



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Palmdale, CA 93551

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STAFF REPORT: Great Basin District
STAFF: Russ Dingman, District Superintendent
SUBJECT: Great Basin District Program Overview

Summary

The following provides an overview of the Great Basin District's unit structure and core program areas.

Discussion

District Structure

The District is comprised of two State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) park units, four State Historic Park (SHP) units, three State Park (SP) units and two State Natural Reserve (SNR) units. The Great Basin District is named for its location, which spans the north and south eastern sides of the Tehachapi Mountains, The District encompass 11 parks that serve a combined 496,000 visitors a year.

Within the new District structure, more than 100 full-time, intermittent, and seasonal employees comprise the staff that are responsible for administration, facilities, public safety, interpretation and education, and natural and cultural resources. Although the 11 additional units come with current staffing that will allow for a smooth transition, the concept of shared responsibilities across park unit boundaries will be a focus of the strategic plan moving forward. Special attention will be given to ensure a separation of funding sources and will require additional accounting procedures. The end result will translate into greater, both in number and efficiency, services to the public.

In addition, there will be 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 will be the new District headquarters. The SVRA provides approximately 20,000 acres of diverse recreation. Hungry Valley SVRA is the third largest SVRA in California. Hungry Valley SVRA offers more than 4,000 acres of open

space and 130 miles of trails that traverse a variety of terrain from sand washes, to rolling hills, to hill climbs. Hungry Valley SVRA has 11 campgrounds with over 200 campsites throughout the park and one group camp. In addition to camping and off-highway vehicle recreation, Hungry Valley SVRA is host to several special events, commercial filming, and military training.

Onyx Ranch SVRA is the second largest SVRA in California and the newest. Located in Eastern Kern County on the western edge of the Mojave Desert, the SVRA offers scenic and challenging terrain for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs), and 4x4 vehicles. Additional OHV recreation and camping opportunities are available at the neighboring Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Jawbone Canyon and Dove Springs locations.

Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park is California's State Regional Indian Museum representing Great Basin Indian cultures. The exhibits and interpretive emphasis are on American Indian groups (both aboriginal and contemporary) of the Southwest, Great Basin, and California culture regions, since Antelope Valley was a major prehistoric trade corridor linking all three of these culture regions. The museum contains the combined collections of founder Howard Arden Edwards and subsequent owner Grace Oliver. A number of the cultural materials on display are rare or one-of-a-kind objects.

Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park. Allensworth is an historic monument and State Historic Park dedicated to the memory and spirit of Colonel Allensworth, and contributions of African Americans to the history and development of California. The town is located in the southern San Joaquin Valley 30 miles north of Bakersfield.

Fort Tejon State Historic Park. Fort Tejon is located in the Grapevine Canyon, the main route between California's great central valley and Southern California. The park highlights restored adobes from the original fort and the museum features exhibits on army life and local history. Living History demonstrations take place on the first Saturday of each month year-round.

Tomo-Kahni State Historic Park was created as a unit of California State Parks in 1993 to protect and preserve the integrity of this unique site. Nestled atop a ridge in the Tehachapi Mountains, overlooking Sand Canyon to the east and the Tehachapi valley to the west, Tomo-Kahni or "Winter Village" was the site of a Kawaiisu (Nuwa) village. Due to the extremely sensitive nature of the site, Tomo-Kahni is available to the public by tour only. The tours are led by trained State Park volunteers on weekends during the spring and fall months.

Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park. Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland is located seven miles west of the Antelope Valley California Poppy Natural Reserve on Lancaster Road at 210th Street West. The Park protects and preserves an impressive stand of native Joshua trees and junipers which once grew in great abundance throughout the valley. It is a day use park open year-round, sunrise to sunset.

Red Rock Canyon State Park, a 27,000 acre park that features scenic desert cliffs, buttes and spectacular rock formations, was established to protect and preserve the spectacular high desert landscape. Rising into providence in the northwestern Mojave Desert adjacent to the southern toe of the Sierra Nevada Mountain, timeless erosion and geological uplift created Red Rock Canyon. Each tributary canyon is unique, with dramatic shapes and vivid colors.

All licensed vehicles (street legal and off-highway vehicle (OHV) with green stickers) may travel on the primitive (dirt) road system within the park. All drivers of street legal vehicles and OHVs within the park must be licensed.

Red Rock Canyon State Park offers some dramatic camping within the Ricardo Campground. The campground, tucked up against the base of desert cliffs, offers 50 primitive campsites, potable water, pit toilets, fire rings, and picnic tables. There are no recreational vehicle (RV) hook-ups or showers. Camping is first-come, first serve.

Saddleback Butte State Park is a granite mountaintop that stands some thousand feet above the broad alluvial bottom land of the Antelope Valley about 20 miles east of Lancaster on the western edge of the Mojave Desert. The Park was created in 1960 to protect the butte and the native Joshua Tree woodlands, as well as other plants and animals that were once common throughout this high desert area. This State Park is home to a variety of desert species such as coyotes and kit foxes, desert tortoises, jack rabbits, cottontail rabbits, ground squirrels, kangaroo rats, many kinds of snakes and lizards, and the occasional badger or skunk.

Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve State Natural Reserve. This 1,800-acre State Reserve, nestled in the Antelope Buttes 15 miles west of Lancaster, is located on California's most consistent poppy-bearing land. The Reserve was established to protect and showcase the outstanding display of native wildflowers the California Poppy.

Tule Elk State Natural Reserve. At the south end of the San Joaquin Valley, Tule Elk State Natural Reserve protects a small herd of tule elk, an endemic California subspecies once hunted nearly to extinction. Tule elk once dominated the deer and pronghorn population that also grazed in the San Joaquin Valley. Estimated at more than half a million animals before 1849, tule elk originally ranged from Shasta County to the north to the base of the Tehachapi Mountains in the south, and from west of the Sierra Nevada to the central Pacific coast.

Natural Resources

The District's Natural Resource program is comprised of four associate environmental scientists and one senior environmental scientist who are responsible for the District's Natural Resource program. These park professionals manage several wildlife habitat protection plans and species monitoring throughout the District. Staff have also been actively involved in the Butterbredt/Alphie Springs habitat management plan at Onyx Ranch SVRA and the habitat monitoring system at Hungry Valley SVRA.

Interpretation and Education

The District manages and operates several interpretive and educational programs, including living history programs, school programs, and summer youth and junior ranger programs. Technology and modern inventions, such as “Discovery Agents” and an automated phone tour, allow the park visitor to be engaged and be part of the park experience. Virtual photo walks, 360° photos of the park units, and the use of social media enhance the visitors’ park experience. Through partnerships and outreach programs, the District has developed unique educational events, such as the National Youth Project Using Minibikes (NYPUM), the California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA) Family Day Out, and the Castaic Lake Youth Recreation Days. Future projects include developing an interpretive prospective and creating a park brochure for Onyx Ranch SVRA.

Public Safety

Cooperation and partnership are the backbone of the District’s public safety program. Staff have been working with several public agencies, local municipalities, and non-profit groups to create interconnectivity riding areas throughout California City and the surrounding area that allow riders to connect to lands managed by the BLM and State Parks. Through these partnerships, we have created safe and legal trails and interconnections between the BLM’s Jawbone Canyon and Dove Springs open riding areas and Onyx Ranch SVRA, and have established a safe and legal crossing at SC103 / SC65 to access areas within Red Rock Canyon State Park and beyond.

Working in conjunction with the BLM and other agencies such as the Kern County Sheriff’s Department, State Parks has developed a multi-agency partnership that allows all of us to work and communicate with one another to educate, inform, and enforce laws within the area. With the use of public kiosks, positive contacts, informational websites, signage, and good mapping we are committed to ensure that visitors are safe while recreating on our lands. We also continue to work with our partners and the public to develop regional concepts for the area.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

None