

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division – Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission – Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area Ad Hoc Committee - AD HOC COMMITTEE NOTES

Ad Hoc Committee: Oceano Dunes SVRA

Date of Meeting: January 24, 2023

Time of Meeting: 4:30-8:30pm

Location: Courtyard San Luis Obispo and Virtual

Attendees:

See Attachment A Listing members of the public in person and virtually. In addition, the following OHMVR Division and Oceano Dunes District Staff attended the meeting:

Sarah Miggins, OHMVR Deputy Director

Callan McLaughlin, OHMVR Division Chief

Tara Lynch, Chief Counsel, California State Parks

Vicki Perez, OHMVR Administrative Assistant

Alex Stehl, Deputy Director, Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Division

Jon O'Brien, OHMVR Environmental Program Manager

Katie Metraux, General Planning and Recreation Service Manager

Joshua Bernadas, OHMVR Associate Park and Recreation Specialist

Jonathan Barros, OHMVR Associate Park and Recreation Specialist

Kevin Pearce, Oceano Dunes District Chief Ranger

Jeff Findley, Oceano Dunes District Maintenance Chief

Roger Jacobs, Oceano Dunes District Planning Chief

Casey Dakin, Oceano Dunes District Administrative Officer

Stephanie Little, Oceano Dunes District Senior Environmental Scientist

Agenda:

- I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 4:30pm. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioners Ross-Leech and Whettam were present.

- II. **Introductions:** Commissioner Whettam welcomed everyone to the Ad Hoc Committee meeting and asked Deputy Director Miggins to say a few words. Commissioners Whettam and Ross-Leech asked the audience in person and virtual to engage in conversation about the issues facing the

ODSVRA and hoped for clarity on priority issues to address over the next year.

- III. Report and Updates from the August 24, 2022 Virtual ODSVRA Ad Hoc Committee Meeting:** Commissioner Ross-Leech reviewed the highlights from the August 24, 2022 virtual Ad Hoc Committee meeting and said the agenda for this meeting was based on the comments and concerns from the participants.

Public Comment:

- Concern about the 300-acre temporary Snowy Plover closure becoming a permanent closure without public notice. Question, how was the decision finalized without public or OHMVR Commission input?
 - Chief Council responded that she would have a report at the March OHMVR Commission Meeting

- IV. ODSVRA Update:** Ronnie Glick, Acting Oceano Dunes District, Superintendent had planned to speak but was unable to attend due to a personal matter. Deputy Director Miggins gave a brief overview of recent activities and events at the ODSVRA.

Public Comments:

- Compliments to District staff for the clean-up from the storms and opening up the ODSVRA.
- Invitation by the Friends of Oceano Dunes to participate in the upcoming park clean-up, request to help promote the event on social media, request to reduce fees for clean-up volunteers.
- Request for more real-time information about conditions at the park.
- Additional OHMVR Commissioners are in attendance, Tom Lemmon, Roger Salazar, and Tommy Randle and will be treated like the public during an Ad-Hoc committee meeting.

- V. Dust Control Projects Update:** Jon O'Brien, OHMVR Division, Environmental Program Manager, gave an overview on the San Luis Obispo Air Pollution Control District 2018 Stipulated Order of Abatement (APCD SOA) which was amended in October 2022 to reduce the amount of mass emission reductions requirements from 50% to 40.7%. Progress has been achieved to meet the mass emissions objective target under the

current modeling scenario. The Scientific Advisory Group is developing a framework to define the excess emission target as per 3b of the amended SOA. No new dust mitigation projects are proposed for 2023. Temporary dust mitigation areas are considered permanent mitigation once they are restored to native dune vegetation, 27.3 total acres (converted 14 acres so far).

Public Comments:

- Concern about the 2013 baseline for the dust mitigation requirements because 2013 had a severe drought and concerned the 1939 original photos did not subtract acres of non-natural vegetation (planted by humans)
- Concern with costs (\$22M) for dust mitigations when the Scripps research has demonstrated that 14% of PM10 is mineral dust.
- Concern that there are continued PM10 exceedances.
- Dr. Lynn Russell's (of the Scripps Research Institute) research paper on small contributions of dust to PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations measured downwind of Oceano dunes has completed peer review and been published. Want to understand how the study's finding may impact the APCD SOA and ODSVRA's future operations and requirements.
- Concern about the quality of the straw used for the vegetation restoration and if it was tested for residual chemicals.
- Concern about emergency access through the riding area with new vegetated islands which have altered the emergency routes and the overall removal of ambulance routes due to closed areas.
- Rangers work closely with emergency responders and other partners to notify them of emergencies in the park and assist with access. Helicopters are called as needed.
- The CA Air Resources Board is closely involved with the APCD and the SOA.
- Member of the public quoted a recent CALCOAST News Article, in particular the costs associated with the dust mitigations.
- Senator from West Virginia spoke about riding Pismo Beach as a bucket list item and recommended the public work with their elected officials to find a compromise to keep the park open.

- Questions about how other State Agencies and Bureaus can assist with keeping the park open.

Public Comment Discussion with Agency/Division Staff

Kevin Pearce, District Chief Ranger, confirmed that some ambulance routes have been removed, 3 are open. Stated that the rangers arrive within minutes of a call, use radios internally and work with partners. He did mention that there can be delays when calls go in to 911 and then are forwarded to the rangers. The Rangers manage this by monitoring overall 911 calls. Understands the request for the emergency corridors.

Jon O'Brien, OHMVR Environmental Program Manager, discussion regarding regulation related to total PM10, inclusive of dust, water, salt etc. Any new adjustments for furthered speciation to reduce responsibility would have to be approved by the APCD and parks. He stated that he was not sure of any instances where CARB has allowed speciation. He said he would speak to DRI relative to adjusting the model to match the 14% dust found in the Scripps research. Jon discussed how a change in the baseline from 2013 to 2019 could have an impact on the study. Discussion relative to photos used by SAG and provided by UC Santa Barbara. He said he would look into the reported possible mercury in the rice straw.

Sarah Miggins, OHMVR Deputy Director stated that they are continuing to work on the dust issues and paid for the Scripps study. That they will help promote the park clean-up. Committed that at the next OHMVR meeting staff would respond relative to the removal of the 300 acres and provide information relative to the difference between the Dune Preserve to the north and the Enclosures.

VI. Operation and Maintenance: Jeff Findley, Oceano Dunes District, Maintenance Chief discussed the work his team performs in the park such as removing wind fencing and installing rice straw to prepare the ground for native planting. His team recently developed an App to report operation and maintenance issues including hazards and fence issues using "Survey123" which they are testing internally. This program may be offered to volunteer groups to try it out to assist with troubleshooting hazards and other areas in need of maintenance. Currently the team uses an email system to identify and track operation and maintenance issues. The Survey123 App should help to expedite work, enable tracking of jobs and results, and keep a photo record of the completed work. The team is also developing hazard maps using the App data and outlook calendars to

schedule crews to address the priority hazard work. The district is trying out different track-out mats at Pier Avenue to see how they are working and regular street sweeping is scheduled for Pier Avenue. The Grand Avenue track out was completed in September 2022 and staff are working on an operation and maintenance schedule for this area. The crews at the park have been focusing on storm repairs and clean-up to get the park open to the public.

Public Comments:

- Everyone was very excited about the App and many were eager to test it out.
- Some riders are very concerned about the wind fencing and buried fence posts as potential hazards.
- Question about using the beach rake to remove trash on the beach, especially after big storms that have recently washed up a lot large debris. Is there a prohibition for using it at the ODSVRA?
- State Parks staff said the CA Coastal Commission cited the ODSVRA for using the beach rake on July 7th, 2020. Possible to find a means to use during emergency situations?

VII. Environmental, Endangered Species Management: Stephanie Little, Oceano Dunes District, Senior Environmental Scientist, provided an overview on the breeding snowy plovers and California least tern. There has been a lot of progress with very good breeding results at the park with strong evidence that the program is contributing to the recovery of these species. Closures for the 2022 season ran from March 1-September 30. As part of the Biodiversity Plan, endangered species buffers have been increased affecting chicks that leave the permanent enclosures. The ODSVRA Wildlife Habitat Protection Program (WHPP) is under development and should be ready for approval by the OHV Commission in the late summer or fall of 2023.

Public Comments:

- Great success with the Western snowy plovers! Question about how the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge is doing with their snowy plover program?
- Question about the District's goals for the snowy plovers, status of goal accomplishment, who else is working to protect the species in the area, question about if the current goals are too high?

- Suggestion to consider developing a pilot program with the Wildlife Refuge, Parks and DFW to address predator control and improve overall habitat and protection for snowy plovers at the Refuge.
- Suggestion that riders may be willing to pay for snowy plover restoration at other locations in exchange for opening additional riding areas at the ODSVRA.
- Comments and fear that the foredune closure will impact the plover habitat negatively.

VIII. Safety Issues/Concerns and Law Enforcement: Kevin Pearce, Oceano District Chief Ranger, said the park is staffed with 12 Rangers, 3 Sergeants, and a Chief, all trained Emergency Medical Responders and many are also EMTs. There are 3 officers on duty day and night. On summer weekends there are more officers assigned. Staffing is always a challenge as officers transfer out and vacancies are filled by new graduates of the CA Park Ranger Academy. In 2022 there were 207 citations issued at the ODSVRA, 19 collisions, and 46 assists by other agency partners. Law Enforcement has developed a pilot program for reporting low level violations and moving violations using an App. During workshop Pearce spoke of GIS mapping and updated maps showing emergency access routes. Will work on this. Working to use QR codes to share various posted orders, looking to expand more, to translate into Spanish. Reminded everyone that OHV Safety weeks are in April and November.

Public Comments:

- Suggestion to consider a text alert system and/or social media to let park users know about closures and other real time information. Ocotillo Wells SVRA recently implemented a system that is a good model.
- QR codes are used in the park now for posted notices. Suggest building on this system for updated park maps, emergency access routes, park rules, etc.
- The OHMVR Division is hosting annual safety weeks in May and September which is another opportunity to highlight rider safety and education.
- Suggestion for all of the SVRAs to share their best practices to learn from each other.

- Concern about state park ranger's presence – want to see more rangers in the park giving out citations, provide more stops, warnings, and active patrols.
- Rangers at the ODSVRA assist other state and federal OHV areas as requested and that assistance is reciprocated to the ODSVRA.
- Recommendation to provide housing to help fill position vacancies.
- Suggestion for more volunteer opportunities and programs to assist the park rangers.
- Recent clam surfacing events have concerned some park visitors. Park staff response: work with CA Department of Fish and Wildlife to walk the beach and talk to park visitors about the clams and what to look for and avoid. Cal Poly SLO is conducting a scientific study of clam populations in Pismo and Oceano and partner with the agencies on outreach.
- Concessions may also have an impact on law enforcement.

IX. Communications and Interpretation and Education Team: Roger Jacobs, Oceano District Planning Chief, discussed his role interacting with user groups and the recent user surveys his team conducted. He now has good information on reservations and attendance trends and age, gender, race, and ethnicity baseline data. The department is working with Loyola Marymount University on community engagement focusing on underserved communities around the park. Fresno State University is conducting an economic study of benefits regarding the park and OHV use state-wide. The district is also involved in developing social media for District notices, closures, and event status for more interactive and immediate communication. The Planning Chief oversees Special Events and Film Permits for the park. CalTrans is hosting "Clean CA" in March with is a great public event that helps the park. The Planning Program also manages the concessions for 8 vendors at the park. The park has interpretive and education programs such as the Jr. Rangers and PORTS education program, campfire programs, visitor center activities and summer fun days.

Public Comments:

- Concern about the reduction of day use and overnight camping limits.

- Request for more up to date information on the park in social media.
- Kiosk workers at the entry stations need to be more informed about what is going on at the park. Sometimes no one is at the kiosk causing an interested user driving to Pole 1 to find out the park is closed.
- Suggestion to look into a QR code for campers who have already paid their fee and must wait in the same long lines to re-enter the park as the day use. Suggested possible quick lane for campers pre-registered. There is a lot of congestion at the entry stations that could be addressed with separating the campers and day users.
- Suggestion to look at the “Blue Ribbon Coalition: Equity Action Plan,” Department of the Interior, 2022 regarding access for all – especially those with disabilities.
- Concern about possibly reducing the concessions at the park and communication with the vendors.
- Would like to see more interpretive programs about the history of the ODSVRA.
- Request to have more content on social media related to the ODSVRA, history, activities, etc.
- Concerns about maintaining access for people with disabilities.
- Concerns with limits at the park and how to accommodate when people leave the park.
- Request to analyze the relationship between the reductions in park size and lack of reduction in concessionaires.

Staff Responses:

Kevin Pearce added: Historical 2700 users per day for street legal day use. CDP amendment 6 limited to 1000 day users and 500 overnight campers (previously 1000 campers).

- X. Prioritization of Issues:** The Commissioners and OHMVR Division staff opened the meeting for attendees to identify their priority issues to address in the short term. Staff wrote down all ideas. The following represents the priority list of issues as identified by the attendees:
1. Air Quality/APCD SOA Requirements:

- PM10 monitoring on other coastal lands in the state for comparative purposes
 - APCD SOA treatments are expensive
 - Violations of PM10 despite treatment efforts – what portion is caused by OHV?
 - Vegetated dunes create safety issues for riders and emergency access
 - Straw waddle treatments are causing pest issues and is it effective?
 - Next steps for the Scripps study findings (since it has been published)
 - APCD SOA has reduced public access and camping
2. Environmental/Endangered Species:
- How does Western snowy plover and CA Least tern program relate to Oceano Dunes District goals?
 - How do other snowy plover and least tern programs compare to ODSVRA?
 - Permanent closure of nesting areas may change the habitat and drive the birds to other areas.
 - Want to hear from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and CA Department of Fish and Wildlife about population recovery in the state.
 - Potential partnership with Refuge for bird nesting habitat improvement and predator control.
 - Need more visitor education about protecting clams.
3. Safety/Law Enforcement:
- Would like to hear from other agencies about OHMVR emergency response.
 - Would like more details about collisions at ODSVRA.
 - Want to see more law enforcement, safety equipment and volunteers involved at ODSVRA.
 - Need a better way to educate visitors about park rules.
 - Driving in the water causes safety problems.
 - Want to learn more about ATV concessions and safety violations.
4. Public Recreation:
- Can State Parks raise entrance fees to provide more access and quality camping?
 - Suggest QR code for reservations and streamlining entry for camping vs day use.

- Want update from District about day use and camping numbers, especially increasing them.
- Need more real time information about park conditions on social media and informed park staff.
- Want to see more accessible recreation facilities for persons with disabilities.

XI. Next Steps and Next Meeting: The Commissioners will review the priority issues identified and develop a simple survey for all of the attendees to further clarify priorities and timelines for resolution. The Commissioners will also solicit information from attendees for timing on the next Ad Hoc Committee meeting.

XII. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda:

- There are dust issues in other parts of the state and other OHV parks. Look at how other areas of the state are addressing and being more proactive in their approach.
- Suggest looking at all of the OHV parks in the state and identifying the potential risks to their continued use and operations. There may be risks to their future based on other land uses that are seen as incompatible.

XIII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.