



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE COMMISSION

Arroyo Grande, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Federal Legislative Update
STAFF: Marivel Barajas, Deputy Director, Legislative Affairs
SUBJECT: Federal Legislation Affecting California

Summary

This report provides summary excerpts and status of bills that impact the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Program. Information contained in this report is accurate as of March 11, 2024.

2023 - 2025 118th US CONGRESS FEDERAL LEGISLATION UPDATE

S. 873 (Manchin): America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2023

Summary: This bill addresses issues regarding public recreation and access to recreation on federal lands and waters, including special recreation permits for outfitting and guiding. The bill has requirements related to long distance bike trails, target shooting ranges, broadband internet infrastructure, an online collection of recreation fees, and an inventory and assessment of recreational resources. The bill will also establish a Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation and a digital version of America the Beautiful--The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

The bill text has no specific reference or impact to off-highway vehicle recreation, however off-highway vehicle recreation is referenced in the Senate report. In summary, no later than five years after the date of enactment, the Forest Service must provide information on trails and roads specific to different types of recreation (including off-highway vehicles) whether they are open or closed, dates of seasonal closure, the classes of vehicles and types of recreational uses that are allowed on each segment of roads and trails, and the boundaries where hunting or recreational shooting are restricted, open, or prohibited.

Status: 11/1/23 The bill was considered by the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

S. 1776 (Padilla): PUBLIC Lands Act

Summary: This bill is the successor to S. 1459 Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act from the previous legislative session which sets forth provisions concerning the restoration, economic development, and conservation of, and recreational access to, certain public lands in California. This is a companion bill to H.R. 2545 and H.R. 3700.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

As related to the Elk Camp Ridge Recreation Trail managed by the U.S. Forest Service in Del Norte County, the bill would designate and require monitoring of the trail for use by mountain bicycles and off-highway vehicles.

In addition, the bill would require that not later than six years after the date of enactment of the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture (acting through the Chief of the Forest Service) shall study the feasibility of opening a new trail, for vehicles measuring 50 inches or less, connecting Forest Service Highway 95 to the existing off-highway vehicle trail system, in the Ballinger Canyon off-highway vehicle area.

Status: 12/14/23 After being considered by the Public Lands, Forests and Mining Committee and by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, the bill was Ordered Reported.

H.R. 2545 (Carbajal): Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

Summary: This bill would designate specified parcels of land in the Los Padres National Forest and the Bakersfield Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management to be incorporated into the National Wilderness Preservation System. This is the successor bill to H.R. 973 from the previous legislative session.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

The bill would require that not later than six years after the date of enactment of the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture (acting through the Chief of the Forest Service) shall study the feasibility of opening a new trail, for vehicles measuring 50 inches or less, connecting Forest Service Highway 95 to the existing off-highway vehicle trail system, in the Ballinger Canyon off-highway vehicle area.

Status: 4/10/23 The bill was introduced.

H.R. 3681 (Chu): San Gabriel Mountains Protection Act

Summary: This bill is the successor to H.R. 693 from the previous legislative session that would have established the San Gabriel National Recreation Area as a unit of the National Park System in California.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

The bill would establish a 22-member Advisory Council to include two members that would represent the interests of outdoor recreation, including off-highway vehicle recreation, within the San Gabriel National Recreation Area.

Status: 3/25/23 The bill was introduced.

H.R. 3700 (Huffman): Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act

Summary: This bill is the successor to H.R. 878 from the previous legislative session that contains provisions concerning the restoration, economic development, conservation of, and recreational access to, certain public lands in Northern California. This is the companion bill to S. 1776.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

The bill would designate the Elk Camp Ridge Recreation Trail in Del Norte County for off-highway vehicle or mountain bike usage. The bill would additionally require the Secretary of the Interior to annually assess the effects of off-highway vehicle and mountain bicycle use on the trail, land in close proximity to the trail, as well as plants, wildlife, and wildlife habitat.

Status: 5/25/23 The bill was introduced.

H.R. 4228 (McMorris Rodgers): FORESTS Act of 2023

Summary: This bill seeks to restore employment and educational opportunities in counties containing National Forest System lands by ensuring that such counties have a dependable source of revenue from timber sales.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

The bill would prohibit the Forest Service from removing or otherwise eliminating or obliterating any legally created road or trail unless there has been a specific decision, which included adequate and appropriate public involvement, to decommission the specific road or trail in question. The fact that any road or trail is not a Forest System road or trail, or does not appear on a Motor Vehicle Use Map, shall not constitute a decision.

Status: 6/20/23 The bill was introduced.

H.R. 6492 (Westerman): EXPLORE Act

Summary: This bill (the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act) seeks to improve recreation opportunities on, and facilitate greater access to, Federal public land, and for other purposes.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

Regarding motorized and nonmotorized access, this bill, not later than five years after the date of the enactment, would require that all maps for motorized and nonmotorized recreation that are publicly available by the Bureau of Land Management and by the Forest Service be made compliant with the format for geographic information systems (GIS). Further, the bill requires that not later than 20 years after the date of enactment, all outdated maps be updated via the public process. Lastly, the bill seeks to add additional opportunities for motorized and nonmotorized access.

Status: 1/17/24 The bill was ordered reported.

H.R. 6718 (McCarthy): City of Ridgecrest Land Exchange Act

Summary: This bill would authorize, direct, expedite, and facilitate a land exchange of approximately 500 acres of Federal land for approximately 640 acres of land owned by the City of Ridgecrest, CA, and for other purposes. The bill would require that the former City-owned land acquired under this section become part of the Owens Peak Wilderness Area, and be managed in accordance with the laws, rules, and regulations applicable to that wilderness area.

The bill's key off-highway vehicle provisions:

The bill would require that the Federal land exchanged under this section is subject to the condition that the City of Ridgecrest shall maintain access to all officially designated motorized routes depicted on the Federal land map; and for non-motorized recreation activities.

Status: 12/12/23 The bill was introduced.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

None