



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE RECREATION COMMISSION

Santa Clarita, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Great Basin District Program Overview

STAFF: Russ Dingman, District Superintendent

SUBJECT: Great Basin District Overview
Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area
Onyx Ranch State Vehicular Recreation Area

Summary

The following is an overview of the Great Basin District's two State Vehicular Recreation Areas, Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area and Onyx Ranch State Vehicular Recreation Area.

District Structure

The District is comprised of two State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) park units, Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area and Onyx Ranch State Vehicular Recreation Area.

Within the District structure, Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area and Onyx Ranch State Vehicular Recreation Area has 70 full-time, intermittent, and seasonal employees will comprise the staff responsible for administration, facilities, interpretation and education, and natural and cultural resources. The two park units shared responsibilities across park unit boundaries that focus on strategic planning. Special attention is given to separating funding sources and detailed accounting procedures to track funds within the District. The result translates into better customer service for the public.

In addition, there is an increased level of investment in our staff through job and task sharing, co-training, and sharing knowledge and resources to accomplish the mission of the Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) and individual park units.

Hungry Valley SVRA. Pre Post Fire the SVRA provides approximately 20,000 acres of diverse recreation. Hungry Valley SVRA is the third largest unit of California State Park's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. Hungry Valley SVRA offers more than 4,000 acres of open space and 130 miles of designated trails and unmarked trails that traverse various terrain from sand washes to rolling hills to hill climbs. Hungry Valley SVRA has eleven

campgrounds with over 200 campsites throughout the SVRA and one group camp. In addition, Hungry Valley SVRA hosts several special events, commercial filming, and military training.

Post Fire and Recovery

The Post Fire started on Saturday, June 15, 2024. 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.

Twenty months after the Post Fire, staff members and volunteers collaborated to reopen nearly three-quarters of the State Vehicle Recreation Area (SVRA). As of February 2026, there are approximately over 7,000 acres of diverse recreation available for public to use, along with over 3,500 acres of open space for recreational riding. The SVRA has reopened 90 miles of designated trails and unmarked trails for recreation. Hungry Valley SVRA has successfully reopened 10 of its 11 campgrounds, providing more than 180 campsites, along with one group camping facility. We are working hard to open the remaining areas within the SVRA, including a small portion in the northeast corner, which includes the Mesa` Trail complex, and the southeast portion, which includes the Freeman Trail complex.

December 2025 Flood

In late December 2025, Southern California was impacted by a series of atmospheric rivers that unleashed unprecedented rainfall, particularly during the Christmas holiday. Hungry Valley SVRA recorded over 6 inches from this storm, leading to widespread flooding, mudslides, and power outages, especially in the areas scared by the Post Fire. As a result, the SVRA was closed during the first week of January 2026 due to severe mudslides.

District staff, including personnel from Public Safety, Maintenance, and Natural and Cultural Resources, conducted a thorough assessment of the damage within the SVRA. Following this evaluation, they collaborated with the OHMVR Division to create an action plan for repairs. Thanks to this partnership, they were able to bring in State Park Equipment Operators, along with necessary equipment from other State Vehicular Recreation Areas, to assist in the repair and reopen of the SVRA. Without this crucial support, many parts of the SVRA would remain closed today. A second phase of work has already been planned to address further repairs and open additional areas within the SVRA

Partnerships

On September 28, 2024, we celebrated a remarkable "Volunteer Day" at Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area, uniting over 100 volunteers dedicated to healing the park after the wildfire damage caused by the Post Fire. This event was made possible through the incredible support of the California Off-Road Vehicle Association and the outpouring of help from concerned citizens, user groups, clubs, and organizations.

I'm thrilled to share that, thanks to our partnership with the California Off-Road Vehicle Association, the California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, and the Great Basin District, a new cooperating association has been established: the Friends of Hungry Valley. Composed of members from the California Off-Road Vehicle Association, this group's mission is to enhance interpretation, education, and operations, while actively engaging the community through volunteer service, stewardship, and maintenance programs at Hungry Valley SVRA.

Additionally, the Friends of Hungry Valley have submitted a “Letter of Intent” with Parks California to partner with the Southern California Mountains Foundation and Urban Conservation Corps. This collaboration aims to develop a mentoring program that will enhance the organization's capacity to provide support for education, stewardship, operations, and recreation. It will also focus on job training, mentorship, work experience, and career development for participants aged 18 and up, preparing them for rewarding park careers centered around operations and stewardship. This exciting program will be based at Hungry Valley State Vehicular Recreation Area.

Quail Canyon Special Event Area and Motocross Track

The Quail Canyon Special Event Area (SEA), including the motocross track, closed on September 23, 2022, as a result of a catastrophic failure of the Quail Canyon well. The well-casting pipes collapsed, preventing the submersible pump from pumping groundwater to the surface. Well casting pipes are an essential component in water well construction; they provide structural support and protect the well from contamination.

With the collapse of the well's main casting pipes, the Quail Canyon was unusable, and the Department would not be able to use the well to pump water into the Special Event Area and onto the motocross track. Water is a critical component in the maintenance and management of motocross tracks, ensuring that they are safe, stable, and effective for riding. Without water, the motocross track could not be used.

The District collaborated with the OHMVR Division to obtain funding for assessing the condition of an existing agricultural well, conducting exploratory borings for a new well site, and installing a new water well for the Quail Canyon SEA and the motocross track. Additionally, the District partnered with the Department's Service Center to solicit proposals from professional engineering consulting firms specializing in comprehensive geotechnical engineering services. As a result of this process, the Department awarded the contract to Geocon in April 2024.

Geocon, working in conjunction with the Service Center, conducted a multiphase approach to attempt to restore non-potable water service to the Quail Canyon SEA and motocross track. Geocon and the Service Center filed a permit with the State Water Resources Control Board and the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Board to establish a new well at Hungry Valley SVRA (2/2024).

Due to staffing shortages at the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Board (RWQCB) and the devastating wildfires that affected Southern California, including the Palisades and Eaton fires, the Department's permit was delayed by 16 months. A permit was issued to the Department on 5/28/25.

With an approved RWQCB permit, the Service Center reengaged our contractor to schedule work to evaluate the condition of an existing agricultural well and to complete an exploratory boring at a new well site. Since there was such a delay with the permit, Geocon had already scheduled work with other Agencies and Municipalities, and the soonest they could schedule work at the SVRA was November 2025.

With Geocon reengaging on the project, they applied for a permit from the Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning to construct a new well at the SVRA. The Regional Planning Department advised Geocon that there was a new requirement for the Department to review all new well sites. This was implemented after the Palisades and Eaton fires to streamline the process. This additional requirement pushed the proposed construction and implementation of a new well for the Quail Canyon SEA to January 2026.

On January 26, 2026, Geocon began construction at the SVRA to evaluate the existing agricultural well site. The contractor utilized airlift methods, set up a temporary pump, and installed a sounding tube while connecting the pump to temporary power in order to assess the well's water production capabilities. After drilling down to approximately 110 feet, the contractor encountered water, which began to "burp" from the pipe. This phenomenon typically suggests that air is mixing with the water supply, confirming the presence of water. To further assess the well, the contractor conducted a step test to estimate the pump rate necessary to maintain stable water levels. Additionally, water samples were collected and sent to the lab for analysis.

The contractor is in the process of ramming out the pilot hole and will install a permanent pump on the existing agriculture well site. The Department will install a temporary water-loading stand, known as the J Stand, a portable unit designed to fill water trucks and tanks efficiently. Water from the agricultural well site will be used to drill a new well for the Quail Canyon SEA.

The Service Center, along with the District and Geocon, has pinpointed a location within the SVRA near the existing agricultural well site for the contractor to drill a test hole. This will utilize truck-mounted, mud- and air-rotary drilling equipment, targeting a maximum depth of up to 800 feet. Geocon's geologist will oversee the drilling process, collecting and logging samples of the drill cuttings while documenting the encountered conditions. A daily field log will be maintained by the geologist to track the drilling activities and record the depth to water.

If the water yield is sufficient, the contractor will install a new water supply well. The well installation will include an 8-inch diameter (PVC casing), 800-foot-deep well consisting of 800 feet of screen, 800 feet of blank casing, 700 feet of filter pack, and 100 feet of sanitary seal. The contractor and subcontractor will install a 4-foot by 4-foot by 1-foot-thick well pad, or as required by the California Well Standards.

The contractor then will install a temporary pump and begin pump testing and will collect water quality samples. Once the pump testing is complete and the water quality samples return positive results, a permanent pump will be installed. This permanent installation will include an electrical control panel, totalizer, and a sounding tube. The new well will then be integrated into the existing well water infrastructure at the SVRA, ensuring a reliable water supply for the Quail Canyon SEA and motocross track.

Onyx Ranch SVRA is the second largest unit of California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. Onyx Ranch SVRA. Located in Eastern Kern County on the western edge of the Mojave Desert, the SVRA offers over 26,000 acres of scenic and challenging terrain for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs), and 4x4 vehicles. Open riding is available at BLM's Jawbone Canyon and Dove Springs locations.

Laid out in a checkerboard fashion, Onyx Ranch SVRA is surrounded by mainly Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land traversing BLM, State Parks, and private land. Onyx Ranch SVRA has semi-developed camping areas available. However, most park visitors enjoy dispersed camping throughout the SVRA and the surrounding areas.

The Department is in the process of developing a general plan for Onyx Ranch SVRA. This plan will provide a comprehensive management plan that will guide the future of Onyx Ranch SVRA for the next 20 to 30 years. The General Plan update will incorporate many mission-driven goals and guidelines that will focus management efforts on maintaining and improving programs and facilities while integrating the network of routes with federal and local government agencies in developing a regional route system throughout the area.

Commission Action

For information only

Attachments

None