



MEMORANDUM

Date: November 6, 2015

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Colossal Cave Mountain Park Activities Update**

On August 17, 2015, the Board of Supervisors approved a management, operation and development agreement with Ortega National Parks, doing business as Colossal Cave Mountain Park, LLC (CCMP, LLC), for Colossal Cave Mountain Park (CCMP; Park). The purpose of this memorandum is to update the Board on the activities that are occurring to improve this County asset and increase visitors to CCMP.

Ortega opened CCMP on September 4, 2015 and retained 90 percent of the Park's previous employees. A media event to showcase the Park's upgrades, improvements and new services will be held on November 10, 2015, with an official "Grand Re-opening" being planned for the near future.

The entire grounds have been cleaned, and restrooms updated as much as possible. New, eco-friendly benches, tables and chairs have been added for cave visitors waiting for the next tour. Younger visitors are enjoying a new sluice attraction constructed at the front cave entrance area.

Attendance

Attendance has been growing steadily with a good local turnout. September attendance rose from 1,766 in 2014 to 2,246 – a 79 percent increase. Attendance revenue is up \$25,000 to date over last year, in spite of the elimination of the \$5 toll booth fee.

There also appear to be more people just visiting the park, as the trails are active with walkers and mountain bikers, as well as equestrian users.

Gift Shop

The Gift Shop was cleared and cleaned, and new displays and shelving were added installed, along with new lighting and merchandise. The new gift shop opened in phases and was fully operational in October. September 2015 sales

increased nearly \$10,000 as compared to September 2014, and October sales are up by nearly \$13,000 over the previous year. These figures are particularly encouraging since September and October are traditionally slow months for tourist attractions.

Visitors' Cafe

The historic Rincon John's building at the caves front entrance area, previously utilized as a kitchen for Park employees and most recently only for storage, was returned to a fully-functional, permitted kitchen at the end of October. Menu items will include sandwiches, hamburgers, hotdogs, pizza and salads. This is the first time in decades that food will be available to Park visitors. The building's roof was repaired and restored to the original design and brought up to code with assistance from County Cultural Resources, Development Services and Health Department staff. The cost of these improvements was completely borne by CCMP, LLC.

Marketing and Public Relations

In the next few weeks, in advance of the planned Grand Re-opening, CCMP, LLC will begin to spend approximately \$130,000 on an advertising and media campaign that will include television and radio ads, billboards, and marketing brochures. In addition, they have formally committed to sponsoring the "Arizona Trails" program on KXCI Community Radio and are exploring other, community-related sponsorship opportunities.

Many of the images that will be used during the upcoming marketing campaign may be viewed at <http://www.mecklerphotography.com/colossal-cave-finals>. In addition, the television commercial scheduled to air on Cox Cable is available for viewing at https://www.dropbox.com/s/jcf3e6vn5y3et3d/CC_007M.mp4?dl=0.

Progress Monitoring and Oversight

Our Economic Development and Tourism (EDT) and Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation (NRPR) Departments receive formal monthly updates from CCMP, LLC management via monthly meetings, and three such meetings have occurred to date. The CCMP Technical Committee, consisting of NRPR, EDT, Culture Resources and the Regional Flood Control District, has met once and will continue to meet as needed. This group is also invited to the monthly management meetings.

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Recently, NRPR and EDT reviewed a 30- to 90-day preliminary project plan from CCMP management. Criteria are being developed for any major improvements and additions at the Park.

As can be seen, CCMP, LLC has made very positive progress at the Park over a relatively short period of time. The Park is being improved and enhanced, and visitors and revenue are increased significantly over the same time period last year. Representative photographs of Park improvements are attached to this memorandum for your review.

CHH/mjk

Attachment

c: John Bernal, Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Nanette Slusser, Assistant County Administrator for Public Works Policy
Tom Moulton, Director, Economic Development and Tourism
Chris Cawein, Director, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Linda Mayro, Director, Sustainability and Conservation

Representative Colossal Cave Improvements – October 2015

