



Connecting People to Parks

**Session 5: Activating and Programming
Underutilized Parks**

June 12, 2025

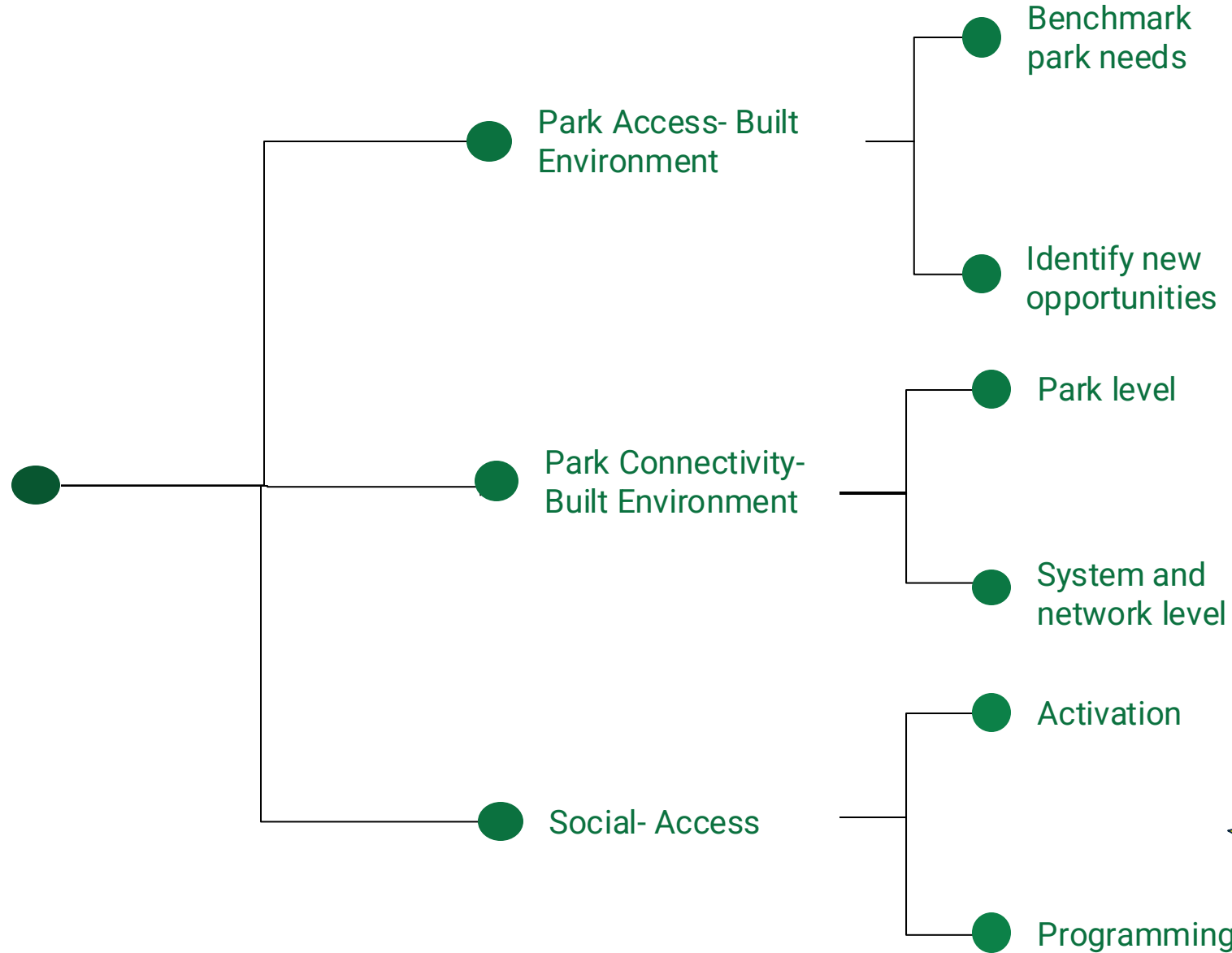


Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Plenary Presentations (40 minutes)
 - Aimee Manis, *Mesa PRCF Deputy Director – Recreation*
 - Oscar Venegas, *Mesa PRCF Recreation Supervisor*
 - Q&A
1. Next Steps & Closing
2. Optional- Discussion Groups



Connecting People to Parks





Activating and Programming Underutilized Parks

City of Mesa

Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities



Positive Park Usage Impacts Through Coordinated Engagement



Aimee Manis

PRCF Deputy Director -
Recreation

Oscar Venegas

Recreation Supervisor

City of Mesa PRCF Mobile Recreation



Our Mission is to provide exceptional experiences in Mesa parks to connect with and engage the community



Park Selection

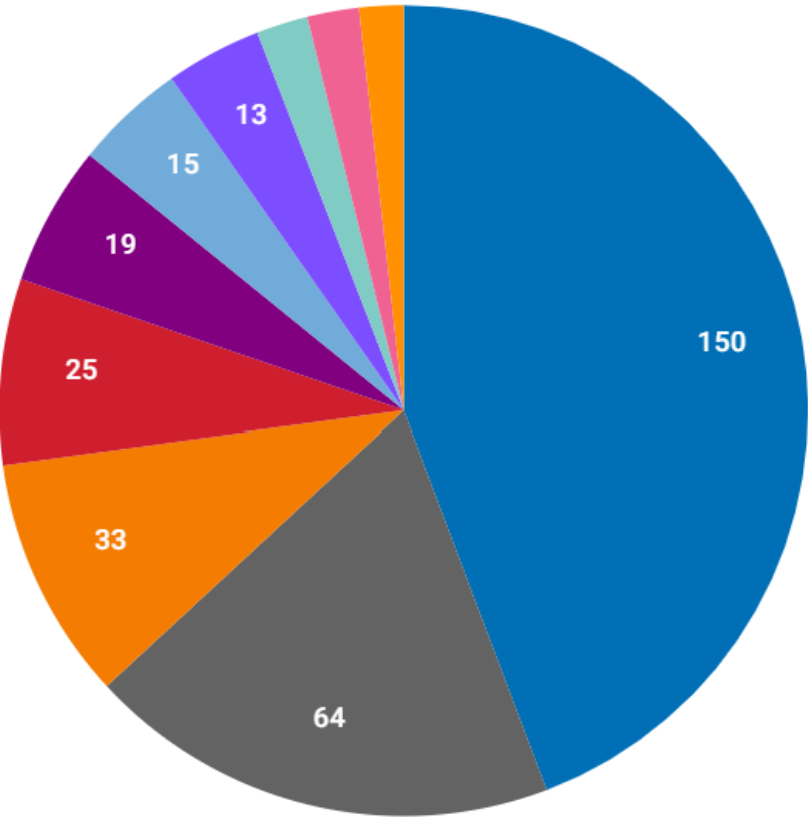
- Mesa Park System
 - 209 Parks with 2,060 acres of park land
 - Population 511,000
 - Desert Southwest
- Criteria for Park Selection
 - Historical issues
 - Volume of enforcement incidents
 - Community input -Yelp, Google reviews, community surveys
 - CIP investment



Park Selection

Homeless Citations by Park

Current Calendar Year. Citations issued by Park Rangers

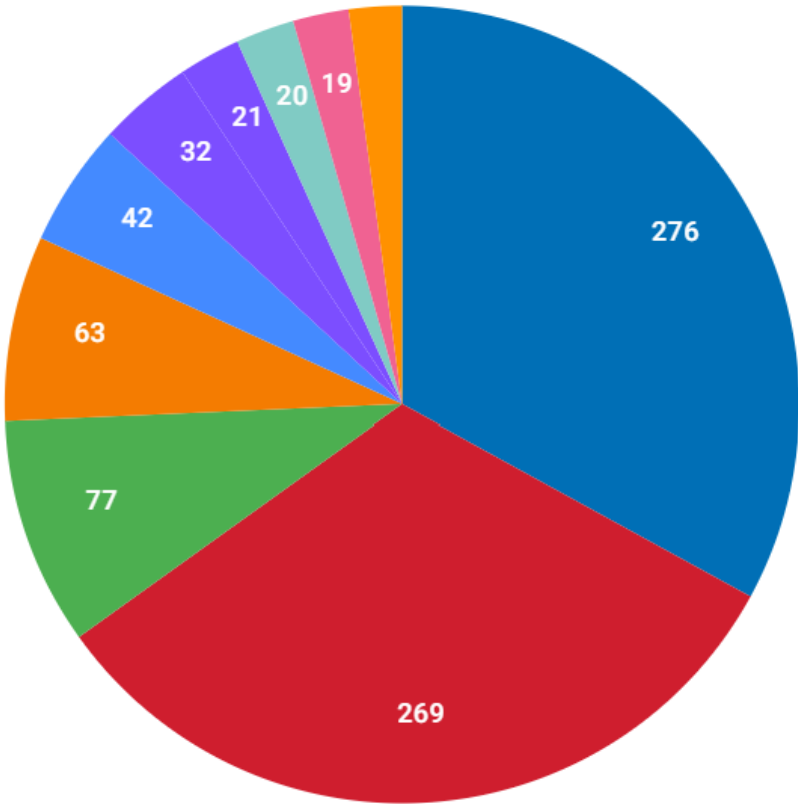


2022

- Pioneer
- Kleinman
- Riverview
- Guerrero Rotary
- Evergreen
- Dobson Ranch
- Beverly
- Sagebrush
- Jefferson
- Fitch

Opioid/Fentanyl Contacts by Park

Current Calendar Year. Contacts involving opioid and fentanyl by top 10 locati...



2022

- Pioneer
- Kleinman
- Evergreen
- Riverview
- Guerrero Rotary
- Beverly
- Escobedo
- Lazona
- Reed
- Jefferson

Approach to activating misused parks



- ▶ City leadership support
- ▶ Managed recreational activities
- ▶ Increased enforcement presence
- ▶ Consistency

Fun & Fitness Programming

- Accessible
- Community Based
- Social Cohesion
- Empowerment



M.O.R.E Programing

- Accessible
- Adventure Based Learning
- Feature Our Facility
- Environmental Awareness



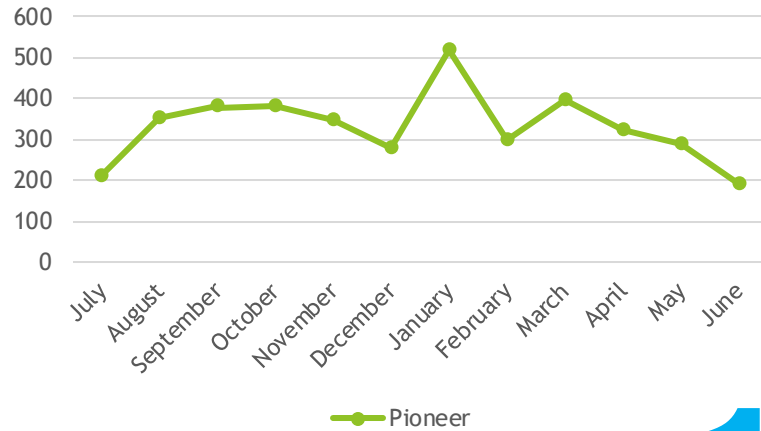
Special Events/Partnerships



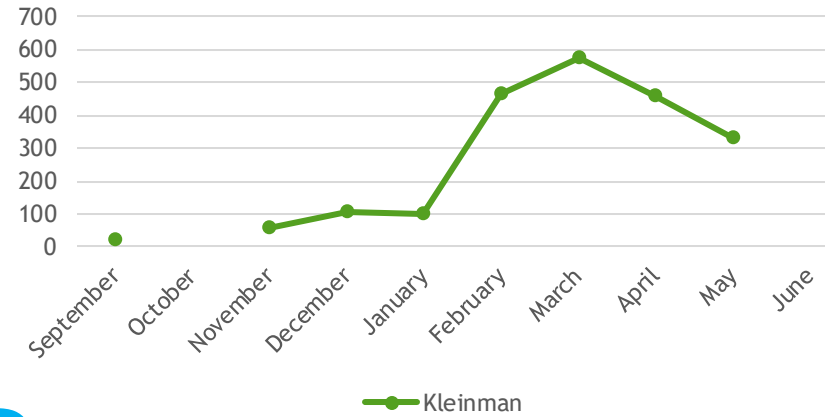


Impact

Pioneer Park FY 24/25

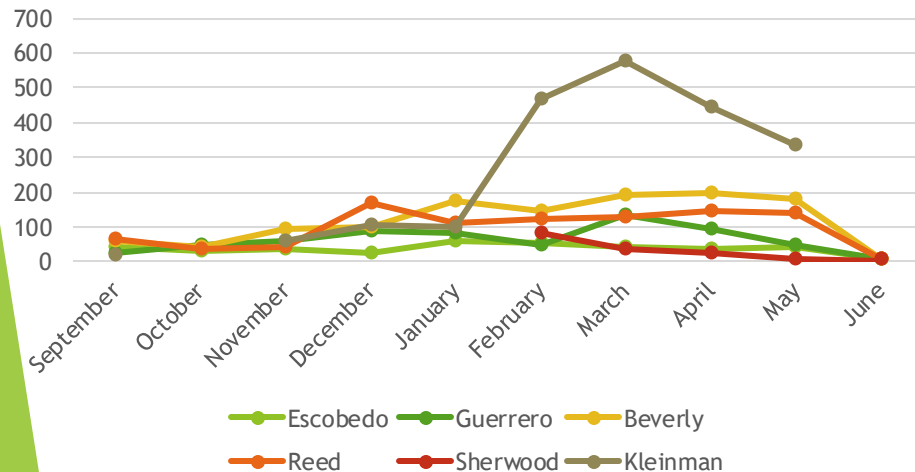


Kleinman Park FY 24/25

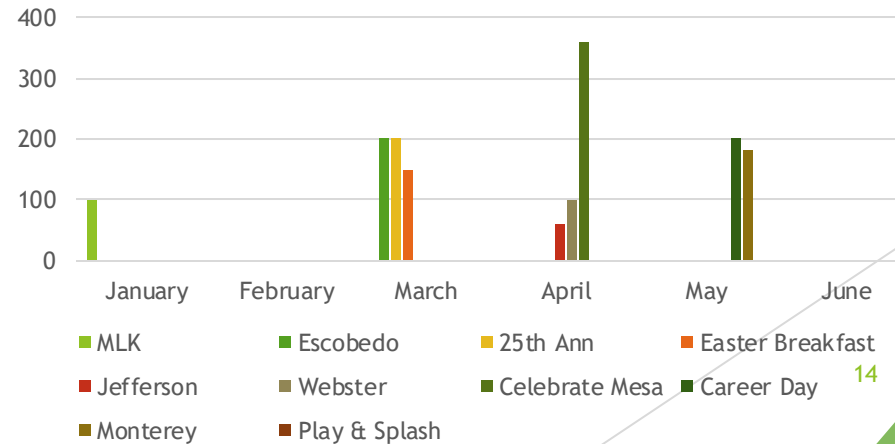


10,862

Roving Unit FY 24/25



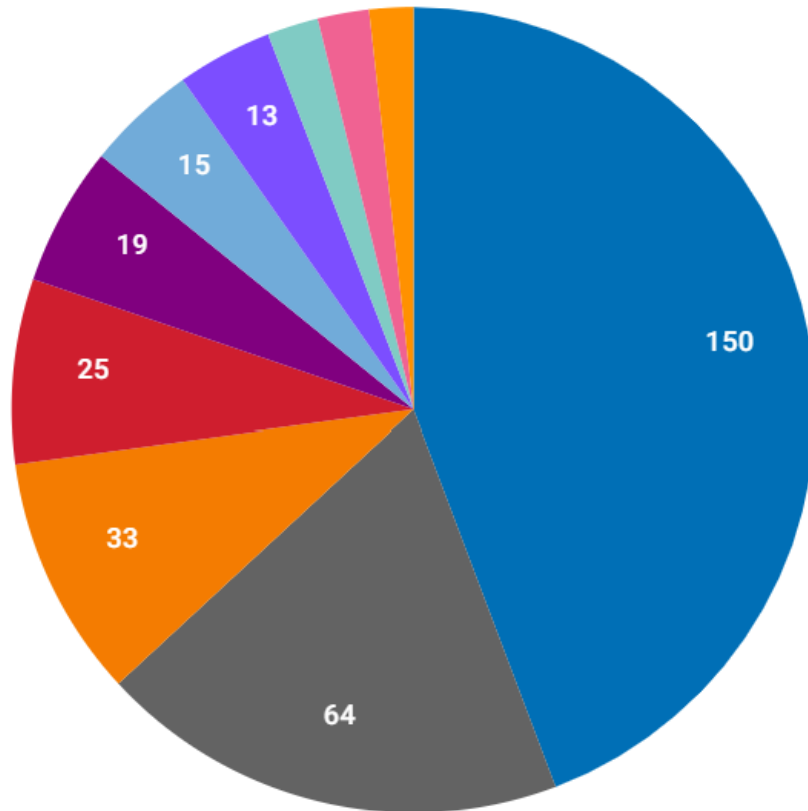
Special Events FY 24/25



Impact

Homeless Citations by Park

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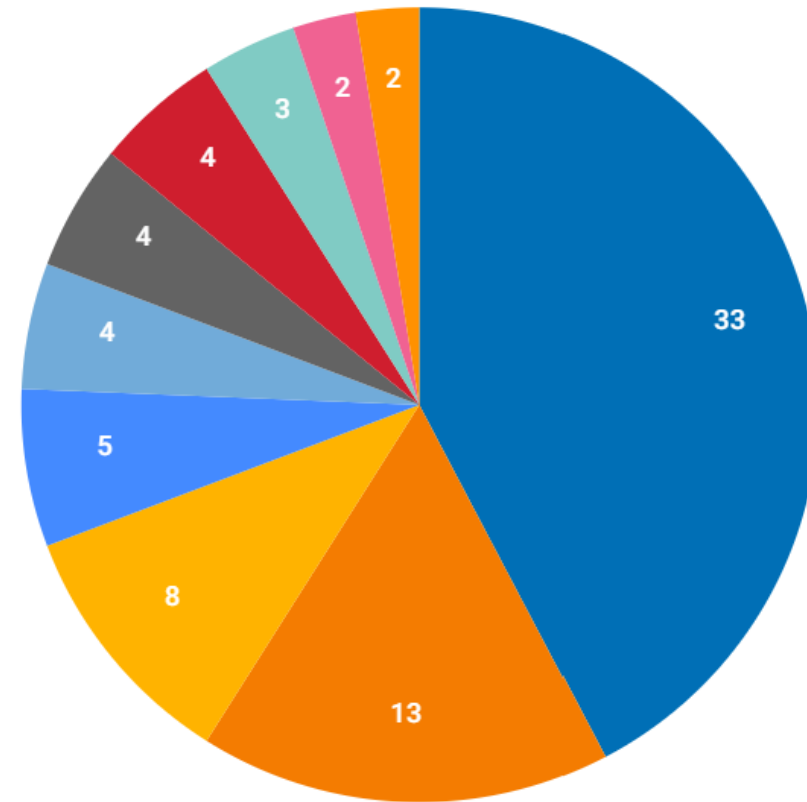


2022



Homeless Citations by Park

Current Calendar Year. Citations issued by Park Rangers



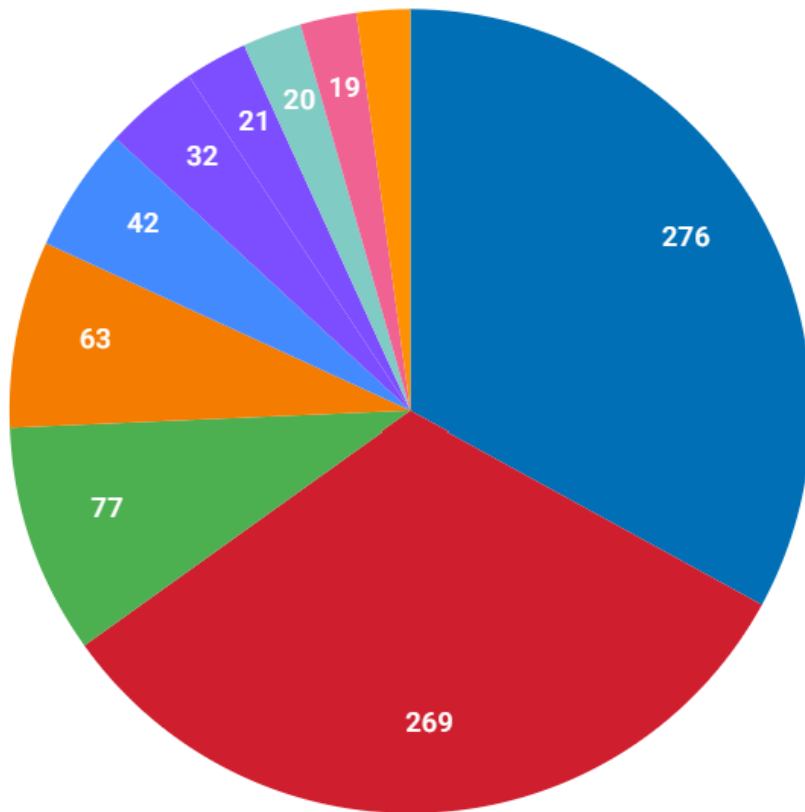
2024



Impact

Opioid/Fentanyl Contacts by Park

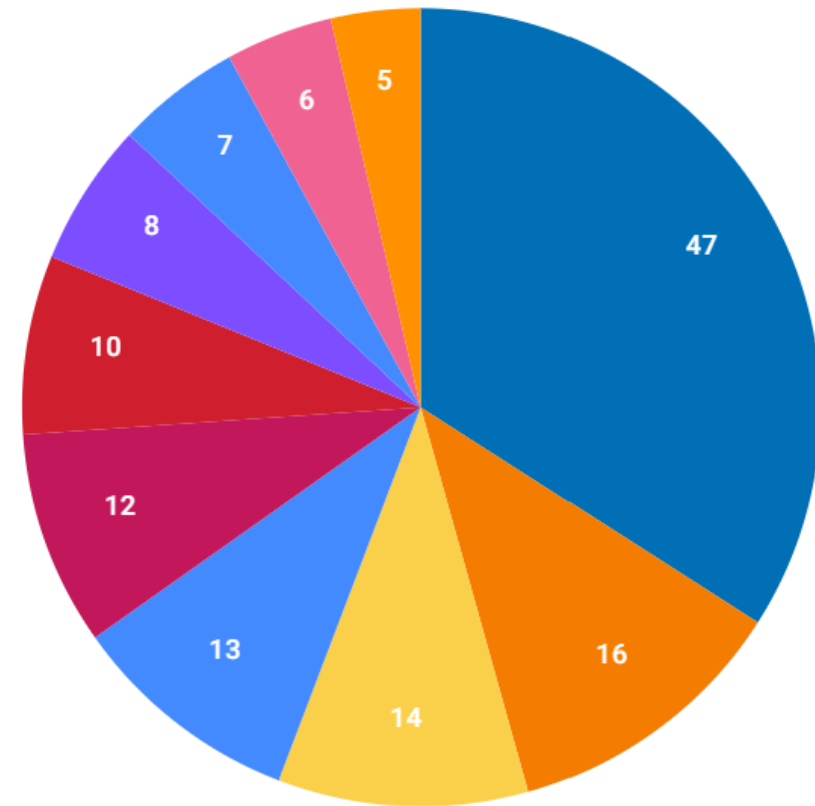
Current Calendar Year. Contacts involving opioid and fentanyl by top 10 locati...



2022

Opioid/Fentanyl Contacts by Park

Current Calendar Year. Contacts involving opioid and fentanyl by top 10 locati...



2024

QUESTIONS



Contact us

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Oscar Venegas Recreation Supervisor - Oscar.Venegas@mesaaz.gov 480-644-2863

3 Big Ideas from Mesa to Apply Today!

1. **Use data, storytelling, and past histories to emphasize the need to invest in underutilized parks.** Pull evidence (visitation data, 911 calls, past media stories) to drive actionable change.
2. **Engage your community by providing unique experiences.** Examples include a snowball fight in July, or hosting monthly birthday parties so that nearby communities have a built in space to celebrate.
3. **Bridge social and power divides.** Use programming and events to bring different stakeholders together. Cultivating social interactions between residents and park rangers, elected officials, and the police department can support trust building and balance power dynamics.





Share your Feedback!

<https://forms.office.com/r/uvjV3nVmEy>

Fill out the
survey once
you leave the
room.

See you in
the Fall!

Peer
Discussion

Raise your
hand function

Discussion Questions

- *Icebreaker- Based on the discussion, what is one low-cost or creative idea you'd love to see implemented in a local park?*
- *Framing: Select one park in your system that is currently underutilized. Visualizing that park, describe the following:*
 - **What are the current uses of this space?** If possible, list 10 reasons people come her (e.g., relaxation, social gathering, recreation).
 - **Is the space multi-generational and inclusive?** Describe your users, across age, ability, culture.
 - **Are there flexible spaces and programming?** Share how the space adapts for different times of day, seasons, or events?
 - **Is there a mix of physical features and social experiences?** Identify how the space supports both passive (e.g., sitting) and active (e.g., courts) uses?
 - **What are the barriers to engagement?** Consider location, transportation access points, perceived safety.





Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$93 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit tpl.org.

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Thank you!

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