



PHOENIX MOUNTAINS PRESERVATION COUNCIL LOOKOUT

Winter 2025 Newsletter



OVERLOOKING PAPAGO PARK

The Papago Park area may not be a preserve, but it is a treasure for the residents of Phoenix and surrounding areas for holiday celebrations, tourism, and as an escape to nature. The future of what this area looks like is in question as the ponds and dams have aged and need repairs that come with a multi-million dollar price tag.

Read the article on page three to learn about when Papago Park had a status that could have preserved the area as a representation of pristine Sonoran Desert. Can we transform this area back to something closer to what it used to be while still making it an attractive tourist attraction for the City of Phoenix?

YOUR CHANCE TO VOICE WHAT YOU WANT IN CITY PARKS

Parks and preserves have very different statuses in the City of Phoenix. The PMPC is dedicated to protecting the preserves, but as citizens we have the opportunity to let city leaders know what we want in the Master Plan for city parks that will be completed in 2025.

A master plan is a policy document that guides the direction of recreation facilities, programs, and services for at least a 10-year period. The goals of this master plan are to evaluate the existing parks, programming, and facilities, assess demographics and trends to delivery programs and services people want (pickleball, anyone??), and prioritize funding.

Two major areas of focus of this master plan will be water conservation strategies and crime prevention. The city will use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to evaluate park safety. CPTED is an internationally recognized multi-disciplinary approach to crime prevention that uses design and

management of built and natural environments to minimize crime and increase the sense of safety in a specific place. The core principles of CPTED are

1. **Natural Surveillance:** Design features that increase visibility within areas so people in the space can see and be seen.
2. **Natural Access Control:** Visual demarcation of public and private space to discourage trespass.
3. **Territorial Reinforcement:** Design elements that show the public the property is cared for and not conducive to criminal activity.
4. **Maintenance and Management:**

Regular caretaking of the property that sends the message to the community that disorder is not tolerated.

CPTED works best when planners rely on residents as leaders in the process. That's why the PMPC and the City of Phoenix encourage you to

visit parksmasterplanphx.com and complete the survey!



POPULAR AMENITIES

- 200+ miles of trails and 40 trailheads
- 186 parks
- 53 parks featuring a FitPHX WalkPHX path
- 38 outdoor pickleball courts
- 33 community and recreation centers
- 29 pools
- 12 dog parks
- 8 golf courses
- 8 lakes stocked for fishing
- 6 skate plazas 3 skate parks

References

City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department. (2024). *The Power of Parks Master Plan. Creating Space for All.* <https://parksmasterplanphx.com/>.
Local Initiatives Support Corporation. (2024). *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).* https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/b2/27/b2278f1b-8f6f-42da-887d-15b183f14f7b/lisc_cpted_crime_prevention_screen.pdf.



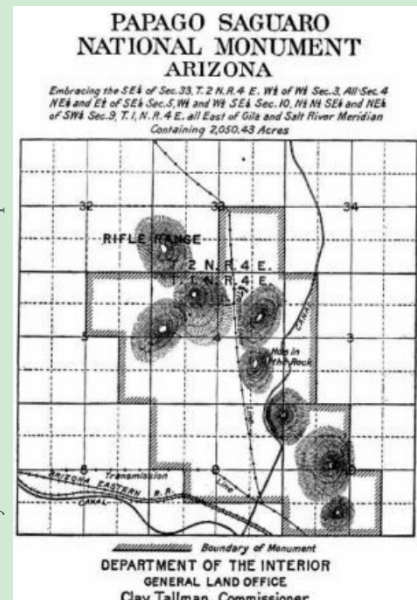
PAPAGO SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Papago Park ponds and dams do hold a special place in the history of Papago Park and the City of Phoenix, but it may not be as picturesque as one may think.

Soon after becoming a state, Arizona got its fourth National Monument. 2,050.43 acres of uninhabited desert outside of Phoenix became Papago Saguaro National Monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906. We know this area as Papago Park. Congressmen Carl Hayden had fought to get federal protection for the land as a National Park. This failed to win enough support, so Hayden went to the president.

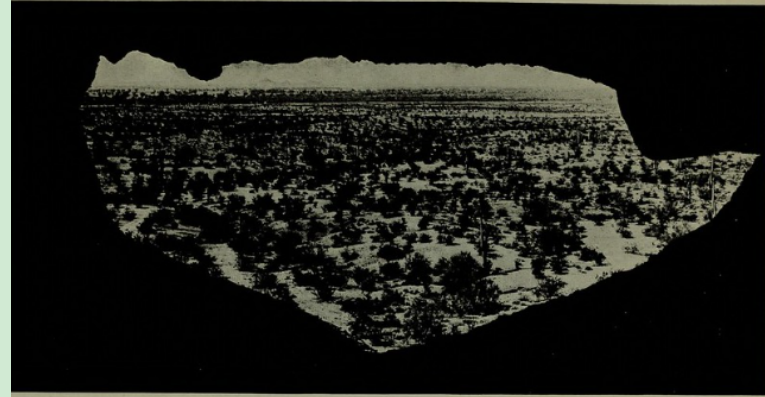
Under the Antiquities Act, a president has the power to protect land that contains objects of

cultural, historic or scientific interest. Hayden made the argument that the land was both historic and scientific because of the cacti and sandstone buttes. President Woodrow Wilson agreed and created Papago Saguaro National Monument on January 31, 1914.



Map of Papago Saguaro National Monument

The area was described by H.S. Swarth in *Birds of the Papago Saguaro National Monument and the Neighboring Region Arizona* (1920). For a study of desert birds no more accessible place could be found than the Papago Saguaro National Monument, on the highway between Phoenix and Tempe. This is a tract of approximately 2,000 acres of desert land, about 9 miles east of Phoenix and 3 miles from Tempe. It is a rolling mesa, of gravelly or rocky



GENERAL VIEW OVER THE PAPAGO SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT.

The outlook is from the "Hole-in-the-Rock," one of several caves near the summit of some hills in the center of the monument. This region is a favorite picnic

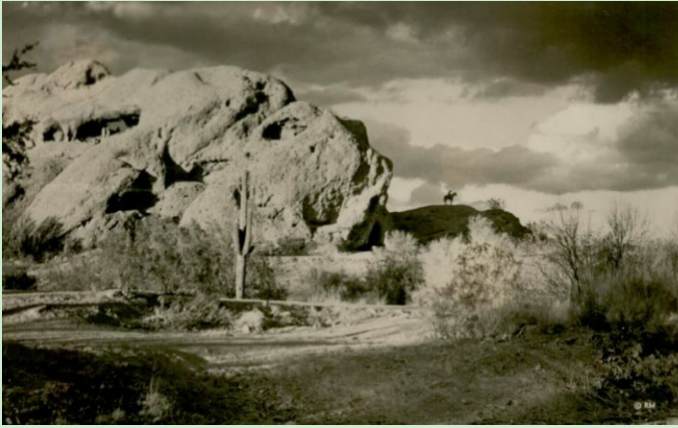
1920s photo from Papago Saguaro National Monument
Courtesy of H.S. Swarth



The same view 100 years later.
Courtesy of Grant Thomas

soil, traversed by a ridge of hills, rising 200 or 300 feet above the level of the surrounding desert. The plant growth is typical sparse desert vegetation, such as occurs over vast stretches of southern Arizona. Giant cactus is evenly, though not thickly, distributed over the whole area. Everywhere there are clumps of "cholla" cactus, locally known as "jumping cactus," a peculiarly diabolical sort whose thorns penetrate at the gentlest touch. Here and there are leafless palo verdes, or clumps of atriplex, and in the sandy washes thickets of cat-claw or scrubby mesquite. The most generally prevalent plant is the creosote bush (*Corillea*), small, rounded bushes of dark green hue, scattered quite uniformly over even the most unprepossessing sections. Many gravelly ridges are grown up with this plant to the exclusion of practically everything else. Along the canal which crosses the Monument, seepage of water has produced limited growths of arrow weed and tules."

The National Park Service (NPS) was not established until 1916, leaving the monument managed by the General Land Office who did little more than inspect the park annually. Once established, the NPS did finally hire a



Picture from a vintage postcard of Hole-in-the-Rock

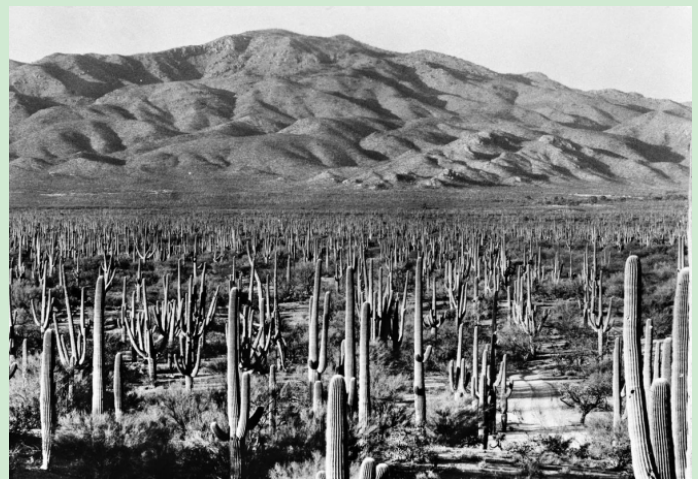
caretaker with a budget of \$70 for a year of improvements. The land needed help as dirt roads had been created by people to get their cars to Hole-in-the-Rock and cattle roamed throughout. Locals were using and abusing the monument, leaving their trash and vandalizing the rocks and cacti. Graffiti and advertisements were being painted on the rocks. The saguaros and other cacti were being stolen for landscaping or to be sold privately. The social use of the monument for picnicking, camping, and other activities had become more important to the residents of Phoenix than cultural, historic, or scientific values.

The monument already had a shooting range for the National Guard (the area had been set aside as early as 1909, before the designation as a National Monument). Land was removed from the 2,000 acres for a railroad right-of-way and road rights-of-way for Washington Street and McDowell Road. Some land with shale deposits was removed for cement manufacturing. The city limits of Phoenix and Tempe were coming ever so closer to the border of the national monument, leaving it even less protected. In 1926, there was a request to extend Washington Boulevard to the Apache Trail. This would make access to the Monument easier. That same year, Arizona Game and Fish Commission began lobbying for a bass hatchery in the monument for sports fishing. The canal easement included power lines that went against the monument's purpose of protecting natural resources.

Carl Hayden enters the picture again. Now a senator, he requested the abolishment of the National Monument. He was not the only one

who believed the land was no longer being used for scientific purposes. Secretary of Interior Franklin K. Lane's office wrote in a memo, "in view of these persistent requests for use of land within the monument for State and city purposes, I would be glad to approve legislation whereby the entire monument be abolished as such and turned over to the State or the City of Phoenix, as may seem best, for either a State or a city Park" (Marcus Burtner, 2011; *Crowning the Queen of the Sonoran Desert: Tucson and Saguaro National Park. An Administrative History*. MS on file at Saguaro National Park. p.32). On April 7, 1930, Papago Saguaro National Monument became the first monument abolished. Legislation removing the status did require the land to be used for park and recreational uses. The area was divided between the City of Tempe, the Arizona National Guard, SRP, and the State of Arizona.

The history of the park does not end here. The City of Phoenix purchased their portion of the park in 1959. There are many other interesting stories even since then, but that's for another newsletter. Some good did come out of losing this National Monument. Phoenix now has the Desert Botanical Gardens, the Phoenix zoo, baseball and softball fields, hiking and biking trails, small lakes, and a golf course. And the NPS started looking for a new portion of the Sonoran Desert to protect. In 1933, Tanque Verde Cactus Forest in Tucson became Saguaro National Monument.



Saguaro National Monument circa 1935

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- Olsson Associates. (2010). *Papago Park Regional Master Plan*. https://www.phoenix.gov/parkssite/Documents/PKS_NRD/PKS_NRD_Papago_Park_Master_Plan.pdf
- Storying Arizona. (2024). *The Last Straw*. <https://vk7.a21.myftpupload.com/project/the-last-straw/>
- Swarth, H.S. (1920). *Birds of the Papago Saguaro National Monument and the Neighboring Region Arizona*. Department of the Interior. <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/60046#page/1/mode/1up>.



SOUTH MOUNTAIN CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

The South Mountain Centennial Celebration and Grand Opening of the newly renovated and newly renamed South Mountain Visitor's Center was Friday, November 9th, 2024.

Mayor Kate Gallego, Phoenix City Councilmembers Kevin Robinson and Kesha Hodge Washington, Parks and Recreation Director Cynthia Aguilar, National Resources Division Deputy Director Jarod Rogers, and Akimel O'dham spiritual leader Bobby Stone all spoke to the group of community members, Park Stewards, and PMPC members.



The South Mountain Visitor's Center now has an interactive map of official South Mountain hiking trails, educational materials on the flora, fauna, and history of South Mountain Park/Preserves.



The visitor's center is open Thursday through Sunday from 9am to 3pm. A stop before a hike is highly recommended!



Left: New floor of the visitor's center.

Above: Vintage cars from a century ago available for photo ops at the celebration.

Right: Planting milkweed and globe mallow behind the visitor's center.



SOUTH MOUNTAIN SILENT SUNDAYS

BY ANDY LENARTZ

the main Central Avenue park entrance, is closed to vehicular traffic from near the park entrance. The road is accessible only to non-motorized activities including biking, hiking, or running.

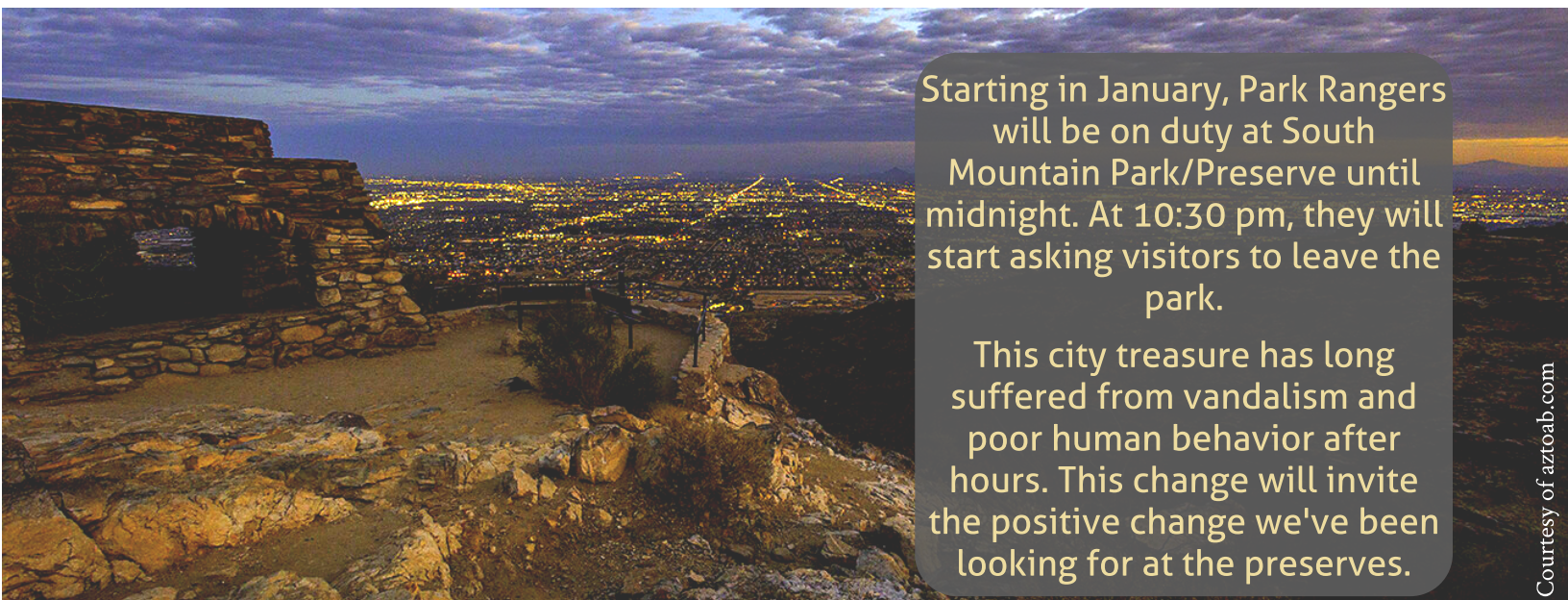
To clarify one potential point of confusion, online maps refer to this road as Central Avenue, Stephen Mather Drive, and Telegraph Pass Road at various points. Regardless of the naming confusion, if it is a road accessible from Central Avenue, it is closed at a point past the entrance on Silent Sundays.

There are two different schedules for Silent Sundays. Every Sunday from 5:00am until 10:00am the road is closed just past the park entrance; vehicles cannot proceed past this point. The 4th Sunday of each month expands this, with the closure in effect from 5:00am to 7:00pm and vehicles unable to proceed past the Activity Complex parking area.

There are multiple ways to access the park roads. The most popular is driving to the Central Avenue entrance and utilizing the parking lot adjacent to the Visitor Center past the park entrance and riding or walking the roads from here. Other ways to reach the roads are using trails from any central to western park access points, such as Telegraph Pass, Corona de Loma, or Tondum Wihom (formerly known as Geronimo).

Although the roads are closed to the vast majority of vehicle traffic, do keep in mind that those who work in the park may still be driving the roads, including Park Rangers, emergency personnel, and maintenance workers. Other than this, enjoy the park free of vehicles!

Silent Sundays at South Mountain Park and Preserve are a special opportunity to utilize park roads without encountering traffic. On these days, Summit Road, the main park road accessible from



Starting in January, Park Rangers will be on duty at South Mountain Park/Preserve until midnight. At 10:30 pm, they will start asking visitors to leave the park.

This city treasure has long suffered from vandalism and poor human behavior after hours. This change will invite the positive change we've been looking for at the preserves.

Courtesy of aztoab.com



PRESERVE BORDERS

PMPC'S PROTECTION OF PRESERVE LAND

The PMPC board recently heard from a landowner about APN 165-99-001H. Over two years ago, this small parcel of land near the west side of the 51 was purchased. Since it is on the border of a preserve, it required a survey to ensure the future homeowner is not using the people's protected preserve land. We have the PMPC to thank for this important step in the planning process! Why does the City of Phoenix have this rule?



Courtesy of Michael Chow/The Republic

In October of 1988, a homeowner learned 10 feet of his land protruded into the Phoenix Mountains Preserve. That homeowner was Dr. Bill Parks, a Phoenix City Councilmember. His home was unintentionally on 10 feet of preserve land. The Phoenix City Charter already included that voters must agree to the lease, sale, or trade of preserve land (thank you for this too, PMPC members), but at the time the city depended on developers to adhere to the boundaries. When questions started being

asked, no one was clear as to where the boundaries were, including city officials. In a quote from Bill Parks in a letter to Ken Gometz dated February 22, 1989, "the City of Phoenix, up to now, has not carefully defined the boundary of the Mountain Preserves nor taken whatever steps necessary to protect the Preserves against encroachment by adjacent landowners." In some places, the boundary was marked by city signs that had been placed by those with good intentions but wasn't completely accurate. Elsewhere, the boundary was marked by developers of adjacent land.

Attention was brought to the undefined preserve boundary because of what Dr. Parks discovered about his property. There was talk about conducting a survey to establish the legal boundary of the Phoenix Mountains Preserve. The PMPC became involved in the discussions and established a Boundaries Committee. Working with Dr. Parks, the members of the Boundaries Committee were able to include South Mountain Park/Preserve in the survey. The City Council voted to conduct the survey to officially establish the boundaries at all City of Phoenix preserves.



Courtesy of birderfrommaricopa.com

Dr. Parks returned the 10 feet of land to the citizens of Phoenix. There were concerns with what other homeowners extended onto preserve land would do and what options were available. The PMPC proposed solutions to the potential encroachments:

1. All lands deemed important to the Mountain Preserves be returned to the Preserves in a natural condition.
2. Voluntary return, in a natural condition, any land now encroaching upon Mountain Preserve land.
3. Determine monetary value of land, now privately occupied and not voluntarily returned, and not essential to the Preserves, for eventual sale to the private parties now encroaching upon Mountain Preserve land.
4. All building permits, for land bordering the Preserves, require a survey if the permit is issued before the survey of the Preserve is completed in the area of the permit.

5. All funds from the sale of Preserve land be placed in a fund to benefit the Preserves.
6. A ballot measure may be necessary to resolve the transfer of Mountain Preserve land. The timetable for a city wide ballot, after the survey and resolution of encroachment cases, will most likely be the city election in 1991. This is the date by which the city should be able to have the survey and negotiations completed and ready for a votes.
7. If PMPC concurs with the ballot measure, PMPC would work for the passage of the ballot measure.

In a letter from PMPC President in 1991 to the Phoenix Parks & Recreation Board, there were four intrusions into the Mountain Preserves on the upcoming election ballot, yet there was still no completed survey of the boundaries. The PMPC had been working on getting this survey completed for over two years by this point. In June of 1991, Ken Gometz spoke before the Phoenix Parks & Recreation Board to express concern about not having a completed survey, the reasoning for moving forward with a ballot measure for the four intrusions, and for more rules for those who may knowingly or unknowingly encroach on preserve land.

When the survey was finally completed, the official boundary was defined by a fence of three wires strung between poles. This was chosen to define the boundary without being a visual obstacle. There were not hundreds of encroachments into the preserves, but some were found and resolved. Unfortunately, this wasn't the end of the boundary questions, what preserve land could be used for, what land was considered preserves, and if the definition of preserve land was constitutional. The fights continued well into the 90's and have popped up occasionally since.

This is why the continued work of the PMPC is still critical for the protection of the preserves. Money talks, but the will of the people can be more powerful.

To go back to APN 165-99-001H, it ends up part of the parcel purchased is on preserve land. The owner is still looking for possible solutions, but they cannot build on this preserve land. We will keep you updated on this as we hear more.



References

David, L. (June 12, 1989). Phoenix to survey nature preserve's 72-mile boundary. *The Arizona Republic*.

DOBBINS LOOKOUT REVIEW

BY ANDY LENARTZ

The most popular lookout at South Mountain Park and Preserve, Dobbins Lookout was recently remodeled. This lookout is accessible using the Summit Road or the popular Holbert Trail, a challenging climb departing from the Central Avenue main park entrance. At this lookout there are newly installed shaded ramadas and sitting areas, improved parking, and added informational signage. There are pit toilets available at this location, but no drinking water.

Thank you to Andy Lenartz, a PMPC member, for his contributions this month. Andy is a professor at GateWay Community College & author of *South Mountain Park and Preserve: A guide to the trails, plants, and animals in Phoenix's most popular city park.*

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Annual Membership Drive

Your membership helps us to protect the Phoenix and Sonoran Preserves

Thank you for your 2025 PMPC Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Please tell us how you heard about PMPC:

MEMBERSHIPS: Family/Individual \$35. Organization \$45.

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Tortoise Protector	\$25
Slope Protector	\$50-\$100
Cliff Protector	\$100-\$500
Peak Protector	\$500+

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