



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Sacramento, CA 95816

December 3, 2020

STAFF REPORT: Draft 2020 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines
STAFF: Jon O'Brien, Environmental Program Manager
SUBJECT: Draft 2020 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines Update

Summary

As per Senate Bill 249, Section 12, the California State Parks, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division must “in consultation with specified bodies and departments, review, and if deemed necessary, update the 2008 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines to establish a generic and measurable soil conservation standard by December 31, 2020...”

The OHMVR Division has been updating the 2008 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines (2008 Guidelines) since September 2019. At that time, OHMVR and California Geological Survey (CGS) staff formed a working group to discuss the 2008 Guidelines and determine the need for updating the document. Based on that review, OHMVR and CGS staff found the soil conservation standard effective for capturing overarching concerns related to possible soil loss and related impacts that may occur at or adjacent to an off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation area. No changes to that standard were recommended. However, changes were deemed necessary to the guidelines portion of the document. The standard reads as follow:

“Off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation facilities shall be managed for sustainable long-term prescribed use without generating soil loss that exceeds restorability, and without causing erosion or sedimentation which significantly affects resource values beyond the facilities. Management of OHV facilities shall occur in accordance with Public Resources Code, Sections 5090.2, 5090.35, and 5090.53.”

The working group developed a survey requesting public comment on the 2008 Guidelines. The survey was sent to all recipients of OHMVR grants from the past three years, the OHV Commission listserv, which is composed of OHV stakeholders and other interested parties, State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) resources staff, Parks natural resource staff, and others. The survey successfully received significant feedback, and more than 220 comments which fell into the following major themes:

- Request for a clearer explanation of the intent and application of the Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines – including compliance and assessments.

- Requests for additional technical resources, guidance documents, and practical examples to help with implementation of the standard and project design.
- Requests for updates to the Best Management Practices Manual.

In early 2020, staff from California State Parks Natural Resources Division (NRD) joined the working group to review and update the 2008 Guidelines. Based on the review findings and survey results, the working group revised the 2008 Guidelines. The updates included the following:

- Edits and new content to improve the clarity within sections that describe the Soil Standard, where it should be applied, and how compliance is demonstrated.
- Added new terms and definitions.
- Provided more detail on how these guidelines apply to OHV Trust Fund Grants Program projects and SVRAs.
- Provided an update to the tools, approaches and models that are available for conducting assessments based on best available science.
- Updates to the technical “how to” sections of the document.
- Updates to the Soil Conservation Plan concept and application.

An initial draft of the update was completed by the spring of 2020. The working group continued to refine the document creating a second draft by late spring 2020.

As per PRC §5090.39(a)(1), “the department shall require that any soil conservation standard, wildlife habitat protection plan, or monitoring program, required by this chapter, applies best available science.” In compliance with this section, NRD developed a Best Available Science section and reviewed a final draft of the 2020 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines, along with supplemental materials, to ensure best available science was utilized. This review was completed on November 30, 2020.

As per PRC §5090.35(b)(1), the OHMVR Division is required to work with other agencies, including the United States Natural Resource Conservation Service, the United States Geological Survey, the United States Forest Service, the United States Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Conservation to complete the update. This group has informally been referred to at the Consulting Agency Review Committee (CARC).

An updated draft of the Guidelines was sent to CARC in early July 2020 and a follow-up meeting to discuss the Guidelines was held on July 16, 2020.

Pursuant to PRC section 5090.39(a)(2), “the department shall require that all standards, plans, and monitoring programs ... shall provide opportunities for public comment, including, but not limited to, written comments and public meetings, as appropriate.” In an effort to achieve widespread public input on the soil standards, the OHMVR Division posted the draft Soil Standards Guidelines on its website on October 14, 2020. The division proactively sent an email blast to over 675 members of the public including stakeholders, OHV organizations, conservation organizations, environmental

organizations, OHMVR grantees, and members of the public who have provided OHMVR division with their email address in order to be kept informed of OHMVR issues. Given the division received a small number of responses in comparison to the level of outreach, the Division extended the public comment period to December 3, 2020 and added the public discussion of the standards to the OHMVR Commission meeting on the same date.

The Final Report is on track to be completed by December 31, 2020.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachment

Draft 2020 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines