



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division  
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## OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE RECREATION COMMISSION

San Diego, CA

August 1, 2024

**STAFF REPORT:** Winter Recreation Program  
**STAFF:** Nathan Harper, Winter Recreation Manager  
**SUBJECT:** 2023-2024 End of Season Report

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### Summary

The Winter Recreation Program is comprised of two separate elements: the Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Program, funded through the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trust Fund, and the California SNO-Park Permit Program, funded through the Winter Recreation Fund (WRF).

#### ***Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Program***

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division is mandated by Public Resources Code (PRC) §5090.01-5090.65 to establish a statewide system of managed opportunities for all varieties of OHV recreation. The statewide OSV Grooming program offers these opportunities during the winter season. The program's 1,761 miles of groomed OSV trails and 28 trailheads are situated in 11 national forests across California.

The OSV program is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and grooming of trails that are associated with winter recreation. However, depending on the amount of snow that is present, the grooming program season often lasts from the middle of December until the later part of May.

#### ***California SNO-Park Permit Program***

The California SNO-Park Permit Program was created under PRC Division 5, Chapter 1.27, to offer parking facilities for winter recreation. This program allows winter recreationists to buy a windshield sticker, which grants them access to park in designated roadside parking areas that will be maintained and cleared for this specific purpose.

There are presently 18 SNO-Parks located around the state that offer snow-related activities such as snow play, cross-country skiing, dog sledding, and snowmobiling. These activities are available on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land from November 1 to

May 30 each year, facilitated by a Special Use Permit. The SNO-Park program sustains itself financially through the revenue generated from the selling of parking permits. Out of the SNO-Parks, ten of them cater to both motorized and non-motorized recreational activities.

## **Discussion**

### ***Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Program***

The OHV Trust Fund allocates the financial resources for the OSV program. The allocation of these monies, amounting to \$1.8 million per year, is intended to assist various aspects of the OHV Program. This includes the administration of the program, the management of grooming contracts, the maintenance of trail markings and signage, the distribution of trail maps, and the facilitation of seasonal monitoring of trails. A fleet of fifteen state-owned grooming machines, in collaboration with contractors and volunteer groups, is tasked with the responsibility of maintaining the grooming of the OSV trails. The groomed trail systems are primarily maintained for OSV (Over-Snow Vehicle) use, but they also cater to many other users that derive advantages from the services offered. Nordic skiers, snowshoers, and other individuals who participate in non-motorized recreational activities often make use of parking spaces and the well-maintained trail networks. User groups rarely encounter conflict.

Cost-share funding agreements are established for a duration of five years instead of the previous three-year agreements with the 11 USFS forests in order to deliver services. These services are carried out by volunteers, personnel of the United States Forest Service (USFS), and commercial contractors. OHMVR is responsible for the acquisition and payment of all fuel, maintenance, repairs, and replacements for the snowcats utilized in trail grooming. The program encompasses staff support from Winter Recreation Program Manager Nathan Harper and Talina Hagler, OSV Program Coordinator.

### ***California SNO-Park Permit Program***

The 2023-2024 Winter Recreation Funding allocation for fiscal year 23/24 has been increased to bolster the SNO-Park Program from \$347,000 to \$800,000 with an adjustment to \$700,000 for the following year. This financing encompasses the expenses associated with janitorial contracts, snow plowing, printing permits, government maintenance, refurbishment, renovation, or improvement (MRRI) projects, and human costs required to manage the program. The program receives staff support from Nathan Harper, who serves as the Winter Recreation Manager, Josh Bernadas, who is the SNO-Park Program Coordinator, and Staff Services Manager Nu Xiong, who fulfills the role of Permit Program Administrator.

The USFS Special Use Permit (SUP) that provides managerial authority for the SNO-Park locations requires an annual investment by the Division through MRRI projects, funded from the Winter Recreation Fund. The cost is based upon projects determined to be completed. This season contractors completed parking lot repairs which

encompassed remove and replace patch paving, drainage repairs, restroom door replacements and minor facility repairs.

The (SUP) also necessitates pre-season evaluations prior to November 1st and post-season inspections following May 30th. Normally, the OHMVR Division and USFS collaborate to conduct joint inspections, where they discuss future projects and the smooth transition of operations into the next winter season.

***Permit Sales***

Snow levels were below normal during the 2023-2024 season, yet the permit sales were still successful with 18,287 day permits and 8,600 season permits sold.

**Commission Action**

For information only.

**Attachments**

None