



Skyline Regional Park

Master Plan

August 2012

Prepared by:

**Town of Buckeye Community Services Department
Skyline Regional Park Master Plan Advisory Committee**

Acknowledgements

The Town of Buckeye's Skyline Regional Park Master Plan was prepared with the significant guidance, assistance, and coordination of the following:

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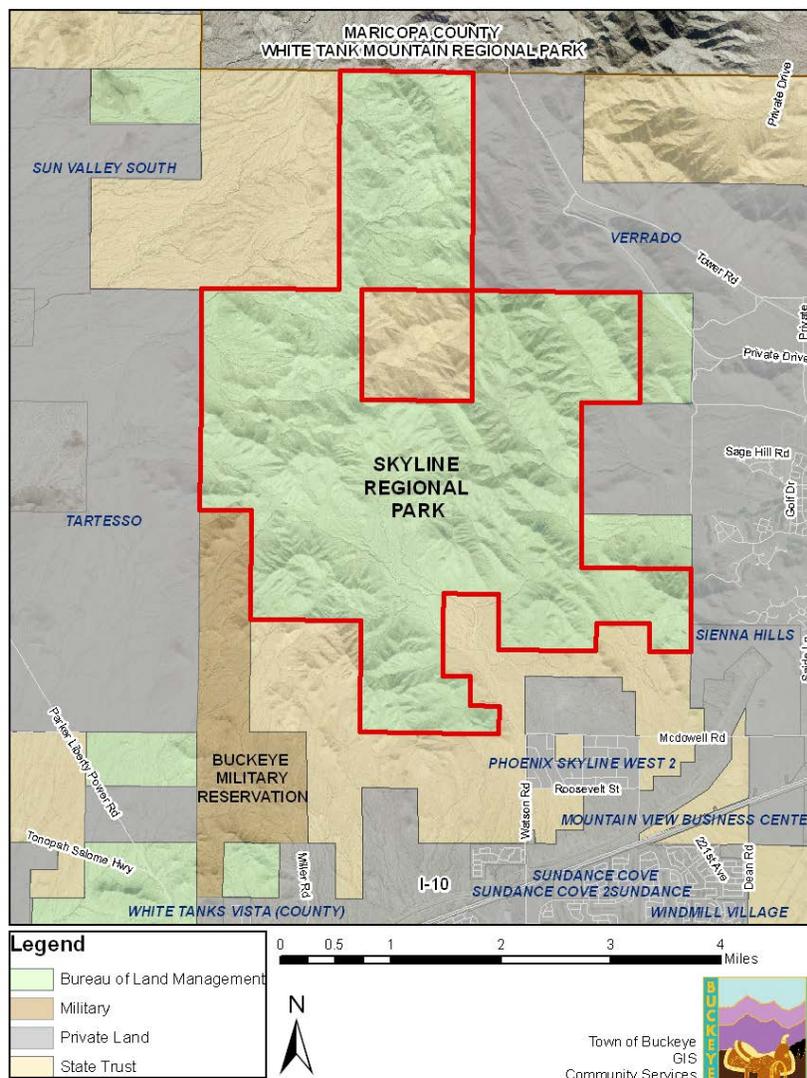
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Background

Skyline Regional Park will be the centerpiece of open space in the Town of Buckeye. The park, at 8,675 acres is located in the heart of the Town's 600 square mile municipal planning area and has the potential to become a popular destination for residents and visitors alike. The size of the park is impressive - approximately 6 miles long from north to south and 4.5 miles at its widest point east to west.

The park is located west of Verrado, east of the future Tartesso development (land owned by Tartesso that is east of the Sun Valley Parkway), and south of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department's White Tank Mountain Regional Park. The Buckeye National Guard owns property located to the southwest of the property. The State Land Department owns a 1 square mile island in the center of the park as well as land to the northwest and south of the park. The future Watson Road entry area is conveniently located two miles north of I-10.



History of the Project

In 2002, the Town submitted an application requesting a Recreation & Public Purpose (R&PP) Lease from the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for the future Skyline Regional Park. The federal government may enter into leases with state, local governments and non-profits for land owned by the BLM if the lease will benefit the public good. Examples of land uses for R&PP leases include parks, schools, historic national monuments, fire stations, public golf courses, etc.

Prior to obtaining the lease, the Town was required by BLM to complete an Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This assessment analyzed the Town's plans for



the property and the impact the proposed uses would have to the environment. The Environmental Assessment reviewed the Town's uses against several criteria including land use, socioeconomics, recreation, earth and water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, air quality, health and safety, transportation and access, noise, and visual resources. As part of the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development process, the Town held two public scoping meetings to inform the public of the plans and to solicit input into the Town's proposed uses. The first meeting was held June 6, 2006 at Verrado Middle School; the second meeting on June 7, 2006 at the Buckeye Community Center.

The Town completed the Environmental Assessment and in July 2009, the BLM issued a Notice of Realty Action stating the lands were found to be suitable for lease and there was a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Town's regional park proposal.

In late November 2010, the Town and the BLM signed the 25-year, no-cost lease agreement. At the end of the 25 year lease, BLM may patent the land to the Town at no cost. The Town has until 2035 before the lease period ends to make improvements that are consistent with those proposed in the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development.

Scope of Plan

The Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development limits improvements within the park to the Watson Road entry area and two additional access points on the west at the Campbell (adjacent to land owned by Tartesso) and Glendale (adjacent to State Trust Land) Road alignments. In the foreseeable future, development will likely not occur in the western use areas due to a variety of factors, including the crash of the housing market, limited infrastructure in the vicinity, surplus of homes for sale, and the future expansion of existing master planned communities that have not reached build out.

In addition, the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development limits the amount of disturbance at both western use areas to five acres each. Because of the limitations imposed by BLM, these two access points will consist of a trailhead with support facilities, such as restrooms, picnic tables and ramadas. The timing when these two trailheads are built largely depends on when the adjacent master planned communities are developed.

For these reasons, the master plan focuses on the Watson Road entry area. Future planning will be needed when development occurs west of the park.

Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development

The Town of Buckeye hired SWCA Environmental Consultants to complete the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development as required by BLM. As listed in the Environmental Assessment, the Town was limited by the amount of acreage that could be disturbed in the park. The 8,675 acres is considered Category III habitat for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise, which means the habitat area is not essential for maintaining viable populations. Despite the lesser category designation, BLM still



has a goal to limit tortoise habitat and population declines by mitigating impacts. The Desert Tortoise is a species of concern and potentially could be listed as an endangered species. As such, BLM implemented a policy that there can be no net loss of Desert Tortoise habitat.

With BLM's policy decision to have no net loss of habitat for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise, BLM restricted the amount of land the Town could develop for the regional park. The table below lists the areas to be developed in the park and the total acreage of allowable disturbance by BLM. In total, the Town is able to develop 77 acres or less than 1% of the total 8,675 acres. The Town is able to develop 48 acres in the Watson Road entrance area in different identified use areas, an additional 10 acres for future trailheads in the western portion of the park (5 acres at Campbell, 5 acres at Glendale Road alignments) and another 15.1 acres for new trails (14 miles of trails at 10 feet wide). According to BLM, additional acres could be developed, but at a cost to mitigate for the loss of habitat to the Sonoran Desert Tortoise at around \$3,000 - \$5,000 per acre.

**Allowable Disturbance in Skyline Regional Park
in accordance with Environmental Assessment**

Area	Acreage
Watson Road Entry Area	
Use Area A-1	10
Use Area A-2	20
Use Area B-1	17
Use Area B-2	25
Use Area C	5
Total	77* Exceeds 48 acres
Future Western Trailheads	
Use Area D (Campbell Road Alignment)	5
Use Area E (Glendale Road Alignment)	5
Total	10
New Trail Development	
New Trails	15.1
Total	15.1**

* May not exceed 48 acres total development in the Watson Road entry area per Environmental Assessment. Because of this, the Town will not develop 25 acres in Use Area B-2.

**15.1 acres equates to 14 miles of trails @ 10 feet wide.

Watson Road Entry Area	48
Future Western Trailheads	10
New Trail Development	15.1
Total Acres of Allowed Disturbance	73.1
Total Acres of Park	8,675
Percent of Land Developed in Park	0.84%



Phased Approach to Development from EA

The Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development included a five to ten year phased approach to development within the park.

First Five Years of Development

- Dust controlled access road crossing State land from the end of Watson Road to the park's primary entry
- Entry/fee station
- Signage and kiosks
- Initial trail improvements and links
- Parking for 10 to 20 cars
- Up to 15 camping spaces with shade ramadas
- Portable or composting toilets
- Picnic areas
- Vehicular control to limit off-road driving

Five to Ten Years of Development

- Make improvements to the access road into the park, which could possibly include paving
- Begin developing new trails
- Expand day use parking depending on demand
- Expand camping spaces as needed
- Expand picnic areas as needed
- Improve directional and regulatory signage
- Begin potential special use areas specifically geared towards mountain biking or equestrian only trails
- Expand visitor services, which could possibly include a visitor center
- Tap into utility services if they become readily available or close to the park entry along Watson Road as part of future private development adjacent to the park

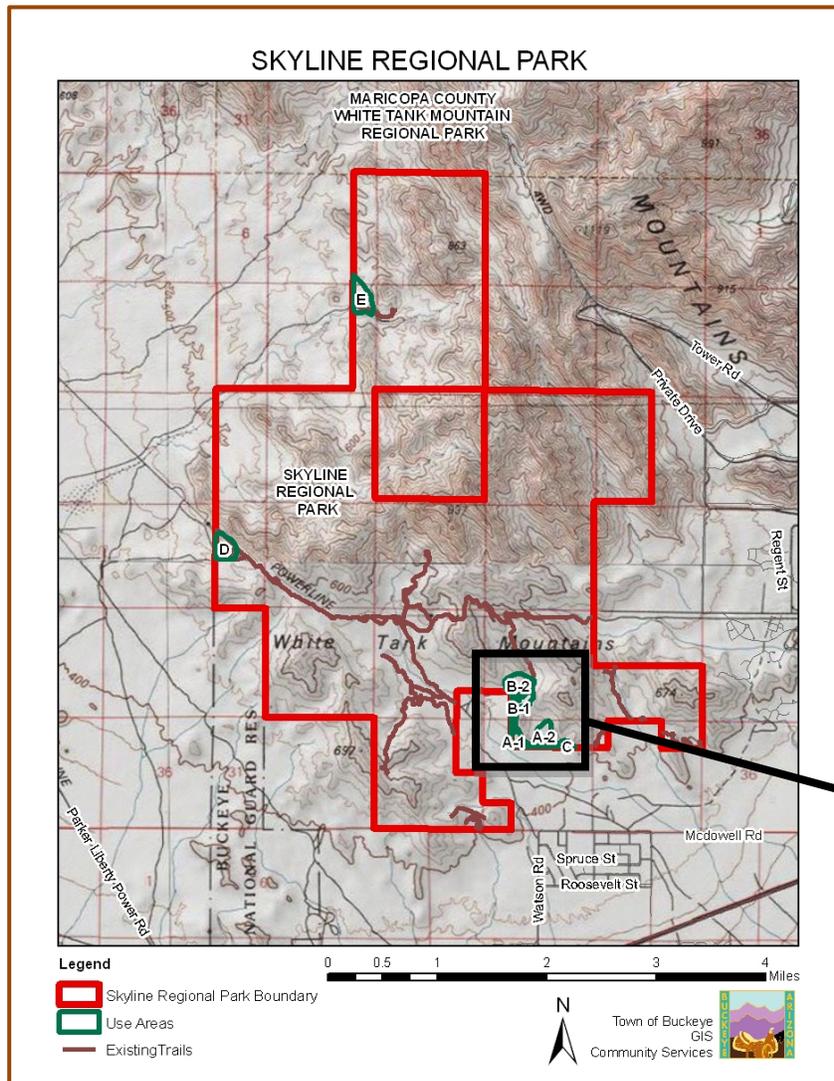
Improvements Beyond Ten Years of Development

- Expand services as needed
- As development occurs on the western side of the park, begin constructing trailheads at the Campbell and Glendale Road alignments



Use Areas in the Park

The Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development identified use areas in the Watson Road entrance area that could be developed, totaling 48 acres. However, when mapped these areas total 77 acres, therefore use area B-2 consisting of 25 acres was eliminated from consideration in master planning. B-2 is separated from the other use areas by a tributary of Skyline Wash that is both deep and wide. The approximate acreages are listed below and shown in the maps below as well.



Watson Road Entry Area

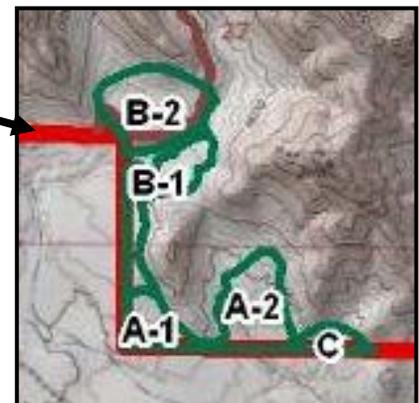
- Use Area A-1: 10 acres
- Use Area A-2: 20 acres
- Use Area B-1: 17 acres
- Use Area B-2: 25 acres
- Use Area C: 5 acres

TOTAL: 77 52 acres. Not to exceed 48 acres. 4 acres in the use areas will not be developed.

Future Western Trailheads

- Use Area D (Campbell alignment): 5 acres
- Use Area E (Glendale alignment): 5 acres

TOTAL: 10 acres

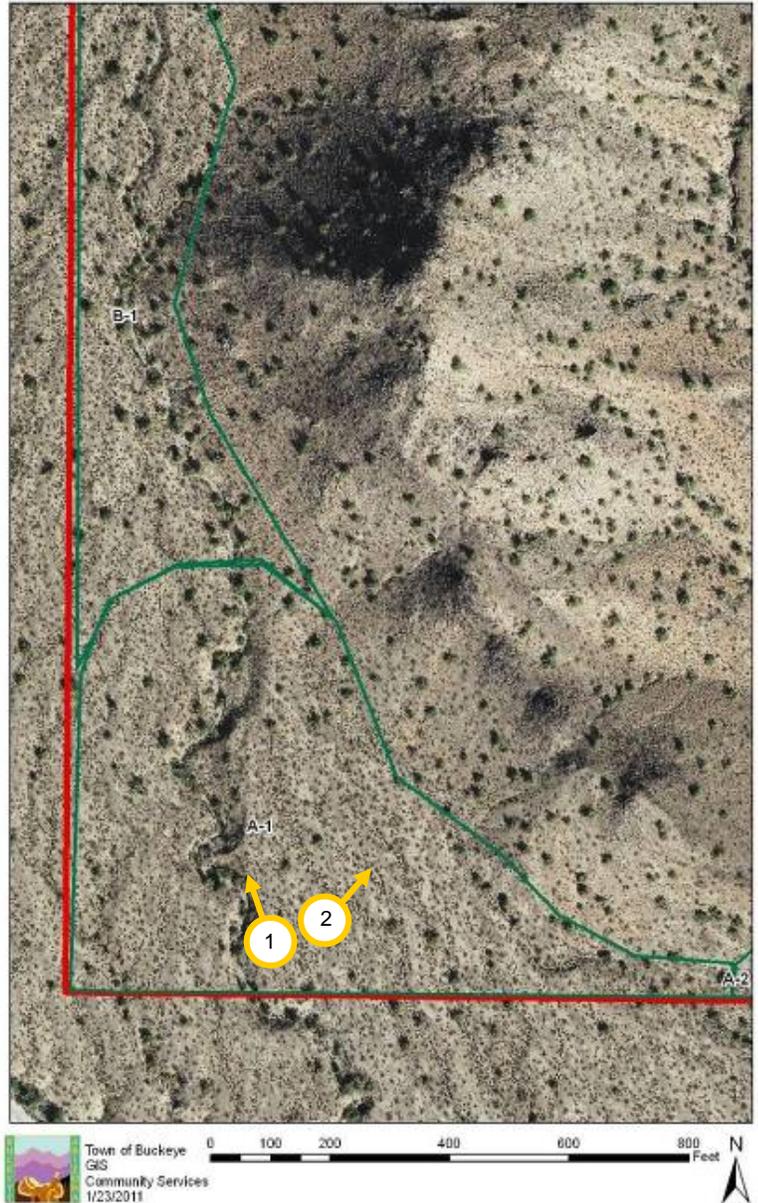




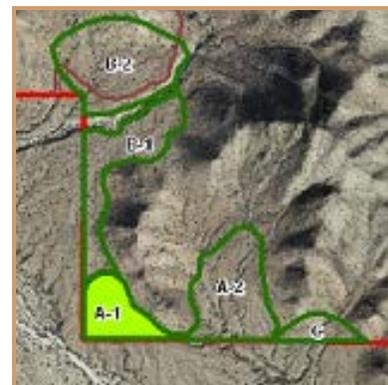
SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK: USE AREA A-1

Use Area A-1

Use Area A-1 is approximately 10 acres in size and has a large wash running through its center. It is bordered by low range mountains to the east. Vegetation in this area consists of desert scrub with a higher concentration of plants near the wash. Picture 1 was taken looking north towards the wash. Picture 2 was taken looking northeast towards the low ridges.



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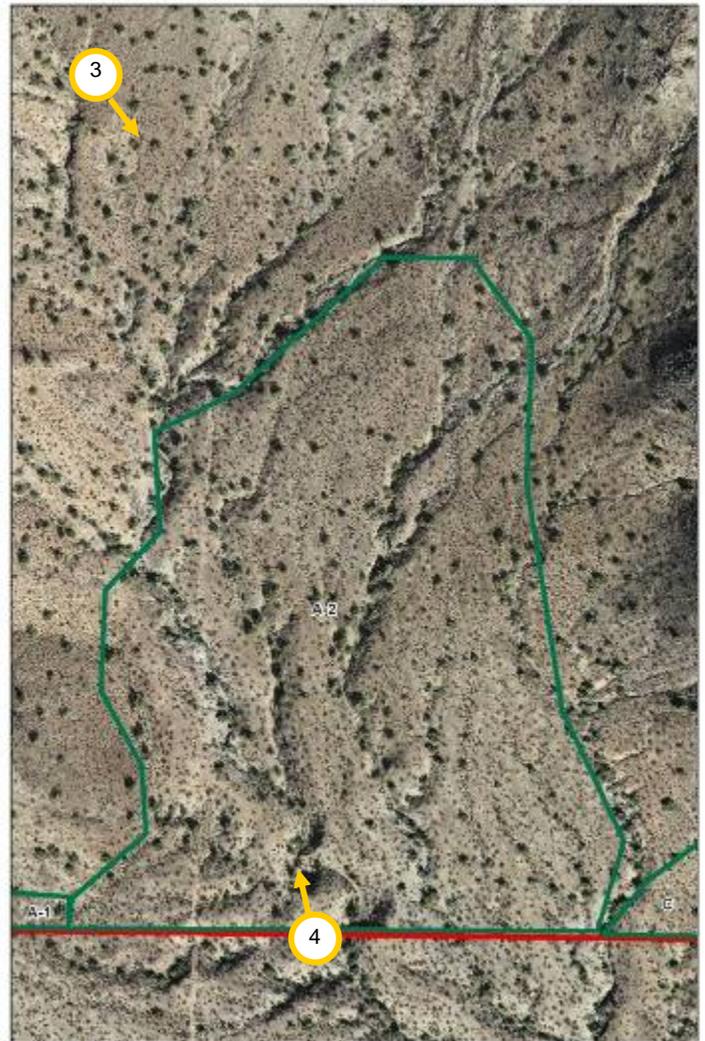


Use Area A-2

Use Area A-2 is approximately 20 acres in size and has a bowl effect by being surrounded by mountains to the north, west and east. There is a pass in the ridges that provide a good connection between Use Area A-2 to Use Area B-1. There are many braided minor washes that flow through the site limiting the areas that could be developed. Of all the use areas identified in the EA, Use Area A-2 has the most limitations. Picture 3 was taken near the top of one of the ridges to the north of Use Area A-2 facing south to give you an overall view of the area. Picture 4 was taken facing north towards the mountains.



SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK: USE AREA A-2



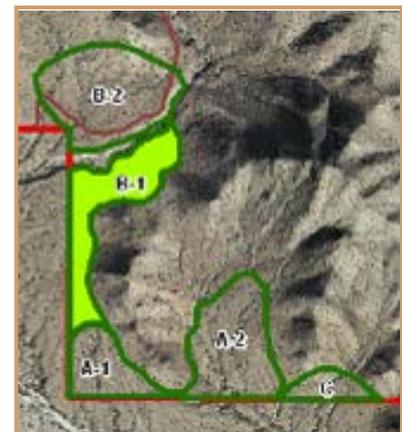
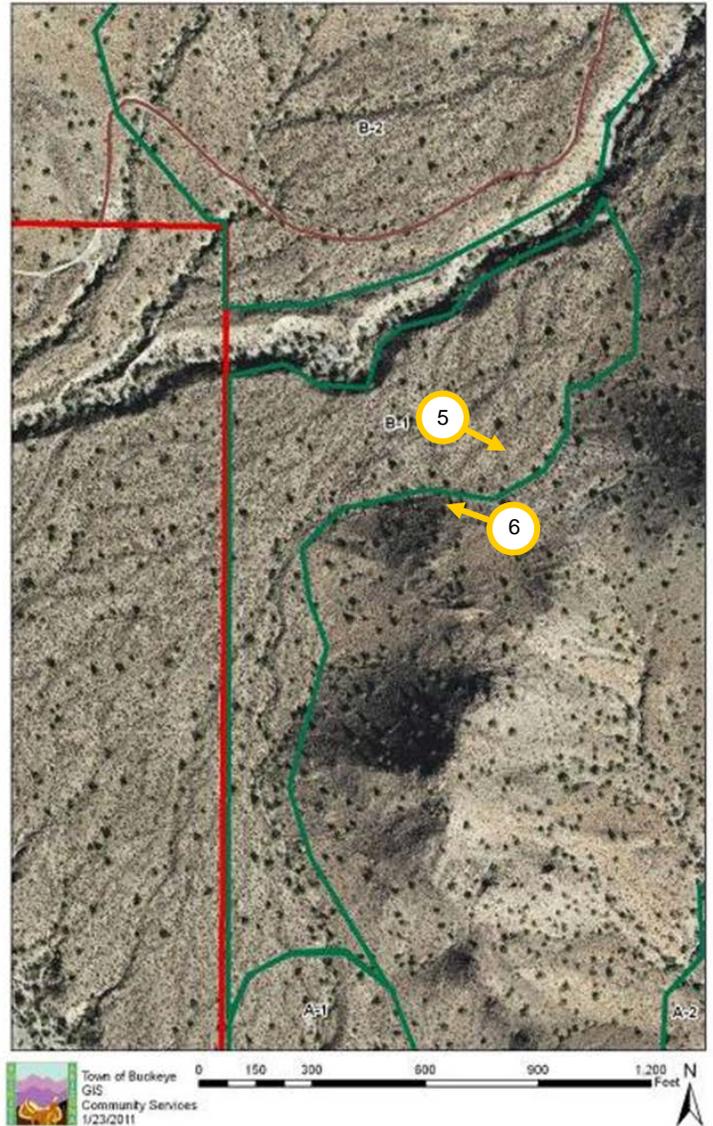


Use Area B-1

Use Area B-1 is approximately 17 acres in size. This use area is bounded by a tributary of Skyline Wash to the north, which is approximately 25 feet wide and 15-20 feet deep. Of all of the use areas, B-1 has the highest concentration of vegetation with chollas and other desert scrub. Picture 5 was taken facing east towards the pass between ridges that provides a good connection to Use Area A-2. Picture 6 was taken from the side of a ridge facing west. You can see the wash as well as the existing trail on the right side of the picture.



SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK: USE AREA B-1





Use Area C

Use Area C is approximately 5 acres in size and is located east from Use Area A-2 and is the smallest of the Watson Road use areas. Because it is only 5 acres, this use area would be better suited for a trailhead.

Amenities Proposed in the Park

Using the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development as a guide and including additional components that would fit within the overall context of the park, the Skyline Regional Park Master Plan Advisory Committee advised the following amenities be included in the Watson Road entrance area:

- **Visitor Center** – Envisioned to be a 15,000 to 20,000 square foot building. Potential uses could be for environmental education classrooms, meeting rooms, exhibit space on plants, animals and cultural resources found in the park.



Example of a Visitor Center Found at Estrella Mountain Regional Park

- **Picnic Area for Large/Small Groups** – Large style ramadas to accommodate groups of over 100 people to be used for family reunions, corporate gatherings, etc. Smaller sized ramadas for single families and smaller gatherings.
- **Zip Lines** – For users with varying degrees of experience. This feature would be unique to the west valley. There is a private company in the east valley (Rappel AZ) that offers programs. Visitors could hike to the top of one of the ridges and zipline to the valley floor.
- **Playground** – Playground equipment for those picnicking and camping.



Zipline Facility in Scottsdale



- **Amphitheatre/Event Area** – Could be used for environmental education and special events. Private parties could rent the amphitheater for weddings and other events as a potential way to generate revenue.



Outdoor Amphitheatre at Papago Park in Phoenix

- **Parking/Trailheads** – Will be appropriately sized based upon demand. Parking will be expanded as demand dictates and will have support facilities such as composting toilets (until public water/sewer and electricity is readily accessible), small picnic ramadas for shade, etc.



Trailhead at 40th Street and Shea Blvd. in Phoenix

- **Interpretive Gardens** – Will be similar to those found at the Desert Botanical Garden, however will be on a smaller scale and focus more on native plants and animals in the park. Many of the trails in the interpretive gardens will be ADA-accessible with small loops, making it suitable for those with limited mobility. There will be interpretive panels throughout that describe interesting facts about certain plants/animals and cultural resources found in Skyline Regional Park.
- **Camping** – A certain area will be set aside for tent camping in the park. Each camp site will feature a picnic table, fire pit (if a fire ban has not been issued) and parking areas. The Town will build communal picnic areas for campers as well as composting restroom



facilities (until such time as public water/sewer and electricity is available for more elaborate restrooms with shower facilities).

- **Lodge** – One of the items requested by the Project Advisory Committee was a lodge that could be used by boy/girl scouts, churches, schools, etc. for environmental education programs. The lodge would feature dorm style sleeping quarters for men/women, restroom facilities and a kitchen area with a common cafeteria.
- **Programming Areas/Environmental Education/Geocaching** – Areas will be set aside for programming. These areas could consist of a graded flat area with seating provided for teaching and instruction. Possible programs include geocaching, campfire storytelling, cowboy poetry reading, art with plants, classes on native plants and animals found within the park, etc.
- **Observatory/Stargazing** – Buckeye is still fortunate to have dark skies despite light glare from the Phoenix Metro Area. The Town could work with an astronomy club to install an observatory and have stargazing programs. For example, working with the East Valley Astronomy Club, the Town of Gilbert built an observatory at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve with volunteers provided by the Astronomy Club. The observatory would need to be located in an area that has unobstructed views of the sky. The Town should work to include more stringent lighting requirements, similar to cities like Flagstaff and Tucson if an observatory is built to ensure its continual use and to protect Buckeye’s night sky from light pollution. Currently, the Town’s Development code replicates State Statutes, which states lighting should be directed downward and the light source should be shielded, among other requirements.



Programming Area at Camp Sombrero in Phoenix



Observatory Located Near the Gilbert Riparian Preserve



Public Participation



Staff and Skyline Regional Park Project Advisory Committee Hiking the Use Areas

Early in the process, it was important to include the public in the master planning process. In June 2011, the Town issued a press release seeking interested participants to be on a committee to develop a master plan for Skyline Regional Park. Subsequently in August, Council appointed seven members to the committee that would be tasked with taking the concepts identified in the Environmental Assessment and fully defining them into a master plan. The committee members came from varying backgrounds, including public safety, archaeology, law, natural resources, and differing user groups, such as mountain biking, hiking, and equestrian, etc. In September, the committee had its first introductory meeting followed by a tour of

the Watson Road entrance area in October. In November and December, the committee began reviewing three alternative plans for the Watson Road entry area.

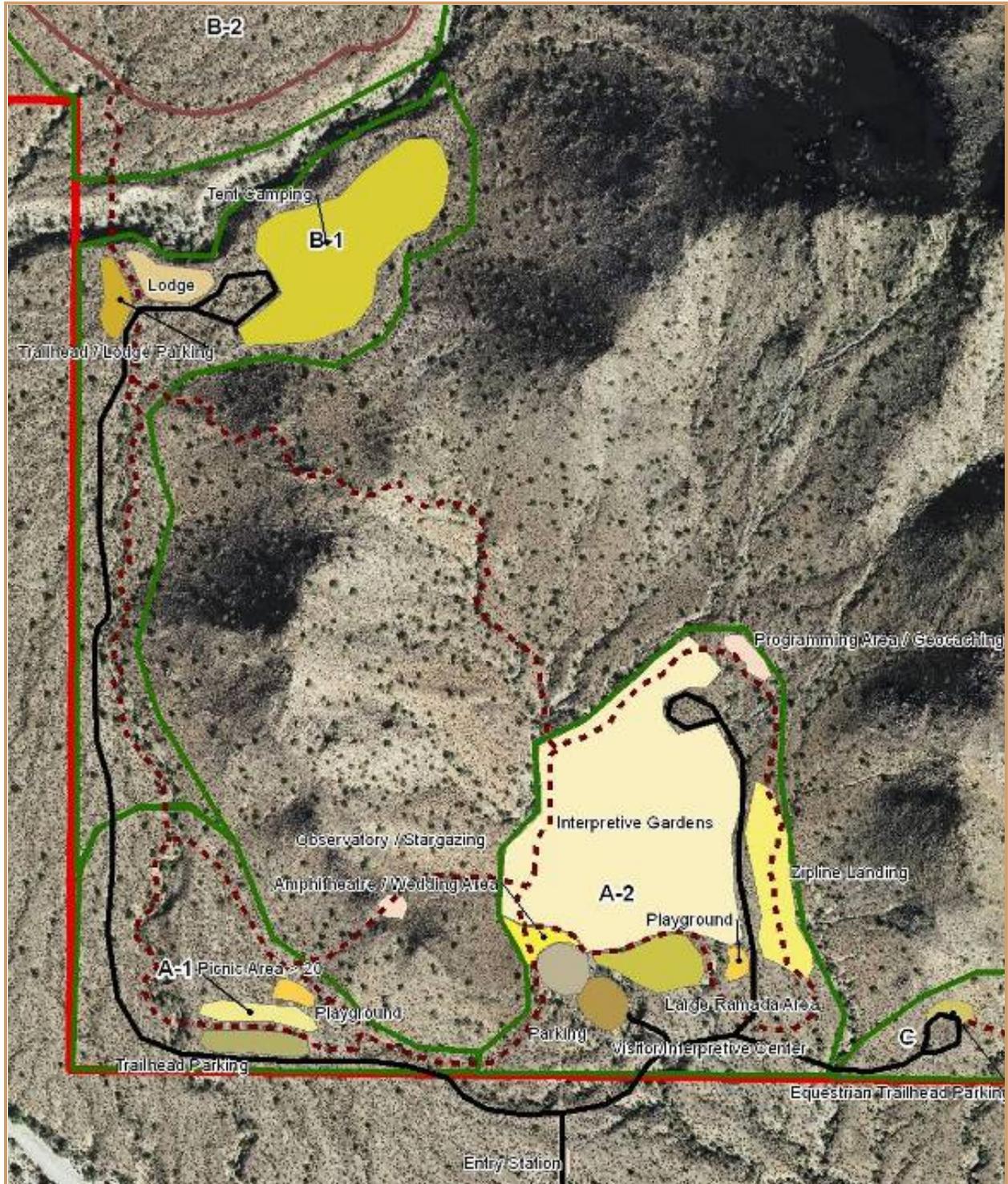
First Public Meeting – January 23, 2012

The first public meeting was held on Monday, January 23 in the Executive Conference Room in Town Hall. At the meeting, staff presented three different alternatives for the Watson Road entry area. Components included in the three alternatives were derived from the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development as well as input from the committee.

Overall, the public seemed to agree with the amenities that staff and the committee proposed; however there was hesitation regarding the ziplines. After staff's presentation, the majority of discussion centered on the desire to limit the impact to the land and questions related to the amenities proposed. Further discussion dealt with illegal uses occurring near the park on State Trust and private land, including the shooting on State Land in "Shotgun Alley" as well as the rampant OHV use in the "Dunes" on State Land. The three different alternatives are included on the following pages. Minutes from the first public meeting are included in the appendix.



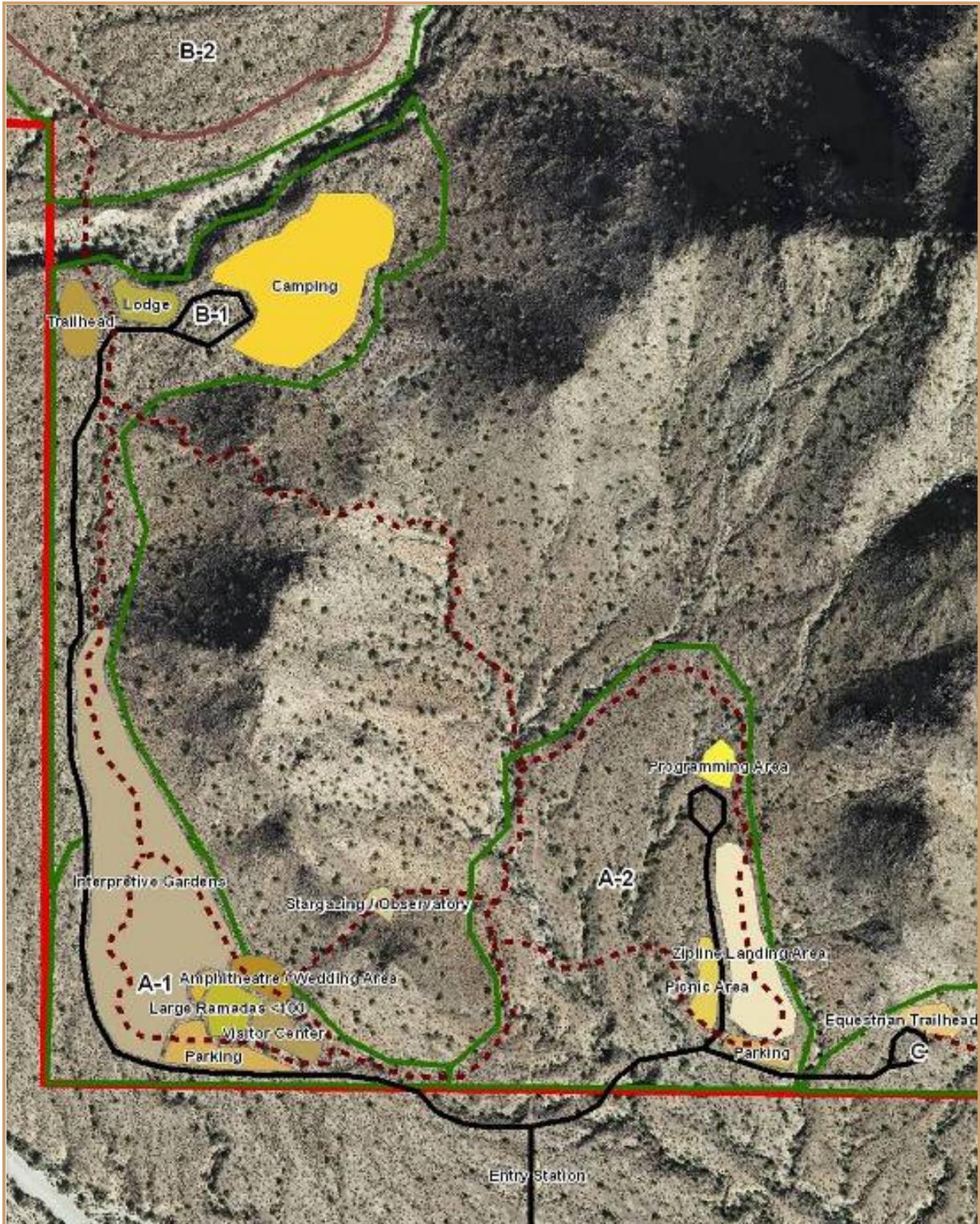
Alternative 1 Conceptual Plan



Most of the activity in Alternative 1 is centered in Use Area A-2.



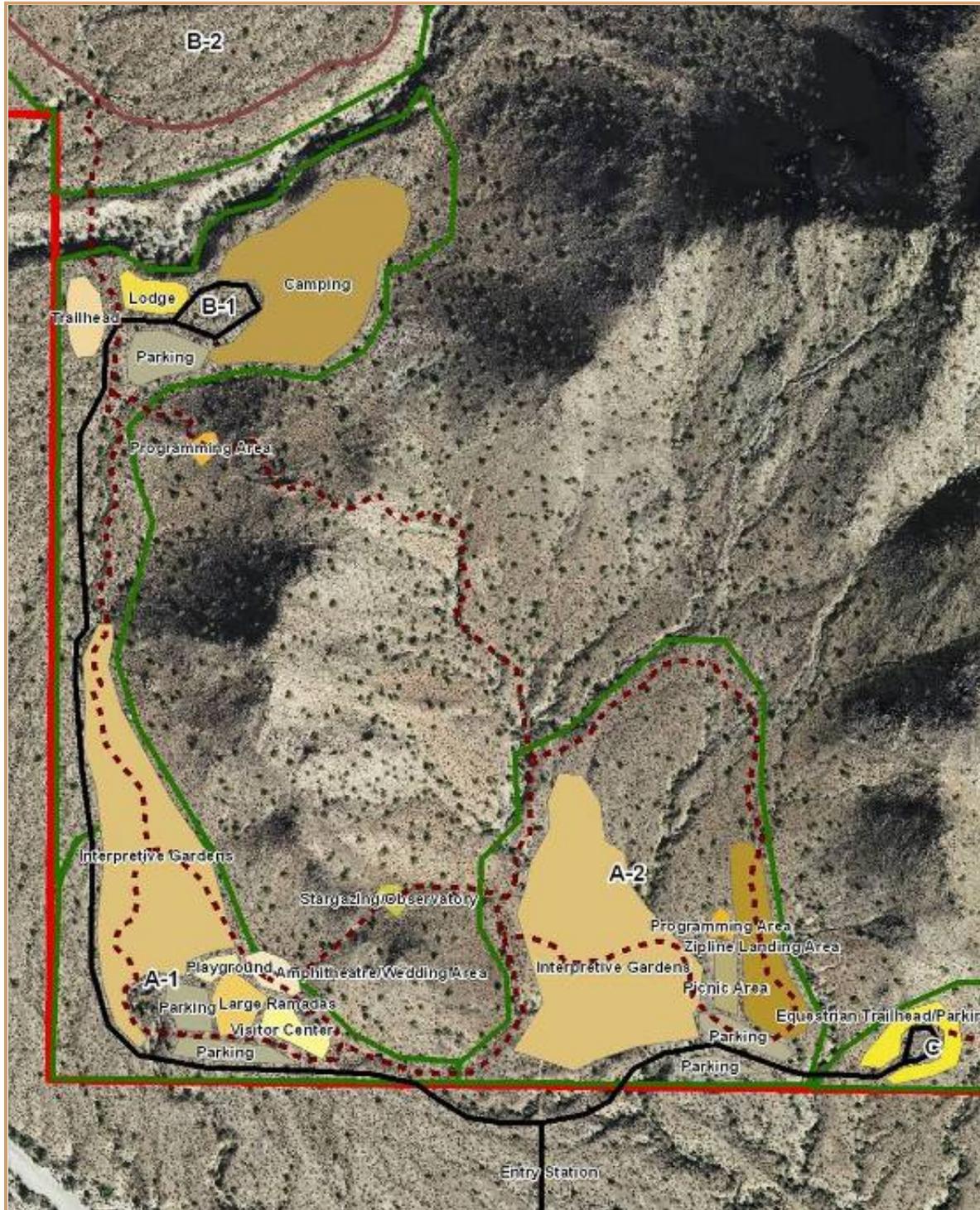
Alternative 2 Conceptual Plan



In Alternative 2, the majority of improvements would be centered in Use Area A-1.



Alternative 3 Conceptual Plan



Of the three alternatives, Alternative 3 had the highest impact of development with development in Use Areas A-1, A-2 and B-1.



Second Public Meeting – March 26, 2012

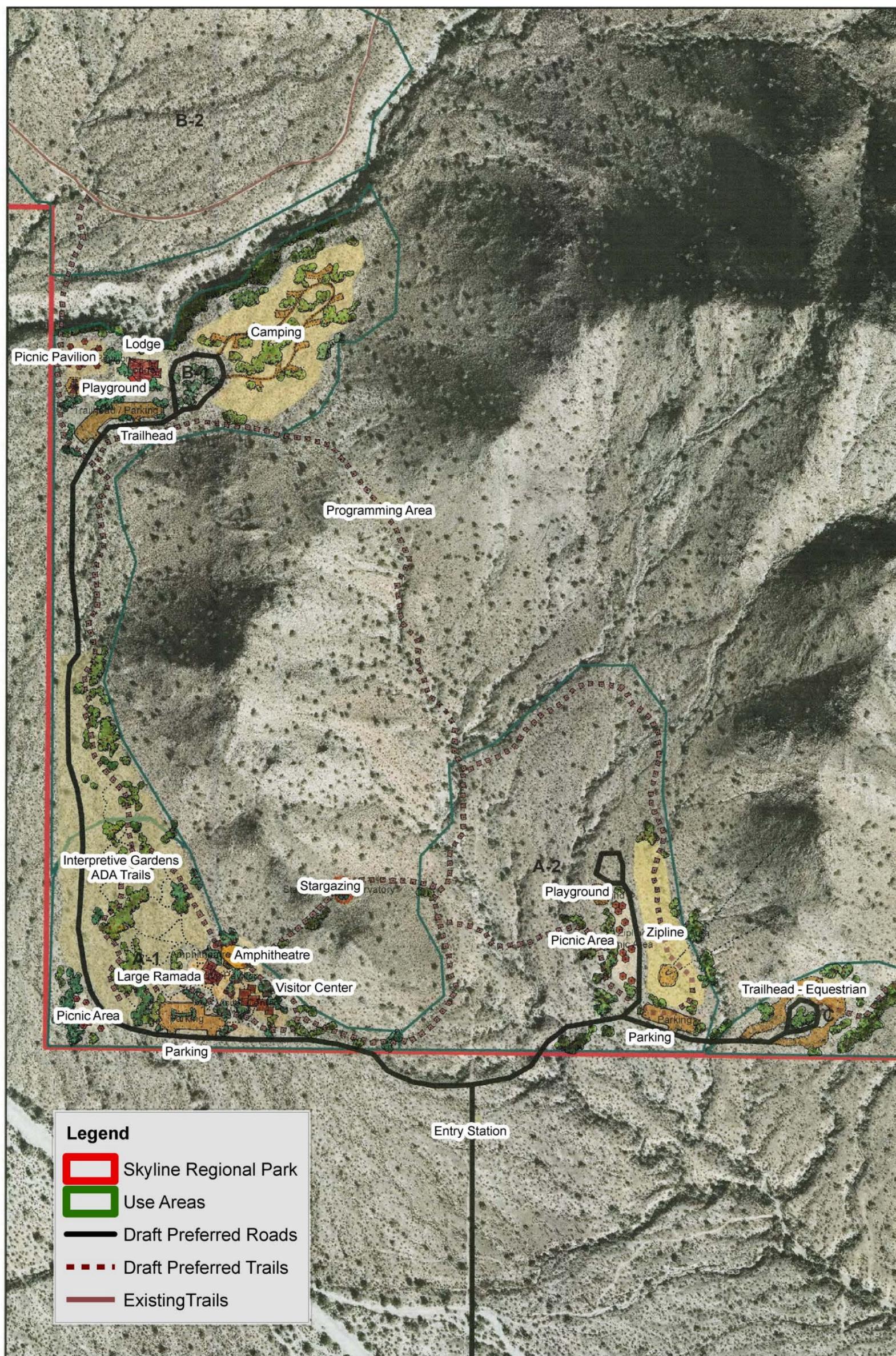
During the second public meeting, staff presented the draft preferred plan that was developed based on input and preferences received at the first public meeting. In that first meeting, the public wanted to see improvements that would have minimal impact to the land, such as limited grading and filling. As part of the presentation, staff presented the phasing plan for improvements over the next 25 years as well as initial cost estimates for phase I, planned for completion between 2014 and 2020. Estimating costs for Phase II and III beyond 2020 was too difficult to ascertain due to unknown inflation costs and the rapidly changing prices of materials. Minutes from the second public meeting are included in the appendix.

Final Preferred Plan

See following page.

Skyline Regional Park Master Plan

Watson Road Entry Area



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3/26/2012





Cost Estimates for Phase I

Staff from W.C. Scoutten Inc. developed a cost estimate for Phase I at Skyline Regional Park.

Overall Project

Topo Survey of Areas A-1, A-2 and B-1	\$20,000.00
Geotech for roadway	\$20,000.00
Entry Road (Watson Road alignment)	\$1,400,000.00
Entry Station	\$20,000.00
Entry Monumentation	
• Monument Sign	\$16,000.00
• Kiosk (3 installed)	\$6,000.00
Internal Roadways (approx. 1.75 mi.)	
• 4" compacted d.g. on 9" sub-grade/native material	\$385,000.00
• Ribbon Curb around loops	\$20,000.00
• Concrete Pipe crossing of significant washes	\$480,000.00
• Groomed connection/extension trails	\$25,000.00

Area A-1

3 - Single Ramada's (installed)	\$78,000.00
Interpretive Gardens	
• Pathways (some ADA) (w/ volunteer assistance)	
○ Approximately 1.5 miles, groomed with stabilized Decomposed granite	\$120,000.00
• Interpretive signs/kiosks	
○ Kiosk (6 installed)	\$12,000.00
○ Interpretive trail signs (24 installed)	\$16,000.00
Stargazing Programming Area/Observatory	(Concessionaire)
• Site preparation and access trail (w/ volunteer assistance)	\$8,000.00

Area A-2

Trailhead w/ parking (includes interim equestrian area)	
• Site prep, stabilized decomposed granite, directional and information signage	\$65,000.00
Zipline	(Concessionaire)

Area B-1

Trailhead w/ Parking	\$40,000.00
Informational Kiosk	\$4,000.00
Camping Area (prep and d.g.)	\$120,000.00

TOTAL Construction Estimate for Phase I **\$2,855,000.00**

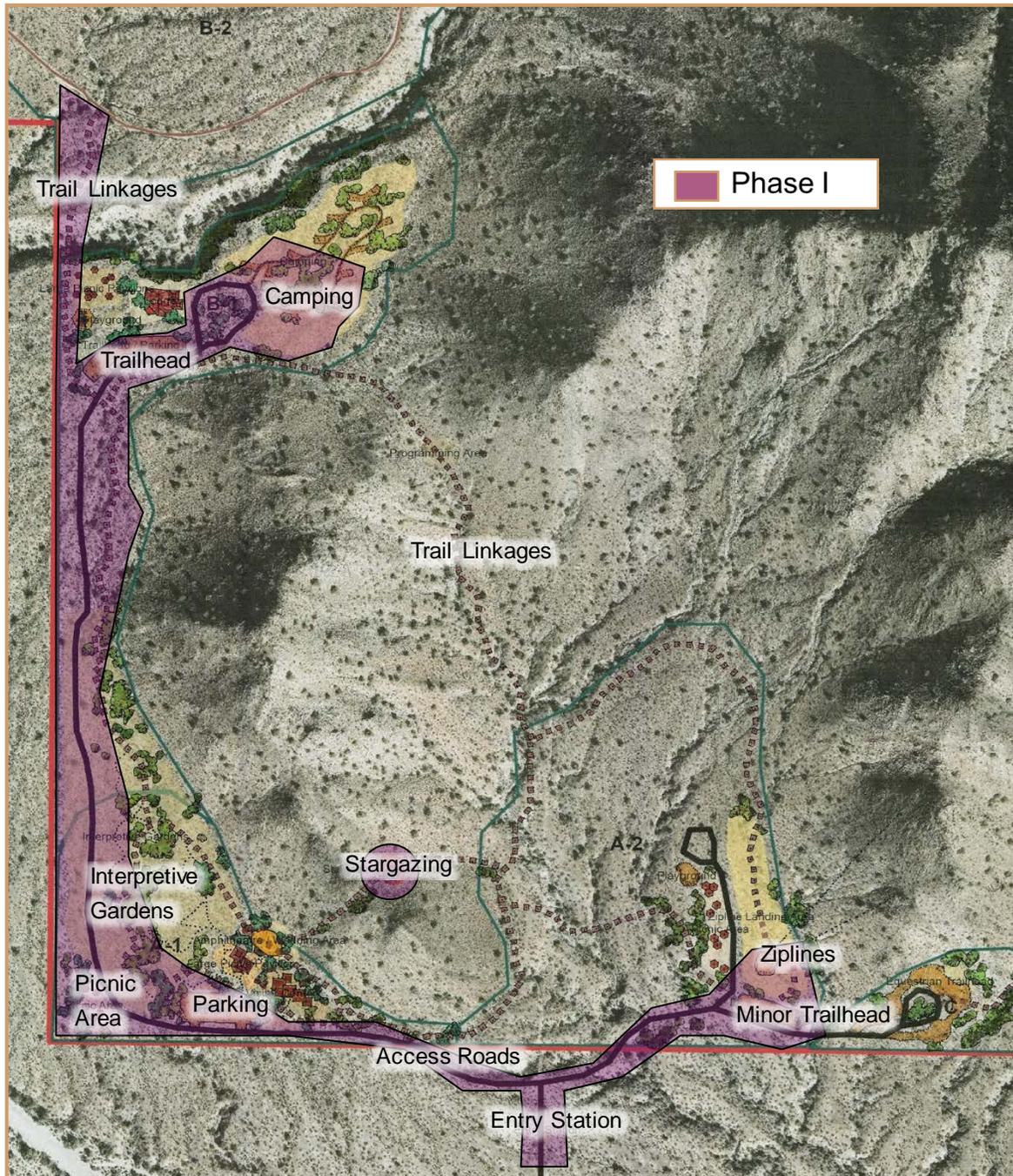
(Add approximately 10% for design services)



Phasing

Working with the Skyline Regional Park Project Advisory Committee, three separate phases were developed over the course of the 25-year lease period.

Phase I (Years 2014-2020)





Phase I (2014-2020)

- Entry Station – Construct entry station with small building to collect fees and traffic calming
- Roads – Access to the park and interior roadways
- Begin trail linkages – Link existing trails to new trailheads
- Signage

Use Area A-1

- Single Ramadas (2-3) Picnic Area – Construct single ramadas for picnicking
- Parking – Parking areas for 30 or more cars, depending on demand
- Begin Interpretive Gardens – Begin ADA walking trails in the Interpretive Gardens and begin installing interpretive signage and placards identifying different plants
- Stargazing / Observatory (Concessionaire) – Work with a non-profit organization (for example the equivalent to the East Valley Astronomy Club) and construct an observatory in the park.

Use Area A-2

- Ziplines (Concessionaire) – This work would need to be done through a concessionaire to install zip lines and associated amenities.
- Minor Trailhead/Parking – Construct parking area for 15 or more cars and support facilities

Use Area B-1

- Trailhead – Construct parking area for 15 or more cars and support facilities
- Camping – Grade flat areas and install support facilities (restrooms, picnic tables, ramadas, etc.)

Phase II (2021-2028)

Use Area A-1

- Interpretive Gardens – Continue expanding the interpretive gardens

Use Area A-2

- Single Ramadas (3-4) Picnic Area
- Playground – Install playground equipment
- Programming Area – Construct a programming area that would consist of grading a flat area and benches for seating

Use Area B-1

- Expanded Camping – Expand camping area as demand dictates
- Large Ramada – Construct a large sized ramada that could seat up to 100 people for larger gatherings, such as family reunions
- Playground – Install a playground near the camping and large ramada



Phase III (2029-2035)

Use Area A-1

- Visitor/Interpretive Center – Construct a visitor/interpretive center
- Large Picnic Pavilion
- Amphitheatre/Event Area – Construct an amphitheater/event area
- Playground
- Interpretive Gardens – Continue expanding the interpretive gardens

Use Area A-2

Use Area B-1

- Lodge

Use Area C

- Trailhead

Future Western Trailheads (Construction Dependent on Adjacent Development)

Use Area D

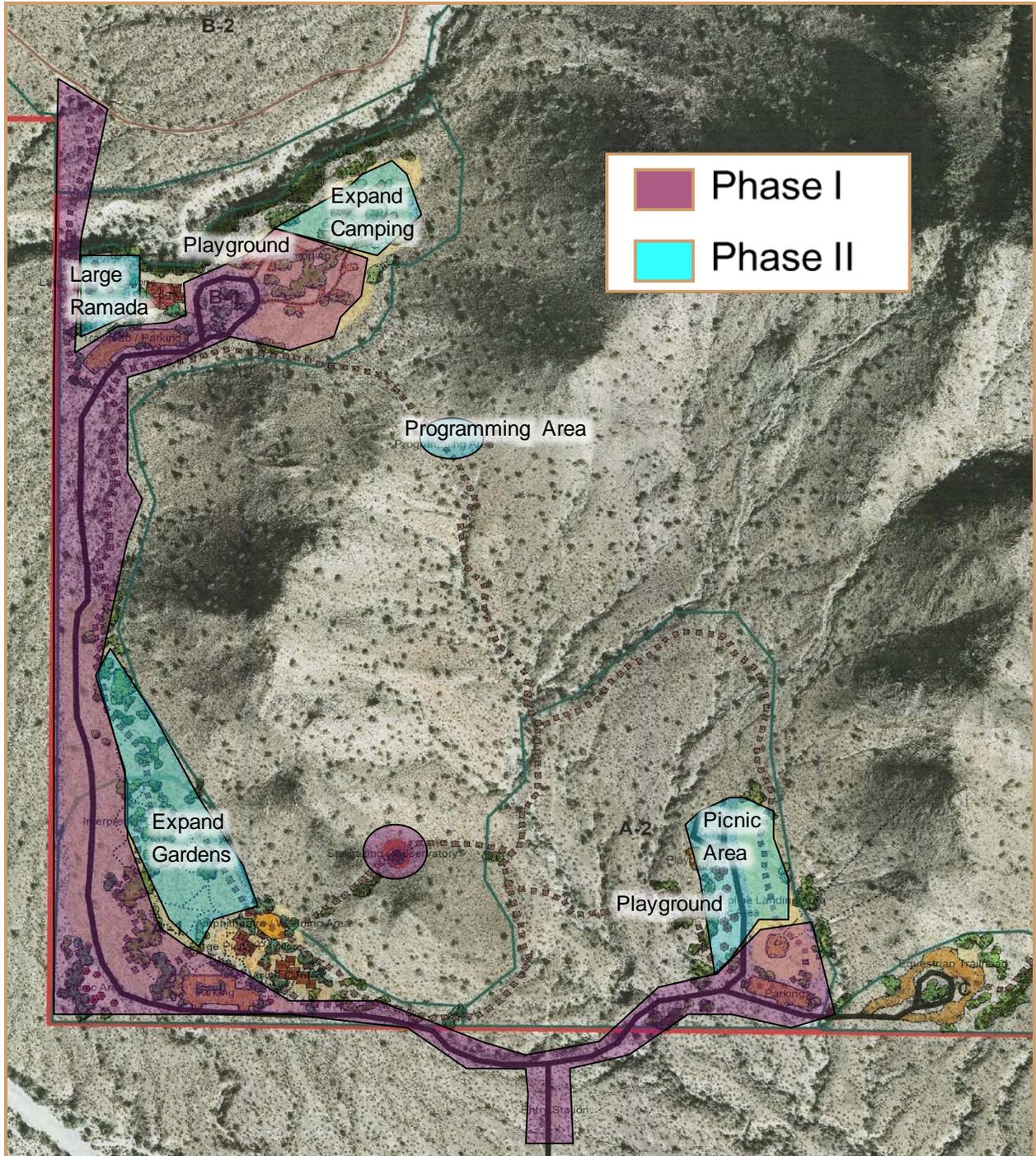
- The trailhead at the Campbell Road alignment will be constructed when development occurs on the adjacent Tartesso property.

Use Area E

- The trailhead at the Glendale Road alignment will be developed when development occurs on the adjacent land currently owned by the State Land Department.

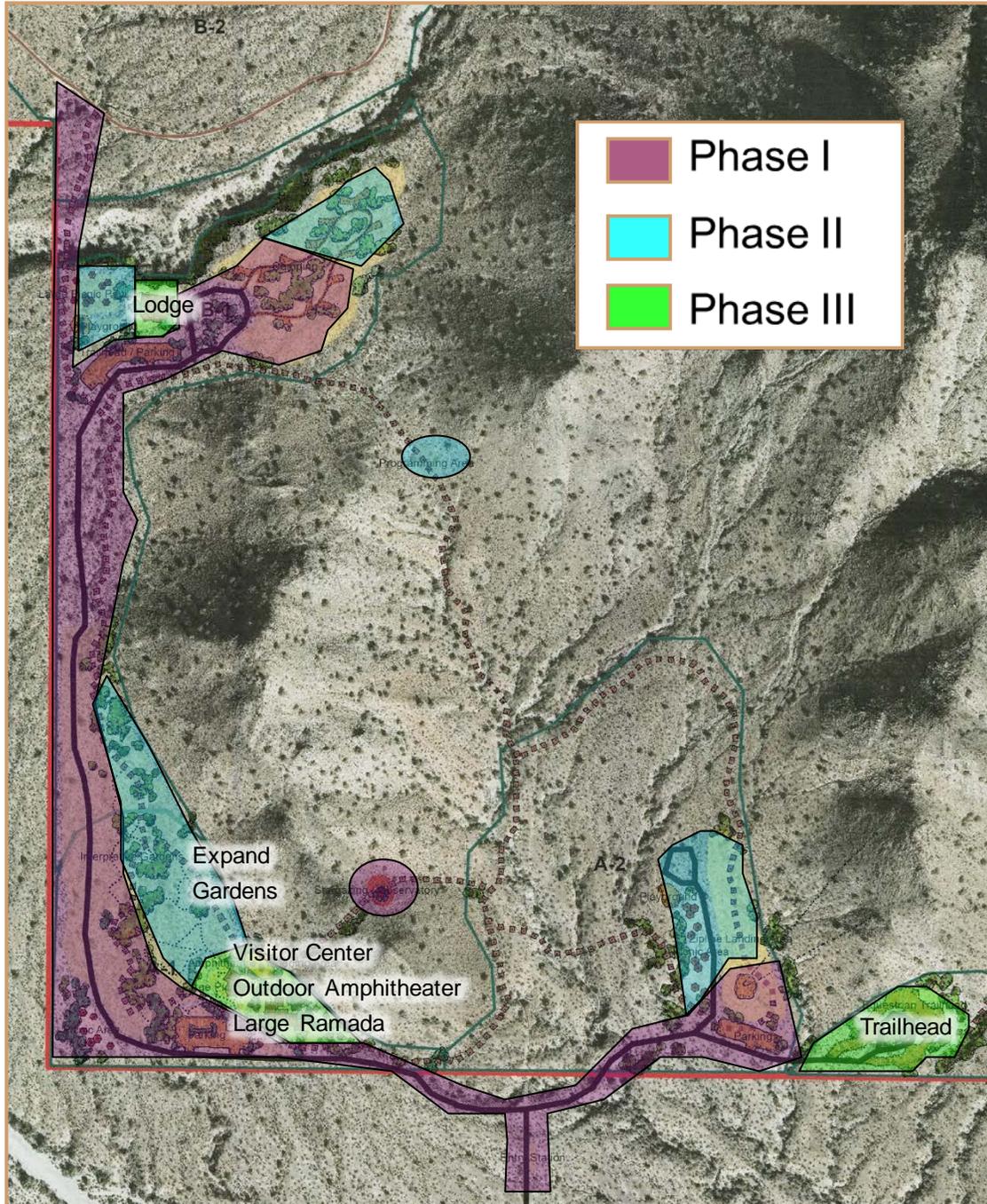


Phase II (Years 2021-2028)





Phase III (Years 2029-2035)





Trail Development

There are already many miles of existing trails within Skyline Regional Park that have been created over time by OHV (Off-Highway Vehicles) use. In 2006, the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development first studied the existing trails that are in the park. According to the EA, there were approximately 14 miles of existing trails, which are denoted in green and black on page 28. The Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development also generally planned the location of future trails, which are shown in pink and would add approximately 14 miles of trails in the park. The final location of these trails will be determined through the design process and are only conceptual in nature at this time.



Trail Along a Ridge Overlooking Watson Road Corridor

When possible, the Town will utilize volunteers to construct trails, however in more mountainous areas it may be advantageous to use a professional company. As part of the EA, the Town is required to reduce the width of some of the OHV trails, which are shown in black, since many of these trails are over 25 feet wide and will be reduced down to 14 feet wide. A revegetation mix of native plant seeds with the required nutrients will be amended to the soil adjacent to the trails and will be flagged off with notices to the public that new vegetation is establishing. Over time, these native plants will take hold and grow, thus reducing the width of the over widened trails.

Prohibition of OHV Activities in the Park



Rock Crawling in the White Tanks

The 25-year lease agreement was issued by BLM with the understanding that OHV activities would be banned. Therefore, the use of rock crawlers, quads, dirt bikes, All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's), etc. will not be allowed in the park.

The Arizona Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (AZOHVC) is a non-profit group in Arizona that advocates for OHV uses. The AZOHVC believes that rock crawling will not have an adverse effect on the environment if it is controlled in the park. The AZOHVC is not advocating for other types of OHV uses such as quads or dirt bikes, only rock crawling using



specialized vehicles in the park. The AZOHVC is seeking permission from the Town to allow them to fund an Environmental Assessment as required by BLM to consider the activity. The Environmental Assessment would need to be conducted by a professional environmental firm that would be approved by the Town. Rock crawling would be analyzed to determine the impacts it would have to the resources in the 8,675 acres of land, including noise and air quality and would study the amount of miles of rock crawling trails that would be allowable without having a negative impact. Town Council will need to make a policy decision whether to allow the AZOHVC to move forward with procuring a firm to begin the Environmental Assessment. In addition, there is no guarantee to the AZOHVC that the Environmental Assessment will result in a finding of no significant impact.

Equestrian & Mountain Bike Only Trails

In accordance with the EA, in the next five to ten years the Town will begin planning for equestrian and mountain biking only trails. Working with these user groups, the Town will begin laying out trails and providing the necessary amenities to these specific user groups, such as water troughs, hitching posts, parking for horse trailers, bike racks, etc.

ADA Accessible Trails

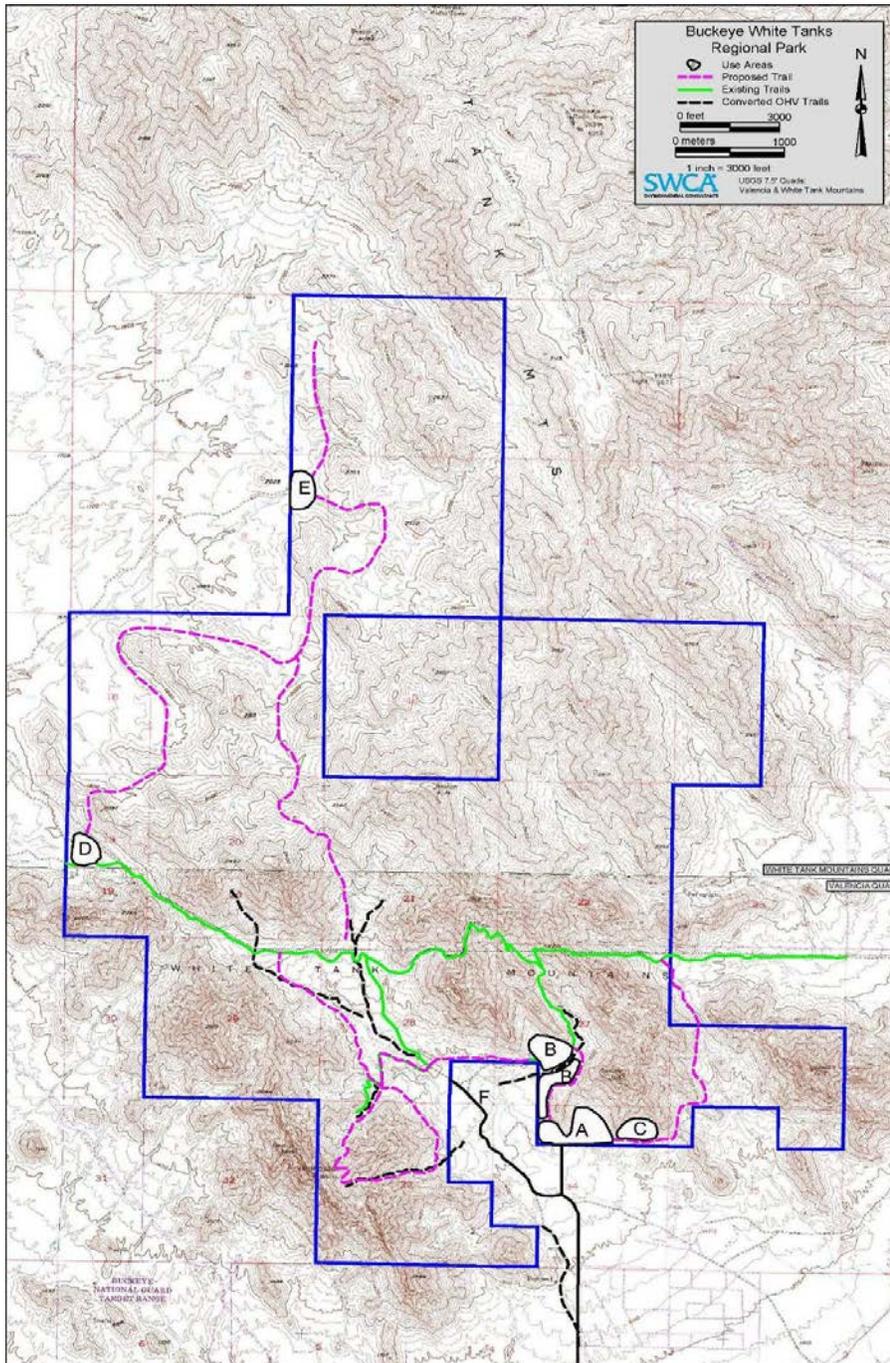
During the first public meeting, there were numerous comments regarding the provision of ADA accessible trails for those with disabilities, and trails that would be suitable for the elderly and children. The majority of these trails will be located near trailheads and parking areas consisting of short loops. ADA trails will be constructed in the interpretive gardens.

Connections to Neighboring Communities

One of the ways Skyline Regional Park will become a popular hiking destination is if there are numerous access points from nearby residential communities. For example, Verrado, Sienna Hills and the future Tartesso development, east of the Sun Valley Parkway are adjacent to the park. These residents could take advantage of the many miles of nearby trails if connections are made from Skyline Regional Park to the individual communities' trail systems. If those developments elect to connect their trails to those in Skyline Regional Park, the Town may install iron ranger fee stations to collect nominal fees. There is also an opportunity to work with the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department to link future trails between the County's White Tank Regional Park and the Town's Skyline Regional Park. Signage and a possible fee station will need to be constructed at the border between the two parks. The Town may establish a reciprocal agreement with the County to determine fee collections between the two entities.



Example of an Iron Ranger Fee Station



Conceptual Map of Trails – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

This conceptual map is from the Environmental Assessment. The green lines indicate existing trails. The dotted pink lines indicate future trails and the dotted black lines indicate existing trails that will need to be reduced in width.

The final alignments for trails have not been determined and will be coordinated with adjacent master planned communities and user groups, such as hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Some trails on the map may be changed or eliminated based on future planning.



Public Safety Plan

During the first and second public meetings, attendees voiced concerns over the rampant shooting and OHV activity that is occurring to the south and west of the Watson Road entry area.

Shooting in “Shotgun Alley”

In particular, there are concerns regarding shooting occurring in “Shotgun Alley”, a road that has been created on State Trust Land that traverses to the northwest from the McDowell and Watson Road intersection. During the day, and especially on weekends, people drive to Shotgun Alley to target practice. These people will bring any assortment of trash – old televisions, appliances, etc. and use them as target practice. When driving along Shotgun Alley, you will find large amounts of trash and used ammunition casings. In the early morning, you can find people collecting brass to turn in for cash at recycling facilities. This illegal shooting creates a large amount of noise, which detracts from the natural setting of the park. The trash itself creates an environmental hazard and eyesore.



Ammunition Casings and Trash from Illegal Shooting on State Land South of the Watson Road Entry Area

There is a common misconception in Arizona that State Trust Lands are “public lands.” According to their website, State Trust Lands are for the financial benefit of 14 trust beneficiaries, including public schools and prisons. The Land Department’s management responsibilities include requiring a permit or lease and charging a fee for use of the Trust land to benefit the beneficiaries. There are exceptions to this requirement for hunters and fishers, who are actively pursuing game or fish that are in season. To access State Land for activities beyond hunting and fishing, one must obtain a recreational use permit from the State Land Department. Legal recreational uses of the land under the permit are limited to hiking, horseback riding, picnics, bicycling, photography, sightseeing and bird watching. Discharging a firearm on State Trust Land is prohibited with the exception of the aforementioned lawful and licensed hunting.



Illegal OHV Activities

The public also addressed their concerns over illegal OHV activities that were occurring within Skyline Regional Park and to the land south of the park both on State Trust Land and private land. There is an area called the “Dunes” located south of the park on private land, which has become a popular destination for OHV users. At the public meetings, attendees voiced concerns over the dust and noise that was created by the OHV use.



The Area Known as the Dunes South of the Watson Road Entry Area is Popular with OHV Users

Combating Illegal Activities

Because of the noise and dust concerns created by the shooting and OHV activities, staff invited members from the Buckeye Police Department to discuss ways to curtail these activities at the second public meeting on March 26, 2012. Because both the State Land and private land have not been annexed into the Town, patrolling these areas falls under the auspices of the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office. Below are methods that could be used to combat the illegal activities by working with the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office and the Buckeye Police Department. One common sentiment that was voiced by staff is that these issues are not new and have occurred elsewhere in the Town. Over time, as the park is developed and with increased education and enforcement, illegal uses will decrease and will move to other remote areas not being patrolled.

Education

- Signage – Work with the State Land Department to install informational signage with rules and regulations on State Land, stating specifically that discharging a firearm and OHV uses are banned on State Land.
- Regularly inspect signage to see if it has been damaged and replace with new signage.
- Pamphlets – Equip public safety officials with educational pamphlets that they can distribute to those being turned away from using State Land for illegal purposes.

Enforcement

- As the park develops, the Town intends to hire Park Rangers to monitor activities and enforce laws in Skyline Regional Park.
- Working with Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office, increase patrols on Watson Road.
- Regularly schedule task forces to set up stations on Watson Road and turn those away who are there for illegal purposes.



- Where necessary, during the construction of the park, work with contractors to move fill from the building of roads and amenities to advantageous locations where people are accessing the park to create blockades, thus limiting illegal access to the park.
- The Town has acquired four Humvees that will allow public safety personnel to access remote locations in the park. Two of these are used by the Town of Buckeye's Fire Department's Technical Rescue Program and the other two are under the Police Department. Utilize these vehicles to patrol areas around the park that have seen frequent illegal uses.
- More actively enforce laws. There is a law that states no discharging of a firearm shall occur within a ¼ mile of an occupied structure A.R.S. 17-309 (A)(4). Some of the shooting occurring in "Shotgun Alley" is within a quarter mile of an annexed residential structure.

Minimizing Danger of Wildfires

In consultation with the Town's Fire Department, during drier weather conditions, the Town may issue no-fire bans in the park. Signage will be posted regarding the regulations, which could include no smoking and the prohibition of charcoal grills. Information regarding the danger and threat of wildfires may also be posted.



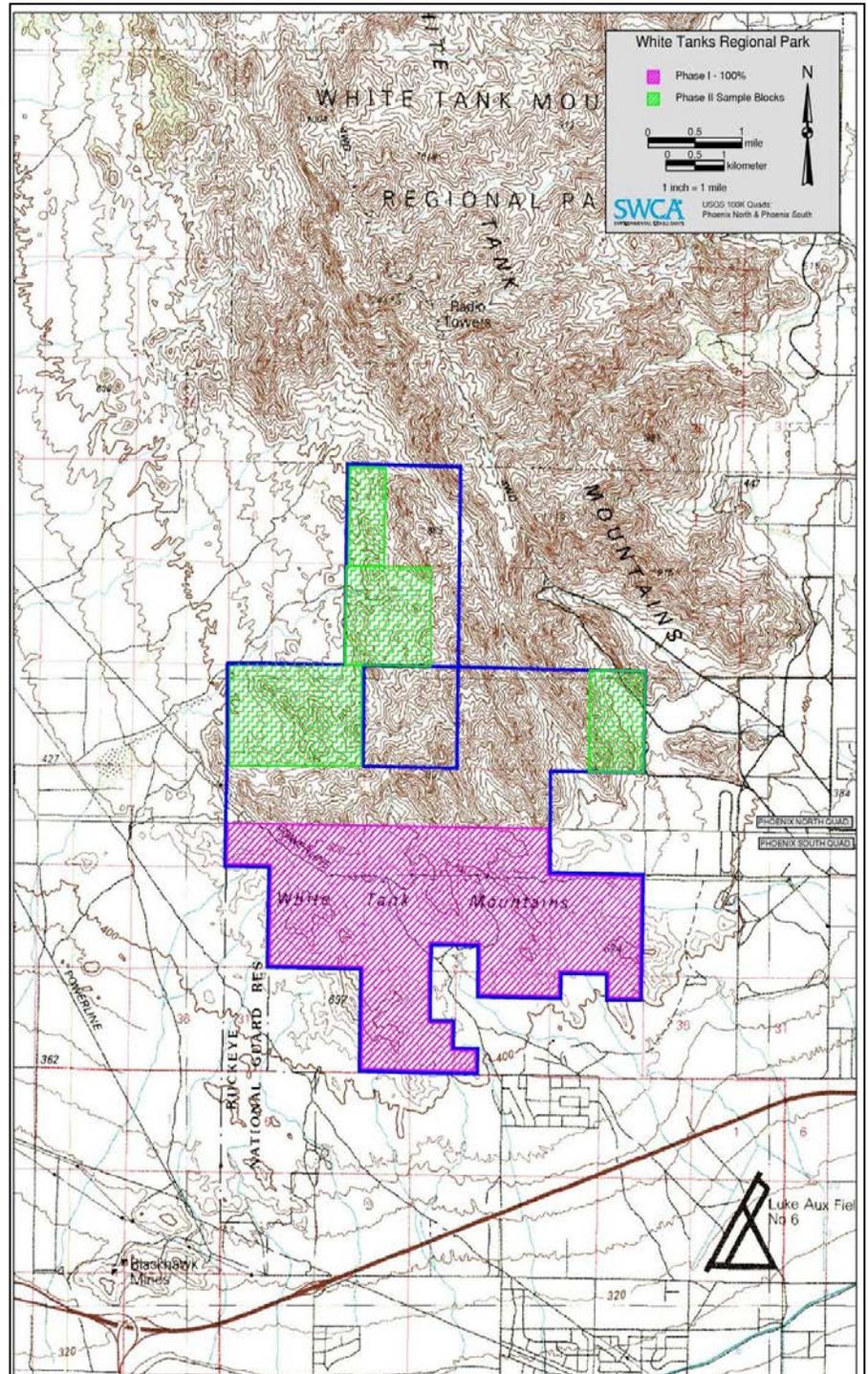
Cultural Resource Plan

There are many known cultural resources in the park. While conducting the Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development, a Class II and Class III Archaeological Survey was conducted on the property. The Phase I area shown in pink in the adjacent map saw a Class III level of effort (100% survey since development will be concentrated in the south of the park). The Phase II area shown in green was the subject of a Class II sample (50%) survey. Since the completion of SWCA's study in 2006, additional cultural resources are being found outside the areas not surveyed by hikers, including Project Advisory Committee members for the Master Plan.

Arizona Site Stewards

In May 2012, the Buckeye Town Council approved an IGA with the Arizona Site Stewards, through Arizona State Parks to begin monitoring known cultural resources in Skyline Regional Park.

The Site Steward Program is a network of volunteers who are trained and certified by the State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State Parks and the Governor's Archaeology Advisory Commission. Site Stewards monitor cultural



Cultural Resource Survey in the Park. Areas Shown in Pink were Surveyed at 100%. Areas Shown in Green were Surveyed at 50%.



resources throughout the state and report site conditions to various governmental land managers. In total, there are 850 volunteers who visit 1,800 different sites across Arizona to protect and preserve cultural resources. Other entities that utilize the Site Steward Program include the City of Phoenix, City of Tempe, Luke Air Force Base, Maricopa County, Pima County, State Land Department, National Forest Service, National Parks, and Bureau of Land Management among others.



Site Stewards Begin Monitoring Cultural Resources in the Park

Within the 8,675 acres, there are numerous cultural resources, including petroglyphs. Throughout early 2012, staff from the Town and Arizona State Parks have been documenting the locations and conditions of cultural resources in Skyline Regional Park and will continue to do so as more resources are found. The approved IGA allows the Town to tap into the Site Steward’s volunteers to begin monitoring the resources in Skyline Regional Park. Volunteers will coordinate with the Town and visit sites periodically, reporting signs of human activity, which could include trash dumping, vandalism, graffiti, or new trails being cut near known sites. Volunteers input

information on site conditions into the Site Steward’s restricted online database to which the Town will have access. Town staff will be able to read the volunteers’ reports and view pictures that were taken. Using the information provided by volunteers, the Town can decide on mitigation efforts if it is determined there is a threat to the cultural resources.

Mitigation

The Site Steward program has an archaeologist on staff that has been a vital resource. Staff will consult with the archaeologist to determine if mitigation efforts are warranted and at what level. Examples of mitigation efforts could include fencing off known sites to keep them protected from vandalism, rerouting nearby trails to limit potential disturbance, and installing interpretive panels and information. Education on the resources is key since the public is largely uninformed that the panels are over 800 years old.



One of the Many New Petroglyphs Found in the Park that will be Monitored by the Site Stewards



Design of the Park

When the park is designed, architects should be sensitive to the environmental resources found on the property and minimize disturbance of the land. It is important to note that the Project Advisory Committee recommends that environmentally friendly practices be used during construction, such as solar options for lighting that would complement the design of ramadas and other amenities. Other ideas were to use gravel pave technology in parking areas to reduce the heat island effect from having large amounts of paved surfaces. When possible, local materials that complement the natural setting should be used to construct amenities. Scenic views should be preserved and enhanced by the design of facilities.

Implementation

This plan looks at making improvements over the next 25 years, however some of the more costly improvements such as a lodge and amphitheater do not necessarily need to be completed in 25 years, since they were not expressly included in the Environmental Assessment. The less costly improvements included in this plan are specifically mentioned in the Environmental Assessment, since they will need to be completed in order to show BLM that the Town has made improvements and invested resources in order to obtain the patent to the 8,675 acres.

Funding for Improvements

User Fees

User fees will likely be charged to enter in the park, similar to fees charged at County Parks (\$6 vehicle entrance fee). These fees can be used to invest in park infrastructure and continued improvements.

Impact Fees

Currently, the Town possesses \$2 million from impact fees that can be used to make improvements to Skyline Regional Park. There is an additional \$1.3 million that has been reserved for the Town Lake project, located south of downtown Buckeye adjacent to the Gila River. The Skyline Regional Park project has been included in both the Town's Infrastructure Improvement Plan (IIP) and the Town's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Recently, due to new State Legislation, the amount the Town collects in impact fees for Parks and Recreation has been significantly reduced from \$1,909 per new single family residential unit to \$1,109, a decrease of 42%. Funding in impact fees is largely dependent on the housing market. If new homes are built, revenues in impact fees will increase. If the housing market is stagnant, no new funds will be available to make improvements.

Grants

Staff will seek funding for park improvements through different grants, including Federal, State, Local and Foundation grants.



Bonds

In the future, the Town may look at bonding to construct infrastructure and needed capital improvements. Bonding authority must be approved by the public for specific purposes and would have a more likely chance to pass in better economic times. Including Skyline Regional Park in the list of projects may be advantageous since this is a project that would benefit Buckeye residents at large.

Review Comments on the Plan by BLM

The Bureau of Land Management, while not formally providing comments, reviewed the plan and contacted staff to address concerns. While overall they were supportive of the plan, they did voice concern over some of the proposed amenities. Jim Andersen, Realty Specialist (Lead) stated that in the past, BLM has had issues with Recreation and Public Purpose Act leases and the use of for-profit concessionaires. In particular, Mr. Anderson stated there could be issues with using a for-profit concessionaire to manage the zipline component in the park. Recreation and Public Purposes Leases are to benefit the public at-large and cannot be used to benefit for-profit companies. For example, the Bureau of Land Management had issues with a municipality wanting to install a large scale amphitheater on Recreation and Public Purposes leased land that would benefit a for-profit company. BLM did not have an issue necessarily with the amphitheater itself, but with the way it would be operated by a private company. Moving forward, Town staff will keep this in mind that for-profit concessionaires cannot be used without receiving approval from BLM.



Appendix

Minutes from Committee Meetings

October 22, 2011 Meeting

November 7, 2011 Meeting

December 5, 2011 Meeting

January 23, 2012 Public Meeting

February 27, 2012 Meeting

March 26, 2012 Public Meeting



Trail in Skyline Regional Park Overlooking the Watson Road Corridor

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE
WHITE TANK REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Project Advisory Committee October 22, 2011 Minutes

Town Hall
530 E. Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
9:00 am

1. Call to Order

The site visit to the park began at 9:00am with the project advisory committee meeting at the Bealls Department Store on Watson Road and carpooling to the future park in two town vehicles.

Members Present – Committee Members Wiley Ahlstrom, Dan Beaver, Debra Harris, Kristin Rondeau-Guardiola, Robert Banach, and Tim Leighton

Staff Present –Parks Manager David Showen, Conservation & Project Manager Robert Wisener, and Planning Manager Larry Harmer

Guests Present – Mayor Jackie Meck

2. Comments from the Public

Mr. Meck was appreciative of the opportunity to join the committee on the site visit and came as a guest to listen to the committee’s ideas.

3. New Business

3a – Opportunities and Constraints

The committee began the tour overlooking use area A-2, which is approximately 20 acres in size. When looking at A-2, the committee began noticing that the acreage was divided by many small washes that traverse through the area and would not be suitable for any large structures. The committee then climbed over a ridge and viewed use area A-1, which is about 10 acres in size and just west of A-2. A-1 is relatively flat but has one main wash that travels through the middle of the area. The committee felt that A-1 would be better suited as the main use area with A-2 serving as a secondary use area. Some of the other opportunities afforded by the park include the following:

Opportunities

- views both internal and external
- relatively undisturbed terrain
- wildlife
- pockets of use areas divided by mountains, which allows for separation of uses
- proximity to Buckeye residents – Tartesso, Verrado
- adjacent to County park allowing for connectivity to County trails

- provide a natural experience in opposition to exercise only (Piestewa Peak)
- blank slate
- archaeological history

Some of the constraints presented by the site include:

Constraints

- many washes that traverse through the use areas
- limitation of land with slopes less than 10% for improvement purposes
- OHV trails are already established & may not be where we want them
- lack of utilities – water, sewer, electric
- encroachment of development
- no vehicular connectivity throughout the site
- lack of controlled access
- island of State Trust land in center of park

3b. – Programming

Mr. Wisener asked the committee for programming ideas that would be conducive for the park. Committee members responded and provided the following ideas which were discussed at the site visit.

Programming Ideas

- Hiking trails
 - incorporate wildlife / vegetation information
 - Cultural information pertaining to indigenous people living in the area
 - trailheads
 - maps
 - scenic views
 - rest areas
 - inclines and declines
- Camping
 - tent camping area for scouting troops adjacent to trails
 - tent camping
 - free standing small cabins
 - lean to
 - RV camping (more intensive, hook ups, larger flat areas)
- Equestrian trails
 - beginner trail
 - advanced trail
 - overnight camping for equestrians
 - concession for horse rides
 - staging area with ample room for trailer parking and horses unload
 - consider availability of source of water for horses / hikers.
- Mountain bike trails
 - children's course with winding, rolling hills with few rocks.
 - long loop for average riders 20 miles

- sport loop for intermediate and expert riders
 - technical loop for expert riders
- Picnic Areas
 - larger picnic areas for family reunions, group events
 - single ramadas
 - could be powered by solar panels to lower impact
 - grills
 - parking could be adjacent to or away. People would need to walk items in.
- Jeeping Trails (if approved by BLM)
- Desert Learning Center / Visitor Center
 - wildlife interpretive center
 - geological and botanical garden
 - interpretive trails for native cultures, similar to Desert Botanical Garden
 - public/private use classrooms
 - “Desert Learning” jeep tours
 - live desert animal exhibits
 - Town offered classes, such as desert photography
- Geocaching
 - desert hide and seek / treasure hunt via GPS coordinates
 - rent GPS devices
 - hold contests
 - offer prizes for harder to find items
 - cache boxes hidden on trail (not off trail)
- Scenic area for weddings/ceremonies
 - easy access by vehicle
 - flat area for seating 10-20 chairs
 - shade trees around area
 - gazebo
 - awesome views
- Stargazing Programs with telescope area
 - dark skies away from lighted areas in park
- Moonlight hikes with different stations
- Playground
 - equipment to blend into landscape (no colorful plastic)
 - canopy
 - benches
- Amphitheatre for Environmental Education

- small area for environmental education / discussions
- Rock climbing / rappeling
 - equipment to blend into landscape (no colorful plastic)
 - canopy
 - benches
 - could have man made wall

3c. Initial Concepts

Because A-1 is relatively flat, the committee felt that this should be the main use area. Potential ideas for use area A-1 include the following:

A-1

- Desert Learning Center / Visitor Center
- Picnic Area with larger pavilions for family reunions
- Trailheads

A-2

- Zip Line with a couple of lines
- Trailhead for mountain biking, equestrian uses
- Picnic Area with solar panels connected by walkways
- Camping Area with single ramadas

The committee discussed the possible acquisition of additional land south and west of the initial use areas off of Watson Road. Possible ideas for these locations could be a larger concert/amphitheater venue or library. For the larger concert venue, it would be beneficial to use the natural landscape of the mountains to the Town's advantage and use the rise of the mountains for the concert seating with the stage facing towards the mountains. The library would need to be located on flat land with room for parking.

5. Staff Report

The next meeting for the committee will be held on November 7th at 6:00pm in the first floor Executive Conference Room in Town Hall.

6. Adjournment

The site visit concluded at 11:30am.

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE
WHITE TANK REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Project Advisory Committee November 7, 2011 Minutes

Town Hall
530 E. Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
6:00 pm

1. Call to Order

The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Members Present – Committee Members Wiley Ahlstrom, Dan Beaver, Debra Harris, Kristin Rondeau-Guardiola, Robert Banach, and Tim Leighton

Staff Present – Conservation & Project Manager Robert Wisener, and Planning Manager Larry Harmer

Guests Present – Raymond Schell, Maricopa County White Tank Regional Park, Stephen Launi

Mr. Wisener provided an updated on changes to the committee. David Marchi resigned from the committee and Stephen Launi will be appointed to the committee in his place at the November 15th Council meeting.

2. Comments from the Public

Mr. Launi informed the committee about his background. Mr. Launi has worked as a professional forester in northern California for 38 years and has extensive knowledge on the management of natural resources.

3. New Business

3a – Raymond Schell, Supervisor for Maricopa County White Tank Regional Park

Mr. Schell provided the committee with information about his experiences working at the Maricopa County White Tank Regional Park over the past several years. The County park is funded solely by user fees, which pays for the five staff and the other costs associated with running the park. Twenty volunteers also assist with maintenance and programming. The entrance fee for vehicles is \$6 of which about 15% of visitors are mountain bikers with the rest consisting primarily of hikers, of which 70% of those use the ADA Waterfall Trail. The park is 30,000 acres and has been in operation for about 50 years. There was discussion regarding safety at the park. Currently, the park is patrolled by the County Sheriff Department. There is one ranger on staff, whose duties involve interpretive activities. The Sheriff's Department is responsible for law enforcement and rescuing people who are lost or dehydrated in the park. Mr. Beaver mentioned that there are deputies assigned to specific County parks. Mr. Ahlstrom asked Mr. Schell how they handle illegal activities occurring on adjacent state trust land. Mr. Schell responded that they've installed fencing around most of

the park, which limits the number of off-highway vehicles that enter the park from illegal access points. Ms. Harris asked about ways the County attempted to reduce vandalism to petroglyphs and other cultural resources on site. Mr. Schell responded that they work closely with the Arizona Site Stewards who monitor the cultural resources to see if graffiti or other vandalism is occurring nearby. If they see human activity occurring close to the site, they will inform park staff so they can determine if additional patrols are necessary or if other mitigation efforts are needed. Mr. Wisener asked about the new hunting law that was passed. Mr. Schell responded that the County only allows archery for deer from January 1st to the 31st and shotgun shot for quail season from September 30 to February 5. Hunters must be located at least a quarter mile (about four football fields away) from recreational areas, such as a trail, picnic or camping area. Hunters must register with the park staff at the entry gate. Ms. Harris asked about human interaction with wildlife and if there were any issues. Mr. Schell stated that human interaction with animals is minimal and that usually visitors will encounter a mountain lion every two months. In every case, the mountain lion retreats when it sees a human. Mr. Schell was also not aware of any rattlesnake bites that have occurred in the park over the last several years. Ms. Harris asked about the desert tortoise of which Mr. Schell answered that they have only encountered one nest inside the park. There was discussion on equestrian uses in the park. Mr. Schell answered that they have an equestrian and horse staging area and use an old tractor tire for watering. There are hitching posts and a picnic area for equestrians, however most equestrians tie their horses to their trailers. The majority of trails are shared by equestrians and hikers. Most equestrians take advantage of trails that are flatter.

Further discussion centered on utilities. Water is pumped from a well that was built more than 50 years ago and follows the entry road for about four miles into the park. Toilets are flushed with well water. Restrooms are serviced via leach bed. Electricity is provided to the park off of Olive Ave.

Ms. Harris asked about the County's wish list and future improvements. Mr. Schell discussed that the County is considering a trailhead located in the northwest corner of the park, near the Sun Valley Parkway, which could capitalize on potential visits from the Festival Ranch community in northern Buckeye. They are also considering a pump and beginner BMX track, similar to the McDowell Mountain Park as well as RV camping with hookups. The committee also had questions concerning utilities.

3b. – Review of Initial Conceptual Diagrams

Mr. Wisener presented an initial conceptual diagram of the southern use areas off of Watson Road that incorporated many of the programming ideas that were submitted by committee members. When laying out the concepts, staff looked at the programming ideas and divided them into three different uses based on intensity. Higher intensity uses (visitor/interpretive center, larger ramadas for family reunions and larger gatherings, interpretive area to include amphitheater with seating of 100, desert botanical, geological and cultural interpretive areas, zip lines, ADA trail loops, and playground) were designated as primary uses, medium intensity uses (smaller picnic areas, major trailheads) designated as secondary, and low intensity (tent camping, minor trailheads) as tertiary. Primary, secondary, and tertiary uses were located separately in different use areas.

Use Area A-2: 20 Acres

During the site visit, staff and committee members noticed that the majority of Use Area A-2 was divided by many smaller washes. Initially, it was thought the majority of this area would be for secondary uses since this land would be harder to develop because of the minor washes. However, the washes naturally divide and separate the uses to minimize disturbances between user groups (visitors to nature center, family reunions, ADA trail loop, geocaching and stargazing programs, zip lines, etc.), therefore staff felt it would be more appropriate for primary uses.

Most of the improvements in Use Area A-2 would be built in future phases since their capital costs were larger.

It was decided to locate the visitor/interpretive center in Use Area A-2 to take advantage of the natural terrain and the building would be easily visible driving north on Watson Road into the park. Adjacent to the interpretive center would be a parking lot and interpretive area that could include such uses as an amphitheater with seating for 100 people that could be used for environmental education or weddings, desert botanical garden and interpretive trails relating to geological and cultural resources. From this area, trails would loop around the use area to connect with the different amenities. Other amenities under consideration in this area would be larger ramadas to accommodate larger family gatherings (up to 100 people), playground, and a discussion circle for some of the proposed programs, such as geocaching and stargazing.

Use Area A-1: 10 Acres

In accordance with the Environmental Assessment / Plan of Development, the Town is committed to constructing a dust-controlled access road over State land, an entry/fee station, initial trail improvements and trail links, parking for 10 to 20 cars, up to 15 camping spaces with shade ramadas, portable or composting toilets, and picnic tables and shade ramadas over the next five years. The majority of these improvements would be constructed in Use Area A-1 and B-1.

Use Area A-1 would be reserved for lower intensity secondary uses and would be constructed in the first phase. Improvements would include parking for the initial trailhead and picnic ramadas to accommodate groups of less than 20 people.

Use Area B-1: 17 Acres

This area would be utilized for some of the tertiary uses proposed, such as a minor trailhead and tent camping. This area would also be developed in one of the initial phases in accordance with the Environmental Assessment / Plan of Development.

Use Area C: 5 Acres

There was discussion on potentially located an equestrian trailhead in Use Area C. The trail would eventually link to the hiking trails located in the interior of the park.

Use Area B-2: 25 Acres

Staff discussed the possibility of using Use Area B-2 as the jumping off point for mountain biking trails that would be predominately located in the southwest portion of the park. If BLM approved jeeping as an allowed, controlled activity, mountain biking and jeeping trails could be located in the same general area in the southwest of the park.

Committee members were generally in support of the concepts presented and felt that staff was on the right track. The committee members were instructed to email any comments/concerns and items of which they liked or disliked by Wednesday, November 16th to Mr. Wisener.

5. Staff Report

The next meeting for the committee will be held on December 5th at 6:00pm in the first floor Executive Conference Room in Town Hall.

6. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 7:40pm.

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE
SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Project Advisory Committee December 5, 2011 Minutes

Town Hall
530 E. Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
6:00 pm

1. Call to Order

The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Members Present – Committee Members Wiley Ahlstrom, Robert Banach, Dan Beaver, Kristin Rondeau-Guardiola, Stephen Launi, Tim Leighton

Staff Present – Conservation & Project Manager Robert Wisener and Planning Manager Larry Harmer

Guests Present – Raymond Schell, Maricopa County White Tank Regional Park

2. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

3. New Business

3a – Review of Three Alternatives for Master Plan

Mr. Wisener began by discussing the last meeting that occurred on November 7th and how staff presented one of the proposed conceptual plans for the park. Since that time, staff began preparing for the public meeting that will be held on Monday, January 23rd. At that meeting, staff will be presenting three different alternatives. These alternatives would have varying levels of intensity from high to medium to low but would be within the allowable acreage of disturbance as detailed in the Environmental Assessment / Plan of Development that was approved by BLM in 2009. The public would be able to see the three alternatives and decide which elements they liked from each to formulate the final plan.

Alternative 1

The first alternative – Alternative 1 is the highest intensity of all three with most of the development concentrated in use area A-2, which is approximately 20 acres in size. Driving north into the park, there would be scenic views of the mountain as well as the visitor center in the foreground. Visitors would encounter an entry/fee station and would continue north to the park to a t-intersection. Going east from the T-intersection to use area A-2, planned amenities include a visitor/interpretive center with an outdoor amphitheater/wedding area, large ramada area, playground, interpretive gardens, zip line landing, and a programming area for stargazing and geocaching. The road would continue east into area C (approximately 5 acres in size), where a trailhead predominately used for hiking and equestrian uses is planned.

Moving west from the T-intersection, there would be another trailhead and parking area to be used by hikers and those desiring to picnic in the ramadas. Moving north on the road to use area B-1, visitors would encounter another trailhead to be used for hiking and mountain biking uses. A lodge is also planned in this alternative, which could feature a kitchen, large common room, restrooms / showers, and large rooms for bunk sleeping. Nearby, there would be areas for camping.

Mr. Launi commented that the stargazing & observatory programming area would be better suited to the ridge of mountains separating use areas A-1 and A-2 since they would have a clear visual of the majority of skies, whereas the proposed site would block views of the northern sky. Mr. Schell thought that maintenance costs may be higher due to the elements proposed including the interpretive gardens, visitor center and large ramada area. There was discussion on phase I of construction beginning in use area A-1 with the proposed picnic area for groups smaller than 20 people and trailhead parking. Future construction would occur in use area A-2.

Alternative 2

The second alternative had the second largest level of impact to the land. Components in this plan are very similar to those in Alternative A, however the components are reversed between use area A-1 and A-2. In Alternative B, the highest concentration of activity is located in use area A-1 where the Visitor Center, wedding/amphitheater, large ramada area, and interpretive gardens would be located. Use Area A-2 would have a zip line landing area and programming area. In Use Area C, there would be an equestrian trailhead. Camping, lodge and another trailhead would be located in use area B-1. Committee members mentioned that the stargazing area would be better situated on the ridge between use areas A-1 and A-2. Committee members also requested a connection between use area B-1 and A-2 that would cross the ridge separating the two. Committee members seemed to favor Alternative 2 over Alternative 1 since use area A-1 has a more contiguous surface since there are less washes traversing through the area than use area A-2, thus making the improvements easier to construct.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 had the lowest impact to the land of the three alternatives. Driving north into the park, there would be a t-intersection. Turning left would take you to use area A-1 with a visitor center that would have a large ramada for groups larger than 100 people, playground and an associated parking area. This alternative did not have an amphitheater / wedding area, interpretive gardens, or zip lines. Turning right at the t-intersection would take you into use area A-2 with another trailhead and smaller picnic area and the programming area for stargazing and geocaching. Road improvements for this alternative would be less since no roads would extend into use area C or north into use area A-2. Driving north from use area A-1 into B-1 would take visitors to another small trailhead with a few picnic ramadas and camping. There would be no lodge under consideration for this alternative.

Committee members believed that many of the amenities planned in Alternative 3 could be considered Phase I for construction of the park, but felt there were not enough amenities to draw people into the park without the interpretive gardens, zip lines, lodge, or amphitheater/wedding area. The committee asked staff to revise Alternative 3 into the highest level of development for the three alternatives. This alternative would be similar to Alternative 2 but with increased intensity of uses. For example, the interpretive gardens could be located in

both use areas A-1 and A-2 and connected by trails and there would be additional parking in all three of the major use areas A-1, A-2, B-1, and C.

Next Steps

Mr. Wisener was going to revise the three alternatives based on the committee's comments. Committee members requested an additional meeting to be scheduled prior to the public meeting on January 23rd. Staff also mentioned that it would be a good idea to visit the other use areas that were not seen during the first site visit on October 22nd including use areas B-1 and C. The committee and staff agreed to hold the next meeting on Monday, January 9th at 6:00pm in the executive conference room of Town Hall with the site visit following on Saturday, January 14th at 10:00am.

4. Staff Report

Mr. Harmer provided an update on a meeting that was scheduled with representatives from the State Land Department to discuss future plans for State Lands in the vicinity of the park including the 1 square mile of State Land located in the center of the park as well as the land north of the McDowell road alignment and south of the use areas off of Watson Road. Mr. Harmer indicated that the 1 square mile was indicated as planned open space on a map provided by the State Land Department several years prior. Mr. Harmer indicated that the State Land Department was not interested in managing open space and may be willing to sell the land at a fairly cheap rate since there is no access and the terrain is mountainous. South of the park, the State Land Department listed the land off of Watson Road as residential, however it would be difficult to develop a majority of the land because of the numerous washes that traverse through the property with the majority of land within the flood plain. Mr. Harmer would provide an update to the committee at the meeting in January.

Mr. Wisener updated the committee on the petroglyphs and other cultural resources within the park. Mr. Wisener met with representatives from the Arizona Site Stewards program that is administered through Arizona State Parks on November 28th. At the meeting, he learned that the site steward program is volunteer-based with hundreds of individuals participating across the state. The stewards visit archaeological sites to monitor them to ensure there is no human activity or vandalism occurring on or near the archaeological sites. Stewards will alert land managers if they see any activity. The land manager would be responsible for mitigation, whether blocking access to the site through fencing, berming, etc., relocation of trails, or the removal of litter and debris which could draw attention to the site(s). The program would be free to the Town with the exception of providing secondary insurance for volunteers. For example, if a volunteer was at the park and twisted their ankle, the volunteer's primary insurance would kick in. If, for whatever reason, their primary insurance would not cover it, the Town would need to provide secondary insurance for the volunteer's injuries. Mr. Wisener was going to meet with the program coordinator and some of the volunteers to go to the park, assess the cultural resources on site, document them, and work with the volunteers to begin monitoring them on a quarterly basis.

The next meeting for the committee will be held on Monday, January 9th at 6:00pm in the first floor Executive Conference Room in Town Hall.

5. Comments from Committee Members

None.

6. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 7:40pm.

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE
SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Public Meeting #1 January 23, 2012 Minutes

Town Hall
530 E. Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
6:00 pm

The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Attendance

Town Council Members Present: Mayor Jackie Meck, Vice-Mayor Brian McAchran, Councilman Craig Heustis

Project Advisory Committee Members Present –Wiley Ahlstrom, Dan Beaver, Kristin Rondeau-Guardiola, Stephen Launi, Tim Leighton

Staff Present – Cheryl Sedig, Phil Yabes, Larry Harmer, Robert Wisener, Stephen Harrison, Daniel Higgins, Chris Larson, Krista Cornish

Guests Present – Raymond Schell, Maricopa County White Tank Regional Park

See sign in sheet for list of public in attendance.

Mr. Wisener thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and instructed attendees to sign-in if they hadn't done so already. Mr. Wisener thanked members of Council as well as staff and recognized committee members that were in attendance at the meeting.

Mr. Wisener discussed the name change for the park, stating the park was formerly called the Buckeye White Tank Regional Park, however the name was too similar to the County's White Tank Regional Park so the Town decided to rename it to differentiate the two parks from each other. Skyline Regional Park was appropriate because of Skyline Wash that runs through the property and the scenic views of the White Tank mountain skyline as one drives west on I-10.

Overview of Park

Mr. Wisener began the powerpoint presentation and stated that the park is 8,675 acres, which is a third of the size of the County's White Tank Regional Park, which is nearly 30,000 acres. The park, from north to south is about 6 miles long and 4.5 miles wide from east to west. The park is adjacent to state land to the south and to the northwest. The property borders Verrado to the east, and land owned by Tartesso to the west, the County White Tank Regional Park to the north, and the Buckeye Military Reservation to the southwest. I-10 is located two miles south of the Watson Road entry. Tower Road (or Caterpillar Road) is located to the northeast of the property and Shotgun Alley and the Dunes are located south of the park.

Timeline

The process for acquiring the land began over ten years ago when the Town discussed leasing the property from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under a Recreation & Public Purpose Act lease. The federal government is able to lease its property to municipalities and other organizations to benefit the public good and can enter into leases for parks, schools, etc. The Town will have the lease for 25 years. At the end of the 25 year lease, if the Town has been a good steward of the land, BLM will patent or allow the Town to acquire the land at no cost. In 2002, the Town officially submitted its application to BLM. Shortly thereafter, the Town began an Environmental Assessment / Plan of Development (EA/POD) as required by BLM for the lease. The EA/POD would analyze the proposed uses to determine their impact to the resources on-site, including noise, air quality, plants, animals, cultural resources, scenic views, etc. In 2006, two public meetings were held to garner input into the Town's EA/POD. In 2009, the BLM approved the Town's EA/POD and shortly thereafter issued a Notice of Realty Action and a Finding of No Significant Impact in the Federal Register, stating BLM found the lands suitable for lease to the Town of Buckeye under the Recreation & Public Purpose Act. The lease agreement was signed by BLM in December 2010.

With the lease approved, the Town began working towards implementing the EA/POD. In July 2011, the Town submitted an application to the State Land Department to acquire the right-of-way into the park north of McDowell Road (3/4 of a mile). This process takes 18 months to two years and should be complete by December 2012. In August, the Town appointed the seven member project advisory committee to take the concepts that were identified in the EA/POD and fully define them into a master plan. In November 2011, the Town annexed the 8,675 acres into its limits so it could begin providing fire and police services. In 2013, the Town intends to construct the access road into the park followed by the initial improvements, including parking, trailhead and trail improvements. In 2035, the Town will acquire the land from BLM at no cost.

Limitations of Development

The park is considered Category III habitat for the Sonoran Desert Tortoise by BLM, which means that there are populations of the desert tortoise in the park, however the area is not essential to maintaining viable populations. The Sonoran Desert Tortoise is a candidate species for the Endangered Species List and as such, BLM has a policy where there can be no net loss of habitat for the tortoise. Because of this, the Town is limited to the amount of land it is able to develop.

In the Watson Road area, the Town is limited to developing 48 acres. On the western side of the park, the Town is able to develop 5 acres at the Campbell Road alignment adjacent to Tartesso's property (use area D) and another 5 acres at the Glendale Road alignment adjacent to State Land (use area E) for a total of 10 acres. BLM will also allow the Town to construct new trails at 15.1 acres, which equates to 14 miles of new trails at 10 feet wide. In total, the Town is able to develop 73.1 acres, which is less than 1% of the total 8,675 acres. Additionally, the Town will have to provide mitigation to some of the disturbance from uncontrolled OHV use in the park. Some of the existing trails will be reduced in width from 25 feet down to 14 feet wide.

Use Areas

In the Watson Road area, the Town is able to develop 48 acres, located in different use areas that are divided by ridges of mountains. Use Area A-1 is ten acres in size and has a wash that traverses through the center. There is the potential to purchase additional land from the State Land Department to the west. Use Area A-2 is 20 acres in size and has many braided minor washes that go through the area that are five to ten feet deep making it more difficult to develop. The area is surrounded by mountains to the west, north and east; however is connected to Use Area B-1 through a gap in the mountains. Use Area B-1 is 17 acres in size and has more dense vegetation than the other use areas. To the north of Use Area B-1 is B-2, however the two areas are divided by a wide and deep wash (30 feet wide by 15 feet deep). Use Area B-2 is 17 acres in size. Use Area C is approximately 5 acres in size. In total, these areas equate to 77 acres, however the Town is limited to 48, therefore staff and the committee decided not to include development in Use Area B-2 since the large wash that separates it from the other areas would make it difficult to reach. Use Areas D (Campbell Road alignment adjacent to Tartesso) and E (Glendale Road alignment adjacent to State Land) on the western portion of the park are 5 acres in size each. As such, these two areas will have limited development to include a trailhead, parking and support facilities such as kiosks and shade ramadas.

5-10 Year Phased Approach

The EA/POD details a five to ten year phased approach to development. During the next five years, the Town will need to obtain access into the park and construct a dust controlled road, provide an entry station to collect fees and serve as an emergency station, construct parking and trailheads, initial trail improvements and linkages, up to 15 camping spaces with shade ramadas, portable or composting toilets and picnic areas with shade ramadas.

Between 2016 and 2020, the Town will need to make improvements to the access road, begin expanding the trail network with the additional 14 miles of trails the Town is able to develop, provide additional parking, camping areas, shade ramadas and picnic areas as demand dictates, provide visitor services, which could possibly include a visitor center, develop special use areas such as mountain biking trails and equestrian trailheads, and extend utility services (water, sewer, and electrical) if these become readily available, which is largely dependent on development south of the park along Watson Road.

Additional Uses Under Consideration by Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee has also provided input on additional uses they would like to see in the park, including zip lines, playgrounds, amphitheater, interpretive gardens, lodge, stargazing and observatory and geocaching program.

The zip lines would likely be done through a concessionaire with the Town receiving a portion of profits. The playgrounds would be sited near the picnic facilities for families to enjoy. The amphitheater would seat around 100 to 150 people and could be used for environmental education programs or rented on the weekends for weddings or other private gatherings. The interpretive gardens would be similar to the Desert Botanical Gardens, however it would focus more on the plants, animals, petroglyphs and cultural artifacts found on the property through interpretive panels. ADA trails would go throughout these areas. The lodge would feature a common area or cafeteria, kitchen, restroom facilities, and dorm style sleeping quarters with bunks that could be used by scouts

and other groups. Stargazing programs are popular and Buckeye does not have the same amount of light pollution found in other parts of the Phoenix Metro Area.

Three Alternatives

Those uses identified in the EA/POD as well as those under consideration by the Advisory Committee were located in different use areas at the Watson Road entrance area. The three alternatives, while similar, locate the amenities within different use areas. Alternative 1 has most of the development occurring in Use Area A-2, whereas Alternative 2 locates the majority of development in Use Area A-1. Alternative 3 has the highest impact of all three and is similar to Alternative 2 but has larger facilities. For example, the interpretive gardens were expanded in both Use Area A-1 and A-2.

Future Steps

Based on comments received at the public meeting, staff will revise the three alternatives into the final preferred plan, which will be presented at the second public meeting on Monday, March 26th. The final plan will be revised based on input garnered from the meeting and will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Community Services Advisory Board as well as to Council for workshop and subsequently to a Council meeting for approval. Staff and the advisory committee will be preparing cost estimates as well as preliminary phasing considerations.

Comments from the Public

- Very pristine area. Limit damage to existing area.
 - Response – Town limited to amount of acres to be developed by BLM, which is less than 1% of overall 8,675 acres of land.
- Control of State Land south of the park. Widespread shooting, dust from OHV activities. Park would not be a desirable place with the illegal activities occurring nearby.
 - Response – Illegal to shoot or access State Land without a recreational permit. While Town does not have jurisdiction over land south of the park, it will have authority over the roadway into the park. Will coordinate with State Land Department and Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to increase patrols in the area. Also, as development occurs, illegal activity tends to shift elsewhere.
- Some areas outside of the development boundaries are better suited for park improvements than what's been identified. Area is not very flat.
 - Response – Town analyzed the limitations of each of the use areas to locate the amenities in the park. Most of the flatter land outside of the park boundary, however is in the floodplain with strict limitations on development.
- Can zip lines be taken out of the plan?
 - Response – The Project Advisory Committee and staff looked at amenities that they felt would draw people into the park to make it a destination in the Valley and spur economic development from those travelling outside of Buckeye to enter the park for the zip lines. At this point, the zip lines are conceptual in nature and would likely be done by a concessionaire with the Town receiving a percentage of profits. All amenities are not final and can be changed given the comments received from the public meeting.

- Will there be access to the trail system from the eastern side of the park for Verrado residents?
 - Response – There is an existing trail connection into the park from Verrado’s Lost Creek trailhead. All connections are conceptual at this time and will be subject to future development plans by Verrado DMB. The locations of trail connections may change based on future development plans by Verrado DMB.
- How far up is the park entrance from the Watson Road/I-10 Interchange?
 - Response – Two miles.
- What will happen to existing OHV trails?
 - As part of the Environmental Assessment that was completed, which was approved by BLM, OHV use would not be allowed. These trails would be closed to motorized uses. Some of these trails will be reduced in width (in some cases as wide as 25 feet down to 14 feet wide). Some of the spur offs that do not lead to anywhere or are short loops off of existing trails may be closed and revegetated with native seed mix.
- Can you describe the observatory in more detail?
 - Response – Buckeye is still afforded dark skies with little light pollution from the Phoenix Metro area. The observatory would be placed in an area with 360 degree views. There is an existing observatory at the Riparian Reserve in Gilbert, which is managed and its programs and operations staffed by the East Valley Astronomy Club. The Town would seek a similar partnership.
- Can you describe the interpretive gardens in more detail?
 - Response – The interpretive gardens would be similar to those found at the Desert Botanical Garden but more focused on the flora and fauna one would encounter while visiting the park. There would be ADA (handicapped accessible) trails that would loop throughout with interpretive panels and placards that would identify the plant species. Some portions of the trails may focus on a specific subject – native cultures who used the property and their resources that remain on the site, i.e. petroglyphs or animals that call the park home.
- I thought this was a huge park?
 - Response – The park is 8,675 acres, however the Environmental Assessment that was approved by BLM limits the acres that can be developed on the property. The Town is limited to 73.1 acres of disturbance (48 acres off of Watson Road, 10 acres of development at Campbell and Glendale Road Alignments, and 15.1 acres for new trails).
- Are the black lines roads?
 - Response – Yes and brown dotted lines represent proposed trail alignments. Solid brown lines are existing trails.
- Would certain trails be handicapped accessible?
 - Response – Yes. The Town envisions that many of the trails within the interpretive gardens would be considered ADA accessible for those in wheelchairs.
- The County has the waterfall trail that is on its property that draws people into the park. Have you found any resources that would draw people in?

- Response – The property has significant petroglyphs on the property and impressive saguaro and Cholla forests. There are also many scenic vistas that look out over the valley floor with views of downtown Phoenix.
- Are trails going to be separated by different user groups? Equestrians, mountain biking, hiking?
 - Response – Currently, the existing trails are not separated between user groups. As the park develops and usage grows, the Town will designate certain trails for those groups to use. Current thinking is that there would be an equestrian trailhead at use area C that would connect into existing trails. Mountain biking trails could be located in the southwestern portion of the park. The Town is working with the AZ Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (AZOHVC) to determine whether jeep rock crawling could occur within the park as an allowed, controlled activity. The AZOHVC would need to fund a study that would look at the environmental impacts jeeping would have to the resources on site and whether that impact would be significant. The study would determine the amount of area that could be used for jeeping trails. The study would need to be approved by both the Town and BLM. In the future, the Town will work with organizations to develop these user specific trail systems.
- Will there be trails that are suitable for younger children and older adults?
 - Response – The majority of trails that would be rated suitable for younger children and older adults would be the ADA accessible trails proposed in the interpretive gardens.
- What will the first phases of development be?
 - Response – The Town will first need to gain access into the park off of Watson Road, which is anticipated to be approved by the State Land Department by the end of 2012. Once the Town has acquired the right-of-way, it will begin constructing the access into the park in 2013. In 2014, the Town will begin making minor improvements into the park, including trailheads with linkages into the existing trail systems, portable or composting toilets, picnic areas and developing the camping area in area B-1.
- How does Alternative 2 differ from Alternative 1?
 - Response – Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 are similar in many ways. The main difference is that in Alternative 1, the main uses are concentrated in use area A-2, whereas in Alternative 2, main uses are found in use area A-1.
- There are a lot of problems with the illegal activities occurring on the state land – shooting and OHV uses create noise problems and dust clouds. The Town will need to get control of this, otherwise it will not be a desirable area.
 - Response – Town needs to begin an educational campaign through signage and enforcement and determine other mitigation methods such as fencing. The area southwest of Verrado and to the northwest of the Flood Retarding Structure (FRS) had similar issues with illegal shooting. Maricopa County Sheriff's Office began patrolling more frequently and those that used that area migrated west to Watson Road. As development and population move into the area, illegal uses begin to migrate to other areas. Mayor Meck stated that similar issues occurred off of Miller Road near the National Guard property. The Town increased patrols and began issuing tickets.

- Is the green line the park boundary?
 - Response - The green line represents the use areas or the limits of development in the park as established in the BLM approved Environmental Assessment. The red line is the park boundary. The Town is able to develop trails outside the use areas but are unable to make significant improvements.
- If you spend money to improve the 73 acres in the use areas, will BLM give you the rights to the whole area at the end of the 25 year lease period?
 - Response – Yes. At the end of the 25 year lease, period, BLM will patent, or allow the Town to acquire the 8,675 acres of land if the improvements are consistent with the BLM approved Environmental Assessment/Plan of Development.
- Will there be animal watering holes in the park?
 - Response – There are water holes in the County White Tank Regional Park. The Town will need to investigate the feasibility of water holes in the park in the future.

Comments from Mayor Jackie Meck

Mayor Meck stated that he grew up in Buckeye and spent many of his weekends in the White Tank Mountains and is very familiar with the property. His goal is to keep development off the property, make the land accessible to the public and preserve it for open space. Scottsdale is spending millions of dollars to preserve their mountain tops and Buckeye is fortunate to have the lease with BLM for 25 years and be able to acquire the land at no cost. He mentioned the joint project that is in the conceptual stages between the Town, a private property owner and the Flood Control District of Maricopa County to build a retention basin within the Skyline Wash that would remove many private properties out of the flood plain. He discussed the access issues regarding the State Land Department and the importance of gaining access into the park and his desire to connect the park with adjacent communities such as Tartesso and Verrado.

His next goal is to preserve land within the Town's municipal planning area that is within the Maricopa Mountains south of downtown Buckeye. He thanked those in the audience for attending the meeting and for providing their vital input.

Additional Comments Can Be Mailed or Emailed

Mr. Wisener stated that there were comment forms on the table as well as business cards for anyone wishing to submit comments. Comments are due back to Mr. Wisener by Monday, February 6th so staff and the committee can take the comments and revise into the final preferred plan. The second public meeting will be held on Monday, March 26th at 6:00pm.

Meeting Conclusion

The meeting ended at 7:45pm.

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE
SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Project Advisory Committee February 27, 2012 Minutes

Town Hall
530 E. Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
6:00 pm

1. Call to Order

The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Members Present – Committee Members Wiley Ahlstrom, Robert Banach, Dan Beaver, Debra Harris

Staff Present – Conservation & Project Manager Robert Wisener, Community Services Director Cheryl Sedig and Planning Manager Larry Harmer

2. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

3. New Business

3a – Review of Comments from Public Meeting – January 23rd

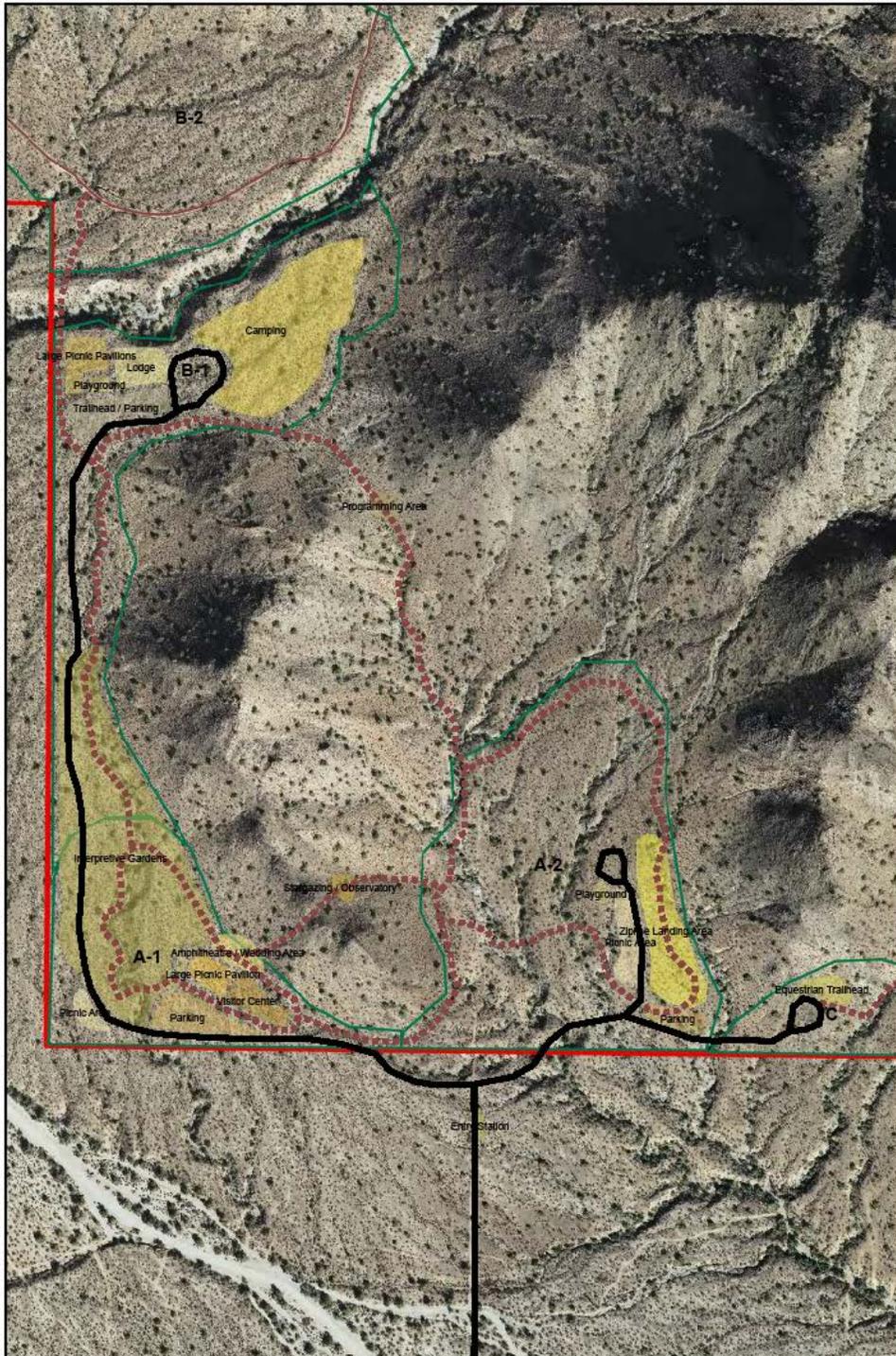
Mr. Wisener discussed the general comments that were received from the public meeting on January 23rd and provided a copy of the minutes from that meeting. For the most part, it seems the public was pleased with the amenities that were proposed and did not favor one alternative over the other except that cost would be the main determinant that would drive one alternative over the other. Mr. Wisener stated that he emailed the powerpoint presentation and the three alternatives to adjacent developments to the park, including Verrado DMB, Tartesso, Sienna Hills, Phoenix Skyline West, and the Buckeye Military Reservation. Verrado responded to the proposed alternatives with comments relating to fire control, trail connectivity and the Town's control over the land. Verrado requested that any trail connections to the park would be subject to future development plans by Verrado DMB as the locations of existing trails may change as their community grows. DMB expressed that the Town should create a Wildfire Protection Plan that would limit the potential for out of control campfires that could destroy thousands of acres in the White Tanks and impact homes in the Verrado community. Another comment related to access control and that the public should be clearly informed of the park boundaries so users do not go on private property. Verrado representatives also felt the Town should create a detailed set of off-road regulations, including enforcement procedures to ensure off-road vehicle uses do not go on private property. Verrado also commented that the amphitheater/wedding area should feel remote and in an area that will have natural desert and mountain views.

3b. – Revise Three Alternatives into Draft Preferred Plan

Staff and the committee reviewed the three alternatives and worked collaboratively to arrive at the draft preferred plan. During the meeting, larger amenities were sited first by the committee

beginning with the visitor center, lodge, and camping. Smaller amenities such as picnic ramadas and playgrounds were located last. The results of this activity are below.

SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK Draft Preferred



Town of Buckeye
GIS
Community Services



3c. – Preliminary Phasing for Skyline Regional Park

The committee discussed potential park phasing keeping in mind the dollars currently available for the project and what amenities would draw people into the park to generate revenue from user fees that could fund future amenities. Below is the phasing as identified by the committee.

Phase I (2014-2020)

Use Area A-1

- Single Ramadas (2-3) Picnic Area
- Begin Interpretive Gardens
- Stargazing Programming Area / Observatory (done by Concessionaire)

Use Area A-2

- Ziplines (done by Concessionaire)
- Minor Trailhead / Parking Area

Use Area B-1

- Trailhead
- Camping

Use Area C

No improvements

Phase II (2021-2028)

Use Area A-1

- Interpretive Gardens Continued

Use Area A-2

- Single Ramadas (3-4) Picnic Area
- Parking
- Playground

Use Area B-1

- Expand # of Camping Spots as Demand Grows

Use Area C

No improvements

Phase III (2029-2035)

Use Area A-1

- Interpretive Center
- Large Picnic Pavilion
- Amphitheatre / Event Area
- Parking
- Interpretive Gardens Continued

Use Area A-2

Use Area B-1

- Lodge
- Parking

Use Area C

- Trailhead

4. Staff Report

Mr. Wisener provided a brief update on the site steward program. Mr. Wisener visited the future park with Kristen McLean from Arizona State Parks to locate the petroglyphs on the property and were able to locate some of the significant panels. Mr. Wisener plans to go back to the property to find other cultural resources that have been identified by the consultant and committee member Dan Beaver to add to the list of sites the stewardship program will monitor. Mr. Wisener stated that volunteers with the Site Steward program will go to the cultural resource sites and record their observations on a quarterly basis, which could include information regarding human activity occurring nearby (new trails being cut or litter/trash debris in the area). The volunteers will also alert land managers if they find graffiti or vandalism occurring nearby or at the sites themselves.

Mr. Wisener stated that he would prepare a map of the draft preferred plan and email it to the committee for final comments. Staff would then take the bubble concept map and render the proposed improvements to present at the second public meeting. Staff from Scoutten, Inc. will also prepare preliminary cost estimates, keeping in mind the phasing as identified by the committee. Mr. Wisener will update the powerpoint presentation from the meeting on January 23rd and will email it to the committee for further input prior to the second public meeting.

The next public meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 26th at 6:00pm in the Council Chambers of Town Hall.

5. Comments from Committee Members

None.

6. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 7:35pm.

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE
SKYLINE REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN**

Public Meeting #2 March 26, 2012 Minutes

Town Hall Council Chambers
530 E. Monroe Avenue
Buckeye, AZ 85326
6:00 pm

The meeting began at 6:00pm.

Attendance

Town Council Members Present: Mayor Jackie Meck, Councilman Craig Heustis

Project Advisory Committee Members Present – Debra Harris, Kristin Rondeau-Guardiola, Stephen Launi

Staff Present – Cheryl Sedig, Larry Harmer, Robert Wisener, Stephen Harrison, Chris Larson, Krista Cornish

Guests Present – Raymond Schell, Maricopa County White Tank Regional Park

See sign in sheet for list of public in attendance.

Mr. Wisener began the meeting at 6:00pm. Mr. Wisener asked how many people had attended the first public meeting with the majority of those in the audience having been in attendance. Mr. Wisener quickly reviewed the presentation that was given at the previous public meeting in January as a refresher.

Background

The park is 8,675 acres in size and is surrounded by Verrado to the east, State Land to the south, Buckeye Military Reservation to the southwest, Tartesso to the west, and the County White Tank Regional Park to the north. Interstate 10 is two miles south from the proposed Watson Road entry area.

Back in 2002, the Town submitted an application to BLM for a Recreation and Public Purpose lease. In 2006, the Town hosted public meetings to garner input into an Environmental Assessment that was required by BLM that analyzed the Town's proposed plan for the land and the impacts it would have to the environment. In 2009, BLM issued a finding that there would be no significant impact to the environment if the 8,675 acres was leased to the Town for a regional park. In 2010, the Town and BLM signed the 25 year no-cost lease agreement. At the end of the 25 year lease, BLM will patent the land to the Town at no cost. This is impressive since Scottsdale has spent \$136 million on 6,800 acres to expand the McDowell Mountain Preserve.

The Environmental Assessment that was completed limits the amount of land the Town is able to develop for the regional park. The Town is able to develop 48 acres in the Watson Road area and 10 acres on the western side of the park at the Campbell (adjacent to Tartesso) and Glendale (adjacent to State Land) road alignments. An additional 15 acres has been allocated for new trails

within the park. In total, the development would result in less than 1% of total disturbance to the 8,675 acres.

Mr. Wisener then reviewed the areas identified for development in the Environmental Assessment. Use Area A-1 is 10 acres; A-2 is 20 acres; B-1 is 17 acres, and C is 5 acres in size.

The Environmental Assessment looked at a five to ten year phased approach for making improvements in the park. During the next five years, the Town will need access to the park and will begin making improvements to include parking, picnic areas, trailheads, and camping. During the next five to ten years, the Town will begin expanding the trail network with the 15 acres allocated for new trails and expand the parking, camping, and picnic areas as demand dictates. The Town will extend utilities to the park if they are readily accessible from adjacent development.

Mr. Wisener detailed some of the additional uses under consideration by the committee, which includes zip lines, amphitheater, lodge, interpretive gardens, stargazing platform, and playgrounds. These uses, in combination with those identified in the EA will need to be placed in the park at the Watson Road entry area.

Between October and December, the Committee began thinking about the different alternatives for the park plan. These were further refined and three alternatives were presented at the first public meeting on January 23rd. Alternative 1 had the highest concentration of uses in Area A-2, whereas Alternative 2 had the highest concentration of uses in Use Area A-1. Alternative 3 had the highest impact of development of all three alternatives. From the first public meeting, it seemed residents wanted to see the land minimally disturbed and cost was a large factor. These comments were discussed by the committee at their February meeting and guided them towards the draft preferred plan.

Draft Preferred Plan

Mr. Wisener reviewed the draft preferred plan (see following page), which had the majority of uses located in A-1, including the visitor center, amphitheater, parking lot, large ramadas for family reunions, smaller picnic area, and interpretive gardens with ADA trails that would have information on plants and animals found in the park. In Use Area B-1, there would be a trailhead, lodge, playground, picnic area, and camping. Use Area B-1 would be connected to Use Area A-2, which would have an additional picnic area and zipline landing area. In Use Area C, there would be a trailhead geared towards equestrian uses that would connect to existing trails.

Phasing

At the committee meeting in February, members discussed phasing the park improvements (see map below).

Phase I

Phase I would be constructed between 2014 and 2020 and would consist of the entry station roads, trail linkages. In Use Area A-1, the Town would construct a parking area, build a picnic area and begin the interpretive gardens. The Town would grade an area and work with an astronomy club to build the stargazing observatory. In Use Area A-2, the Town would construct another parking area and work with a concessionaire to construct the zipline landing area. In Use Area B-1, the Town would construct a trailhead and begin building the camping area.

Phase II

Phase II would occur from 2021 to 2028. Improvements constructed over this time period would include the expansion of the interpretive gardens in Use Area A-1. In Use Area A-2, the Town would build 3 to 4 single picnic ramadas, construct a playground and programming area for recreation educational programs. In Use Area B-1, the Town would expand the camping area as demand dictated and build a large picnic pavilion.

Phase III

Phase III would be developed between 2029 to 2035. During this time, the Town would build the larger capital projects, including the visitor center, amphitheater, lodge, and in Use Area C another trailhead.

Cost Estimates for Phase I

Larry Harmer, Planning Manager for the Town discussed the cost estimates for Phase I of the park. He stated that at this stage, without having the design completed the costs would only be a rough estimate, therefore cost estimates were only developed for Phase I. Once the design is fine-tuned, the Town will be able to get closer to the actual costs for construction. Basically, everything shown in Phase I would be approximately \$3 million. Constructing Watson Road to the park as a chip sealed road would be about half of the budget. Inside the park, the Town looked at 3” or 4” deep compressed granite rolled onto a natural base. The roadway inside the park would need to cross five or six washes so the Town would need to install concrete culverts crossings. The linkages to existing trails could be completed by volunteers, such as Eagle scouts.

In Use Area A-1, the Town would construct three single ramadas that are 20’ by 20’ in size and about 1.5 miles of ADA trails within the interpretive gardens. The Town would install approximately 6 interpretive panels with information on the plants and animals in the park The Town would prepare the site for the stargazing observatory platform.

In Use Area A-2, the zipline concessionaire would be responsible for their improvements. The Town would construct a parking area that would connect to trails leading to the east.

In B-2, the Town would install a trailhead with informational kiosk and the camping area. See cost estimate below.

Phase 1 (2014-2020) Cost Estimate

Overall Project

Topo Survey of Areas A-1, A-2 and B-1	\$20,000.00
Geotech for roadway	\$20,000.00
Entry Road (Watson Road alignment)	\$1,400,000.00
Entry Monumentation	
• Monument Sign	\$16,000.00
• Kiosk (3 installed)	\$6,000.00
Internal Roadways (approx. 1.75 mi.)	
• 4” compacted d.g. on 9” sub-grade/native material	\$385,000.00
• Ribbon Curb around loops	\$20,000.00
• Concrete Pipe crossing of significant washes	\$480,000.00
• Groomed connection/extension trails	\$25,000.00

Area A-1

3 - Single Ramada's (installed)	\$78,000.00
Interpretive Gardens	
• Pathways (some ADA) (w/ volunteer assistance)	
o Approx. 1.5 miles, groomed with stabilized dg	\$120,000.00
• Interpretive signs/kiosks	
o Kiosk (6 installed)	\$12,000.00
o Interpretive trail signs (24 installed)	\$16,000.00
Stargazing Programming Area/Observatory (Concessionaire)	
• Site preparation and access trail (w/ volunteer assistance)	\$8,000.00

Area A-2

Trailhead w/ parking (includes interim equestrian area)	
• Site prep, stabilized dg, directional & info signage	\$65,000.00
Zipline (Concessionaire)	

Area B-1

Trailhead w/ Parking	\$40,000.00
Informational Kiosk	\$4,000.00
Camping Area (prep and d.g.)	\$120,000.00
TOTAL Construction Estimate	\$2,835,000.00
(Add approximately 10% for design services)	

Comments

- Did you include any kind of boundary demarcation in your cost estimate or fencing?
 - o Response – Town could work with volunteer groups to fence off the property. When constructing the road, the surface scarification will turn up big rocks. The Town could mandate the construction company to place these rocks on the park boundary to keep OHV use out of the park.
- Group came to the park to hike. People shooting towards the hill. The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office was called and the Sheriff's Office advised them not to go up the hill. The area off of Watson Road is very close to this area.
 - o Response – Larry Hall, Assistant Police Chief stated that the Town would take a two prong approach through education and enforcement. The Town can place signs alerting people that shooting is not allowed on the State Land Department property. Eventually, the Town will have a ranger program to patrol these areas. The Town will need to coordinate with MCSO and increase visibility by adding patrols on Watson Road on the weekends.

In addition, the Town acquired four humvees. Two of these vehicles went to Fire for the Technical Rescue Program; the other two went to Police.

Between education and enforcement, illegal activity should be curtailed.

The Town also has laws stating that there is no hunting within 1 mile of a structure and no shooting within a quarter mile of a building. The Town had issues on Miller Road north of I-10 near the National Guard building. People were cutting the fence and vandalizing their property. The Town increased patrols and the illegal activities decreased.

- Wash is used by ATV's and creates lots of dust. Would like the plan to focus on the trails and keeping parts of the desert natural.

- Response – Larry Harmer stated that the illegal activity is occurring on State Land. There are only three legal ways to access State Land; 1) cattle grazing lease, 2) valid hunting license for game in season, and 3) annual recreation permit. The Town must engage the State Land Department in increasing patrols. There are only 12 or so people in the State Land Department whose primary job responsibility is enforcement. Before Verrado was built, most of the shooting was occurring behind the Flood Retarding Structure #3 in the area of Sienna Hills. The Town developed a cooperative agreement between the Town and MCSO. With development of Verrado and increased patrols, activity began moving over to Watson Road.
- A-1 is a flat area. A-2 has many washes. Should limit development in A-2.
 - Response – Town agrees. Minimal improvements to A-2 with only parking and a few ramadas. Ziplines will be done by concessionaire.

Mr. Wisener asked those in attendance if there were things that they did like.

- Likes the observatory. Not a fan of the ziplines. Does not think the Town will be able to make money off of the ziplines. Thinks the amphitheater is a good idea. Was wondering if we would really need to build the road between Use Area A-1 and B-1 since there is already a trail that goes to Use Area B-2.
 - Response – The existing trail is on State Land and the Town has no control over it. The Town would need to purchase the land from the State, however the State believes the land is developable and would be required to get the highest and best use. The sale of State Land would go to auction.
- If the Town does not develop all of the improvements within 25 years, will BLM still patent the land to the Town?
 - Response – At a minimum, the Town would need to construct the improvements identified in Phase I. As listed in the Environmental Assessment, the Town must make the improvements as listed in the five to ten year phased development, which includes entry station, road into the park parking, camping for up to 15 spaces, portable or composting toilets, and picnic tables with shade ramadas. Between five to ten years, the Town will need to make improvements to the access road, begin new trails, adding additional camping, parking, and picnic areas as demand dictates, adding visitor services which could possibly include the construction of a visitor center, and develop special use areas, such as trails specifically geared towards mountain biking or equestrian uses.

Next Steps

Mr. Wisener stated that the Town will take comments received from tonight's meeting and refine into the final plan. Mr. Wisener said that there were additional comment cards on the table that could be completed and mailed in by April 9th. The powerpoint presentation will be placed on the Town's website at www.buckeyeaz.gov/parksdevelopment and Mr. Wisener would email the link to those in attendance. The audience could forward the link to their friends if they were unable to attend tonight's meeting. The Town will be presenting the plan to its Community Services Advisory Board, the Planning & Zoning Commission and Town Council at a workshop and subsequent Council meeting.

Mr. Wisener thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting Conclusion

The meeting ended at 7:00pm.