

# Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department



Maricopa County  
Parks & Recreation Dept.  
[www.maricopa.gov/parks](http://www.maricopa.gov/parks)

## Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department Mission

**Mission.** The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department strives “to provide recreational and educational opportunities while protecting park resources.....for a safe and meaningful outdoor experience.”

# About Maricopa County's park system

Welcome to the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department.

From hiking on a barrier-free trail to horseback riding along a creek, Maricopa County Parks offer visitors the best of the Sonoran Desert. Ten parks in the system circle the Phoenix metropolitan area. At approximately 120,000 acres, Maricopa County is home to the largest regional park system in the United States.

- **History.** In the mid-20th century, residents of Maricopa County had the foresight to preserve large areas of the desert for recreational use, responding to the rapidly growing population of their area. In 1954, the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department focused its efforts on large, regional parks. Estrella Mountain Regional Park was the first regional park in the Maricopa County Park System.
- **The Future.** The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a Strategic System Master Plan to guide decision-making for the future development and management of its parks, trails, recreation and open space opportunities. The vision is to “Create a Legacy for Future Generations.”

# About Maricopa County's park system

## Staffing

- There are approximately 90 employees who work for the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department.
  - Parks
    - Park Supervisors / Interpretive Rangers / Park Maintenance Workers / Clerks / Hosts (these are the winter volunteers that assist the parks by performing various duties. In exchange, they receive free lodging).
  - Administration
    - Director, Administrator, PIO, Contract Administrator, Financial (Supervisor, Grant Coordinator, Accountants) Administrative Coordinators, HR/Payroll, Administrative Assistants.
  - Planning and Development
    - Manager / Maricopa Trails Manager /Planner / Project Manager / GIS Technician.
  - Construction Crews
    - Trails
    - Trades

# About Maricopa County's park system

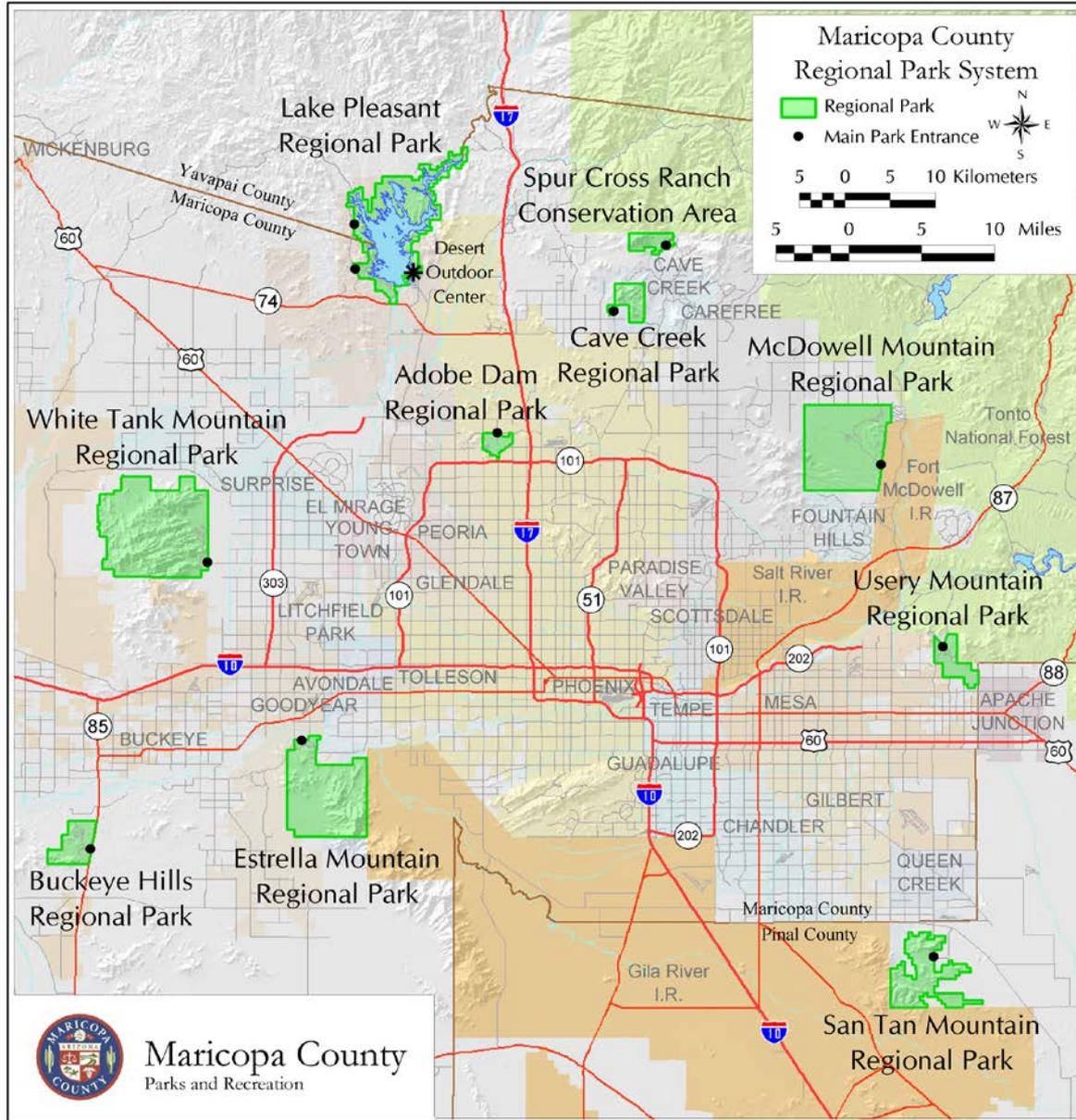
- **Educational Programs.** Experienced Interpretive Rangers take visitors on interesting guided hikes. Explore the ruins of Native American Hohokam, interpret the art chipped onto rocks known as petroglyphs, or learn about the native wildlife. Every day, Maricopa County Parks offer visitors a variety of guided hikes at no additional cost.
- **Concessions.** Through agreements with privately-owned companies, Maricopa County Parks offer all forms of recreational activities: horseback riding, watercraft rentals, and golfing are just a few of what the system has to offer.
- **Volunteers and Park Host Programs.** The Maricopa County Park System would not be a reality without the contributed hours by this highly-prized group of individuals. Volunteers and hosts from around the country donate their time and energy in all of the parks at the contact stations, visitor centers and campgrounds.

# About Maricopa County's park system

- **Camping.** With camping sites available at almost every park, the Maricopa County Park System is home to thousands of visitors every year. Visitors come with their recreation vehicles (RV) from all over the country to stay at a Maricopa County park. Tent campsites are also available, many with a picnic table and fire pit.
- **Picnicking.** There are hundreds of picnic tables and sites throughout the Maricopa County Park System. Many of these locations include a grill with nearby restrooms. Covered ramadas are also available and make the ideal setting for a wedding, party, or group gathering. For a nominal fee, visitors can reserve an area within the park for a wide variety of activities.
- **Trails.** Recreation possibilities are endless with miles of trails for hikes, bikes, and horseback rides. Competitive tracks are also available for those who want to test their ability. Designating these scenic multi-use trails for **non-motorized use only** allows the public to be safe and enjoy the primitive desert. Interpretive Rangers offer guided hikes at no additional cost to the “Day Use” fee.

# The Parks

# Maricopa County's park system



# The parks

- **Adobe Dam Regional Park.** Sitting at the base of the Hedgepeth Hills in north Phoenix, this 1,526-acre park is used by many clubs, including the Arizona Model Pilots Society, Maricopa Live Steamers (trains), and Phoenix Kart Racing Association. Adobe Dam is also home to the 500 Club Championship Golf Course, Waterworld Safari Aquatic Park, and the Victory Lane Sports Complex (ball fields).



- **Buckeye Hills Regional Park.** Consisting of 4,474 acres of natural desert, the park is located in the southwest Valley. Enjoy the rolling hills of pristine Sonoran Desert, with beautiful views of the Gila River riparian area. Currently, a state-of-the-art gun range is under construction.



# The parks

- Cave Creek Regional Park. Located north of Phoenix, this 2,922-acre park sits in the upper Sonoran Desert. Ranging in elevation from 2,000 feet to 3,060, this desert oasis provides any hiker and equestrian majestic views.

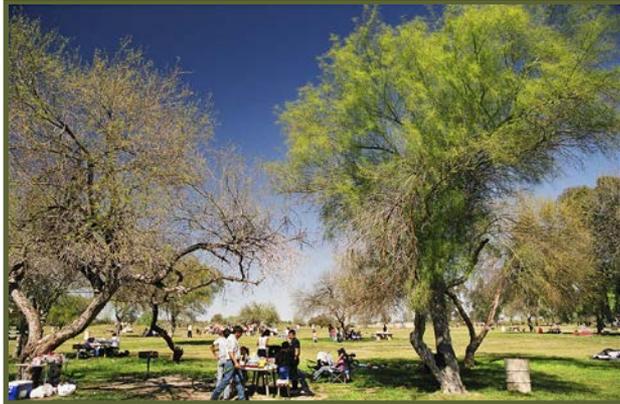


- Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant. In the hills of the park, The Desert Outdoor Center at Lake Pleasant offers spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. Schools and non-profit groups can take advantage of the facility's 26,000 sq. ft. "educator's dream" available for students. Over 30 programs are offered, ranging from dinosaur history to alternative energy.



# The parks

- Estrella Mountain Regional Park. These 19,840 acres of desert and mountains



became the first regional park in the Maricopa County Park System in 1954. Located near the meeting of the Gila and Agua Fria Rivers in the southwest Valley, the park includes a large riparian area. The landscape seen by the first settlers and explorers. The Sierra Estrella range, or “Star” Mountains, was once within the Mexican border, and remained so until the Gadsden Purchase in 1853.

- Lake Pleasant Regional Park. One of the most scenic water recreation areas



in the “Valley of the Sun”. At 23,662 acres, 10,000 of which are water, this northwest Valley park is a recreationist’s dream. At the Lake Pleasant Visitor Center, guests learn about the history of the area and desert wildlife.

# The parks

- McDowell Mountain Regional Park. Nestled in the lower Verde River basin,



the 21,099-acre park is a desert jewel in the northeast Valley. Elevations in the park rise to 3,000 feet along the western boundary at the base of the McDowell Mountains. Visitors enjoy a full program schedule, over 50 miles of multi-use trails, and spectacular views of the surrounding mountain ranges.

- San Tan Mountain Regional Park. Consisting of over 10,000 acres, the



southeast Valley park is a fine example of the lower Sonoran Desert. The park ranges in elevation from about 1,400 feet to over 2,500 feet. Goldmine Mountain is located in the northern area, with a spectacular San Tan Mountain escarpment in the southern portion of the park.

# The parks

- **Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.** The newest addition to the Maricopa County Park System, the conservation area encompasses 2,154 acres of diverse, rugged upper Sonoran Desert.



- **Usery Mountain Regional Park.** Located on the Valley's east side, this park takes in 3,648 acres set at the western end of the Goldfield Mountains, adjacent to the Tonto National Forest. Along the most popular feature of the park, the Wind Cave Trail, water seeps from the roof of the alcove to support hanging gardens of Rock Daisy.



# The parks

- **White Tank Mountain Regional Park.** Nearly 30,000 acres makes this the largest regional park in Maricopa County. Most of the park is made up of the rugged and beautiful White Tank Mountains on the Valley's west side. The range, deeply serrated with ridges and canyons, rises sharply from its base to peak at over 4,000 feet.



# Partnerships

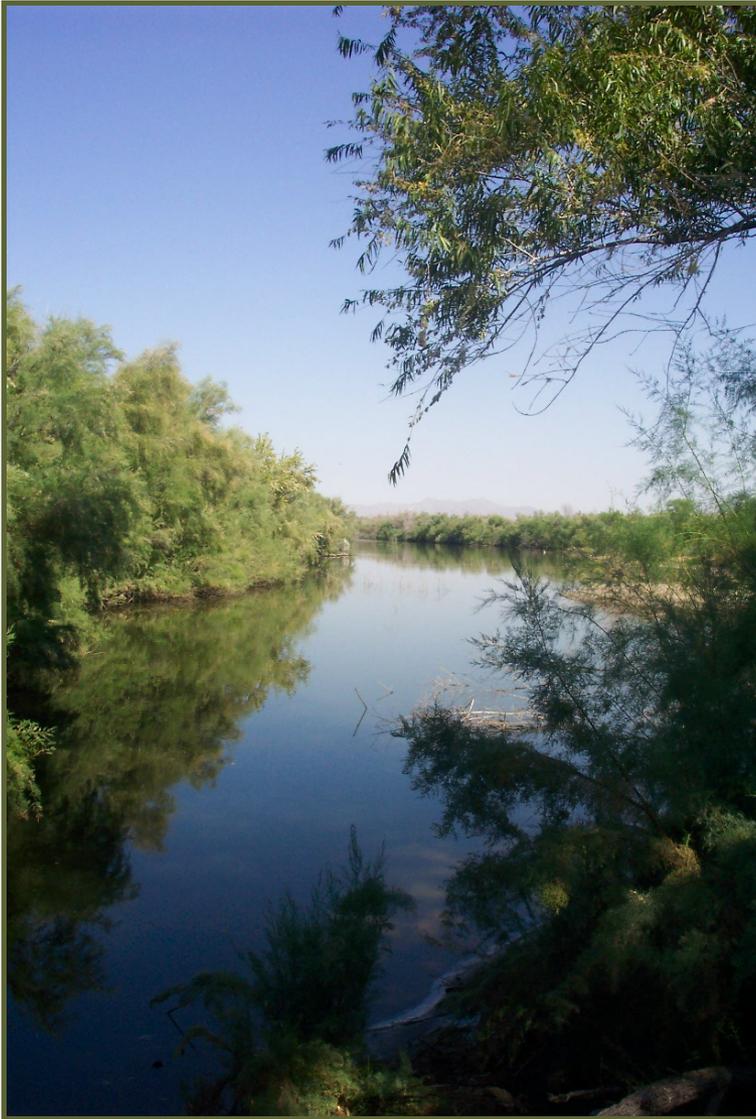
# Spur Cross Ranch Partnership

- 2154 Acres purchased by the State of Arizona, Maricopa County and the Town of Cave Creek
- Two year master planning process “Conserve and protect natural and cultural resources while providing for non-motorized day use activities including recreation, interpretive and educational opportunities.”
- Managed by Maricopa County Parks through an IGA of the parties
- Dedicated .5% town sales tax to support future operations and development





# El Rio Water Course Master Plan Partnership



- A plan is underway to restore the Gila River's natural flood control functions, rejuvenate the river's wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities along the river for residents of the Phoenix metropolitan area.
- The El Rio Watercourse Master Plan is a comprehensive flood control and multi-use recreation plan for a 17.5-mile stretch of the Gila River in the communities of Avondale, Buckeye and Goodyear and Maricopa County Park's and Flood Control.
- A multi-jurisdictional team has been assembled to facilitate implementation of the plan.