



# Board of Supervisors Memorandum

November 18, 2014

## Colossal Cave Mountain Park Performance Audit Report and Recommendations

### Background

Following Board of Supervisors direction at their meeting of September 10, 2013, the County Administrator directed the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to coordinate and assist a citizen-led performance audit of Colossal Cave Mountain Park (CCMP) and CCMP's current operator, Escabrosa, Inc. (Escabrosa). The scope of work for the committee was to:

- Generate specific recommendations for continuous improvement and accountability;
- Establish specific objectives and priorities for CCMP management; and
- Develop a range of options for CCMP to set the conditions necessary to develop more specific future plans.

The resulting Colossal Cave Mountain Park Audit Committee (Committee) met from December 2013 through September 2014. Consultants, County staff and Committee members conducted multiple site visits, staff interviews, inspections and comparisons with other caves and parks for performance and best management practices. Concurrently, Escabrosa submitted to an independent financial audit of its business records for Fiscal Year 2012, which was completed and submitted to the Committee in August 2014 (Appendix 3 in the attached *Performance Audit of Colossal Cave Mountain Park*).

The Committee concluded CCMP has potential as a sustainable nature attraction, but the park needs investment to stabilize and repair its infrastructure and to recruit a new operator with vision and proper operational and financial backing. Investing in CCMP now could produce significant long-term benefits for both CCMP and Pima County. However, deferring maintenance or closing CCMP will only incur significantly higher costs to reopen or repair the infrastructure later.

### Recommendations

I recommend the Board of Supervisors:

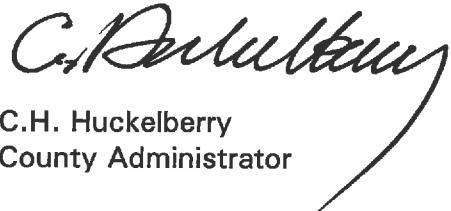
1. Approve keeping Colossal Cave Mountain Park open under the current operating agreement, which expires in August 2015, with increased operational oversight of Escabrosa, Inc. from the Pima County Economic Development and Tourism Department

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors  
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with assistance from other appropriate County departments and make necessary repairs to ensure safe operation until a new park operator can be secured.

2. Exercise the option to not renew the current operating agreement with Escabrosa upon its expiration on August 3, 2015.
3. Direct staff to prepare a Request for Proposals to find a qualified and experienced park operator with investment capital and appropriate vision to develop Colossal Cave Mountain Park.
4. Direct staff to develop and present a short-term plan with cost estimates within 90 days to the Board of Supervisors that will stabilize Colossal Cave Mountain Park infrastructure and make immediate repairs and improvements necessary for safe and viable operation.
5. Direct staff to develop mid- and long-term plans to develop a sustainable attraction that respects the natural resources and cultural and historical values of Colossal Cave Mountain Park

Respectfully submitted,

  
C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator

CHH/mjk – November 12, 2014

Attachment

c: Hank Atha, Deputy County Administrator for Community and Economic Development  
Tom Moulton, Director, Economic Development and Tourism