

May 11, 2009
Oracle State Park
by Tina Acosta

Topic: Oracle State Park remains open, but hours and staff decrease

This spring has been very eventful for Oracle State Park with the announcement that the park was going to be closed. However, thanks to YOUR efforts, Oracle State Park will remain open! We, the staff at Oracle State Park (OSP), are very grateful to all who attended meetings, wrote letters and emails supporting the park, volunteered your time manning the gatehouse and sent us good thoughts. THANK YOU!

The bright side of all this negative press is the increase in media exposure. This exposure, combined with volunteers manning our gatehouse on the weekends and at special events and that our Friends group has started marketing on our behalf, has resulted in an increase in visitation of over 50% for February, March and April! And our revenue is up considerably as well.

Now that we are at the tail end of our busy season, the park will be reduced in days, hours and staff. Starting the 19th and 20th of May, OSP will close Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and open Thursdays through Mondays, 7am – 3pm. However, the parking lot leading to the Arizona Trail as well as to the rest of the park trails (off American Avenue) will remain open sunrise to sunset seven days a week. As with the main entrance, there is a self-pay station for the \$6 per vehicle (up to four adults) day-use fee. This fee will be reduced to \$5 per vehicle the Friday before Memorial Day through the end of Labor Day. There is also a register for Annual Pass holders to sign in. Make sure your attendance is counted as the higher the attendance (and revenue), the better the chance of us remaining open through the next fiscal year!

Rangers Jennifer Rinio and Rick Gagnon will remain at OSP. Terri Leverton has already returned to McFarland in Florence to oversee the restoration work. Tina Acosta will be working at Kartchner Caverns in Benson on a temporary assignment as Volunteer Coordinator. And, Jack McCabe, from Catalina State Park, will be the Acting Park Manager, supervising both Oracle and Catalina State Parks.

Despite the decrease in hours and staffing, OSP will continue to offer educational and inspirational programs: May 16th, learn how to build a worm bin, for garbage reduction and fertilizer production, May 29th, Astronomy night with Starizona, June 6th & 7th, enjoy making your own journal, June 7th, another full-moon concert and the last of the series and June 12th, explore the park at dusk and into the star-filled evening. For more details, please see the Que Pasa section of The Miner, visit our website at www.azstateparks.com or call the park at 896-2425.

How can you continue to help? Please stop by the office to discuss the various volunteer opportunities, ranging from gatehouse duty and office help to building and vehicle maintenance and repair. There is no set time commitment, all help is greatly appreciated.

Once again, thank you very much for your support and hard work. It has paid off by keeping the park open and will continue to enrich our community by the protection of the 4,000 acre wildlife refuge, the education programs offered, as well as the fun-filled evenings of music and stars on the upper patio of the Kannally Ranch House.