

Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Strategic Systems Master Plan: Parks Vision 2030 Regional Focus Groups Held in January/February 2021	
Theme from Focus Groups	Notes <i>(additional comments were received from participants after initial review of spr</i>
Existing Regional Parks	Focus on the visitor experience and enhance existing parks with more See how regional parks can help overburdened city/town parks.
<i>Additional comments</i>	Diversify assets and recreational opportunities across parks. Balance carrying capacity/visitation, maintenance and operations with Valuation of ecosystem services in the wake of extreme climate change.
Population Growth	BLM leadership working toward pro-active approach to managing MCPRD to review acres of county parks per resident in past years, at present, and anticipate future needs based on increased demand
<i>Additional comments</i>	AZ Office of Tourism (AOT): Continue Leave No Trace/responsible recreation messaging to mitigate negative impacts to parks and sustain a pristine trail system as population grows. The public is increasingly Impact environmental stewardship through MCPRD education, environmental/conservation/recreation programs to create value
Future Areas for Expansion of Regional Parks	BLM under multi-use mandate, MCPRD able to assist BLM in the West Valley with designated recreational use sites. Tonto National Forest (TNF) experiencing high visitor-use, MCPRD able
<i>Additional comments</i>	Dense population within Metro Phoenix needs additional local public access to recreation outlets linking high ecosystem services, public
Identifying/Acquiring Lands for Protection	Fountains Hills: ASLD land to the northeast may be an opportunity. They are working on one of their first Park, Trail and Open Space plans right Ranch Conservation Area Identifying Priority Lands for Protection: MCPRD to work with partners such as Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) on wildlife corridor studies, Central AZ Conservation Alliance (CAZCA) on the Regional Open
<i>Additional comments</i>	Buckeye: City is working with BLM on R&PP application for 1,350 acres located to the southwest of Skyline Regional Park near I-10 and Tonopah- Buckeye: Residents and developers have expressed interest in City acquiring State Trust Land northwest of White Tank Mountain Regional must be coordinated with ASLD. Arizona State Statute prohibits the designation of STL as open space in general and/or comprehensive

	ASLD – When purchasing State Trust Land, they can only sell their land at public auction. ASLD has a Constitutionally mandated fiduciary obligation to ensure maximum benefit for the designated Beneficiaries.
BLM - Recreational Programming	Need to curb unsanctioned recreational activity with the intent of BLM multi-use mandate. Recreational space planning/design to provide space for many different activities (equestrian trails, OHV use, target BLM working on Travel Management Plans in area near Buckeye and
Additional Access Points at Regional Parks	Surprise: New access point desired at White Tanks Mt. Regional Park Buckeye: New western and northern access points, especially for
<i>Additional comments</i>	Estrella Mountain Regional Park access/connectivity to Gila River as well as PLO 1015, FJ Weiler Greenbelt and AZGFD WMA's - Robbins Butte, Base + Meridian, etc. Additional options to consider Estrella Mountain
Trail Connections to Regional Parks	Buckeye: Trail connections between Skyline Regional Park and White Goodyear: Trail connections to Estrella Mountain Regional Park are are desired. Fountain Hills is currently working on their park and recreation master plan and an active transportation plan. 2001. Have consolidated and eastern canals which gives them the north/south connections but suggested east/west connections getting Avondale: Interested in how their parks integrate with Estrella Mt.
<i>Additional comments</i>	Trail/multi-use paths connections expanded along the N+S of Salt-Gila River corridor spanning Metro Phoenix and connecting with local trails
Trails	MCPRD: Working on trail connection from Vulture Mt. to White Tank MCPRD: Working with Friends of Daisy Mountain Trails in Anthem to Pinal County: Trails Plan calls for extensive connections into Queen Creek in planning documents. Major link is the CAP canal trail (through CAP canal trails: many opportunities, major thoroughfare in SE region of the county, Apache Junction constructing CAP trail in near future. Tom Chandler: landlocked but Consolidated and Eastern Canals provide N/S Apache Junction: working to develop trailhead across the street from Userly Mountain Regional Park. AJ looking at washes and powerline Mesa is starting a strategic planning effort focusing more on the 10-minute walk to a park campaign, infill and major connection opportunities, benefits for natural area parks and green space area

	Mesa South Canal mirrors the Salt River and has more consistent land
<i>Additional comments</i>	Active transportation network initiatives to link local/County trails to major Arizona trails - 1,500-mile Sun Corridor Trail (Douglas, AZ- Las Vegas, NV); 315-mile Maricopa Trail; 800-mile Arizona National Scenic Trail; 100-mile Tribute Trail; 100-mile Flagstaff Urban Trail System; 500-
Maricopa Trail	Buckeye: Focus on connections between open space resources, such as between White Tank Mountains to the Hassayampa and Gila Rivers.
	Peoria has 22 miles of Maricopa Trail, currently working on developing
	Queen Creek: Maricopa Trail ties into Sonoqui Wash Trail; seeking to
	Goodyear: Supportive of Maricopa Trail and connections to Bullard
	Maricopa Trails and Park Foundation (MTPF) sees an opportunity to create a connection from Granite Reef Dam to Hwy 85 with extensions
	MTPF sees opportunity to expand the Maricopa Trail into long linear
	MTPF is focused on connecting the Maricopa Trail to communities.
<i>Additional comments</i>	AOT: Market the Maricopa Trail to increase awareness of parking options throughout the trail and the many businesses/recreation sites
	Connections within Maricopa County to Canalscape network,
Regional Connectivity	Pinal County sees opportunity to connect San Tan Regional Park to the Superstitions. Superstition Vistas planning document discusses
	Peoria interested in looking at BLM land and building partnerships, Peoria can be a great partner to provide opportunity to sign plans and assist with connectivity.
	Goodyear: Currently working on the Bullard Wash Park Master Plan.
	Cave Creek: Would like to see a land bridge of open space between
	Opportunity for Phoenix, Cave Creek and TNF to coordinate on how they depend on each other for richness of habitat. Wildfire has hit a lot of areas on Tonto and hit Spur Cross, pressure for wildlife to move under or
	Central AZ Conservation Alliance (CAZCA) along with many partners prepared the Regional Open Space Strategy (ROSS): https://cazca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CAZCA_ROSS_V2_10.16.19.pdf
	Apache Junction: Looking to maintain/improve connections to
	Gilbert: New regional park, focused on connecting larger landscapes. Planning 30 miles of trails (although some challenges). November 2021

	<p>Tempe: Landlocked but has all open space included in the Tempe Forestry Master Plan. Looking to utilize sidewalks and medians to plant</p> <p>Glendale: Landlocked on all sides but has a robust park system with connecting greenbelts. Skunk Creek Wash in north provides a wildlife corridor. Agua Fria in western part of Glendale may be included in the</p> <p>Scottsdale mentioned as state statute mandates general plan updates,</p> <p>New Coalition for Farmland Preservation, trying to preserve farms that</p> <p>Tonto National Forest (TNF) - Regional Priorities from the Forester</p> <p>MCPRD: Looking to work with partners to help create connections in</p> <p>MCPRD: Utilizing river, wash, and canal corridors to connect the region.</p>
<i>Additional comments</i>	<p>Transportation planning opportunities for congestion mitigation to come from SR - 30 and I-11 to consider active transportation network</p> <p>Maricopa County Health Department: The benefits of natural areas in mitigating heat is worthy to be top of mind. "Heat is the primary weather-related cause of death in the United States, and heat related morbidity and mortality is expected to increase in cities as a result of</p>
Infill/River Corridors	<p>Improving the river corridors for recreation opportunities to reach</p> <p>El Mirage: sees Agua Fria as a place for a multi-use trail and wildlife</p> <p>Avondale: sees Agua Fria down to Gila River as opportunity for multi-use trail and wildlife corridor. Would include trails and paths leading to</p> <p>Goodyear: El Rio Project - it's not in Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) now</p> <p>Surprise: Working with the Flood Control District to use the Central AZ</p> <p>City of Phoenix: Rio Este extends from Tres Rios to the original Rio</p> <p>Mesa and Salt River Pima - Maricopa Indian Community: Focused on 14</p> <p>Sonoran Institute encourages looking at the value of open space and public lands through the lens of watershed health as it affects water</p> <p>Maricopa County Flood Control District is starting to look at sustainable</p> <p>Maricopa County Health Department is looking at corridors for the benefit they provide to cooling areas and mitigating the urban heat island effect. Also interested in health benefits of having access to</p> <p>Sonoran Institute -looking at value of open space at a state level when looking at watershed trends and water availability, water quality and availability, landscapes that protect the headwaters to many ephemeral</p>

	Rio Reimagined is now part of the U.S. EPA's Urban Waters Federal Partnership. Project includes 58 miles along Salt and Gila River corridors, 8 communities - 2 tribal nations, and 6 cities. State and federal agencies
<i>Additional comments</i>	SRPMIC and City of Mesa still considering ecological restoration between Granite Reef Dam and 101/202 Interchange - formerly named VaShly'ay Akimel Salt River Restoration Project as designed with the US Army Corps of Engineers.
	(Revision) Lower Gila River Collaborative (LGRC) focus area (Tres Rios to Gillespie Dam) has a mix of public and private land. AZ Game and Fish Department (AGFD) has Wildlife Areas that they own, as well as Public Land Order (PLO) 1015 Lands that are owned by the U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Connectivity	Type and width of corridors matter to maintain different species. Although corridors may only be a few hundred feet wide in some parts,
	Queen Creek Wash was identified as an important wildlife corridor, as well as other washes in northern part of town, QC plan includes connection pieces and open space corridors identified to hold high
	Note Audubon Important Bird Areas within Maricopa County
	Wildlife isolation and loss of biodiversity in regional parks due to
	Source or sink populations in land use, some corridors may serve as highways for animals to move out of an urban setting into Tonto (sinks
<i>Additional comments</i>	Buckeye developing a Wildlife Corridor Best Practices Guide to be used as a tool to employ wildlife friendly design principles. The Guide is
	APS – Electric transmission corridors may serve as substantial wildlife corridors. APS Forestry Department manages the transmission right-of-way to perform integrated vegetation management, including
	Understanding impacts of climate change on ecological and wildlife habitat to prioritize conservation efforts and maintain diversity of Sonoran Desert.
OHV	Buckeye interested in developing areas for OHV – they mentioned sharing management with county, BLM or USFS too.
	M CPRD Buckeye Hills Regional Park has potential for OHV.
	BLM issues with OHV are in the Resource Management Plans - may allow OHV use but not organized OHV use, for example. PM 10 can be
Concerns	Community members who want to see trail development and those who
	Wildlife isolation and loss of biodiversity in regional parks due to

	<p>Making sure particular parks are not overburdened. Threat of overuse.</p> <p>TNF concerned about urban interface areas where population growth is prevalent. Opportunity to work with cities/towns to established</p> <p>TNF mentioned source and sink concept for wildlife movement. Also, besides connectivity, certain areas may need to be protected that have</p> <p>How people are accessing trails - will they be using e-bikes in the future.</p> <p>Consistency with mapping so agencies can work together to make it easy</p> <p>Concern that projects may get approvals at the parcel level and the detail is not being thought through. Need staff to be aware at all levels of what we are striving towards and any rules/regulations relating to the preservation of parks and open space. Peoria is also creating a GIS tool</p> <p>Increased biking opportunities within the parks.</p> <p>Consider providing epic outdoor adventures within an hour to 1.5 hour drive of the Phoenix Metropolitan area so all users have access to them. Look at more parks and how to enhance the existing parks with more</p>
<i>Additional comments</i>	<p>Target shooting is increasingly becoming an issue on lands on the fringe of the metropolitan area. BLM and others who are developing</p> <p>Changes in use given impacts from the pandemic.</p> <p>Social and environmental equity and inclusion to high quality, diverse public open space.</p>
Follow-Up	<p>Gila River Indian Community recently acquired land from BLM directly southeast of Estrella Mountain Regional Park (GIS data showing BLM</p> <p>MCPRD was asked how they would include diverse stakeholders in public outreach process. All documents and outreach will be available on our website as well as a signup form to be contacted about project</p> <p>Buckeye working on a Best Management Practices Plan for</p> <p>Maricopa County Flood Control District looks at some areas as nodes</p> <p>Engage the business community early, may find support there. Work</p> <p>Next 10 years are critical to being proactive with planning with ecological integrity in mind (especially at urban/rural interface areas).</p> <p>AZ State Parks and Trails is working on the Statewide Comprehensive</p>
<i>Additional comments</i>	<p>Review the ASLD Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDs) and how they contribute to similar goals mentioned in this document. 37-</p>

<p>Challenges</p>	<p>Lack of resources, budgetary concerns, funding for acquisition and development, funding for maintenance and ongoing operational costs, staff capacity including training and awareness, time for partnership</p> <p>Motorized vehicles in general, in particular near Anthem on the</p> <p>Determining best areas for equestrian trails.</p> <p>MCDOT understands roadways can be very impactful for wildlife</p> <p>Influx of visitors coming in from out of state.</p> <p>Sustainable management of the urban/rural interface area.</p> <p>BLM: wildcat target shooting</p> <p>Working with third-party utility companies when working to</p> <p>CAP balancing water delivery priorities first, but want to provide opportunities for recreation. Process may take time. USBR looks at</p> <p>Working collaboratively with various groups with conflicting missions. ASLD mission conflicts with open space and preservation initiatives as</p> <p>Cave Creek: getting the formal dedications of trails and getting across</p> <p>Safety/Mountain Rescues: strains emergency response, Cave Creek is</p> <p>Encroachment: Concerns around Phoenix Sonoran Preserve with</p> <p>Heavy use vs. Conservation: Glendale mentioned balancing heavy use with conservation goals in the Thunderbird Conservation Park. Working</p> <p>New development - is adequate open space dedicated: Phoenix has approved new development south of SR 74 Carefree Hwy, north of the</p> <p>Flood structures disrupt the wash corridors in Queen Creek. Glendale</p> <p>Rapid development, preservation of open space struggles to keep up in</p> <p>Apache Junction: Developing a Community Facilities District (CFD) relating to recent annexation of ASLD land. Looking at washes and</p> <p>Gilbert: Trail development challenges in working under different jurisdictions, establishing easements, many unknowns, currently in</p> <p>Challenge to open space for AZ State Parks is that as development encroaches near state parks, a lack of funding and political will to</p>
<p><i>Additional comments</i></p>	<p>(re-visit) Access: The land where the Friends of the Daisy Mt. Trails group have proposed trails is ASLD land. Their challenge is the process of Maricopa County Parks and Recreation obtaining the Special Land Use</p> <p>urban resilience.</p> <p>Importance of conservation and public awareness of loss of diversity and habitat.</p>

	Collaborative (LGRC) is working on stewardship and legitimate recreation as ways to improve conditions on the land. There are issues
Funding	The sales tax in Phoenix/Scottsdale help to preserve open space and develop parks. Park and Recreation Bonds (Peoria is holding a vote for
<i>Additional comments</i>	AOT: Consider adding a QR code/electronic payment option at parks with fees (that currently only take cash). This might result in getting Quality of Life tax initiative tied to transportation funding for the State and the County. Public awareness campaign for environmental stewardship and
Working Group Development - Partnerships & Funding	Strength in Partnerships: Develop a new regional park interagency cooperative group to pursue long-term funding and support for parks and recreation (look at LGRC and North Valley Outdoor Network - NVON collaboration efforts as models). Check in on city plan updates and share Philanthropy group (Pulliam and others) creation to help secure funding. Use surveys/polls that show people would pay extra taxes for open space and quality of life initiatives, work together to find ways to develop funding stream. Perhaps could be a financial aspect of the group above. Bringing together ideas about securing initial capital and then management funds, identify what will be needed in 50 years and start Priority areas acquisition: Work with others to identify priority areas for protection and to enhance the County park system, look for assistance from various landowners. When local property owners are involved, AZ Parks and Recreation Association is a membership-based organization, host agencies and orgs. from across state, can assist with The Conservation Fund has been working with Maricopa County to strategize priority parcels, work with landowners, may be able to provide own capital to supply bridge for park and conservation efforts. Kirstie mentioned a project in Utah with a coordinating committee, Trust for Public Land - mission is to create parks and protect land for people across the county, land protection across the state with many federal agencies, some agriculture protection with NRCS funding, helped lobby for great Americans outdoors act, also partnering with Coconino County and Prescott parks and other local agencies, have a service called conservation finance, help counties create funding for

	Greater Phoenix Chamber, partner with many orgs including the Nature Conservancy, work on policy side, land and water policy, on economic
<i>Additional comments</i>	Consider an Open Space Tax once economy is back to pre-COVID levels.
Major Transportation Projects/Infrastructure	The Sonoran Valley Parkway Partnership has developed an authorized plan. Political buy-in from the top will determine the forward momentum. From Goodyear to Mobile. 2-6 lane parkway project, New Interstate I-11 Map: https://i11-viewer.hdrgateway.com/
<i>Additional comments</i>	SR-30 is now funded and should targeted for green infrastructure solutions and congestion mitigation projects such parks, open space and AOT: Consider opportunities to add electric vehicle charging stations to recreation parking lots including MCPRD. There is growing interest in developing Arizona's electric vehicle infrastructure. (Valley of the Sun
DRAFT GOALS	

River corridors	"Focus on a comprehensive strategy with partners to connect spaces and create substantial greenways along the river corridors for the
Priority Areas	"Work collaboratively across jurisdictions and agencies to understand and identify land priorities with an emphasis on protecting wildlife
Connectivity	"Collaborate with various partners to develop connections between
Regional Goals	"Build additional access points to regional parks where needed." "Identify future areas of high priority for the expansion of regional parks "Develop new regional parks consistent with the growth of the "Encourage Maricopa County citizens to connect to nature and utilize "Develop a sense of place through our parks and trails that cultivate
Partnerships	"Develop a new regional park interagency cooperative group to pursue "Work with new interagency cooperative group to review the "Work with AZ State Parks and Trails on recreational and open space
Recreation	"Balance natural and cultural resource management with recreational "Elevate the value of maintaining corridors from improved quality of life
Cities & Towns	<i>Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department Encourages</i> "Update their General Plan and Park and Recreation Master Plan simultaneously to ensure development complies with the Park and "Review zoning ordinances and city planning documents for conservation efforts." <i>Examples such as a Desert Lands Conservation</i>

"Develop a subdivision ordinance or some type of zoning mechanism to require developers to provide a dedication of trails and open space."
"Work with developers to integrate trail connections with
"Look at a quality of life code to help promote parks and open space, similar to building and fire codes." *Examples include adding quality of life codes to the trails/parks master plan and mandating wash corridors*
"Build in Leave No Trace principles to their park and recreation programs and outreach." *(See AZ Tourism branding for Leave No Trace in AZ for*
"Consider all funding opportunities available to assist with parks and recreation management". *See examples such as sales tax initiatives -*
"Utilize canals, major washes and waterways to establish recreation opportunities for parks and trails as well as protect open space and
"Connect to the Maricopa Trail and work collaboratively with MCPRD to develop guidelines for the Maricopa Trail or Sun Corridor trails within
"Engage staff at all levels on what your community is striving towards with park, recreation, and open space goals and share any