

# PALO VERDE REGIONAL PARK

## Alternatives Descriptions

Four alternatives have been developed using the data analysis, inventory, recreation needs assessment, working group input and comments received at Public Meeting #1 and #2. As part of the planning and public involvement process, the alternatives were presented to the working group for review and at Public Meeting #3 on June 7, 2016 as part of the planning and public involvement process. The alternatives range from Alternative A - No Action, to progressively increasing levels of change, active recreation opportunities, amenities, and development for Alternatives B, C, and D. Alternatives B, C, and D are compatible with the OS&T Department's mission "to provide outdoor leisure, recreation, environmental, cultural, and natural resource management services to Pinal County residents and visitors so they can have access to, understanding, and enjoyment of the natural assets of Pinal County." However, Alternative A would not be compatible in that as a no action plan, Pinal County would provide no outdoor leisure, recreation, environmental, cultural, and natural resource management services. The study area would remain under BLM management. Public review will include Public Meeting #3 and on-line access to the public meeting materials at the Palo Verde Regional Park webpage: <http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/OPENSACETRAILS/PARKTRAILPLANNING/Pages/PaloVerdePark.aspx>. Attendees to Public Meeting #3 are asked to complete the questionnaire. On-line visitors are asked to respond via the "Leave a Comment" button.

### **Alternative A - No Action**

Alternative A was established as a No Action Alternative as a baseline for comparison to the other alternatives. The No Action Alternative reflects authorized and legal conditions that are expected to continue to exist if the Palo Verde Regional Park is not adopted. It **does not** imply that existing unauthorized and illegal activities will continue, i.e., cutting of new trails for any use or travel off the recognized BLM trails network, destruction of the desert setting, shooting of TVs and dangerous items, trigger trash, dumping, and similar. Land management will continue to rest with the BLM, which can alter and/or end recreation activities as needed to protect the land and environment.

### **Opportunities and Actions Common to Alternatives B, C, and D**

If the creation of a regional park is the desire of the public and it is authorized by the Board of Supervisors, it is the intent of the OS&T Department to provide recreation experiences in the regional park that are consistent with the department's mission as well as to potentially offer additional opportunities that might not otherwise occur in the County's park system. Although the OS&T Department has no site development standards at this time, facility development will likely:

- Fit within the context of the ecological, physical, and cultural settings of the BLM lands
- Be generally minimalist in nature, or minimal in context to an amenity's development requirement
- Harmonize with, or complement, the character of the landscape setting
- Whenever possible, be in close proximity to existing roadways, infrastructure, and supporting facilities

In the study area, undesignated trailheads, staging areas, and shooting areas have set an obvious trend for where additional facilities might be appropriate and could be located and developed. The public has generally gravitated to areas that are noticeably easily accessible by roadway for shooting areas and as jumping off points (staging areas). These offer convenient access to inviting locations, natural and cultural attractions, or access to the backcountry. Therefore, proposed park facility development would occur in the following locales to a level commensurate with the alternative's proposed progressive level of change:

#### North of SR 238 (Historic Trails Corridor)

- Trails (Non-Motorized): Secondary Trails and Trailhead Facility
- Picnic Area: Family Area

#### Palo Verde Mountains and Haley Hills Areas (between SR 238 and Vekol Wash Buffer)

- Trails (Non-Motorized): Secondary Trails, Primary Trails, and Trailhead Facility
- Trails (Motorized): Single Track, Two Track, and Staging Area
- Equestrian: Staging Area
- Interpretive: Wildlife Viewing/Bird Watching and Photography
- Picnic Area: Family Area

- Camping: Backcountry, Tent Site, RV/Trailer Camping (Unimproved) and Group Site
- Shooting Sports: Hunting and Shooting Range (Target shooting will be consolidated to a designated location in the regional park)
- Miscellaneous: Geocaching and Rock Climbing

Center of Southern Study Area (between Vekol Wash Buffer and Fresno Road Buffer)

- Trails (Non-Motorized): Secondary Trails, Primary Trails, Competitive Track, and Trailhead Facility
- Equestrian: Staging Area
- Interpretive: Wildlife Viewing/Bird Watching and Photography
- Camping: Backcountry
- Camping (Alternate Location): Tent Site, RV/Trailer Camping (Unimproved) and Group Site
- Shooting Sports: Hunting, Backcountry
- Miscellaneous: Geocaching and Rock Climbing

Southern End of Study Area (between Fresno Road Buffer and I-8)

- Trails (Non-Motorized): Secondary Trails and Primary Trails
- Trails (Motorized): Single Track, Two Track, and Staging Area
- Interpretive: Wildlife Viewing/Bird Watching and Photography
- Camping: Backcountry
- Shooting Sports: Hunting, Backcountry
- Miscellaneous: Geocaching and Rock Climbing

### **Alternative B - Minimal Change**

This Alternative includes core programs to meet the mission of the OS&T Department. It provides for minimal levels of recreation opportunities that might be found in an open space regional park. For this alternative, opportunities in addition to what now occur in the No Action Alternative include additional non-motorized trails, equestrian facilities, tent and RV semi-developed camp sites (no water or electric), group camping, family picnic, and rifle range. No additional motorized trails will be developed and target shooting will be consolidated to a designated location.

### **Alternative C - Moderate Change**

Alternative C builds on Alternative B by adding facilities that would benefit users seeking more varied recreation opportunities or services of both passive and active recreation types. These include an equestrian riding stable and arena, interpretive center, small amphitheater, playground, developed camp sites (with water and electric), shotgun range, archery range, archery field course, and shooting sports concession.

### **Alternative D - Most Change**

Alternative D builds on Alternative C by retaining nearly all of Alternative B and Alternative C opportunities and adds interpretive and barrier-free trails, large group picnic facilities, paintball field, and off-leash dog area. Motorized trails will be limited to a dedicated trails area between the Fresno Road Buffer and I-8 on authorized trails. Motorized trail use north of this area will be eliminated.

### **Opportunities and Actions That Were Eliminated From Consideration**

Actions that were considered in the recreation evaluation activity, but that were not carried forward include the following along with the rationale for elimination:

Jeep Tour – inconsistent with the intent of the regional park and would not likely be economically feasible due to limited miles of trails and route options that a concessionaire could provide its customers.

Passenger Car Loop – not financially viable to construct.

Botanical Garden – inconsistent with the open space and natural setting of this proposed regional park.

Event Area - inconsistent with the intent of the CRMA, would not likely be economically feasible, and would require significant infrastructure investment. Passive group use areas will be considered.