

MPA MEETING - APRIL 23 - 7 p.m.

FOUNTAIN HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER

Speaker: Teresa Retterbush. She is the East Side Supervisor of the County's Park system. She will present some interesting observations on our Park and what's coming in the future.



McDOWELL Messenger

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE McDOWELL PARK ASSOCIATION & FRIENDS OF THE McDOWELL AREA



WHAT CHALLENGES FACE OUR PARK IN THE FUTURE?

WE NEED TO LOOK AT
THE PAST FOR SOME
POSSIBLE ANSWERS

By FAY SCHLOTFELDT

What new problems will the urbanization of property surrounding McDowell Mountain Park bring? We have growth on our northern borders and the state land to our south has been sold and will soon be developed. What issues might the McDowell Park Association face in the future regarding the Park? Our Park will be facing new pressures for its use and some may not be in the best interests of the Park.

With the growth that surrounds our Park, it is easy to understand why various proposals for parkland use, which may not be very compatible for the park, lie in wait for us to deal with.

Since the founding of the MPA, many new members have joined our organization and are not aware of earlier issues. The Messenger Editor,

Mike O'Connor has asked me to share some of the earlier problems that our organization faced when it was first formed, and to try to relate some of those problems into a view of the future.

I've agreed to try to do that, knowing there are others in the Association or in the communities who will have some more-detailed, or perhaps different, recollections and forecasts from their involvement in them. I may miss some specific events but will try to give an impression for your evaluation.

Our early Board and Committee members tended to think of the urban pressure issues as "commercialization" of the Park, but it has always been more than that.

What I think the Park and the MPA can look forward to, is the view which will be held by some, that these 22,000 acres are "unused." The view

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President's MESSAGE

Jim Urban

Desert beauty: how secure?

We've just experienced a wildflower season which met or exceeded our expectations. One of the best areas was within McDowell Mountain Park. The Park put up a sign directing people to the parking area for the bicycle Competitive Track, just beyond the entry gate. A service road, usually closed to the public, was open to walkers, and with a round trip of one-half mile or less, most of Arizona's spring wildflowers could be seen in profusion.

This is just one of many ways our neighbor, McDowell Park, adds to the beauty of our area.

However, there is also a large amount of presently open desert which is not assured of staying that way – the State Trust Lands in the metro area. As you know, several attempts to preserve these areas, in recent years, have not been successful. Most recently, Proposition 106 was defeated by a narrow margin, in the 2006 election. This was designed to exempt a small part of Trust land from the requirement (by long standing state law) that sale must maximize the funds received, for education use.

Our governor has been very supportive of a bill presented in the current legislative session, which would allow cities and towns to purchase some parcels of Trust land at its appraised price (rather than competing at auction). Unfortunately some of the issues in this bill have not been resolved, and a recent newspaper article about the bill indicated that "lawmakers have stalled" and the bill is "effectively dead" for this session.

Therefore, conservation groups are considering another try at a citizens' initiative to get this issue on the 2008 election ballot. This is an enormous task, requiring the collection of more than 153,000 valid signatures by July 3rd. If petitions to do so are circulated, please support this effort!

FROM THE EDITOR

—Mike O'Connor

Our feature story this issue tells you some of the battles that the McDowell Park Association has been involved in to help keep our Park the wonderful resource that it is.

As development and population ever tightens around the Park, the pressures to carve out pieces of this beautiful acreage for non-conforming use will certainly increase. For those who are fairly new to the area and the Park, it will give you some perspective of battles we have fought and what type of battles certainly lie ahead of us.

This article should also highlight the importance of our McDowell Park Association and why it is important that each member help out where they can and that they recruit others to join MPA.

I am very thankful to Fay Schlotfeldt for taking the time to do the research and writing for this article. Fay has the background, as he was one of the original members of MPA.

The article only reinforces the fact that we must always have a strong and viable MPA!

The McDowell Park Association

MISSION STATEMENT: As Park advocates, we assist in the preservation and enhancement of McDowell Mountain Park to benefit both users and neighbors.

MCDOWELL PARK ASSOCIATION WEB SITE:

<http://www.mcdowellparkassociation.org/>

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Vice-President: Keith Clayton, 471-7955

Secretary & Membership Chairman:

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that the acres are just “empty space” that can be better used than “just sitting there as desert.” It is these views of what those “better uses” are, that will cause problems with the MPA. Those views probably group themselves in categories. I’ll try here to put some form to them and use past “problems” to outline and comment on them.

CATEGORY:

TRADE GOODS INVENTORY

Some have, and will continue to think of the Park’s acres as an inventory of “trade goods” for housing or just dollars. Those folks tend to try to find a “good cause” appealing to a fair sized population (larger than park supporters) who have never been around the park and may easily believe that the loss of “a few acres” of “unused” land may serve a larger or more personally valuable purpose.

In this category, as Scottsdale has expanded its high-value properties near the Park’s northern borders, several efforts to sever parts of the Park have come about.

✓ Land exchange proposals (Swaps)

1993 – (pre-fire) “Park for Peaks and BLM land.” A Scottsdale real estate broker and community leader spearheaded a project, supported by the Mayor and others in Scottsdale, to trade off multiple sections of the “vacant” park on the north or southern portions which would be traded for “unbuildable” Kemper-Marley Developer-owned peak lands in the McDowell Mountains. (No sustainable ecosystem, no public access.)

Opponents: Rio Verde, Fountain Hills, and some Scottsdale residents (who joined to become the MPA in 1993) and Maricopa County Parks Commissioners. Eventually the county supervisor also was opposed to this.

1996 – (after fire) “Park for Planet Ranch, Trust Land, Saguaro National Monument.” The same Scottsdale broker mentioned before, a new Tucson developer, the new Scottsdale Mayor, the BLM, and new Federal players, plus a new County Supervisor supported this project. New twist:

add some Scottsdale mountain land to park.

Opponents: MPA, Rio Verde Community Association, Fountain Hills Town Council, some McDowell-Sonoran Preserve members, some Park Commissioners and Mo and Stewart Udall among others. The proposition was finally withdrawn amid strong opposition. Use of land for housing, rather than recreation, also conflicted with the intent of the original 1950s land use “ownership” agreements (patents) from the Federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

✓ By-Pass roads through the “vacant” Park land

1988-91 – Beeline access study. A route considered to move traffic from Northern Scottsdale to (ostensibly) the recreational lakes to the Northeast without going south to Shea Blvd. Options included a leg across the Northeast corner of the Park. This route across the area near the Scout/Youth Camp would have been the “Developers Dream.” That is to partition “public” land. Make part of it unusable or, from a practical standpoint, inaccessible for a public use and then make the case to sell or trade it off. Other route options crossed the river near the Rio Verde Ranch or nearer Bartlett Dam.

This whole project, strongly supported by developers and land speculators in the Pinnacle Peak-Dynamite area, would have had to bridge the Verde River and partition part of the Tonto National Forest as well. After \$2 million, it died of its own consultant-fee costs amid opposition gathered by the Rio Verde Community, its developer, the Audubon Society, Sierra Club and some of the same individuals from Scottsdale and the Indian Communities who opposed the Orme Dam project. Cave Creek and Carefree leaders and others opposed the optional routes. But the proposed route across the park remained on County Highway project maps for years.

1992 – A group of Rio Verde residents proposed a by-pass road to divert some traffic around the community from the McDowell Park Road, at the power line, north to Rio Verde Drive.

This was opposed by another group of Rio

4 | Verde residents and Rio Verde Development and Park management. The County Transportation Department (MCDOT) reviewed the proposal and finally rejected it for several reasons, such as: Not sufficient traffic. There was no one to pay for the Park's land and road construction. Harmful impact to Park's land and use, including partitioning. Harm to adjacent property owners.

2001 – Group of Rio Verde and Tonto Verde residents raised the same proposal with the possibility of a route across the same path as the old “Beeline Access” study, (which seemed reluctant to disappear). The MPA felt this had been rejected twice before, and should be again, rather than stir up hope and antagonisms, by some, that this was even a possible use of park land.

MCDOT finally agreed to do a broader feasibility study, which also included three routes. One route was just east of Rio Verde across National Forest land; the 1992 route parallel to the power line; and the “Scout Camp” route ending at 176th Street.

MCDOT reached the same conclusions as earlier. None of these routes were available options, for essentially the same reasons as the rejection of the 1992 park route proposal. In addition, there was the recognition by the County that the same 1950's parkland purchase conditions, set by the BLM, would apply here. That Federal land program required that the sold land be used for public recreation or a benefit to the park function.

A dividing road through developed campsites, trail systems and picnic areas, which are designed to share the desert experience, would do the opposite of that. Other use can trigger the process of reversion of ownership back to the BLM.

(Similarly, the Forest Service rejected the option of a by-pass through their land on the east, because of the threat to archeological sites and other issues.)

Category:

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT of the “unused” park land

Programs, such as the following, are, again, worthy activities whether on private land or pub-

lic. These are a sampling of proposed projects the MPA and its members have addressed, sometimes at high intensity public hearings, meetings, and in press releases or letters. I'll briefly list some, and try to address our past issues, in general terms, below.

1990s:

✓ **FIRING RANGE** in the area of the current bicycle track.

Proponents: – Gun Dealers, Shooters and some Park Staff.

Opponents of placing Range in the Park: MPA, Rio Verde and Fountain Hills officials.

Reason for opposition: It was the same as opposition would be to a sports stadium: The proposal did not fit into the nature of the Park's camping/ picnicking/hiking experience. Then there was the noise. Also, there were available private commercial alternatives and Usery Park locations. The Commission agreed.

✓ **COOK-OUT FACILITY** (Lost lease in Scottsdale and wanted a park location near Lously Hill).

Proposed to build a “ranch type” building with kitchen where he could continue to offer corporate cookouts. Park might be able to use the area when he wasn't using it, including parking.

Opponents (after much review): MPA and some Parks Commissioners.

Cookout facility could benefit public visitors to the park, if readily available and minimal impact to park environment. This proposal underestimated the auto traffic and parking needed and had limited availability (value) to normal park visitor's experience. Public food service in this atmosphere could be a park benefit, but probably not commercially viable at McDowell Park (vs. Lake Pleasant for example). This was not a “fit”. The Commissioners agreed.

✓ **SCULPTURE GARDEN** Display of an eastern artist's huge metal (I-beam) type sculptures and artist's work. This sought to emulate a display in an eastern state. That is located

trees along a highway. Proposed that the Park provide space for statuary and artist workshop display area. Wealthy donor would have selected the sites. Commercial fees might be involved to visitors.

A retired banker fan of an artist and the Scottsdale Arts community supported – demanded – approval. MPA (Bob Eidsmoe was at the forefront of this effort) opposed the idea. An *Arizona Republic* editorial opposed the idea too. More on this is included in my general comments to future MPA members, below.

Proposal was withdrawn after public outcry.

URBAN SURROUNDINGS, PAST AND FUTURE VIEWS

The problem with these “empty space” pro-

posals is that, mostly, they come about from the “top down.” Commercial or developer interests tend to take their packaged ideas to city, county, state leaders or directly to the County Supervisors. In the end, these become political decisions.

Supervisors and Park Commissioners really have to be open to consider these proposals if brought before them in good faith. They usually end up with the right decisions, but if the public does not keep aware and present their views, it is possible for these things to become a “done deal” before strong opposing views can be mounted. Unfortunately, many times this comes down to the Park’s need for “income” in times of limited funding.

My hope would be that as the future unfolds, MPA members would hold a vision that McDowell Mountain Park’s focus would be to provide a respectful public with the great experience of the natural high-Sonoran desert. That experience is worth protecting.

That sort of focus would permit support for things like today’s limited, but quality, camping, hiking, biking, horseback trails and public educational programs. Members might support limited saddle or hayride programs and a public food service with “trailed-in” or trucked-in horses, but would not support grazing or relocating “commercial” corporate meeting type business facilities.

Members might support some donated, realistic statuary of native animals, such as mountain lions, bobcat families, javalina or deer at surprise locations along a small, educational-experience trail. But I would hope members would continue to oppose huge, I-beam contemporary statuary, projecting above the desert trees and landscape

‘Let it be!’

Is another such venture in the McDowell Park’s future? What venture you ask? The sculpture garden mention above.

Some more details on that little proposed project: Frank Crierie, a retired Scottsdale investment banker wanted 500 acres of the Park for an outdoor museum of contemporary art.

His proposal was modeled after the 400-acre internationally known Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, NY. There, sculptures as tall as 70 feet high dot the parkland.

Crierie’s Sonoran Desert Sculpture Park would include large pieces (some of them I-beams) set against the saguaros and an arts center to display smaller works. Shown in this box is an example of the type of art that would have appeared in the proposed park.

A January 3, 2000 editorial in the *Arizona Republic* ended its opposition to the proposal with these words:

“We hope that Crierie pursues his proposal, perhaps finding private land on which to create his sculpture garden.

“But the master artist has already sculpted this particular piece of parkland.

“Let it be.”



6 | oppose it strongly, even if a willing donor and the Scottsdale Arts Community supported that artist and his works. (Oppose even while being strongly criticized in the Scottsdale newspapers and in public forums, as was done.) Perhaps MPA members, to retain the desert experience, would oppose any statutory, anywhere in the park.

Urban encroachment can be a mixed blessing for the park. The closer people live to its borders, the more they can see the value of protecting this open desert “feel.” However, in the next 50 to 100 years, as “publicly accessible” land like this disappears, they may have a desire to “love it to death” and the focus will shift to limiting usage rather than cram in urban park amenities like ballparks and soccer fields and aquatic centers. Horse trails also can’t sustain unlimited horses.

We can hope that future MPA members will be willing to support the good uses and fight the fights needed to protect the “experience” of the park of which the word “peaceful” is a part.

Urban surroundings have now limited the possibility of expanding the park itself. It has not yet eliminated the possibility of the MPA protecting more of the desert environment by strongly supporting the preservation and accessible development of the Fountain Hills and Scottsdale Preserves and the Tonto National Forest. And we should not forget to support the supervisors, commissioners, mayors, staff and organizations that are also dedicated to that protection.

FAY SCHLOTTFELDT: Fay had been a leader on the Rio Verde Committee to oppose the extension of Rio Verde Drive across the Verde River to the Beeline highway. He served a term on the Rio Verde Community Assn. Board as Chairman of various committees and sub-committees. He was appointed to serve as Chair of an Ad Hoc Committee to oppose the first “Park Land Swap” proposal in 1993. It was the resultant joint work on that effort, with Jack Fraser (MPA founder) and others of Fountain Hills and Scottsdale that led to the “merger of interests” to form the McDowell Park Association later in 1993. Fay served as Vice-President of that founding Board until retiring after his first term.

Fay and his wife, Jan, moved to Rio Verde in 1986 from Omaha, Nebraska where he retired after an active Marketing and Sales Executive career with Northwestern Bell, US West and A.T. & T. He later retired from his own marketing management consulting business.

Survey bodes well for McDowell

It will be no surprise to MPA members to find that 95.7% of the visitors to McDowell Mountain Park give the Park a “extremely satisfied” to a “very satisfied” rating. Or that the same percentage holds true when asked how they rated the overall quality of the Park.

These figures, and a multitude of others come from a yearlong 2005-2006 Parks Visitor Study (conducted at all county parks) which was a joint social science research project by the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and the School of Community Resources and Development at the Arizona State University.

Some other results:

78% of those interviewed had been to the park before.

Those who had been to the park before had made 11.3 visits during the 12 month period.

Those coming to McDowell Mountain Park, on average, traveled 30 miles to get to the Park.

When asked to indicate which activities they participated in during their current visit, the results are:

57.1% mountain biking

49.8% trail hiking

38.9% walking for pleasure

19.8% picnicking

2.3% horseback riding

When asked “Including yourself, how many people, traveling in your vehicle, are in each of the following age categories,” respondents answered:

Asked if they were annual pass holders: 18.8 yes; 81.2 no.

10 years or less: 0.11

50-64: 0.63

11-20 years: 0.11

65 and older: 0.42

21-34: 0.221

Average age: 51.8

35-49: 0.60

Comparing all the parks in the county, when asked how they rate the quality of the Park, in this case giving an excellent rating, here are the comparisons:

Cave Creek: 53.7

Usery Mountain: 51.8

McDowell Mountain: 50.7

Spur Cross Ranch: 43.3

White Tank: 41.6

Outdoor Center, Lake Pleasant: 35.9

Lake Pleasant: 30.5

Estrella Mountain: 23.0

Buckeye Hills: 21.4

San Tan: 20.4

Adobe Dam: 14.3

Park attendance figures

Below are some attendance figures for the McDowell Mountain Park supplied by Rand Hubbell, Park Supervisor.

Attendance and events at the Park are key to the Park's budget!

	2006	2007
July-Dec.	26,515	22,842
	2007	2008
January	9,159	10,219
February	11,252	9,696
March	13,887	15,677
July-March	60,813	58,434

MPA's Mission Statement revised | 7

The McDowell Park Association's Board of Directors has spent a little time over the past month's to simplify and at the same time clearly point to the mission of our organization.

Until now, the mission statement had been a multi-paragraphed one. However through the diligent efforts of a number of Board members, it has been condensed to a finely-honed mission statement regarding MPA. Here is it:

"As Park advocates, we assist in the preservation and enhancement of McDowell Mountain Park to benefit both users and neighbors."

Check out the Park's web site for April events—there are some good ones!

<http://www.maricopa.gov/parks/mcdowell/>

MEMBERSHIP REPORT By Merideth Hale, Secretary & Membership Chairman

Why is membership important to any organization? There are so many reasons. Membership helps give voice and strength to the mission of the organization. Membership expands every member's opportunities for (1) socializing; for (2) personal growth of interests; for (3) contributing to the overall community through projects that benefit everyone; for (4) education by broadening your horizons. These are some of the reasons we seek your continued support through "membership". Please renew. Tell your neighbors about the McDowell Park Association and the wonderful recreational opportunities the Park provides for us and for our guests.

The following have responded since the February *Messenger* and prior to March 25, 2008:

Donations = Hiker (H) to \$49
 = Trail Blazer (TB) to \$99
 = Mountain Climber (MC) \$100 +

New Members: The Jim Peacock Family

Renewals:

Marjorie Barritt
 Robert and Babette Benzer – H
 Bob and Margaret Bohannan – H
 Dave Calder – H
 Lee & Karen Carlson – H
 Patsy Caulkins – TB
 Maree Lee Eger
 John & Mary Jo Eichler – H
 Paul & Susan Erickson
 Jim & Susan Everitt – TB

Robert Freund
 Norm and Gloria Hawk
 Ralph & Sharlee Korn
 Mary & John Leavitt
 Daniel & Sidra Luciano
 Mike Maggio & Jill Martin
 Bob Mason
 Jack & Pat Meinert – H
 Dick & Ann Nordholm
 Bill & Sabra Otteson

Robert & Jan Ruggles – H
 Thomas & Dolores Ryan – H
 Al & Lynn Stevens – H
 Frank & Ruth Stroble – H
 Patricia Waterman – H
 Jane & Jake Wilson
 Margaret Wilson
 Robert & Janet Witzeman

Thank you! Please continue to watch for your postcard that will remind you to renew. We have added a line for your e-mail address if you wish to include it. Communication by e-mail will be coming.



McDowell Park Association MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name(s): Please print names of family members to be included. (List one if individual membership.)

Address: _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Tax deductible donations, in addition to membership, will be most welcome!

ENCLOSED: Individual (\$15) _____

Family (\$20) _____

Donation \$ _____

Total \$ _____

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McDowell Park Association. Mail to:

McDowell Park Association
P. O. Box 18613
Fountain Hills, AZ 85269

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THE McDOWELL PARK ASSOCIATION



Inside:

Threats to our Park?

A look at the past to see what problems we may face in the future.

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MPA meeting

April 23 – 7 p.m.

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