



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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

San Diego, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Senate Bill 249 Compliance Updates

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SUBJECT: Environmental Compliance at State Vehicular Recreation Areas

Summary

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division staff with support from the Natural Resources Division (NRD) of State Parks continue progress towards full compliance implementing the updated environmental requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 249 (2017). Starting in summer, the OHMVR Division plans to circulate several updated Wildlife Habitat Protection Plans (WHPP) and Soil Conservation Plans (SCP) for public review and comment. Collectively, these plans form the basis of the natural resource management at the nine SVRAs.

Discussion

In 2017, the Governor signed SB 249 into law which made revisions and added several sections to the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Act (Public Resources Code [PRC] § 5090.01 *et seq.*). Notably, the bill emphasized natural and cultural resource protection and conservation measures at SVRAs through revisions to multiple statute provisions. Further, SB 249 defined the roles and responsibilities between the OHMVR Division and the Department in ensuring compliance with specific new requirements. The following list summarizes the amended SB 249 requirements as they pertain to environmental protection at SVRAs:

- Prepare and implement WHPPs that conserve and improve wildlife habitats and contain an updated wildlife inventory and inventory of native plant communities (PRC § 5090.35(c)(1)),
 - developed in consideration of state and regional conservation objectives (PRC § 5090.32(g)),

- Update the 2008 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines by December 31, 2020 (PRC § 5090.35(b)(1)),
 - Completed in late 2020 and adopted,
- Monitor annually for compliance with the Soil Conservation Standard through the development of a SCPs (PRC § 5090.35(d)),
- WHPPs and SCPs apply the principles of best available science (PRC § 5090.39(a)(1)),
 - Best Available Science Guidelines developed by the NRD of the Department
- WHPPs and SCPs provide opportunities for public comment (PRC § 5090.39(a)(2)),
- Post plans, reports, and studies related to off-highway vehicle recreation on the Division webpage (PRC § 5090.32(m)).

Beyond strengthening and prioritizing environmental protection measures at SVRAs, SB 249 increases the rigor, or standard, to which the WHPPs, SCPs, or other monitoring plans are developed. The Department, through NRD, defines Best Available Science, and reviews WHPPs, SCPs, and other monitoring programs to ensure they are drafted using the principles of best available science throughout the entirety of the development process.

In 2022, the OHMVR Division finalized and adopted WHPPs from Prairie City, Clay Pit, and Heber Dunes SVRAs. By the end of 2024, Division staff anticipate finalizing WHPPs from Hungry Valley, Onyx Ranch, Hollister Hills and Oceano Dunes SVRAs.

Several SVRA SCPs are additionally nearing completion. Division staff anticipate circulating for public comment the draft SCPs from Prairie City, Onyx Ranch, Heber Dunes, Hungry Valley, and Ocotillo Wells SVRAs beginning in the summer, 2024. OHMVR Division staff expect all WHPPs and SCPs to be finalized and implemented by 2025.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

[List any attachments]