



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
1725 23rd Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, California 95816
(916) 324-5801 • Fax (916) 324-0271

Lisa Ann L. Mangat, Director

**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Lake Arrowhead, CA 92352**

January 24, 2020

STAFF REPORT: Interpretation and Education Outreach Report
STAFF: Don Schmidt, Lead for Interpretation and Education Outreach Team
SUBJECT: 2019 Overview – Interpretation and Education Outreach

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Interpretation and Education Outreach Team is focused on informing the public about safe, lawful, and responsible off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. They do this by providing to a broad audience a very active statewide education, interpretation, and outreach program that reaches thousands of people every year. The 2019 Interpretation and Education Outreach Report focuses on both new and ever-popular programs and projects, partnering at events with other state park units, and changes that have occurred this year.

Dedicated interpreters, rangers, seasonal park aides, and volunteers engage the public during in-park education and interpretation programs, and conduct outreach at a variety of venues that include OHV events, sports events, county fairs, community events, safety fairs, youth events, school programs, and career fairs.

Discussion

In 2008, Senate Bill (SB) 742 made revisions to the OHMVR Division, including a provision that required the Division to provide education programs associated with OHV recreation. To meet this mandate, park interpreters were hired at the State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs) and at OHMVR Division Headquarters to develop relevant, integrated programming that gives the public opportunities to learn about safety, lawful OHV operation, and protection of California's resources. We are now in the 11th year of a program that has been refined by the needs of our audience, and has thrived by the professionalism of our staff. This report will cover some highlights of the 2019 interpretive programs offered statewide by the SVRAs and the mobile statewide outreach program.

As an example of the collaborative effort to teach responsible OHV recreation, the statewide outreach team started January 2019 by participating in the International Sportsmen's Expo Youth Fair with Park Operations and the Boating and Waterways

Interpretation and Education Outreach Team, as well as the El Dorado County Recreation Division and the Snell Foundation. The outreach team and its partners occupied one of four exhibit buildings for this major event at the Cal Expo State Fairgrounds, and provided activities for youth and families that focus on outdoor recreation, while learning about safety and resource protection.

During the Youth Fair, the OHMVR Division staff taught the Tread Lightly! stewardship principles using the remote-control Jeep program, and presented the hands-on wildlife discovery program to discuss ways to identify and help protect wildlife. To simulate a safe off-highway riding experience, youth learned about wearing proper riding gear, then put on safety gear, and were guided through all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding skills on a simulator. The outreach team also worked next to California State Parks Central Valley District in the main event area to provide maps and information about the OHMVR program. The Youth Fair educated thousands of people about outdoor recreational opportunities, how to recreate safely, and ways to protect the environment.

The OHMVR Division Statewide Outreach Program participated in 19 programs during 2019 using all the interpretive elements highlighted at the Youth Fair. These included small, single day events like State Scientist Day at the State Capital, and partnered with California State Parks Great Basin District and the National Park Service at the National Junior Ranger Day event held at Sequoia National Park. They also provided week-long OHV safety, education, and information at the King of the Hammers Off-Road Race in Johnson Valley, which is one of the largest OHV events in the world. The outreach team also partnered with Park Operations and the Boating and Waterways Interpretation and Education Outreach Team at the California State Fair, and worked in conjunction with California State Parks Sierra District at the Nevada County Fair, to name a few.

The greatest change that occurred in the OHMVR Statewide Outreach Program took place at the beginning of 2019, as a result of the California State Parks Transformation efforts, the OHMVR Division Outreach Program Team including the Program Manager and Park Interpreter positions (both full-time and part-time) were moved from the OHMVR Division and incorporated into the Interpretation and Education Division. Those positions, along with program planning and event coordination, are now managed by the Interpretation and Education Chief. The OHMVR Outreach Program has maintained the approved event schedule, expanded the social media presence, and has made some minor changes to the outreach program including offering more assistance to the field staff in the OHMVR parks for special events and roving interpretation on high visitor attendance dates.

On a more personal note, the Statewide Outreach Program Manager, Donna McGuire and her husband, retired Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) employee, Ross McGuire, were seriously injured in a vehicle accident in October and are slowly recovering from their injuries.

Hollister Hills SVRA

Hollister Hills SVRA celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Clean Wheeling program, which has remained an integral part of the Hollister Hills SVRA line up of park

sponsored special events. This is a great park stewardship program for families, and is a team effort between the park staff, off-road clubs, and the Hollister Hills Off-Road Association (HHORA). This year the interpretive staff recognized an opportunity with non-motorized user groups and began offering full moon hikes, astronomy sessions, and guided walks that highlight the diverse array of wildflowers. They also used this opportunity to discuss OHV land management practices at the park. Additionally, the interpretive staff restructured the school group program for second, fourth, and fifth grades, and HHORA assisted by providing transportation funding. The curriculum was designed to align with the new Next Generation Science Standards, and focused on the San Andreas Fault line.

Carnegie SVRA

Carnegie SVRA staff began to offer campfire programs this year, which were well received. One program that families enjoyed discussed the local bat population, and their relationship to insect management at the park. Park interpreters also provided many programs at special events that promoted safe riding practices and proper riding gear, and invited park visitors to participate in talks on the history of Carnegie SVRA.

Prairie City SVRA

At Prairie City SVRA, the skilled interpretive staff have found unique ways to reach classrooms world-wide. Using the computer program Skype, an iPad and a microphone, staff have been able to bring children to the park through the Internet, in order to educate them on resources and safety. Park interpreters developed a dynamic interpretive program showcasing the Vernal Pool Management Area that discusses how recreation and resource protection go hand-in-hand at the park. Staff talk with the students about engineering, physics, and math connecting all of these subjects to the world of OHV recreation. The program has been very popular, proving visitor interest in a multi-disciplinary program focused on resource protection in an SVRA. This has increased visitor engagement by reaching a larger and more diverse audience.

Hungry Valley SVRA

Hungry Valley SVRA continued to offer and expand on one of their most popular interpretive programs, the Animal Ambassadors. After a short presentation discussing outdoor safety and the importance of snakes in the environment, visitors get an opportunity to hold the snakes in a safe space. Participants also learn about the important role snakes play in the food web. Hunter, the kingsnake, and Poser, the gopher snake, which are native to the park, are the two Animal Ambassadors on staff. In June, youth from the Los Angeles Police Department's National Youth Project Using Minibikes (NYPUM) program were able to meet the Animal Ambassadors when Hungry Valley SVRA hosted the West Coast NYPUM Rodeo. Not only were the participants able to address their fears and hold the snakes, they were also introduced to the importance of habitat protection, park stewardship, and potential career opportunities in park management. The goal of this program is for individuals to gain a greater appreciation for the park, so they may enjoy their experience even more.

Oceano Dunes SVRA

Oceano Dunes SVRA continued to expand their innovative interpretive programs, emphasizing safe and responsible riding and protecting the dune environment. Dunes Safety Day, an event that focused on riding and ocean safety, was held during the Fourth of July holiday. Rangers, lifeguards and interpretive staff answered questions about riding rules and regulations, taught visitors about proper riding gear, and helped ocean users to identify rip currents. The interpretive staff introduced a new program called OHV Junior Rangers, where children learned how to ride safely in the dunes, and were introduced to the importance of respecting the dunes ecosystem. Visitors now have daily access to the visitor center, and have an opportunity to experience new programs that focus on the dune environment. Interpreters are offering the popular Agents of Discovery program, and a resource and recreation themed experience for young children called Little Rangers. Additionally, the staff are using interpretive technology in new and exciting ways. Augmented reality coloring sheets help teach children about Snowy Plovers and Monarch butterflies, and the staff are piloting a new Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) program called “Discovering the Dunes” that reaches students in classrooms around the world.

Ocotillo Wells SVRA

Ocotillo Wells SVRA made over 70,000 interpretive contacts in 2019, mainly through its outreach at OHV trade shows and field programs. This has been a year of working in partnership with many different agencies and groups to make the visitor experience at Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Heber Dunes SVRA safe and enjoyable. In April, the interpretive staff helped host a campout for the El Centro NYPUM program, and provided two unique night-time hikes for the children and chaperones. Working with OHMVR statewide outreach team, Ocotillo Wells SVRA was able to host a booth at the Sand Sport Super Show in Costa Mesa. This booth included a mix of natural and cultural history, Tread Lightly! messages, and rider safety. With OHMVR statewide outreach team assistance, the booth also featured an ATV safety simulator that was popular with young attendees. OHMVR statewide outreach team will be assisting Ocotillo Wells SVRA interpretive staff with education programming during the Christmas through New Year’s holiday week. Historically, this is one of the busiest visitation periods of the year and the goal is to reach thousands more visitors with the additional assistance. Additionally, Ocotillo Wells District is working with Safety Coordinators at the Division of Boating and Waterways and OHMVR Division to debut a safety messaging campaign over the winter holidays. This campaign will include bumper stickers, radio spots, and a rack card with helpful safety guidelines.

Heber Dunes SVRA

During the first half of 2019, the interpretive staff at Heber Dunes SVRA provided outreach to five local schools. Over 100 children received science core-based curriculum, performed lab work, made field studies, and presented reports on subjects such as the wildlife food chain, desert plants, and animals living at Heber Dunes SVRA. The State Park Interpreter at the park has since retired, and efforts are being made to facilitate the program using seasonal staff and volunteers until the permanent position is

filled. Ocotillo Wells District looks forward to continuing this valuable community outreach and education in the future.

Conclusion

During the last 11 years, dedicated staff have developed a variety of traditional and innovative interpretive programs that are relevant to many audience types, from the OHV community to underserved youth in the NYPUM program. These dynamic programs are content rich and incorporate strategies of audience engagement to be meaningful, enjoyable, and memorable.

The OHMVR Interpretation and Education Outreach Program will continue to evolve in order to remain strong and effective, while educating the people of California about the importance of safe, responsible recreation and the value of environmental protection for sustainable OHV recreation.

Unit	2019 Total Interpretive Contacts	Venue/Event Resulting in Most Contacts
Heber Dunes SVRA	2,115	Mid-Winter Fair and Fiesta
Ocotillo Wells SVRA	77,369	Mobile Park Programs
Hungry Valley SVRA	3,853	Wind Wolves Nature Festival
Oceano Dunes SVRA	114,748	Butterfly Grove Roving
Hollister Hills SVRA	12,892	San Benito County Fair
Carnegie SVRA	1,227	Visitor Appreciation Day
Prairie City SVRA	3,961	Hangtown Motocross Classic
Clay Pit SVRA	700	4x4 Demo Day
OHMVR Division HQ	38,949	California State Fair
Total Statewide 2019 Interpretive Contacts:		255,814

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

None