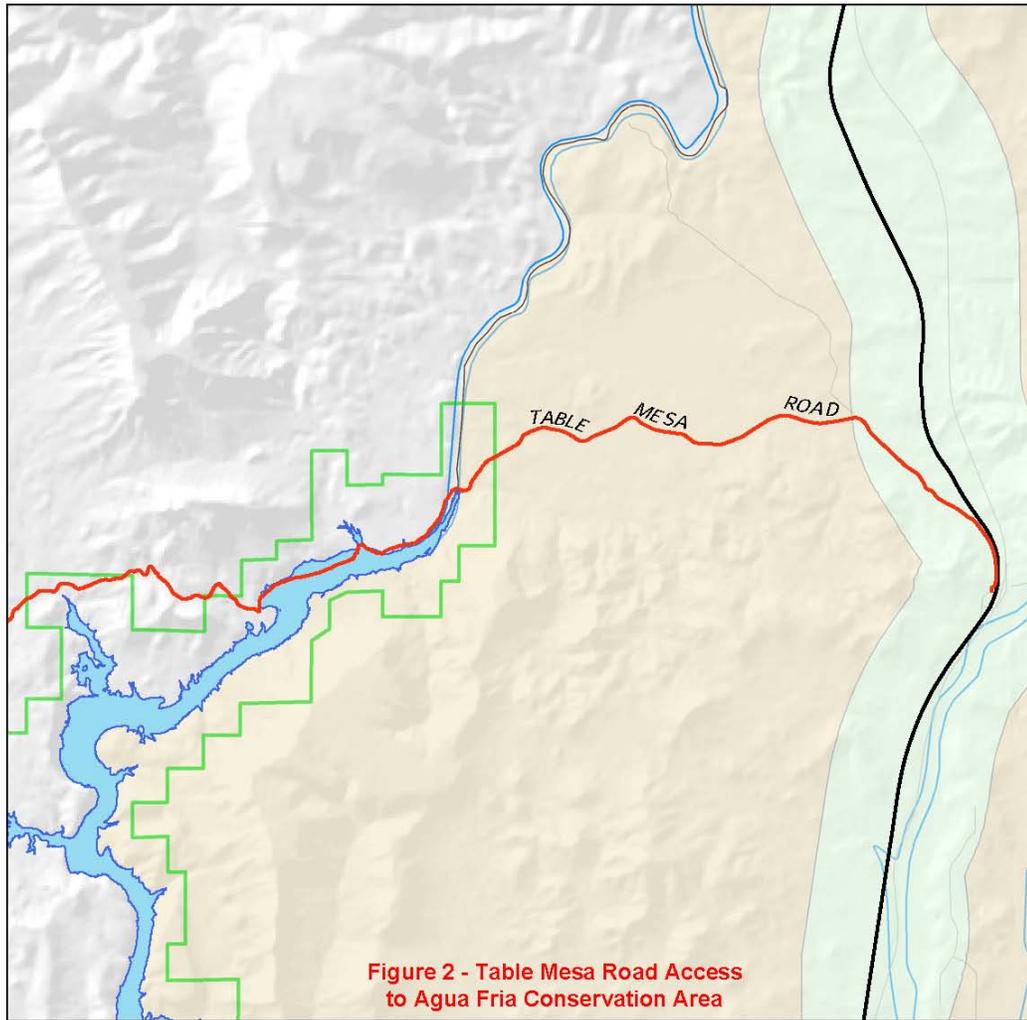


Figure 1. Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park

Agua Fria River Area

Area Plan Land Use



Oct. 22, 2007

Fig. 2. Table Mesa Road Access to Agua Fria Conservation Area.