



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
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OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE COMMISSION

West Sacramento, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Education, Interpretation, and Outreach Program

STAFF: Heather Holm, Interpretation & Education Division Chief

SUBJECT: 2024 Annual Commission Report

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division provides a progressive statewide education, interpretation, and outreach program with a focus on safe, lawful, and responsible off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. The 2024 Education, Interpretation and Outreach report focuses on programs and projects, program changes, and partnerships with other state park units and the OHV community to reach a broad audience.

Park interpreters, rangers, seasonal staff, volunteers, and OHV community members work together to provide the public with engaging education and interpretation programs. Continuing to be the most effective method for engagement, outreach events took place at a variety of venues that include OHV events, sports events, county fairs, community events, safety fairs, youth events, school programs, and career fairs. For 2024, interpretive staff within the State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs) and as part of the OHMVR Statewide Outreach and Education Program engaged over 51,494 contacts through 857 programs.

	# of Programs	# of Contacts
OHMVR Statewide Outreach & Education	17	14,543
Clay Pit SVRA	0	Not reported
Prairie City SVRA	62	3,777
Carnegie SVRA	19	944
Hollister Hills SVRA	180	10,685
Hungry Valley SVRA	38	2,068
Oceano Dunes SVRA	219	5,366
Eastern Kern County Onyx Ranch	0	Not reported
Ocotillo Wells SVRA	311	13,890
Heber Dunes SVRA	11	221

Discussion

Statewide Outreach Team

In 2024, the OHMVR Division Statewide Outreach and Education program team welcomed two new Interpreter I's, Kevin Schmidt and Megan Stanley. With a renewed focus on serving the OHV community, the statewide outreach team narrowed down the number of outreach events in which it participated to those with a strong OHV nexus. The outreach team went to 17 events this year, continuing its longstanding participation in events like Nevada County Fair, International Sportsmen's Expo, and King of the Hammers, while joining some new events like Camp RZR and the Sonoma Overland Expo. Across those events over 14,000 people visited the OHV outreach booths, receiving information about OHV recreation opportunities, as well as learning safety and recreation best practices. These events took place from Sonoma, California all the way to the Imperial Sand Dunes.

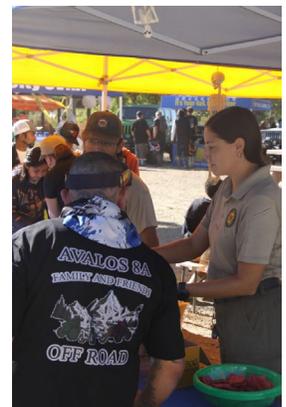


Additionally, this year the OHMVR Statewide Outreach and Education team started recording a statewide OHV podcast, *Beyond the Blacktop*. This podcast discusses OHV news, provides safety education, and promotes the diverse OHV opportunities across California. The *Beyond the Blacktop* podcast has released three episodes since it launched in October. In total the podcast has been listened to 275 times.

Prairie City SVRA

Interpretive staff at Prairie City SVRA participated in over 60 outreach activities. These included educational tours and presentations, Junior Ranger Programs, OHV safety training, roving, DPR-sponsored special events, and booths at other special events and stakeholder meetings. Staff reached over 3,700 people in 2024. For 2024 Prairie City SVRA social media accounts reached 370,600 Facebook users and 21,000 Instagram users.

New highlights included Junior Ranger Programs at Auburn State Recreation Area, Cal4Wheel's Sierra Trek and school program at St. Michael's Day School in Carmichael. An interpretation skills presentation and a law enforcement-led visitor management overview tour was presented to two Sacramento State University classes. A new vernal pool presentation was created and provided to Ansel Park Independent Living Facility in Rocklin. The team attended Sacramento Snake Fest with Carnegie SVRA staff, making nearly 400 contacts in one day! And a collaborative team of park staff provided two college interns with firsthand



interpretation experience as they fulfilled their internship credits under environmental resources.

Carnegie SVRA

The Carnegie SVRA interpretive program had a strong year of consistently providing interpretive programs throughout the year at Carnegie and being part of special events in and outside the park. The Carnegie interpretive team engaged the public in a total of 19 programs, educating about 944 visitors.

In the winter, interpretive staff engaged visitors through informational booths at the beginning of each month, roving, family rides, and Junior Ranger programs. Staff also provided a school program for 5th grade students. During Safety Week in March, they successfully had a safety ride with riders still new to the park.



In April, at a hill climb event in the park, the Carnegie booth featured a small hill climb craft and staff brought out animal furs and skulls to educate the visitors on the animals in the park. Staff also hosted the 12th annual Visitor Appreciation Day which included 10 booths and a visit from the Reach Air Ambulance helicopter. May saw interpretive staff partnering with Prairie City to participate in Snakefest in Sacramento to educate attendees about being safe in California State Parks and how to protect snakes when visiting parks.

When red sticker season started, interpretive program resumed in October with family rides and junior ranger programs, as well as helping at special events. Carnegie was represented at the Prairie City Visitor Appreciation Day. They also attended the two hill climb events at Carnegie in the Fall educating the public about tarantulas and snake safety, while the Carnegie Classic included an additional pumpkin carving activity. During Safety Week the interpretive staff hosted a safety ride. In December staff will be hosting the 2nd annual Light parade at Carnegie.



Hollister Hills SVRA

Hollister Hills SVRA has begun to expand its interpretive programming after several years of staff shortages. Hollister Hills SVRA holds the distinction of being the only SVRA that is part of the 4th Grade Adventure Pass Program, where 4th graders in California public schools can get into 54 state parks for free with the Adventure Pass. Interpretive staff used Adventure Pass funding that was provided to enhance the interpretive program. Staff were able to buy new pelts, skulls, and giveaways for the 4th grade school groups that came to Hollister Hills. Through grant funding received by the California Outdoor Recreation Foundation (CORF) and with their support, staff also did something different by providing 4th graders and their families with free MSF motorcycle training classes. The kids and their families learned the basic skills required to ride, and staff were able to offer several of these classes. The grant also provided the Hollister Hills SVRA training program with new goggles, gloves, and helmets for the students along with a new training bike for the program.

With these new resources, when the Scouts of America called and wanted to come out to camp, staff were able to offer them a combination of interpretive and riding opportunities. The scouts and parents explored life along the Bird Creek watershed. Youth discovered evidence of local wildlife while having opportunities to touch replica skulls, pelts, and tracks. The park interpreter discussed unique wildlife adaptations and how they allowed animals to survive as well as protect themselves in a riparian habitat. The scouts learned about the park's stewardship efforts as well as recreational opportunities found at Hollister Hills SVRA by learning how to ride the next day.

As of December 2024, Hollister Hills SVRA has had 12 field trip schools visit the park with 250 students and teachers attending. Interpretive staff led six guided hikes in the nature area with 120 adults attending, and one guided day hike with nine adults. They participated in one outreach program with 16 adults and 55 students attending; and facilitated one Junior Ranger program with three students and two adults and one evening program with five students and 11 adults.

Oceano Dunes SVRA

Oceano Dunes SVRA interpretive staff have continued offering the popular Discovering the Dunes PORTS program as an alternative option to in-park programming. Discovering the Dunes is a livestreamed program where students learn how the rock cycle forms the coastal sand dunes and how native plant and animal species have adapted to survive in this extreme dune habitat. This program includes discussions about the importance of protecting threatened and endangered species, including the Western Snowy Plover and California Least Tern and how natural resources are managed in a park with diverse recreational opportunity. In-park programming opportunities include the Chumash education program, a two-hour long program which incorporates a guided hike around the Oceano Lagoon to see first-hand the natural resources used by the Chumash. During the 2024 school year, the park interpreters have been able to reach over 2,500 students through these programs!

Interpretive staff host a variety of guided walks through the Adventures with Nature program. Docents and staff lead monthly walks at Oso Flaco Lake on a journey through riparian, dune, and shoreline habitats while learning about the native flora and fauna. One of the more popular guided walks at Oso Flaco Lake leads visitors through the Oso Flaco landscape learning about the unique dune residents in the late 1920s to early 1950s, called the Dunites. Docents and interpretive staff serve about 400 visitors a year through Adventures with Nature.

One of the park's newer annual events, which began in 2019, is Dunes Safety Day. Staff have been gradually trying to grow this event to include partners, and this year California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Cal Fire, ATV Safety Institute, and Kautz Towing joined park staff to provide off-highway vehicle and aquatic safety education. Activities include a CHP helicopter landing and demonstrations as well as the ever-popular RC dune course which teaches Tread Lightly and OHV safety principles.

Hungry Valley SVRA

Hungry Valley SVRA interpretive staff are currently writing a social media plan for the park to ensure important safety topics, resource protection, and recreational opportunities are communicated effectively to the OHV community. Interpretive staff offered Junior Ranger programs both in the park and at the Frazier Park Branch of the Kern County Library and onsite school tours for K-12 students from the local area including Peak to Peak Mountain Charter School and El Tejon Elementary School. State Park Rangers and interpretive staff provided outreach at the Pine Mountain Club Christmas Parade and the three-day Fiesta Days event in the nearby community of Frazier Park.

For the second half of 2024, closure of Hungry Valley SVRA for a little over five months due to wildfire damage necessitated staff to shift their focus to providing interpretive programming and outreach in local venues and developing more digital and online interpretive content. The Post Fire started adjacent to the park on June 15, 2024. State Park Peace Officers and park staff evacuated the park's 1,200 visitors in approximately one hour preventing any injuries or loss of life due to the fast-moving wildfire. The fire burned 10,064-acres within the eastern and southern portions of Hungry Valley SVRA, which contains most of the park's off-highway vehicle recreation trails and the Quail Canyon Special Event Area. A volunteer workday was held in September to repair and restore the areas of the park impacted by the Post Fire. Approximately 200 volunteers planted Valley Oak saplings, spread native grass and shrub seeds, removed invasive mustard plants, made upgrades to the 4x4 practice area, painted, and replaced damaged fencing throughout the park.

Hungry Valley SVRA partially reopened on November 1, 2024, to the public for OHV recreation. A new reservation system through LAZ Parking was implemented on weekends to ensure public safety on the reduced number of trails open in the park. Park interpretive staff worked with the Communication Division on a press release and frequently asked questions to inform the public about the park's partial reopening and temporary measures put in place to ensure public safety. A successful social media campaign was launched to inform the public about the park's partial reopening, new reservation system, and temporary hours of operation for day use only (6am to 6pm). A park information sheet also provided visitors with information on the temporary reduced hours of operation, new reservation system, and a map showing the open trails available for OHV recreation. These steps made for a smooth partial reopening of the park after the Post Fire.

Eastern Kern County Onyx Ranch SVRA

Eastern Kern County Onyx Ranch State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) is laid out in a checkerboard fashion surrounded by mostly Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that offers over 26,000 acres of scenic and challenging terrain for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs) and 4x4 vehicles. State Parks



Peace Officers provide roving interpretation focusing on recreational opportunities, safety messaging, and resource protection in the park.

Since November 1st, the public has been directed to Eastern Kern County Onyx Ranch SVRA while Hungry Valley SVRA is unavailable for overnight camping. The park is close to the Central Valley and Los Angeles area making this an option for off-highway vehicle enthusiasts to camp and recreate among the park's scenic landscape.

Ocotillo Wells SVRA

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA Interpretation team made over 14,000 public contacts in 2024. The bulk of public interactions occurred in the park at mobile interpretation pop-ups. The interpretation team continues to set up pop-up canopies in the park to make public contacts, be a presence in the park, share safety messaging, and to deliver interpretive messages. In addition, programs were offered to multiple school groups, a First Day Ride was offered, Night Sky and Scorpion Search programs were expanded, and the district continued to interact with the El Centro KOYOTES program. Ocotillo Wells SVRA began work with the Imperial County Department of Probation's ASPIRE afterschool program. Through the ASPIRE program, the team was able to work closely with 4th-7th grade participants to cover subjects like desert safety and sustainable recreation. Further engagement with the Imperial Valley occurred by attending multiple events at the Pioneers' Museum in Imperial and Career Days at local schools.

The OWSVRA team attended a few larger outreach events such as the City of El Centro's Trunk or Treat event and Camp RZR at Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. By assisting OHMVR Division staff at Camp RZR, CA State Parks was able to work closely with the Bureau of Land Management's El Centro Field Office. The presence of State Parks at the event was much appreciated by BLM staff. In conjunction with OHV Safety Week 2024, OWSVRA hosted Tread Lightly Day CA with regional Tread Lightly Staff. Visitors were educated about sustainable recreation and OHV safety. Local Jeep clubs participated by performing informal cleanup activities in the park.



Near the conclusion of the 2023-2024 season, two permanent Interpreters were added to the team. As a result, Ocotillo Wells SVRA will be able to further develop programming. To begin the 24-25 riding season, staff have developed multiple RC car Junior Ranger programs that utilize the Ocotillo Wells SVRA RC Crawler course. The programs echo the safety messaging of OHV Safety Week, with talking points addressing "Sharing the Trails" and "Be Visible." STEM-focused aspects are incorporated into the programs to educate participants in the science and math behind OHV. Participants are educated on things such as approach and breakover angle, and as a result become more aware of the capabilities of their vehicles. The team will continue to incorporate additional OHV-themed offerings into future programs.

Heber Dunes SVRA

Heber Dunes SVRA was visited by interpretive staff regularly in 2024. Using the mobile interpretation model from Ocotillo Wells SVRA, the team set up pop-up canopies in Heber Dunes to interact with the public on targeted weekends. Staff interacted with 226 visitors in the park. In cooperation with the Ocotillo Wells District Resources team, two cleanup events were organized in conjunction with the park's Habitat Protection Plan. Finally, the El Centro KOYOTES program visited the park multiple times to make use of the facilities. Interpretive staff were on hand to speak on a variety of topics ranging from parks careers to desert safety.

Commission Action

For information only

Attachments

None