UNIT 439

OCOTILLO WELLS STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA

GENERAL PLAN

April 1982

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OCOTILLO WELLS
STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA
preliminary
GENERAL PLAN

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OCOTILLO WELLS
STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA

PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN

DECEMBER, 1981

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OCOTILLO WELLS PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN

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APPENDICES:

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area is a popular State Park System unit located in eastern San Diego County, adjacent to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, 90 miles (144 km) east of the City of San Diego. The unit was purchased with Off-Highway Vehicle funds in 1975 and 1976. The 12,510 acres (5,004 hectares) of purchased private lands were combined with 2,080 acres (832 hectares) of reclassified state park lands, making a total of 14,590 acres (5,836 hectares). Ocotillo Wells was classified a state vehicular recreation area in April 1976.

This document presents proposed management policies and developments considered essential for improving visitors' safety and enjoyment, unit operations, and resource protection. While emphasis was placed on improvements that would best serve OHV recreationists, impacts on resources were a prime consideration throughout the planning process.

The following is a summary of the plan's major recommendations.

Resources

1. Establish a one-acre (.4 hectare) cultural preserve at Barrel Springs to perpetuate significant cultural values. Vehicle use will not be permitted there.

2. Establish trails-use zones to protect sensitive biotic and geologic resources, and to minimize the impacts of OHV use in a proposed operations and ranger residential area.

3. Make it a management priority to monitor accelerated erosion and contain impacts to areas within the unit.

4. Rehabilitate areas when important natural and recreational values are in danger of being lost.

Land Use and Facilities

1. With the exception of the one-acre cultural preserve, make the entire unit available for OHV activities. The plan proposes 12,470 acres (4,987 hectares) for open, unrestricted use and 2,120 acres (848 hectares) for designated trail use.

2. Establish an identifiable entrance off Highway 78, to include highway signing, information panels, orientation maps, and trash receptacles.

3. Connect unit trails to existing OHV trails in neighboring Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

4. Consider potential development of a "Future Use Area" for additional camping based on visitor needs. Identified long-range improvements include construction of a trailer sanitation station and rehabilitation of water wells and an access road.

5. Upgrade the headquarters area by adding a maintenance shop, equipment storage, ranger station, and trailer sanitation station. Information, first aid, and additional drinking water will also be available in this area.

6. Construct trailer pads for additional staff housing.

INTRODUCTION

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Responding to the need created by increasing sales of off-highway vehicles (OHVs), the California Legislature in 1971 passed the Chappie-Z'berg OHV Act. This act provided for the registration of vehicles, set equipment noise standards, and created OHV operating rules. Additionally, this law, combined with the Chappie-Gregorio Off-Highway Gas Tax Act, allows the State Department of Parks and Recreation to acquire land for the purpose of providing facilities to accommodate this form of recreation.

The purpose of Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area is to provide a facility for OHV recreational use and activities. Current State Park System policy specifically permits the department to manage and modify the natural and cultural elements of the environment of state vehicular recreation areas (SVRAs) to enhance recreational experiences. Ocotillo Wells SVRA has been planned following this operational guideline. Under this plan, use will be managed so the unit can continue to sustain OHV recreation, while the unit's resource values will be preserved. The plan also points out expected environmental impacts resulting from proposed development and management policies.

The plan is not intended to be a rigid document, but rather a flexible planning tool establishing guidelines within which OHV recreation, management, operation, and development can occur. It has been made flexible purposely to accommodate the unit's changing needs and the recreating public's desires. The plan should be reviewed and updated to reflect current conditions before any development proposals are implemented.

Unit Description

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is a 14,590-acre (5,836-hectare) unit located 90 miles (144 km) east of the City of San Diego in San Diego County. It is bordered on the north and west by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the largest unit in the State Park System. The southern boundary is State Highway 78, and the San Diego County-Imperial County line forms the eastern boundary. To the south and east of the unit is a mixture of federal Bureau of Land Management and private lands. Ocotillo Wells County Airport is located on the southern edge of the unit. The town of Ocotillo Wells, with an estimated population of 100, is south of the highway and airport.

General Plan Objectives

This document is designed to be a long-range guide for the management and development of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The plan's flexibility will help permit the following specific planning objectives to be achieved:

1. Establishment of land-use designations that protect resources and accommodate recreational activities.

2. Establishment of interpretive programs that educate OHV users about desert safety and point out the need for user assistance in minimizing unit maintenance as well as preserving resources.

3. Provision of increased OHV recreational opportunities through the interpretation of desert resources.

4. Provision of facilities required for unit operation.

5. Provision of sewage storage and water supplies to handle increased visitation.

Planning Process and Public Involvement

The state Public Resources Code requires the Department of Parks and Recreation to recommend a classification for each State Park System project after its acquisition, and to prepare a resource element and general plan. The Ocotillo Wells project was classified as a state vehicular recreation area in April 1976. An inventory of unit resources was begun in 1976 and a resource element was completed in 1978. The resource element in this plan was revised in 1981 to reflect current knowledge. The Public Resources Code directs the department to submit the general plan, with the resource element, to the Park and Recreation Commission for approval.

This plan is the product of citizen as well as department contributions. An Ocotillo Wells Citizens Advisory Committee was established in 1977 to recommend policy guidelines to the director based on citizen wishes about unit development and management. The committee submitted a list of recommendations to be included in this general plan. The basic recommendations of the committee were: 1) to allow the unit's current types of use to continue, 2) to protect the unit for future use, and 3) to inform the public about the safe use of OHVs. (A copy of the committee's specific recommendations is included in the appendix.)

Advice has also come from members of the Statewide Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee and unit visitors. Comments from the OHV community about general SVRA operations have been helpful in compiling this plan.

Organization of Plan

The plan is composed of five major elements:

-- Resource Element - describes unit resources and presents resource management policies based on the unit's classification, purpose, and environmental tolerance.

-- Land Use and Facilities Element - describes existing land use and facilities and recommended changes.

-- Interpretive Element - presents programs for interpreting unit resources and recreational values to the public.

-- Operations Element - presents management strategies to implement the general plan.

-- Environmental Impact Element - assesses the potential impact of general plan proposals on the environment within and outside the unit.

A section dealing with potential acquisition is also included in the plan.

RESOURCE ELEMENT

RESOURCE ELEMENT

This section presents a summary of unit resource descriptions and the general policies for managing natural and cultural resources at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Details for implementing the policies will be worked out in later management programs. (More detailed resource information is available in the unit inventory of features, on file with the department.)

This element was approved by the Park and Recreation Commission in March 1979, and has been revised to fit the present format for resource documents and general plans. Some parts have been updated to include more detailed discussions of geological, biological, and cultural resources.

Natural Resources

Topography

Ocotillo Wells SVRA lies in the Colorado Desert, a part of the Southern Desert Biotic Region, and is in the Desert and Desert Mountains Landscape Province.

The unit is relatively flat with few areas of relief. Elevations range from 100 feet (40 m) to just over 800 feet (240 m) at the unit's southwest corner, on the southern flank of Borrego Mountain. The generally flat terrain is broken up by gently rolling clay hills (mudhills) in the northeast corner and by more moderately rugged hills in the southeast corner.

The SVRA's most prominent feature is Squaw Peak, a butte located in the middle of the unit that rises to an elevation of 400 feet (160 m), nearly 200 feet (80 m) above the surrounding flatlands. The peak serves as a landmark for visitors and provides commanding views of the entire area, including scenic features of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Blow Sand Hill, a large sand dune on the east face of Borrego Mountain, is another prominent feature. Visible from Highway 78, the dune is also identifiable from other high points in the unit. Both features help to orient trail riders.

Many drainages created by rapid storm runoff interlace the area. Larger drainages are often eroded below normal grade and are not clearly visible until seen at close range. Although quite popular as trails and travel routes, these drainages can be a potential problem for unaware recreationists.

Meteorology

Four types of climatic phenomena occur in the unit. (1) Moist, unstable air from the east and southeast during summer months causes occasional rainstorms. This system is responsible for most of the region's rainfall. (2) Thunderstorms bring rain during late summer and early fall. (These occasionally damaging storms originate as hurricanes in the Pacific). (3) High windstorms (Santa Ana winds), mostly in the fall and winter, are caused by a buildup of high pressure over the desert. These winds out of the north have caused severe duststorms. (4) Low-pressure storm systems from the Pacific Ocean bring rain anytime from mid-October to mid-April.

The unit is located in the rainshadow of the Peninsular Range. Rainfall in the Colorado Desert varies according to location and topography. At Ocotillo Wells, the annual normal rainfall is 3.45 inches (87 mm), while at Borrego Springs near Anza-Borrego Desert State Park headquarters, the average is 4.78 inches (121 mm). Spectacular spring wildflower displays depend on gentle winter rains, while the summer season can produce thunderheads, strong winds, and fierce cloudbursts that cause flash floods which erode the landscape.

Winds are one of the desert's most interesting weather phenomena. Summer winds, though warm, are usually moderate, while fall and winter winds can be fierce. The latter, known as the Santa Anas, are the strongest of the year, sometimes reaching velocities of over 40 miles per hour. They achieve maximum velocities soon after sunrise, and often come up with great suddenness after rainstorms. During the Santa Anas, fine sand and soil particles from dry lakes and dunes become windborn, causing sandstorms that can last several days.

As in all deserts, there is a considerable daily range in temperatures. In summer, temperatures range from above 100°F in the daytime to below 70° or 75 °F at night; in winter, from 65° or 70 °F at midday to below freezing at night. The hottest days of summer result when low-pressure areas move in from the coast and form over the Great Basin. Summer shade temperatures of 105° to 118 °F are frequent in the unit.

Hydrology

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is crossed by four broad, flat washes (Military Wash, Fault Wash, Palo Verde Wash, and Bank Wash), all of which enter the unit from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on the north and west. These washes fill with heavy flows during summer rains. San Felipe Creek, an intermittent stream, flows generally west to east across the south half of the unit.

There is usually no surface water in the unit. The unit's name is derived from the shallow thermal waters in the southern section. The presence of mesquite is evidence of water at Barrel Springs, about a mile east of Squaw Peak.

Geology

Detailed geologic mapping of Ocotillo Wells SVRA has not been completed. Although available geologic information is suitable for general planning, more detailed mapping and analysis will be necessary before additional facilities are built. Since the area is primarily dedicated to OHV recreation, erosion problems are particularly important.

The unit lies on the western edge of the Salton Trough Geomorphic Province. Most of the unit's geologic formations are relatively young sediments (less than 25 million years old), derived primarily from terrestrial and lacustrine (lake) environments with minor marine deposits. There are also minor outcrops of metamorphosed sedimentary rocks and granitics, and widespread unconsolidated alluvium.

In general, the unit's flat surface is dissected by irregular canyons and washes, which wind through mudhills, uplifted and tilted sediments, and rugged crystalline outcrops. Infrequent but torrential rains cause rapid topographic changes, erosion, and deposits. The general absence of surface water and rain results in a low incidence of chemical weathering. Ridges and exposures, which in a less arid environment would not stand up, remain intact and sharply defined until subjected to the relentless effects of flash floods, sand blasting, wide temperature fluctuations, and mechanical grinding and compaction from vehicle travel.

The unit's exposed geological formations include (from oldest to youngest): pre-Cretaceous metasediments, Cretaceous quartz diorite, Imperial Formation (a Miocene marine deposit), Canebrake Conglomerate, Palm Spring Formation (a Pliocene non-marine deposit), Ocotillo Conglomerate, Recent playa deposits, Quaternary alluvium, and dune sand. Alluvial deposits predominate in the area, covering flat surfaces and washes with fine sands, silts, and clay.

The Miocene (10-15 million years old) Imperial Formation includes abundant oyster shell reefs which now form resistant ridge caps. A wide variety of oyster shells, mollusks, corals, ostracods, diatoms, and foraminifera are found in these fossil-rich layers. No significant vertebrate fossils have been found at Ocotillo Wells. However, in adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the terrestrial Palm Spring Formation has yielded significant finds, including mammoths, mastodons, horses, camels, antelope, deer, ground sloths, and possibly a cold-climate musk ox.

Movements of the earth's crust are tied to regional plate tectonics. An active branch of the complex San Jacinto Fault Zone (the Coyote Creek fault) cuts through the unit, as well as other related, less active faults, including the San Felipe Hills fault. The last major earthquake in the area originated in the unit in April 1968. The epicenter of the magnitude 6.4 earthquake was on the north flank of Borrego Mountain. It caused surface rupture along traces of Coyote Creek fault, with an offset of as much as 38 centimeters. Considerable shaking and aftershocks resulted in spectacular boulder falls, which blocked roads and canyons. Continued seismic activity in the 7.5 magnitude range can be expected.

The unit contains many classic examples of desert geomorphic features, some of which warrant special protective measures and lend themselves to interpretive displays. These features include: massive alluvial fans, coalescing to form bajadas; playas; pediments (erosional bedrock surfaces covered with alluvium); desert pavement; desert varnish (a dark magnesium or iron oxide coating on exposed rock surfaces); desert stream channels; mudhills (rounded, nearly vegetationless clay hills); and on a smaller scale though no less interesting, armored mud balls, ventifacts, and sandstone concretions.

Soils

Part of the unit was mapped in 1967 by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service as part of the soil survey of San Diego County, at a scale of 1:24,000. Unfortunately, the northern third of the unit and a small part of the southwestern corner were not included in the mapping survey. DPR staff has completed the soils map for these areas from aerial photo interpretations. No field check has been made.

The soils of Ocotillo Wells SVRA are very sparsely vegetated due to low rainfall and low soil fertility. Most of the area is covered by gently sloping alluvial fans (2 to 9% slopes), alluvial washes, playa deposits, and generally flat alluvial plains.

In general, the soils are unconsolidated alluvium derived from granitic bedrock or Tertiary-aged sedimentary formations. Most soils are moderate to excessively drained and rapidly permeable. Wind as well as water erosion plays an important role in soil erosion. The soil classifications found in the unit (and further described in the appendix) are:

Acid igneous rock land (AcG), Carrizo very gravelly sand (CeC), Indio silt loam (InA), Mecca fine sandy loam (MpA), Playa (Py), Riverwash (Rm), Rositas loamy coarse sand (RsA), Rositas loamy coarse sand (RsC), Rositas fine sand (RrC), sloping gullied land (SRD), and Badlands (Bz).

The soils north of the San Felipe Hills fault, in the northeastern part of the unit, have been classified by the Imperial Irrigation District as Badlands, which are rough, rapidly eroding areas of fine and medium-textured materials. The subsoil permeability is slow, runoff is rapid, and the erosion hazard is high. Because of these characteristics, the plan classifies this area for trails-use only (see section on Allowable Use Intensity).

Plant Life

The flora of Ocotillo Wells SVRA can be divided into eight plant communities: mesquite woodland, desert ironwood woodland, palo verde woodland, four wing saltbush scrub, creosote bush-burro-weed scrub, brittle bush scrub, desert buckwheat scrub, and ocotillo scrub. (The classification system is further described in the appendix.)

The woodland and buckwheat communities are found in major and tributary washes; four wing saltbush scrub on highly alkaline soils; creosote bush-burro-weed scrub on sandy rolling hills; brittle bush at the base of slopes, and ocotillo scrub on alluvial fans and in valleys.

Most vegetation in the unit is part of the creosote bush community. These plants are characterized by their stunted appearance and regular spacing. Their seeds are slow to germinate and require varying exposures to heat and moisture to initiate growth.

The California Native Plant Society lists Orcutt's woody aster (Xylorhiza orcuttii), found near Barrel Springs, as a rare and endangered species. Other species that are rare, but not endangered, are pholisma (Pholisma arenarium), Thurber's pilostyles (Pilostyles thurberi), and Salton milkvetch (Astragalus crotalariae). (See Plant Life appendix for details on these species.)

Of special value and botanical interest is the endemic desert buckwheat and the community it forms only in the SVRA and the vicinity.

Parts of the unit have been denuded of vegetation from continuing OHV use, especially in the washes. This has reduced species diversity and total coverage. The southern portion tends to be less vegetated than the northern, due to a heavier concentration of OHV activity. In addition, considerable damage to plant life was caused by maneuvers of General Patton's tank corps in the 1940s.

Animal Life

Various species of mammals, reptiles, and birds live in the unit.

Mammals include the western pipistrelle (evening bat), black-tailed hare, round-tailed ground squirrel, badger, long-tailed pocket mouse, kit fox, coyote, kangaroo rat, antelope, ground squirrel, and several other species.

Among the reptiles are the desert banded gecko, flat-tailed horned lizard, desert iguana, Colorado Desert zebra-tailed lizard, chuckwalla, and several other lizard species, including the Colorado desert fringe-toed lizard, which is on the San Diego County list of rare and endangered species. Snake species include the Colorado desert shovel-nosed snake, desert glossy snake, Colorado desert sidewinder, Western leaf-nosed, Sonoran gopher snake, and several others.

Bird species include the raven, Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, prairie falcon, mourning dove, road runner, burrowing owl, phainopepla, and horned lark.

Ecology

The distribution of major plant and animal species in the unit is determined primarily by soil type, water availability, and salt accumulation. Summer storms offer some water to the biotic components of the ecosystems. Extreme temperatures control the adaptations of flora and fauna. Low rainfall results in minor chemical weathering of the generally flat terrain.

The SVRA contains eight ecosystem units, including desert buckwheat, which is unique to Ocotillo Wells SVRA and its vicinity. The other seven are mesquite, desert ironwood, palo verde, four wing saltbush, creosote bush, brittle bush, and ocotillo.

The mesquite ecosystem is found at Barrel Springs, which has a sandy substrate solidified less than two feet below the surface. It supports a dense mesquite woodland community, which tends to increase humidity and lower the temperature at ground level. Water availability is relatively high due to local seeps and the dense cover which aids in retaining surface water. Many mammals and birds are attracted to this comparatively cool, moist area.

The desert ironwood ecosystem is found in the dry washes. The major dry washes are composed of alluvial deposits of sand and gravel. Rainfall temporarily floods the washes, subjecting the desert ironwood woodland communities there to severe scouring. The vegetation is usually sparse and the air temperature high, but like other riparian systems, the area attracts many animal species.

The palo verde ecosystem occurs in Palo Verde Wash, which is composed of alluvial deposits of sand and gravel and floods after major storms. The vegetation community is almost entirely palo verde.

The four wing saltbush ecosystem is found around Squaw Peak. The substrate is high in salt content, but has no surface crust. It supports a very sparse vegetation cover (5-10%) of the four wing saltbush community.

The creosote ecosystem is found in dune areas around Squaw Peak and Wolfe Well. The substrate has a sandy surface but is solidified a few feet beneath the surface. There are extreme surface temperatures (often up to 125°F in the summer) and high water percolation . The rolling hill topography offers protection from severe winds on the leeward side of the mounds. The vegetation is a creosote bush - burro-weed scrub with scattered coverage. Many members of the plant community are annual or biennial, increasing plant coverage appreciably during the spring bloom and offering a rich habitat for many species of mammals, birds, insects, and reptiles.

The brittle bush ecosystem occurs in the Borrego Mountain area. The resident brittle bush scrub community is associated with a well-drained decomposed granitic substrate. Rainfall is low and summer temperatures high. The vegetation cover is sparse.

Small washes northeast of Bank Wash contain the desert buckwheat ecosystem. The substrate is sandy to gravelly. The vegetation is classified as the desert buckwheat community, unique to the unit and its vicinity.

The ocotillo ecosystem is found on coarse sandy alluvium. The soil is well drained to leached, with low water retention and high erosion. The soils are mostly undeveloped. Vegetation is composed of the ocotillo scrub community, which is sparsely scattered (25% coverage) on the infertile soil.

Cultural Resources

Historical Background

People have lived in southeastern California for at least 10,000 years, quite possibly longer. The earliest, belonging to the Malpais culture, occupied an environment that was adjusting to the end of the last ice age (Pleistocene). Artifacts associated with this period are flaked stonework, rock clearings, gravel cairns, and large gravel-outlined figures. The Malpais Industry was followed by a new cultural pattern known as San Dieguito (10,000 - 7,500 B.P. = before present) and Early Milling Stone (7,500 - 3,900 B.P.). These people became familiar with the region's resources, developing more efficient economies that allowed more sedentary living and population growth. Although they probably passed through or used portions of the Ocotillo Wells area, evidence of habitation in the present recreation area, other than Malpais manifestations, is attributed to the Late Milling Stone Horizon (3,900 B.P. - A.D. 1,500). Groups inhabiting the region at the time of European contact appear to have developed from this cultural tradition. They were the Cahuilla, Ipai (Kamia), and Tipai (Kumeyaay), whose territories converged at Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

These people were hunters and gatherers who utilized all edible plants and almost all available animals. Vegetal foods were stored in large containers. Food commodities were socially exchanged between neighboring groups. The Kamia added agriculture to their subsistence pattern, planting along riverbanks after annual floods and on valley lakeshores. The natural environment was altered by agriculture and by periodically and intentionally burning some habitats to improve plant yields and hunting.

The best known example in the unit of the Late Milling Stone Horizon is a habitation site at Barrel Springs that probably served as a seasonal camp for all three peoples, who would collect natural resources in the area and trade. During conflicts or drought, the mineral springs and adjacent areas may have provided refuge. Considering the wealth of artifacts found at Barrel Springs during a partial (10%) excavation by the department in 1977, it certainly occupied an important point in the trading relationships between coastal and interior peoples.

The Spanish first entered the general area of Ocotillo Wells when the need arose for an overland route between northern Mexico and California. Father Garces in 1771, Fages in 1772, and Anza in 1774 and 1775, all visited the area, providing links in the eventual Anza Trail. Both Anza expeditions of 1774 and 1775 followed San Felipe Creek through the center of today's SVRA.

Two of the first Americans to cross the area were Jedediah Smith in 1826 and Peg Leg Smith in 1829. The gold discovery in 1848 brought thousands of immigrants to California through the Anza-Borrego Desert. Ten years later, the Butterfield Company began regular stage service through the area. The Civil War caused increased military use of the Emigrant Trail, and in 1877, when the railroad was completed from Arizona to Los Angeles, the Anza Trail fell into disuse.

The 1880s brought a new interest in the desert. Instead of a corridor to reach other areas, people began to see the desert as a place to settle. Homesteaders brought their cattle, sheep, and goats to graze. The cattle industry became important to the area. Cattle camps were established and the old Emigrant Road began to be used regularly for cattle drives from ranches in Arizona to Southern California destinations.

Mining has also occurred throughout the region. In the 1850s, reports of gold discoveries came out of the Anza-Borrego Desert. Some of these developed into legends, such as the Lost Mine of Peg Leg Smith. These stories attracted more prospectors, and gold mining was conducted on a small scale for many years. Later, interest shifted to calcite, gypsum, tungsten, and celestite, which were mined until the 1950s.

Native American Resources

Ocotillo Wells has never been systematically surveyed for cultural resources. However, an archeological assessment of cultural values was made in the unit in 1976, when 25 prehistoric sites were recorded in the unit, and others were reported outside the survey areas. At least half these sites may relate to the Malpais Industry, dating from the early post-Pleistocene period. The artifacts consist of simple lithic tools such as large flakes, choppers, scraper planes, and ovate bifaces. Projectile points are absent, and tool manufacture by pressure flaking was unknown. This early period is also characterized by circular rock clearings, gravel cairns, and large gravel-outlined figures. The rock clearings generally lack walls but often have slightly elevated rock rims. However, low walls of piled boulders occasionally occur. These clearings usually are located on rocky, upper terraces and adjacent mesas, and on desert pavement. Sometimes called sleeping circles, the clearings typically lack associated artifacts.

Other prehistoric resources in the area are sites associated with the Late Milling Stone Horizon. Artifacts include circular shell fishhooks, perforated stones, bone tools, pottery, shell ornaments, bone and stone blades, scrapers, manos, metates, mortars, and pestles.

Euroamerican Resources

Very few Euroamerican resources were recorded in Ocotillo Wells SVRA during the 1976 cultural assessment. These consist mainly of remnants of mining operations, a homestead built about 1929, and tank tracks, craters, and metal fragments from Army maneuvers conducted before and during World War II.

Esthetic Resources

The unit is situated in the midst of interesting and rugged geologic and topographic features, many of which, though visible from the unit, lie outside its boundaries. From the SVRA, spectacular vistas can be enjoyed of distant, rugged mountain ranges. About 15 miles north are the Santa Rosa Mountains; just 5 miles southwest rise the Vallecito Mountains; and beyond these are the Laguna Mountains, which have snow-covered slopes most of the winter and spring.

Inside the unit scenic interest is somewhat limited because of sparse vegetation and generally flat terrain. Some scenic and topographic interest is provided by Squaw Peak and Borrego Mountain. Another interesting location is an area of rolling sand dunes vegetated by mesquite at Barrel Springs, about a mile east of Squaw Peak.

Just outside the unit's west boundary, the East Butte of Borrego Mountain rises to an elevation of 1,057 feet, contributing an important scenic element to the unit. The southern portion of this mountain, which extends into the unit's southwestern corner, is scenically and recreationally attractive, with challenging dunes and rugged slopes rising abruptly above the desert floor.

In the unit's extreme northeast corner are mudhills which provide some visual interest in the generally flat area. These hills extend both northward and eastward well beyond unit boundaries into Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Also along the east boundary, and just south of the mudhills, is the Shell Reef area, an east-west trending ridge capped by an erosion-resistant layer of fossils, including oysters, mollusks, and corals -- evidence that it was once submerged in the ocean.

Recreation Resources

The unit has been used for more than 40 years for OHV recreation. Although the SVRA is predominantly flat, it is well suited for this use. There are several places of sufficient topographic relief to provide vehicular recreationists with a variety of challenging activities, including touring, rallies, and hill climbing (a popular nighttime happening). The unit is also available to groups wishing to hold club or competitive events. Popular locations for these include the sand dunes at the base of Borrego Mountain, Squaw Peak, the Mesquite Dunes area, and the east-west trending ridges paralleling the south boundary.

The primitive road system in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is accessible from the unit and is used by vehicular recreationists for touring. Property belonging to the State Lands Commission, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and private owners, which is located immediately east of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, is being studied for potential acquisition. (The later section on potential acquisition provides more details on adjacent uses.)

Several areas in the southwest portion of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, just east of Borrego Mountain, are sheltered from winds and have some shade-producing desert ironwoods. They are suitable for camping and picnicking.

Resource Policy Formation

Classification

The statutory purpose for a state vehicular recreation area (including resource objectives, use concepts, management philosophies, and resource protection and management guidelines) is stated in Section 5001.5 of the Public Resources Code:

> "State vehicular recreation areas, consisting of areas where topographic features and associated recreational vehicle opportunities are the primary values. Such areas shall be chosen to insure that no substantial natural values are lost and that no adjoining properties incur adverse effects from the operation and maintenance of vehicular recreation areas. When important natural or scenic values are found to be present within the boundaries of a state vehicular recreation area, they shall be defined within a natural preserve in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (f). The development of facilities shall be aimed at making full public use of the recreational opportunities present, and the natural and cultural elements of the environment may be managed or modified to enhance the recreation experiences. Under all circumstances, conditions of accelerated and unnatural erosion shall be anticipated and prevented to the extent possible. Where the occurrence of such erosion is unanticipated, every measure shall be taken to restore the area."

Declaration of Purpose

The prime resource of Ocotillo Wells SVRA is the large amount of land with physical and natural characteristics well suited for recreational vehicle use. In addition, there are natural and cultural values in the unit and at nearby Anza-Borrego Desert State Park which can provide other day-use and overnight recreational opportunities.

The purpose of Ocotillo Wells SVRA is to make available to the people vehicular recreational opportunities along with other day and overnight recreational opportunities; to manage and protect any fragile, rare, and irreplaceable natural and cultural resources in the unit; and to interpret for the people the recreational, physical, natural, and cultural values of the unit and the surrounding desert.

Zone of Primary Interest

The department is concerned about all lands adjacent to the unit. Of primary concern are state park lands to the west and north and lands to the east under study for potential acquisition. Any change in land use of these adjacent lands could affect the unit's stated purpose and management objectives.

Resource Management Policies

Development of facilities and management of natural and cultural resources shall allow full public use of the unit's potential vehicular recreational opportunities. Natural and cultural elements shall be managed and, in areas designated for trail and open use, may be modified to enhance recreation experiences.

Policies for Natural Resources

Meteorology

Information on factors such as rainfall, wind, and temperature is necessary for long-term management. Site data are essential, especially for evaluating erosion potential.

Policy: To obtain needed meteorological data, a recording rain gauge shall be installed and maintained in the unit. A hygrothermograph shall also be installed to record temperature and humidity. Wind conditions shall be monitored with appropriate equipment.

Hydrology

The unit's topography is sculptured primarily by concentrated runoff from infrequent torrential rains. Winds also play an important role in erosion, but running water is responsible for most major features.

Policy: The department shall prevent off-site impacts caused by OHV use in the unit. Sedimentation patterns in the major washes shall be monitored and steps taken to assure that adjoining properties do not incur adverse impacts from the use of OHVs in the unit. Where major washes leave unit boundaries and channel sediments and water to non-SVRA lands, erosion control measures shall be started to prevent adverse impacts to off-site areas (PRC 5019.56c). Control actions shall include but not be limited to construction of debris catchment basins and partially lined channels, and physical removal of sediment to protect adjacent roads and private property.

Geology

Erosion

Use of OHVs in the desert accelerates the potential for wind and water erosion. The Public Resources Code requires confinement of OHV impacts to department-administered lands (Sec. 5019.56(c)).

Policy: Accelerated erosion caused by OHV use shall be regularly monitored by photographic and written documentation. When erosion leads to hazardous situations or when important natural resource values are in danger of being lost, areas of the unit shall be closed until they have recovered enough to withstand renewed OHV activities. Rehabilitation efforts shall be undertaken to preserve the unit's recreational and natural values, and to confine impacts within unit boundaries.

Geologic Hazard Mitigation

The unit is cut by an active fault capable of generating a magnitude 7.5 earthquake. Continued seismicity, ground rupture, and violent shaking are to be expected.

Policy: All structures shall be constructed to withstand a magnitude 7.5 earthquake generated along any of the branches of the San Jacinto Fault Zone. Geologists shall be consulted on the siting and design of permanent structures. A geologic report shall be filed with the state geologist before construction in the special studies zone defined by the California Division of Mines and Geology.

Protection of Significant Geological Features

The mudhills in the unit's northeastern corner are remarkably undisturbed and are not able to withstand direct impacts of OHV use. They are naturally bare of vegetation and can be easily eroded.

Policy: Vehicle trails in the mudhills shall be identified to provide through routes for travelers and patrols. Motorized vehicles will be permitted only on designated trails.

The unit contains several areas which abound in concretions -- from pea-sized spheres to larger pumpkin-shaped balls and table top-sized slabs. Concretions are structures formed in place by the action of water on minerals in sediments. Their varied shapes and tendency to "weather out" of the surrounding formation make them interesting examples of slow-moving geological processes.

Policy: Areas of particularly significant sandstone concretions shall be protected by the establishment of a trail-use zone or other methods. Interpretive signing and access shall be provided, explaining the formation process and protection afforded the features. Collection shall not be allowed.

Soils

The physical and chemical properties of soils are important factors to be used in planning, development, and management of OHV units. Suitability of soils for OHV use, and vulnerability of soils to physical breakdown, must be considered when planning and using these units. Loss of soil cover through deterioration of surface layers leads to accelerated erosion from water and wind.

Policy: Erosion shall be monitored and excessive erosion shall be avoided as much as possible. Impacts shall be confined within unit boundaries. (Refer also to hydrology and geology policies.)

Policy: The unit's soils map shall be field-checked and completed by staff who have specialized training in soils sciences. This map will serve as a base map for erosion control and soil management.

Policy: Soils studies shall be conducted in the unit to determine wind and water erosion in areas of concentrated use as compared to effects in limited-use areas.

Policy: Use areas shall be continually monitored and rehabilitated. Close liaison shall be maintained with BLM desert planning staff who conduct soils studies and soils resource monitoring programs. Cooperative studies shall be encouraged.

Plant Life

Vegetative conditions that once existed within present unit boundaries can be estimated by looking at adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Judging from relatively undisturbed areas at Anza-Borrego, there was considerably more vegetation and associated fauna before vehicle use began at Ocotillo Wells.

Policy: When half the natural vegetative cover is lost in a resource management unit (defined as a plant community - soil phase combination), that unit shall be closed for rehabilitation. Unique plant communities shall be protected in a trails-use zone (see section on Allowable Use Intensity for definition).

Policy: The department shall map the distribution of the unit's several rare and endangered plant species. Protective measures shall be instituted to restrict vehicle use in the plant's supporting habitats by establishing a trails-use zone or by other methods.

Animal Life

The California Administrative Code protects plants and animals in State Park System units (CAC 4305, 4306).

Policy: Unit staff shall vigorously enforce regulations protecting plants and animals whenever flagrant and willful destruction occurs. Current lists of plants and animals shall be maintained at unit headquarters.

General Ecology

Policy: For management purposes, additional studies shall be made of vegetation, plant and animal distribution, soils, erosion patterns, and geologic features to supplement information in the initial unit resource inventory.

Policy: A resource monitoring program shall be started immediately by operations staff to gauge the impact of vehicle use on vegetation, wildlife, soils, and other environmental aspects. Headquarters staff will assist in establishing and evaluating the program.

Policies for Cultural Resources

Cultural resource management at Ocotillo Wells SVRA is now governed by various statutes and directives. The following portions of the Public Resources Code deal with this subject: Chapter 1, Sections 5006.47 and 5019.74 (for a cultural preserve); Chapter 1.7, Section 5097.5; and Chapter 1.75, Section 5097.9. The following department resource management directives are relevant: 11, 13, 15, 24, 25, 32, 50, 51, 52, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, and 72.

Cultural site sensitivity is based on the type of site, the current site condition, and the potential for destruction. Sites with debris or scattered artifacts tend to be quite sensitive to both weathering and visitor use. Sites composed entirely of bedrock outcrops are less sensitive.

In the spring of 1976, an effort was made to identify and record cultural values in this unit. Due to time restrictions and shifting sands, some cultural resources may not have been found and properly recorded.

Policy: Any type of construction with subsurface disturbance will not be permitted without a survey of the site for cultural resources by department historians and archeologists. Any cultural resources that are found shall be properly recorded and protected. Cultural resource surveys shall also be conducted of all acquisitions.

Policy: All known prehistoric sites in the unit will be preserved and protected from OHV damage. These areas will be classified for trails use only, with travel routes directed away from archeological sites.

Policy: The partially excavated Barrel Springs site, which has produced much research data and still contains many artifacts, will be considered for cultural preserve status (Section 5019.74 of the Public Code). Meanwhile, the site, including its prehistoric values and the natural spring, shall be protected from OHV damage. Vehicles shall be prevented from entering the archeological site either by large boulders placed around it or by other barriers. Research materials and data provided by the excavation shall be the basis for an interpretive display at the site.

Policy for Esthetic Resources

Policy: The department shall maintain and enhance the unit's scenic quality by use zoning and careful location of designated trails and other facilities.

Allowable Use Intensity

OHV recreation is complex. Different vehicle models are made for different uses. Depending on operator skill, vehicle size, the desire of users to push their vehicles and themselves to the limit, and the concern of operators for the environment, allowable use intensities will differ greatly with various forms of OHV recreation.

Because of the difficulty of estimating the number of users an area can support, unit management guidelines for OHV use and intensity are established around the following three OHV use zones: open use, trail use, and closed. These zones were recommended primarily because some areas in the unit are more sensitive to OHV activity than others. Different management levels are needed to comply with existing environmental requirements and to ensure the unit's long-term use for OHV recreation.

Principal factors used to establish the OHV use zones include soil stability and type, the sensitivity of important plant and animal life, and the significance of archeological sites and geological features. Management of zone boundaries was also an important factor.

The following OHV use zones are shown on the Land Use Intensity Map and further described in the Lands Use and Facilities Element:

Open-Use Zone

This zone, with 12,470 acres (85 percent) of the unit, includes lands with high tolerance for OHV use. Vehicle use can be allowed anywhere in this zone, and individual and group camping may be permitted.

Trail Use Zone

The zone, with 2,120 acres (15 percent) of the unit, allows OHV use on existing roads, trails, and washes, and those to be designated. The siting of ranger residences may require relocating existing trails to provide a buffer between residences and OHV activities.

In the unit's northeast corner, existing natural values are very sensitive to OHV use. In their natural state, the mudhills are devoid of vegetation and highly erodible. The washes in this area support the habitat of most of the unit's rare and endangered plants, as listed by the California Native Plant Society.

Closed Zone

Because the land is extremely sensitive, the proposed one-acre Barrel Springs Cultural Preserve would be the only area in the unit closed to vehicle use. Boundaries would be established around the most sensitive features. The preserve could be reached only by foot to assure maximum resource protection.

LAND USE AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

LAND USE AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

This section, which proposes land use and facilities, was developed from the resource evaluations described in the Resource Element, and from assessments of existing land uses, visitor needs, and operations requirements.

Existing Land Use and Facilities

Some form of OHV use has occurred on the unit's land since the 1930s. During the early 1940s, the property was used for Army maneuvers by General Patton's tank corps. Recreational OHV use began after World War II with surplus military jeeps and water-cooled dune buggies. This activity grew in popularity and expanded to today's forms of OHV recreation.

Unit attendance for fiscal 1981-82 is expected to be about 275,000 visitors. In 1980-81, visitor attendance was 273,800. Peak use occurs on holiday weekends (Thanksgiving, Easter, etc.) when visitor attendance is about 25,000 people.

The flat open terrain dominating the unit is attractive to OHV enthusiasts for desert travel and exploring. The unit has been used mostly for unrestricted cross-country travel, usually along natural sand washes. Other trails follow old roads. All routes are designated and appear on maps and brochures available at the facility. However, there is no developed trails system. Present trails are the result of travel between popular points of interest (see Map of Existing Facilities).

There are several favored areas--Blow Sand Hill, the drainage east of it, and Squaw Peak (see Existing Facilities Map). Blow Sand Hill, a sand dune several hundred feet high, is used for hill climbing, making it popular with spectators on busy weekends and during competitions. The drainage east of Blow Sand Hill is a camping site known as the Quarry Campground. It contains desert ironwood trees used by campers for protective shade and shelter. Squaw Peak, in the center of the unit, is another popular sand dune area. Rising nearly 200 feet above the surrounding flatlands, its dunes are an outstanding natural feature offering extensive recreational opportunities as well as scenic vistas. Nighttime activities in the unit are also very popular, especially during summer months. (Area staff has indicated that nighttime use poses no unusual operational problems.)

Ocotillo Wells SVRA, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to the north and west, share common attributes of natural beauty and recreational resources. There have been only minor conflicts between OHV use and traditional state park activities, such as hiking, painting, photography, and nature studies.

Each unit is very accessible to the other. Some of the primitive roads that follow washes within Ocotillo Wells SVRA extend into Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (see Existing Facilities Map).

Lands east and south of Ocotillo Wells SVRA are predominantly private with some land held by the Bureau of Land Management and the State Lands Commission. Much of the land to the east is used by OHVs. Lands to the south are separated from the SVRA by Highway 78. Ocotillo Wells County Airport, located on Benson Dry Lake just north of Highway 78, is used by light planes, sail planes, and motorized hang gliders.

The small town of Ocotillo Wells south of the unit includes two gas stations, two cafes, and a vehicle storage facility. More commercial services are available about a mile south of the town, along Split Mountain Road. These conveniently located services are quite popular with OHVers, especially on peak-season weekends.

An informal entrance to the SVRA, with a unit identification sign, speed limit signs, and large trash receptacles, is on the north side of Highway 78, west of Benson Dry Lake. There is an old homestead site within the unit about a mile east of Benson Dry Lake. There are no buildings left; however, several abandoned water wells and stands of mature eucalyptus trees make this a potential oasis for visitors.

Operational facilities, located in the unit's extreme southwest corner, include a small fenced compound with two trailers (each about 8 feet by 30 feet) for office and storage space, and an outdoor public telephone. A single-family house at the rear of the operations area is used as a ranger residence.

The trailers and compound are no longer adequate. Because the trailers were developed as temporary facilities and lack adequate protection from the sun, staff worktime must be restricted to cool hours of the day.

Proposed Land Use

Since the State Park and Recreation Commission's classification of the unit as an SVRA in 1976, OHV use has had little obvious impact on the unit's natural and cultural resources. Few demands for additional facilities have been made by OHV users. Consequently, this plan primarily formalizes existing land use patterns, applies land use and management proposals to recent acquisitions, protects resources, and provides facilities the staff needs to maintain and manage unit resources. The following use zones are designated for the unit, based on the resources and the use they are capable of withstanding.

(The Resource Element describes the resource tolerances of these zones. The locations of the zones are depicted on the Land Use Intensity Map.)

Open-Use Zone

This zone encompasses the majority of the unit (about 85% or 12,470 acres). This area will be open to all types of conventional OHV use. The zone contains most features, identified in the previous section on existing land use, that are popular with OHV enthusiasts. Uses and activities now taking

place near these features include informal camping, day-use observation, and unrestricted vehicle use. Visitors will be permitted to continue these uses in this zone. The recently acquired property in the southeastern portion of the unit offers additional opportunities for camping.

Trail-Use Only Zone

This zone (about 15% of the unit or 2,120 acres) is composed of two locations, the southwest and the northeast corners of the unit. The southwest part of the unit includes the site of existing and proposed operational facilities. The trails only designation is intended to reduce user conflicts with daily operational traffic and to minimize the impact of noise on staff and families in their residences.

Due to the number of natural features in the northeast corner, including sandstone concretions, erosion-prone mudhills, and rare and endangered plants (as listed by the California Native Plant Society), use will be limited to designated trails that will be developed to interpret those features and to minimize impacts on them.

Closed Zone

A one-acre area at Barrel Springs is proposed as a cultural preserve, where vehicles will be prohibited and features will be interpreted.

Access

The unit can now be entered anywhere along Highway 78. However, most visitors enter just west of the town of Ocotillo Wells at an informal entry point. Since this location is so popular, it is proposed that a designated entry point be established there for user convenience. While no physical barriers will be set up along Highway 78 to control alternate access, signing at this location will provide a clear identification of the unit and also a reference point for visitors and staff.

Internal circulation is not a major concern in the SVRA because most of the unit is proposed as an open use area. The need for established circulation routes in the open zone is minimal since there are adequate opportunities at present to travel from place to place. Circulation will be limited to trails in the trails zone. The primitive roads that connect Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Anza-Borrego Desert SP will be open to use. A distinction will be made between the two units, their roads, and trails by signs at the boundary between the two units. (Activities are limited to roads and trails in the state park.)

Proposed Facilities

Most OHV users do not demand conveniences such as flush toilets, drinking fountains, and grassy picnic areas. However, there are certain developments that would benefit both visitors and operations staff. This plan's facility development proposals will provide staff and visitors with essential facilities sufficient to maintain and manage the SVRA, based on the experience of recent years.

To minimize improvement costs, development will be limited to the following three areas (see Map of Proposed Facilities for locations):

Proposed Entrance Area

Although the unit can be entered anywhere along Highway 78, entering and exiting will be encouraged at this location. To accomplish this, several improvements are proposed. Signing for Ocotillo Wells SVRA shall be placed along Highway 78, giving directions to this point and identifying it as the entrance. An orientation area will be developed just off the highway with a kiosk for the posting and dispensing of information about the facility and scheduled events. Large trash receptacles there will be available for most visitors' trash. (Drinking water will not be available at this location.)

Headquarters and Maintenance Area

As described in the section on existing land use, there are already two trailers at the site that were intended to be short-term solutions to the need for maintenance and storage space. Staff and equipment have outgrown the trailers and the small compound. It is proposed that a permanent maintenance shop be built, designed to maintain and store vehicles and other equipment. The maintenance building will also include a covered outdoor work area for protection from the sun. The existing ranger residence will be rehabilitated and trailer pads shall be developed for additional staff housing.

A trailer sanitation station will be constructed to serve the many OHVers who operate vehicles with self-contained toilets. Water is necessary to clean the station area after each use and the existing water supply will no longer be adequate. A new water storage tank will be built with enough capacity to handle this need and other proposed development. Drinking water for visitors will also be available at this location.

A unit headquarters will be provided for operational functions and visitor information. First aid will also be available there.

Future Use Area

Facilities proposed at the entrance and maintenance areas are expected to handle current visitor needs. The future use area is intended to accommodate additional visitor needs (camping, water, and a trailer sanitation station) when current facilities cannot adequately serve visitors. However, this site is available for use in its undeveloped state. Any developments there shall be consistent with the unit's current use patterns.

Some protection from the desert sun is already afforded in this area by large trees, which will attract visitors. To accommodate the increased concentration of people, minimal improvements are proposed. Road improvements would enable trailers and other camping vehicles to enter this area. A trailer sanitation station will be constructed for the convenience of visitors in self-contained vehicles, and existing wells will be rehabilitated. These are all long-range improvements based on user needs and shall have a low priority in relation to other improvements proposed in this plan.

Portable chemical toilets will be placed in all areas of the unit where overnight use is concentrated. Permanent restrooms will be built when needed.

Concessions

Possible concessions services have been explored throughout the planning process. Because essential commercial services for visitors are available adjacent to the unit, it is recommended that no permanent concessions facilities be located at Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

However, since the unit will be available to organizations that want to use it for OHV events that draw large crowds, temporary concession operations will be permitted if operational staff determines that it is desirable. Arrangements for this are discussed in the Operations Element.

Recommended Sequence of Implementation

The sequence of implementing the proposals in this plan is displayed in the following priority list.

	Resource Management	Visitor Accommodations
Immediate Priorities:	o Establishment of reference points for determining off-site sediment transport	o Signing for entrance, land use, and major trails
	o Identification and protection of cultural preserve	o Interpretive panels, unit orientation maps
	o Designation of trails in trail-use zones	o Headquarters and administrative facilities (including water well and trailer sanitation station)
	o Management of plant and soil resources to minimize soil loss through erosion	o Formalized trail connections to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
Future Priorities:	o Rehabilitation of areas if important natural and recreational values are jeopardized	o Additional camping and trailer sanitation station

INTERPRETIVE ELEMENT

INTERPRETIVE ELEMENT

There are substantial opportunities at Ocotillo Wells SVRA for interpretation that enhances visitors' recreational experiences. Programs will be designed primarily to improve OHV riding experiences and to contribute to the long-term use of the park as an OHV recreation area. (The interpretive prospectus for Ocotillo Wells SVRA, on file with the department, contains a detailed discussion of interpretation proposed for the unit.)

Outline of Interpretive Themes

The following themes will be presented at Ocotillo Wells SVRA:

1. OHV Use and Development

    a. Orientation and Management
    b. Safety and Skills Improvement
    c. OHV Evolution and History

2. The Desert Environment

    Part I. Physical Heritage

    a. Plant and Wildlife Adaptations
    b. Landforms
    c. Environmental Alteration

    Part II. Cultural Heritage

    a. A Crossroads for Native Americans and Euro-Americans
    b. Native American Use and Remains
    c. Hispanic and American History

Descriptions of Interpretive Themes

1. OHV Use and Development

This theme will encourage the safe operation and enjoyment of OHVs at Ocotillo Wells. In addition, the theme is designed to help safeguard the future use of Ocotillo Wells as a SVRA. Because a stable physical landscape is essential to the sport, the environmental relationships involved in the activity will be presented.

a. Orientation and Management: The unit's recreational potential will be interpreted at the entrance station through maps and displays. Interpretive trails, facilities, and interesting features in the unit will be presented along with information on landscape reclamation projects, hazards, regulations, special events, and items of general interest to OHV enthusiasts.

In addition, staff and other individuals and groups could conduct orientation programs to teach OHV riding techniques that have minimal impacts on the environment.

b. Safety and Skills Improvement: A primary interpretive effort will deal with safety and survival in the desert environment. Survival information should be provided to help recreationists cope if they are lost or injured, or their vehicles are disabled. A selection of programs will deal with such related topics as safe riding practices, currently available safety equipment, first aid, and proper vehicle maintenance. Additional programs and activities that improve riding skills should be encouraged.

c. OHV Evolution and History: The evolution and application of all off-highway vehicles should be explored and interpreted. A historical approach could trace the past, present, and projected use of OHVs, illustrating how they evolved into a popular recreational activity. As part of this approach, the state's involvement, in terms of the OHV Fund and the importance of SVRAs, should be presented.

2. The Desert Environment

This theme should encourage visitors to examine aspects of the unit's physical and cultural environment. Leisurely rides over prescribed routes and participation in conducted or self-guided tours will contribute to the pleasures of riding while increasing rider sensitivity to the environment.

Part I. Physical Heritage

a. Plant and Wildlife Adaptations: The importance of the flora and fauna to the desert environment should be interpreted. Diversity, species adaptations to environmental niches, and the impact of changing land use are essential parts of this theme.

b. Landforms: The region's geological and topographical evolution should be interpreted through the area's interesting landforms. Related aspects of climatic and biological significance may be included if they are reflected in the landform. The influence of these landforms on people, from Native Americans to present OHV users, should be included.

c. Environmental Alteration: Interpretation should familiarize recreationists with ways to reduce or avoid impacts of OHVs on the landscape. This must be approached in a positive way, demonstrating how these actions will help ensure the SVRA's long-run usefulness, reduce costs, and promote the sport.

Part II. Cultural Heritage

a. A Crossroads for Native Americans and Euro-Americans: The region's diverse history can be appreciated more fully by explaining Ocotillo Wells' background as an important pathway used by Native Americans, Hispanic explorers, and early American pioneers.

b. Native American Use and Remains: The close relationship between Native Americans and the desert environment should be interpreted. Sufficient artifacts and prehistoric sites provide opportunities to tell the Native American story without restricting OHV use. Barrel Springs, for example, can provide a valuable interpretation site since it represents many functions (trading, resources, and settlement).

c. Hispanic and American History: Interpretation should reveal the story of notable historic figures and events from Hispanic pioneers to early American settlers. In particular, the American period of desert pioneering should be developed in terms of early environmental perceptions and settlement incentives. Military activities during World War II and resulting landscape modifications should be included.

Methods and Media

Personal contact is the most desirable way for staff to communicate with visitors at Ocotillo Wells, particularly during routine patrols, which provide valuable interpretation opportunities. Informal demonstrations, tours, and campfire programs should supplement these individual contacts. Programs should be designed to reflect the independent and mobile nature of many OHV enthusiasts. More formal scheduled presentations can be made part of the overall interpretive effort as the staff becomes familiar with visitors' habits and desires.

The use of interpretive facilities should be limited at this unit. They should not restrict OHV activities or be located in areas where they call attention to features that are exceptionally vulnerable to destruction. The entrance area and the ranger station are ideal locations for outdoor exhibits, especially if park brochures and other informational publications are available (see section on Interpretive Facilities).

The interpretive effort at Ocotillo Wells can be broadened by the programs and facilities at Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This can be accomplished by: 1) keeping visitors informed of trails and other facilities available at the nearby state park, 2) bringing temporary exhibits and other media to Ocotillo Wells from the state park, and 3) organizing OHV caravans between the two units.

Interpretive Services

Visitor Activities

Any activity or presentation developed for use at Ocotillo Wells SVRA should encourage visitor participation in order to stimulate interest and respect for the unit.

Ranger-visitor contacts during routine patrols will provide the most frequent opportunity for interpretation and participation. Interpretive brochures should be distributed during these contacts.

Demonstrations and workshops are especially suitable for this unit. Appropriate topics include safe operation of OHVs, first aid, desert camping, and survival. To develop riding skills, competitions could also be held at the SVRA. Youth programs should be developed and expanded. The Youth Certification Program, for example, has proved very successful. Properly trained visitors should be enlisted to organize and participate in these activities. Staff and volunteers could also make presentations outside the park to organized groups and other interested audiences.

Other personal services tailored around OHV activities could include informal outdoor programs for campers and ranger-led OHV tours at Ocotillo Wells and Anza-Borrego.

Self-guided routes, aided by maps and brochures, should be developed for viewing selected aspects of the countryside. These trails would orient newcomers to the area and offer interesting riding alternatives to return visitors.

Interpretive Facilities

Interpretive facilities are needed at Ocotillo Wells SVRA, but should be concentrated at only a few locations--the traditional entrance near the Ocotillo Wells Airport (Benson Dry Lake), the ranger station, and Barrel Springs. The need for more facilities should be determined only after staff becomes more familiar with the habits and desires of visitors.

The interpretive effort at the entrance should focus on OHV use and development and aspects of the region's physical and cultural heritage. Because Ocotillo Wells is bordered by Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, it is also important to make clear to visitors the differences in land use classification between the two units. An interpretive structure should be developed at the entrance with panels, maps, bulletin board, and brochures. Due to the possibility of vandalism, preventive measures should be incorporated into this structure's design.

The ranger station, located in the extreme southwest corner of the unit, will provide a good location for the display of Native American artifacts and historic objects. Because the station is frequented by visitors seeking information and assistance, brochures, maps, and bulletin boards would be appropriate at this facility. With the addition of benches and shade, the area could also be used for formal and informal programs.

The park brochures available at the entrance and the ranger station should deal with orientation, self-guided tours, safety, rules, and local history. Dispensers can be used at both sites.

To protect the cultural significance of Barrel Springs, interpretation should inform visitors of the area's unique value. Aspects of Native American settlement, use of resources, and trade should be presented at this site.

In summary, an innovative approach to interpretation is necessary at Ocotillo Wells. Interpretive services must catch and hold the interest of OHV enthusiasts whose recreational activities compete for their attention. When appropriate, programs and facilities at Anza-Borrego should be integrated with those at Ocotillo Wells to expand the latter's interpretive opportunities.

OPERATIONS ELEMENT

OPERATIONS ELEMENT

This element describes present management strategy and general guidelines for operating the unit in the future.

Existing Management

Ocotillo Wells SVRA has been operated by the department since the fall of 1977. Since then, area staff has been able to focus management efforts on parts of the unit needing the most attention.

The major emphasis of operations has been on visitor safety and resource management. Peak-use times are the most demanding on staff. Rangers monitor the citizens' band radio emergency frequency to help locate and reduce response time in case of injury accidents. Rangers are also qualified to administer first aid. Coordination with outside entities in emergencies is a continuing process. The department cooperates very closely with local communities to ensure this coordination. The unit's staff also conducts an educational session entitled "The Driver's Certification Program." This was developed primarily for OHV users who are not old enough for a driver's license. The program is not required; it is offered for users to increase their awareness of safe OHV operations.

Resource management at Ocotillo Wells SVRA has been both simple and effective. Rangers have found that interpretive identification and directional signing offers more protection than such devices as fences or closure signs, which tend to draw attention to the features.

Unit staff has already initiated some minor improvements to aid in management. Speed limit signs have been posted in the vicinity of Quarry Campground. A 15-mile per hour speed limit is strictly enforced there and in other camping areas. Speed limit signs and a unit identification sign have also been placed at the commonly used entrance point off Highway 78. Trash dumpsters have been placed at the entrance and at camping areas. There are two temporary mobile trailers inside a small fenced area, which has proved inadequate as the unit's operational office.

Proposed Management

When the general plan is put into effect, most current management procedures will be continued. The following changes are anticipated as a result of implementing this plan:

1. An emphasis on expanding available recreational resources such as: trail connections to adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, interpretive programs, potential camping opportunities in the identified future-use area, and trails development in the trails-use-only zone.

2. Staffing adjustments will be made in response to increased attendance and changing use patterns. Visitor use is expected to increase along with the desire for camping. As a result, more staff will be needed to meet the needs of the recreating public, particularly at peak-use times and during nighttime activities. A greater effort will be made to assure that drinking alcoholic beverages and the operation of OHVs do not mix. Other adjustments will include a greater staff presence at the proposed headquarters, which will reduce the need for dispatching additional staff from Anza-Borrego State Park.

3. Ocotillo Wells SVRA will continue to be available for organized events. Holders of these events will be required to obtain a special-use permit from the department by indicating the intended activity, its location, the course of operation, the expected number of participants and spectators, and any necessary concessions; and by submitting proof of insurance. Permits will be reviewed and approved by the area manager, based on an assessment of potential impacts to the unit from the proposed event.

4. Management of the proposed cultural preserve will be oriented to resource interpretation. Due to its small size (one acre), vehicle use will not be permitted in the preserve; however, visitor access for interpretation will be allowed.

Generally, management of Ocotillo Wells SVRA will be flexible to accommodate changing visitor and unit needs.

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

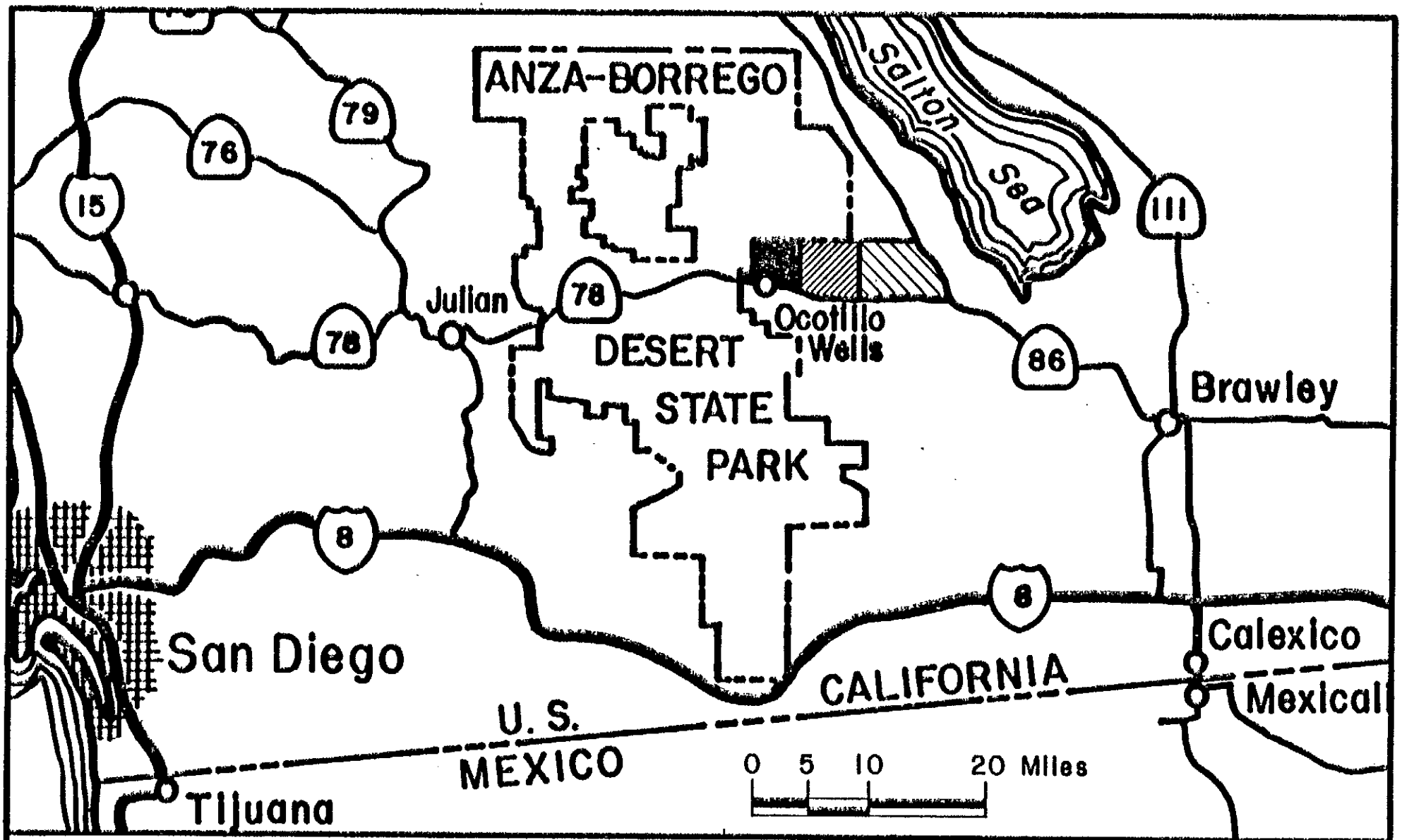
POTENTIAL ACQUISITION

The Department of Parks and Recreation is examining lands east of the SVRA for possible acquisition. The area under study, about 52,000 acres (20,800 hectares), is primarily a mixture of Bureau of Land Management and private lands. The study area, contiguous with present boundaries of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, is located north of State Highway 78 in western Imperial County and extends eastward to State Highway 86. The Salton Sea is located about three miles northeast of the possible acquisition.

This acquisition project has the potential of increasing recreational opportunities now available in the unit. Should this acquisition become part of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, there will most likely be a need for additional management personnel. The potential of these additional lands was also considered in planning for facilities in the present unit.

The department will study the suitability of acquisition in two phases. The first phase extends from the San Diego-Imperial County line east to Pole Line Road (6 miles east of the county line). The second extends from Pole Line Road east to Highway 86. Preliminary resource studies will be done before determining a suitable acquisition goal.

Although the potential of this acquisition was considered in the formulation of the General Plan, this document is not a commitment to purchase any lands. If the acquisition of any of the study area occurs, this plan will be amended to include those lands.



ACQUISITION STUDY MAP

OCOTILLO WELLS STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA

ACQUISITION STUDY AREA—PHASE I

FIGURE 1

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ELEMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ELEMENT

Years of OHV use have produced many changes in the landscape of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. To summarize the contents of this element, the environmental impacts of the proposals in this plan will be similar in type to those that have already been experienced, with the following major exceptions:

1. Resources will be better managed and protected when the recommended resource management policies are adopted and implemented.

2. Soil disturbance will be minimized by locating most new facilities at currently used sites, and by replacing temporary facilities.

3. Interpretive information may lead to better resource protection by visitors.

4. Sanitary conditions will be improved by proposed visitor use facilities.

5. Additional structures will be more esthetically pleasing than current structures.

This environmental impact element meets the requirement of Section 5002.2 of the Public Resources Code that each general plan include an environmental assessment. This element also satisfies the environmental documentation requirements of The California Environmental Quality Act (beginning with Section 21000, PRC). When a specific phase of the general plan is budgeted and proposed for implementation, a more detailed and specific environmental assessment will be prepared for that particular project as part of the budget package.

This element deals only with the present ownership of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Any future expansion of the unit will be addressed in a separate environmental document.

Project Description

(Please refer to the Resources Element for detailed project and resource descriptions).

Regional Setting

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is entirely within eastern San Diego County. Both eastern San Diego County and western Imperial County are sparsely populated. Most of the land is undeveloped desert. There is intense agriculture around Borrego Springs and south of the Salton Sea in the Imperial Valley.

Area storm runoff and agricultural irrigation water drain into the Salton Sea, whose surface is 235 feet below sea level. Eroded sediments from Ocotillo Wells SVRA travel toward the Salton Sea in water runoff or, as dust, are carried by westerly winds into Imperial County.

Air Quality

Dust is the greatest air pollutant in the Salton Sea area, spread by northwest winds. From June 1977 to June 1978 in Brawley, Imperial County, six monthly average readings exceeded National Clean Air Standards. Ocotillo Wells SVRA is probably a minor source of dust compared to undisturbed land east and southeast of the unit.

Noise

California's deserts have long been sought out by individuals seeking solitude and quiet. OHV operations can disturb this atmosphere. Effective January 1, 1975, all OHVs manufactured before that date could produce no more than 88 decibels at a distance of 50 feet. All vehicles produced after that date are limited to 86 decibels at the same distance. However, this requirement (Section 38280, Vehicle Code) is sometimes difficult to enforce.

Because of these requirements, and because vacant land buffers noise levels at the unit, there is essentially no major noise impact at the unit or in the vicinity.

Meteorology - (See Resource Element, p. 13 .)

Hydrology - (See Resource Element, page 14 .)

Soils - (See Resource Element, p. 16 .)

Geology and Seismicity - (See Resource Element, p. 14 .)

Plant Life - (See Resource Element, p. 16 .)

Animal Life - (See Resource Element, p. 17 .)

Access - (See Land Use and Facilities Element, p. 33 .)

Environmental Impacts

An environmental impact report was prepared by the department in the process of acquiring Ocotillo Wells SVRA in 1976. At that time, parts of the unit were being heavily affected by OHVs. The acquisition EIR described OHV impacts on the area's environment to that date, and predicted expected impacts if the property were to be managed as a state vehicular recreation area. This Environmental Impact Element focuses mainly on impacts expected from implementing the general plan proposals, as well as previous impacts that are still affecting the unit.

This element assumes that the department will have sufficient equipment, expertise, staff, and operating funds to carry out the general plan's recommendations, including the resource protection policies of the Resource Element.

Geology and Soils

Proposed facilities may require some minor earth movement during construction, which will be relatively insignificant compared to soil disturbances caused by OHVs. In a 1979 report entitled "Off-Road Vehicles on Public Land," the US Council on Environmental Quality discussed the impacts of OHVs on desert lands, which is applicable to Ocotillo Wells SVRA:

> "Desert soils have proven exceptionally vulnerable to (ORVs). . . . The soil breaks down very rapidly under ORV tires on desert slopes.
>
> "Some dust pollution in the air is, of course, natural, especially during periods of high wind. However, man's disruption of the desert surface greatly increases the dust in the air."

It is difficult to estimate the amount of accelerated soil erosion that has taken place or will take place at Ocotillo Wells SVRA, or how damaging the effects have been or will be as a result of OHV activity. Dust particles from the site will probably add to the overall dust problem in the desert. Wind will carry most of the particles eastward over sparsely populated areas. Dust in the Imperial Valley agricultural area probably comes from nearby cultivated areas. (See discussion under Air Quality).

During storms, above-normal amounts of debris will probably be carried down the washes. Where San Felipe Wash passes under State Highway 78, additional work has been performed by Caltrans to protect the highway.

Energy

Continued use of the unit by off-highway vehicles, combined with travel to and from the unit, will consume energy resources in the form of nonrenewable fossil fuels. Construction, operation, maintenance, and patrol activities will cause additional energy use.

Air Quality

As discussed in the section on geology and soils, a great amount of dust will result from wind erosion at the unit, which can have an effect on agriculture, esthetics, and health. Monitoring of suspended particulates in various parts of Imperial County, conducted from June 1977 to June 1978, indicated that the amount of micrograms of suspended particles per cubic meter was highest in the agricultural areas of Imperial Valley and lowest in the nonagricultural areas. One monitoring station was four miles from Ocotillo Wells.

The study attempted to correlate high readings in nonagricultural areas with high readings in agricultural areas, but concluded that particulates:

> "...in the cultivated areas of the Valley are due primarily from activity within and outer transport contribution is minimal".

Other air pollution will continue to be caused by OHV exhaust fumes and from trips to Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

Biotics

Effects on Plant Life

Most new construction will be on already disturbed land, whose remaining vegetation will not be significantly affected.

OHVs have destroyed much vegetation and probably will continue to do so, preventing the return of native plants in bare spaces. Vegetation that returns will often be exotic. Once vegetation is removed, the soil is more vulnerable to wind erosion and further mechanical erosion by OHVs, and becomes more arid. The report, "Off-Road Vehicles on Public Land", states that: "The most common shrub in both the Mojave and the Colorado deserts is the creosote bush;. . . .These shrubs are surprisingly long lived and durable, but once damaged by ORVs take years to recover. . . ."

The unit's rare and endangered species could be affected by OHVs if not for mitigation measures.

Effects on Animal Life

The federal report also stated that: "Not too surprisingly, Bury et. al., discovered that extensive reduction in the wildlife accompanied the destruction of plant life wrought by ORVs. . . ."

The report also mentioned that besides destroying animal life directly, by colliding with animals and by eliminating their food and shelter, OHVs can affect wildlife with excessive noise, which puts wildlife under stress and may cause hearing loss in some animals.

Fires

Fires are not considered a major threat at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Carelessly built campfires or sparks from vehicles can start small fires. Under the right wind conditions, fires could become more extensive.

Litter

Items such as bottles, cans, packages, and paper are often not disposed of properly. Litter is unsightly and potentially dangerous.

Cultural and Historic Sites

OHVs could have an effect on archeological and historical sites in the area. Willful destruction might occur, along with unintentional damage.

Public Services

Continued OHV activity will entail the use of water and will produce waste. Local roads and State Highway 78 will be used more, especially during winter and spring. Local hospitals may have to treat more patients due to accidents in the area. If the unit staff is increased, there may be a slight increase in student enrollment at local schools. Local businesses will have increased sales. During facility construction, there could be an increase in employment, boosting the local economy.

Significant Environmental Impacts That Cannot Be Avoided If The Proposal Is Implemented

Many impacts associated with proposals in the general plan will be partially mitigated by measures that will have beneficial impacts on the environment. However, despite controls, many OHV-related impacts are adverse and cannot be avoided due to the nature of the activity. A summary of these unavoidable effects follows:

1. Soils and geology -- Accelerated soil erosion will continue. Mechanical erosion will loosen the soil, making it easier for wind or water to carry the soil away. Erosion will be greater in areas of heaviest use where vegetation and moisture cannot hold the soil together. Wind will have the greatest effect. Soil particles can be blown miles east of the unit. Erosion by water, usually during intense storms, will carry loosened soil and debris downstream in San Felipe Wash.

2. Air quality -- Travel to and from the SVRA and recreation use in the unit will continue to generate air pollution. The greatest effects will be from dust blown into the atmosphere. Esthetics, health, and agriculture can be affected. However, Imperial County concludes from studies that most dust in agricultural areas is from cultivated lands, not from the desert.

3. Noise -- Noise will continue to affect wildlife and people using the SVRA, but this impact will be reduced by mandatory OHV muffler requirements.

4. Esthetics -- OHV activity and the dust it causes will continue to affect esthetic values.

5. Water quality and hydrology -- OHV activity will continue to loosen soil, which will be carried by water runoff into the washes.

6. Vegetation -- Adverse impacts on vegetation will continue through soil compaction and erosion, and from the effects of OHV use.

7. Wildlife -- Wildlife will continue to be affected by the presence of vehicles. There could be some direct injury from vehicles, as well as indirect damage through habitat loss, noise, and air and water quality degradation.

8. Energy -- OHV recreation involves the use of significant amounts of nonrenewable fossil fuels. These resources will also be used for transportation to and from the area.

9. Traffic -- Besides causing air pollution and using nonrenewable fossil fuels, traffic to and from the site will add to congestion on peak-use days.

Mitigation Measures

The Resource Element describes resource policies designed to protect the environment in accordance with the unit's purpose. The Department of Parks and Recreation will implement these policies, including the following measures to mitigate potential significant impacts:

1. The unit will be zoned into the following areas: 1) open use, 2) trail use, and 3) closed. Most of the unit is open. Trail-use areas will control use by providing buffers near the residences and administrative areas, and in sensitive areas. Closed lands are extremely sensitive because of their cultural or natural resource values.

2. Main trails are located so as not to erode the sides of washes or further affect vegetation.

3. Through education and interpretive displays, visitors will be encouraged to follow main trails and appreciate the unit's natural values.

4. Areas of high natural and cultural resource value will be preserved as noted in the plan and will be patrolled by staff. (Some less noticeable resource values may be better protected by not having special attention drawn to them, especially in lightly used areas.)

5. Nonconventional OHV equipment that causes greater than normal soil damage will be prohibited in the unit.

6. Muffler and noise level requirements are established by the California Vehicle Code. The noise limit for an OHV built after 1974 is set at 86 decibels (measured from 50 feet away).

7. Safety will be a key concept in the development and operation of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. At the entrance kiosk, users will receive literature containing safety tips along with a map showing the location of zones and other information. Riders will be encouraged to carry water and to use personal safety equipment such as helmets, gloves, eye protectors, rollbars, and safety belts. Desert survival information will also be dispensed. There will be a first-aid station at the unit headquarters, staffed by trained and equipped rangers.

8. Trash receptacles will be placed at the entrance, headquarters, and camping areas, and will be regularly emptied. Refuse will be hauled to the nearest county disposal site.

9. All structures planned for human occupancy will be designed and built to state earthquake standards, as specified in Title 22 of the California Administrative Code.

10. State park signs should designate the unit's north and west boundaries, and riders should be made aware of certain designated trails that can be used to or from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Lands to the east that may eventually become part of the SVRA should also be posted at the unit boundary.

11. The department will continue to seek ways to reduce erosion by working with other agencies, by monitoring erosion, and by studying control systems, wind breaks, and possible closures of parts of the unit.

Alternatives To The Proposed General Plan

1. No Project

   Current management would continue. There would be no new facilities, including sanitary, safety, and interpretive facilities, and no new resource protection measures. Visitors will not have their needs met as desired.

2. Development and Operation Alternatives

   a. Open the Entire Unit to Unrestricted Riding

      This would result in widespread and more accelerated soil erosion, landscape scarring, and destruction of biota, including a rare and endangered species. Unrestricted riding would also interfere with unit operation and maintenance.

   b. Zone the Entire Area for "Trail Use" and "Closed to Use"

      While this alternative would reduce environmental impacts, it would be difficult to justify from the standpoint of the users and the OHV program. In most of the areas proposed as "open", including the unit's southern half, users already tend to stay in the washes and follow trails.

   c. Other Alternatives

      There are a myriad of plans and ideas for the management, development, and future use of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Most plans were rejected because they were either too restrictive from a user standpoint or showed lack of responsibility for protecting the environment and meeting legal requirements.

      The General Plan's proposed facilities for unit administration and visitor needs are fairly modest. Highly developed campgrounds and other facilities have not been requested by OHV users.

The Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses Of The Human Environment And The Maintenance And Enhancement Of Long-Term Productivity

The increased rate of soil loss caused by OHV use will permanently diminish the land's capacity to produce food, forage, and wildlife. However, these predicted reductions of long-term productivity will be less severe than the effects of unrestricted OHV use. Likewise, if the unit were not in State Park System ownership, other likely uses of the land--mining, industries, or private OHV parks--could easily have greater negative environmental impacts and could narrow even more the range of beneficial uses to which the land could be put. The proposed development of Ocotillo Wells SVRA should also benefit the environment of the entire region by drawing OHV recreationists from many places in Southern California and concentrating them in a manageable unit.

Irreversible Environmental Changes

This project involves the irreversible commitment of fossil fuels. Fuels and materials will be used in maintenance, in the enhancement of damaged areas, and for facility development. The loss of soil and associated vegetation from trails and roads will result in some irreversible site changes.

Growth-Inducing Impacts

Proposed facilities could result in a significant increase in visitation, causing increased demand for local goods and services.

The popularity of the new facilities may cause many new individuals to become interested in OHV recreation. This, in turn, will increase the demand for acquisition and development at existing or new OHV units.

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Appendices

1. Citizens Advisory Committee Recommendations
2. Plant Life
3. Soils Descriptions
4. Existing Facilities Map
5. Proposed Land Use Intensity Map
6. Proposed Facilities Map
7. Soils Map

Appendix 1

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATIONS

February 24, 1978

Mr. Russell W. Cahill, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 2390
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Mr. Cahill:

As members of the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area Advisory Committee, our function is to represent the potential users of the area and the public at large. This representation should be in the form of recommendations to the Director who will make the final decisions for the area. The recommendations we make here are motivated by three concerns: To maintain the function of the area as it is now, to protect the area so future generations may also enjoy it and to inform the public regarding safe use of off-road vehicles in the area and elsewhere. The Committee recommends that the Director take the following actions:

1. No improvements such as picnic tables and fireplaces or restrooms be planned at this time, but that a survey be taken after the park has been in operation for a while to see if they might want some of these things at that time.

2. Have a "dump" station available for motorhomes and trailers.

3. Provide litter containers at major entrances and in frequently used areas.

4. Provide a first-aid station capable of immobilizing and transporting people with neck and back injuries because of area's isolation.

5. Post signs and brochure boxes at all major entrances to area including off-road accesses.

6. Levy no charge for admission or camping in park.

7. Look into providing turn lanes at entrance to area off highway.

8. Wood gathering, specifically brush and trees be prohibited in the ORV area.

9. Ground fire should be permitted anywhere in the ORV area, but fire containers be encouraged.

10. Provide portable fire containers at the most frequently used areas.

11. Provide portable fire containers at no charge for group cross-country activities (such as Poker Runs).

12. Camping be available anywhere in the ORV area except across an existing road or trail or in the middle of the wash.

13. There be no cut-back in ORV use in the Anza-Borrego State Park (existing rules).

14. Boundaries of the ORV area should be clearly marked so users know when they are in or out of park.

15. The State should negotiate with County of San Diego for permission to use land around the airport for access and to have safe and convenient exits to service stations and restaurants.

16. No shooting or carrying of loaded firearms should be permitted in ORV area.

17. An unlicensed person should be able to drive in park if they meet requirements of Section 38304.

18. All Sections of Off-Highway Vehicle Code, Division 16.5 shall apply in ORV park except Sections changed by our recommendations.

19. All park vehicles should be equipped with CB radios and channel that will be monitored should be identified for users.

20. The State should look at the Bureau of Land Management and private land that joins ORV park on the east with idea of expanding ORV area. Parks and Recreation could enter into a cooperative agreement with BLM as talked about in the last portion of Division 16.5. Section 38270(a) of Vehicle Code or State could use money out of there part ORV fund or State may have other ways this could be done.

21. Parks and Recreation should prepare the course of instruction referred to in Section 38007 of the Vehicle Code but if this can't be done then they should encourage the Highway Patrol to do it.

22. All representatives from Committee to work with staff on a informational brochure. Although our primary responsibility is to make recommendations regarding the creation of the recreation unit, we would like to list some items that we feel should be in the informational brochure.

a. A map showing the recreation area in relation to State Park, BLM, private land and the closest full service hospital.

b. A warning about dehydration and a recommendation to carry extra water in all vehicles.

c. A list of major vehicle codes that pertain to off-road vehicles and a reminder that all apply in or out of area.

d. A recommendation to shut off high intensity lights when running parallel to the highway or when meeting oncoming traffic on trails or in ORV park.

e. A special recommendation to use helmets because of the area's isolation.

f. A recommendation that all 4-wheel vehicles be equipped with seat belts and that they be used.

g. A recommendation that all 4-wheel vehicles be equipped with a whip equipped with light and flag for day and night use.

h. Use the "buddy" system, do not go riding alone.

i. Vehicles should not cross or drive on the right.

j. All 4-wheel vehicles should have a roll bar or roof structure to support the weight of the vehicle.

It is our hope that these initial recommendations will allow you and your staff to understand the public's needs and concerns regarding Ocotillo Wells. We offer this preliminary report as a record of progress since our organizational meeting in June 1977. We are anxious to see Ocotillo Wells open as a Vehicular Recreation Area, and look forward to further communications from you.

Sincerely,

Ivan E. McDermott
Chairman

J-0266L

Appendix 2

PLANT LIFE

(Literature citations refer to materials listed in the bibliography).

Terrestrial Plant Communities

The unit's vegetation has not been mapped or analyzed in the field. All information in the plant life section of the general plan is from information on file with the department or available through the literature. Adjustments are likely after field surveys are completed. Floristic surveys are somewhat limited to the spring as most plant species cannot be positively identified without microscopic examination of flora parts. With some genera this must be done by taxanomic experts specializing in a given group of plants.

Eight plant communities have been identified in the unit so far. These are outlined in the vegetation classification hierarchy presented below:

I. Terrestrial Substrate Class

A. Tree Formation Class

1. Evergreen Formation Subclass

a. Prosopsis glandulosa "Mesquite" Vegetation Type
1) Stunted Tree Formation
a) Scattered Woodland Subformation
(1) Prosopsis glandulosa var. torreyana "Mesquite" Stunted Scattered Woodland Community

2. Deciduous Formation Subclass

a. Olneya tesota "Desert Ironwood" Vegetation Type
1) Short Tree Formation
a) Scattered Woodland Subformation
(1) Olneya tesota "Desert Ironwood" Short Scattered Woodland Community

b. Cercidium floridium "Palo Verde" Vegetation Type
1) Short Tree Formation
a) Scattered Woodland Subformation
(1) Cercidium floridium "Palo Verde" Short Scattered Woodland Community

B. Shrub Formation Class

1. Evergreen Formation Subclass
a. Atriplex canescens "Four Wing Saltbush"
1) Short Shrub Formation

a) Barren Scrub Subformation
(1) Atriplex canescens "Four Wing Saltbush" Medium Barren Scrub Community

b. Larrea tridentata "Creosote Bush" Vegetation Type
1) Medium Shrub Formation
a) Scattered Scrub Subformation
(1) Larrea tridentata "Creosote Bush" Scattered Medium Scrub: Burro-weed Scattered Dwarf Scrub

2. Deciduous Formation Subclass

a. Encelia farinosa "Brittle Bush" Vegetation Type
1) Short Shrub Formation
a) Scattered Scrub Subformation
(1) Encelia farinosa "Brittle Bush" Short Scattered Scrub Community

b. Eriogonum deserticola "Desert Buckwheat" Vegetation Type
1) Short Shrub Formation
a) Scattered Scrub Subformation
(1) Eriogonum deserticola "Desert Buckwheat" Short Scattered Scrub Community

c. Fouquiera splendens "Ocotillo" Vegetation Type
1) Very Tall Shrub Formation
a) Barren Scrub Subformation
(1) Fouquiera splendens "Ocotillo" Very Tall Barren Scrub Community

Tree Formations

A mesquite community occurs locally at Mesquite Dunes. Blowing sand forms hummocks around the major plants. The mesquite communities of the area, common in washes and spring area, are composed of dense thickets of mesquite exceeding 80% coverage. Those in Ocotillo Wells SVRA are much less dense due to high vehicle activity creating severe erosion (Spolsky, A.M., 1979). Eriogonum spp., Ambrosia dumosa, and Distichis spicata are the dominant species under the mesquite stand.

Desert ironwood communities are common in washes and, like the mesquite community, are restricted to riparian habitats. The vegetation cover is usually sparse. Mesquite, smoke tree, and catclaw may also occur in the community, but in Ocotillo Wells SVRA a large volume of traffic has destroyed all vegetation except the ironwood.

Palo Verde Woodland community occurs in Ocotillo Wells SVRA in the Palo Verde Wash. The substrate consists of alluvial deposits of sand and gravel. This wash floods after major storms and the vegetation is often severely scoured by flood waters. The cover is sparse to moderate (10-20%), and Palo Verde is nearly the only species present where the wash is heavily used by vehicles.

Shrub Formations

Four wing saltbush communities are found in the southern end of Ocotillo Wells SVRA around Squaw Peak. These communities are found on alkaline soils in the driest areas of the unit. Species diversity is low with Larrea tridentata and Atriplex canescens as dominants covering 10-15%.

Creosote bush communities are found near Squaw Peak and Wolfe Wells in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The species composition is fairly diverse with a 25% cover increasing to 50% during the spring bloom. The dominants include Larrea tridentata, Atriplex spp., Ambrosia dumosa, and Eriogonum spp. These communities occupy sandy, rolling hills with little available water.

Brittle brush communities occur in the Borrego Mountain area adjacent to and in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. They have a sparse cover (15-25%) with a Larrea tridentata overstory and an Encelia farinosa understory. The species diversity is low. This community is usually found at the base of slopes (30-60% slope) below the 3,000 foot elevation.

The desert buckwheat community is a unique plant community reported only in Ocotillo Wells SVRA and its vicinity. This community is an important natural value which is not protected outside the unit. It is found along sandy to gravelly washes and dunes mainly northeast of Bank Wash. Mounds of blow sand occur around individual plants. This mound formation may have scientific importance since it may be the beginning step in mima mound formation, which is an unexplained geologic phenomena that occurs around the perimeter of the Great Central Valley of California, on coastal terraces at Point Lobos State Reserve, at Wilder Ranch State Park, in one valley in Oregon, and in several areas of Africa. To date, there is not a satisfactory explanation of the formation of mima mounds.

Ocotillo scrub is found on coarse, sandy alluvium in fans and valleys. The cover is about 25%. Dominants in the different stories are Fouquiera splendens, Larrea tridentata, and Ambrosia dumosa.

Rare and Endangered Plants

Orcutt's woody aster (Xylorhiza orcuttii) occurs in Bank Wash and near Barrel Spring. It also occurs infrequently in the eastern portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Listed as rare and endangered (Smith, Cole, and Sawyer, 1980:30), it is found in badlands and sandy washes from 100 to 1,600-foot elevations and is often associated with soils formed from parent rock containing calcite (Spolsky, 1978:25).

Pholisma (Pholisma arenarium), a parasitic plant, occurs near the unit's ranger residence in a wash and is associated with cheesebush, which acts as host. It is considered rare in California but common elsewhere in its range (Smith, Cole, and Sawyer, 1980:77). There are 11 sitings of this plant in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (Spolsky, 1978:30).

Thurber's pilostyles (Pilostyles thurberi) occurs on dyeweed near Bank Wash. This plant is known at six locations in the state (in Imperial, San Diego, and Riverside counties), including Carrizo Badlands overlook in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park (Spolsky, 1978:32). It is considered rare in California (Smith, Cole, and Sawyer, 1980:77).

Salton milkvetch (Astragalus crotalariae)has been reported in the unit. Three locations are known in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park; one is in Bank Wash. It occurs in very dry, sandy washes (Spolsky, 1978:34). It is considered rare but not endangered (Smith, Cole, and Sawyer, 1980:46).

Special Interest Plants

Desert eriogonum (Eriogonum deserticola) was considered to be a rare and endangered species; however, new sitings have occurred for this narrow endemic. Its range extends between Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Yuma Dunes. Ocotillo Wells SVRA represents the westernmost population of this species, forming a unique plant community northeast of Bank Wash.

Appendix 3

SOILS DESCRIPTIONS

The following soil series and soil unit descriptions were taken from the San Diego County survey and the Imperial County soil survey performed by the Imperial Irrigation District in 1967.

Acid igneous rock land (AcG). Rough, broken terrain with boulders and outcrops of granite, granodiorite, tonalite, quartz diorite, gabbro, or basalt. The soil material is loam to loamy coarse sand in texture, and is very shallow, over decomposed granite. A very sparse cover of desert shrubs, cactus, and grasses is typical. Many areas experience very rapid runoff.

Carrizo very gravelly sand (CeC). The Carrizo series consists of excessively drained, very deep, very gravelly sands, derived from granitic alluvium. They are on alluvial fans and have slopes of 0 to 9%. The vegetation is chiefly creosote bush, cactus, and ocotillo. Fertility is very low, permeability very rapid. The available water-holding capacity is 1.5 to 3 inches. Runoff is very slow to slow, and the erosion hazard is slight.

Indio silt loam (InA). The Indio series consists of well-drained and moderately well-drained, very deep silt loams that have formed an alluvium derived from acid, igneous, and micaceous rocks. These soils are on alluvial plains and have slopes of 0 to 5%. Included in this soil mapping are small areas of Mecca soils, Rositas soils, and Carrizo soils.

Mecca fine sandy loam (MpA_2). The Mecca series consists of well-drained, very deep coarse sandy loams derived from granitic alluvium. These soils are on alluvial fans and alluvial plains, and have slopes from 0 to 5%. The surface layer of this nearly level soil has been worked by wind, and low hummocks have formed. The available water-holding capacity is 7 to 8 inches. The erosion hazard, chiefly wind erosion, is moderate. There are small areas of Rositas, Carrizo, and Indio soils included in the mecca fine sandy loam unit. Also included are areas where the soils are stratified with silt loam, very fine sand, and loamy fine sand.

Playa (Py). Essentially barren, level, undrained, closed basins. The soil material is clayey and generally moderately to strongly saline.

Riverwash (Rm). Occurring in intermittent stream channels, the soil is typically sandy, gravelly, or cobbly. It is excessively drained and rapidly permeable. Many areas are barren.

Rositas series. Consisting of somewhat excessively drained, very deep, loamy coarse sands derived from granitic alluvium. These soils are on alluvial fans and alluvial plains and have slopes of 0 to 15%.

> Rositas loamy coarse sand (RsA). 0 to 2% slopes. This soil is nearly level. Runoff is very slow, and the erosion hazard is slight. Included in the mapping are small areas of Carrizo soils, Mecca soils, and Indio soils.

Rositas loamy coarse sand, 2 to 9% slopes (RsC). This gently to moderately sloping soil occurs on alluvial fans. The slope averages 5%. Included with this soil in the mapping are small areas of Carrizo soils, Mecca soils, and Indio soils. Fertility is low and permeability is rapid. The available water-holding capacity is 3 to 4 inches. Runoff is slow to medium and the erosion hazard is slight.

Rositas fine sand, hummocky 5 to 9% slopes (RrC). This soil is gently rolling and has hummocks to low dunes that are less than six feet high. Runoff is slow to medium. The hazard of water erosion is slow to moderate. The hazard of wind erosion is high. Included in mapping are small areas of Carrizo soils, Mecca soils, and Indio soils.

Sloping gullied land (SRD). Occurring in the desert on alluvial fans near mountains, this soil type consists of a variety of material derived from igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks. The texture ranges from clay loam to gravelly, cobbly sand. Drainage is good to somewhat excessive. Runoff is medium to very rapid, and the erosion hazard is moderate to high.

Badland (Bz). Composed of highly dissected, rapidly eroding areas of unconsolidated material with little or no vegetative cover. Soil materials range from clay to loam in texture, with slow to moderate permeability.

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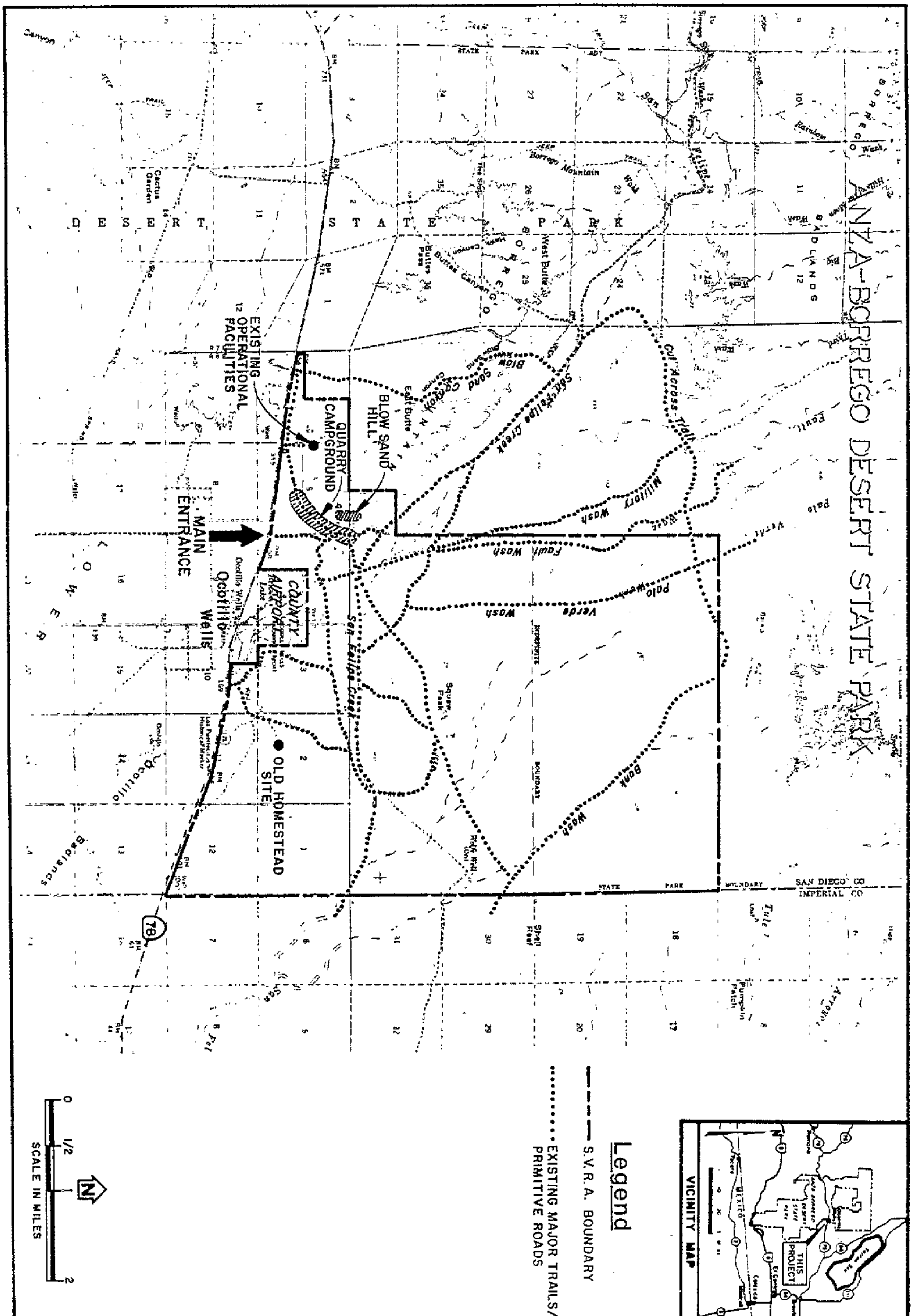
ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK
DESERT STATE PARK
BORREGO BADLANDS
Borrego Mountain
EXISTING OPERATIONAL FACILITIES
QUARRY CAMPGROUND
BLOW SAND HILL
MAIN ENTRANCE
Ocotillo Wells
COUNTY AIRPORT
OLD HOMESTEAD SITE
Blow Sand Canyon
San Felipe Creek
Cut Across Trail
Military Wash
Fault Wash
Palo Verde Wash
Bank Wash
STATE PARK BOUNDARY
SAN DIEGO CO
IMPERIAL CO
78
Legend
S.V.R.A. BOUNDARY
EXISTING MAJOR TRAILS/ PRIMITIVE ROADS
VICINITY MAP
THIS PROJECT
SCALE IN MILES
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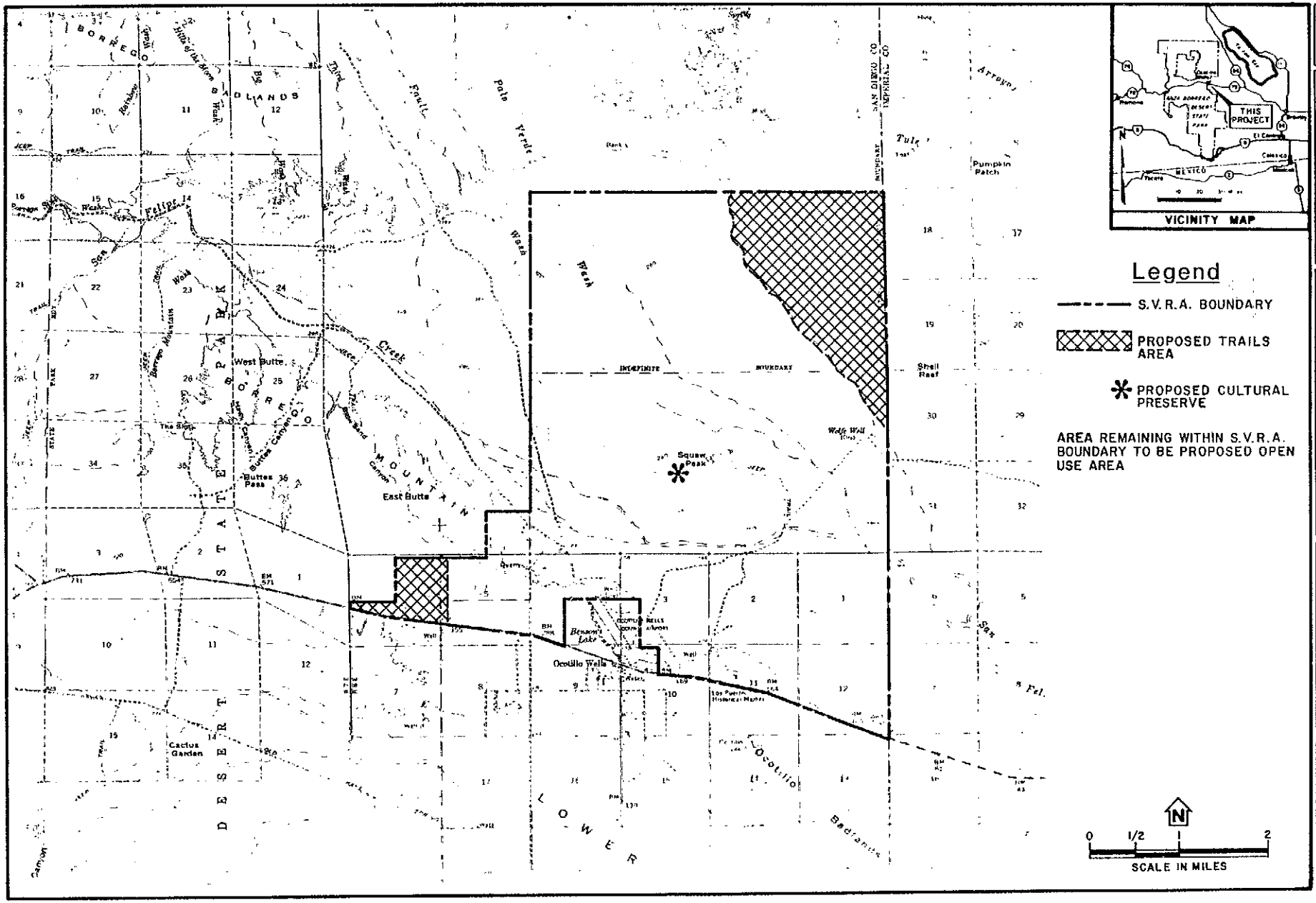
OCOTILLO WELLS STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA	RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA	REVISIONS	DATE	DESIGNED
EXISTING FACILITIES	DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION			DRAWN JULY 81
DRAWING NO. 18080	APPROVED______ DATE______			CHECKED
SHEET NO. 1 OF 4				



DESIGNED
DRAWN JULY 81
CHECKED

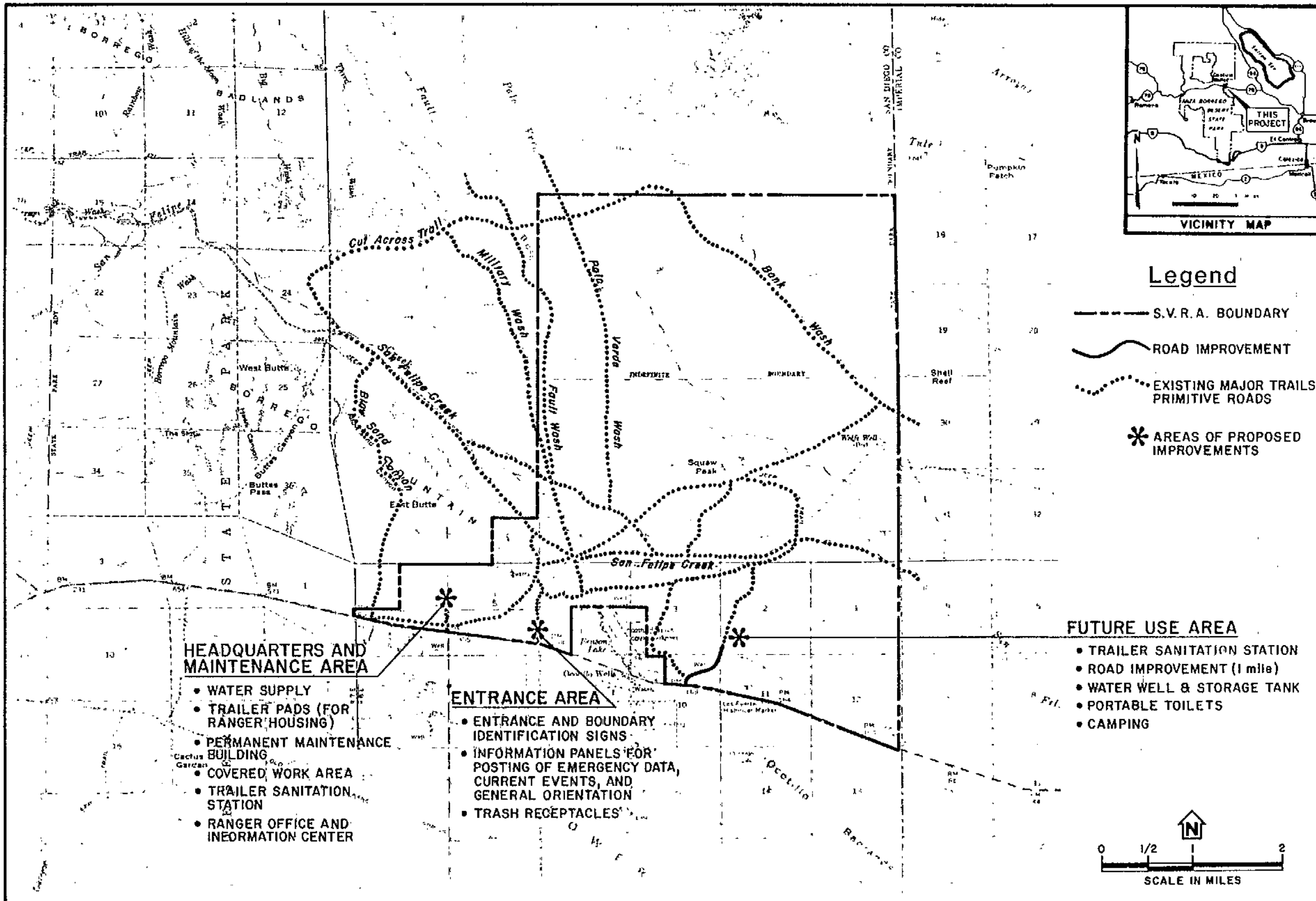
DATE
REVISIONS

RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
APPROVED _____ DATE _____

OCOTILLO WELLS
STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA
GENERAL PLAN
PROPOSED LAND USE INTENSITY

DRAWING No. 18080

SHEET No. 2 of 4



OCOTILLO WELLS
STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA
GENERAL PLAN
PROPOSED FACILITIES

RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
APPROVED______ DATE______

REVISIONS | DATE

DESIGNED
DRAWN JULY 81
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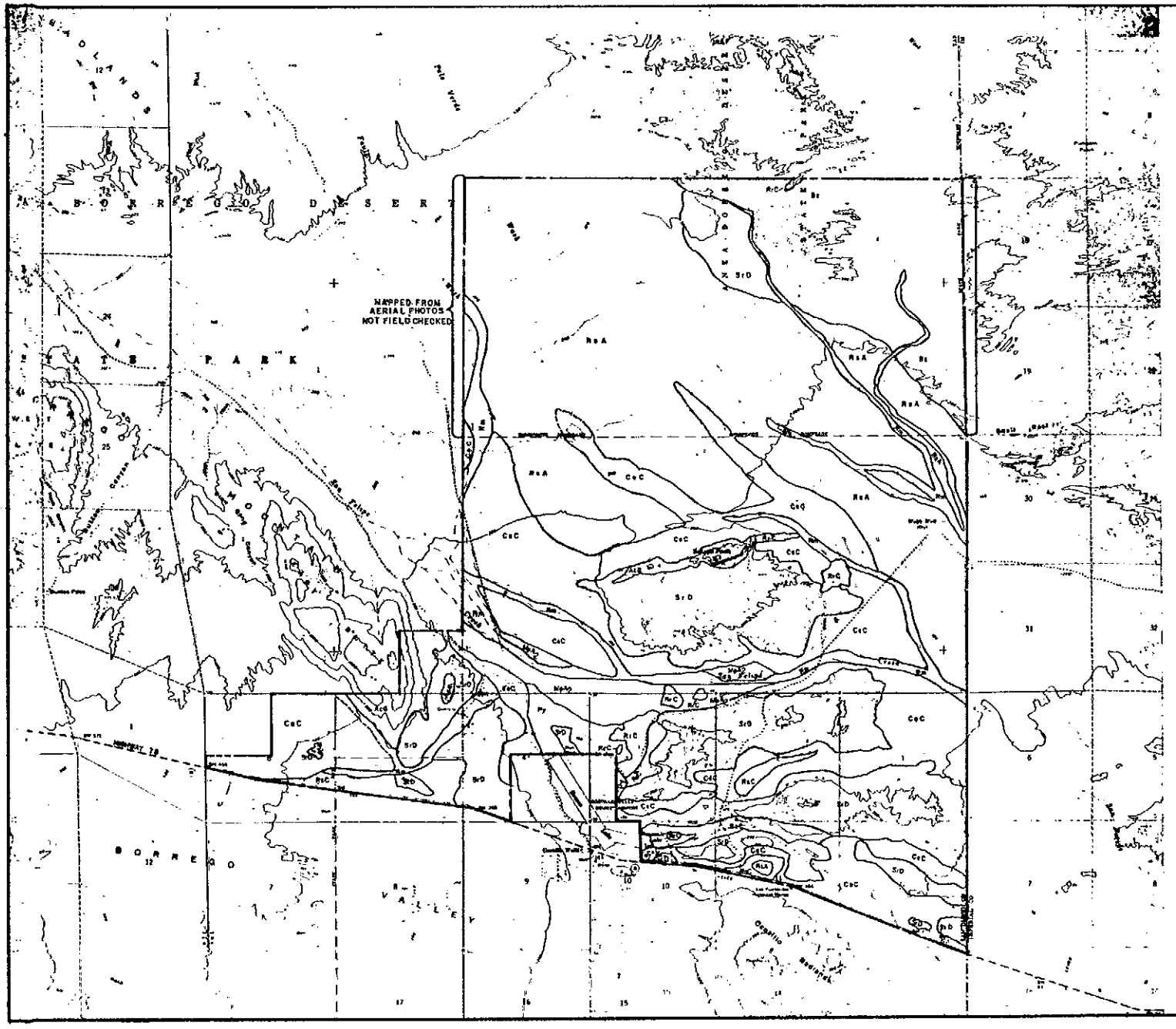
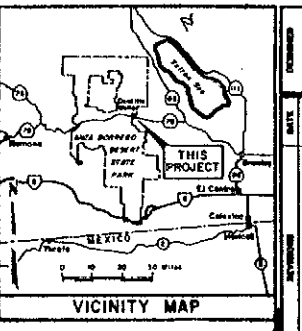
DRAWING No. 18080
SHEET No. 3 OF 4





LEGEND

SVRA BOUNDARY

AcG - Acid Igneous Rock Land

CeC - Carrizo very gravelly soil (0-9% slopes)

InA - Indio silt loam

MpA_2 - Mecca fine sandy loam

Py - Playa

Rm - Riverwash

RsA - Rositas loamy coarse sand (0-2% slopes)

RsC - Rositas loamy coarse sand (2-9% slopes)

RrC - Rositas fine sand, hummocky

SrD - Sloping gullied land

Bz - Badland

SOURCES U.S. Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey, San Diego County map sheets 31 and 32, 1973

Imperial Irrigation District Report for General Soil Map, 1967

DWR aerial photos 11-28-80 (interpretations for northern 1/3 of unit performed by DPR staff (S Willard))

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RESOURCES AGENCY OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

APPROVED _____ DATE _____

OCOTILLO WELLS S.V.R.A.

SOILS

DRAWING NO. 18080

SHEET NO 4 of 4

THE OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA GENERAL PLAN

Was Prepared By:

Gary Shannon, Landscape Architect
Syd Willard, Geologist
Jim Barry Ph.D., State Park Plant Ecologist
Ken Pierce, Park & Recreation Specialist
Jeff Cohen, Research Writer
John McAleer, State Historian
Kenneth Smith, State Park Ranger IV

Under The Supervision Of:

Alan K. Kolster, Senior Landscape Architect
Herbert L. Heinze, Regional Director, Southern Region
Maurice Getty, Chief, Resource Protection Division
J. Leslie McCargo, Chief, Development Division

Special Assistance From:

Gary Caplener, Senior Graphic Artist
Ken Ferguson, Delineator
Susan Fillmer, Word Processing Technician
Joann Weiler, State Park Interpreter II
Ocotillo Wells Advisory Committee

TE OF CALIFORNIA—THE RESOURCES AGENCY EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor

PARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
BOX 2390
RAMENTO 95811

(916) 324-1395

S.P.S. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT
AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS

August 3, 1982

TO HOLDERS OF THE PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN FOR
OCOTILLO WELLS STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA,
DECEMBER 1981:

The enclosures are the addendum to the Preliminary General Plan, which was approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission April 9, 1982. The preliminary plan, with this addendum attached, should be considered as the Final General Plan for the unit.

Attached are State Park and Recreation Commission Resolution 23-82 adopting the plan, a list of plan revisions, and comments and responses on the plan by agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Please delete the word "preliminary" from your copies of the plan. (Note to depository libraries: your copy of the plan addendum is also enclosed.)

Sincerely,

Alan K. Kolster, A.S.L.A.
Senior Landscape Architect

Enclosures

ATE OF CALIFORNIA—RESOURCES AGENCY Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor
EPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
TATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
O. BOX 2390, SACRAMENTO 95811

Resolution 23-82
Resolution adopted by the
CALIFORNIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
at its regular meeting in Borrego Springs, April 9, 1982

WHEREAS, the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation has presented to this Commission for approval the proposed General Plan for Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area; and

WHEREAS, this reflects the long-range development plans as to provide for the optimum use and enjoyment of the unit as well as the protection of its quality;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the State Park and Recreation Commission approves the Department of Parks and Recreation's General Plan for Ocotillo Wells SVRA preliminary dated December 1981, with addenda, dated March 26, 1982, subject to such environmental changes as the Director of Parks and Recreation shall determine advisable and necessary to implement carrying out the provisions and objectives of said plan.

First Amendment to General Plan

Provided if there is excessive use of any presently existing trail connecting the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area which results in damage to the resources of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, such trail connection shall be closed by action of the Regional Director after notice to and consultation with the Ocotillo Wells Advisory Committee.

Second Amendment to General Plan

If it is found that a trail in a "trails only" area needs to be closed for either safety or resource protection reasons, it can only be done by the Regional Director after consultation with the users and advisory committees.

Addition to Addenda of General Plan

Such closure shall occur only after consultation with the user, the advisory group, and the Regional Director's approval.

GENERAL PLAN REVISIONS
TO PRELIMINARY
OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA GENERAL PLAN

ADDENDA -- March 26, 1982

1. Page 17, paragraph three, insert a fourth sentence to read, "Loss of vegetation in the washes also occurs as a result of sediment scouring after major torrential downpours."

2. Page 22, Paragraph four, revise to read as follows:

   The primary purpose of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA is to make available to the public oppotunities for recreational use of off-highway vehicles; to manage use in the interest of visitor safety and long-term use of the site for off-highway vehicle recreation; to provide appropriate related facilities to serve the needs of present and future off-highway vehicle recreation users; to perpetuate important natural, scenic, and cultural values in the unit; and to minimize potential conflict between off-highway vehicle recreation use and other land uses on adjacent properties.

3. Page 25, paragraph four, second sentence, replace "BLM desert planning staff" with "BLM California Desert District".

4. Page 48, paragraph one, change "drinking alcoholic beverages" to "alcohol abuse".

5. Page 25, paragraph six, revise to read as follows:

   Policy: When half the natural vegetative cover is lost in a given ecological management unit (defined as a plant community-soil phase combination), that unit shall be closed for rehabilitation. Ecological management units shall be shown on base maps on files at the Area Office and at the Resource Protection Division in Sacramento. This policy shall not be applied to areas approved for development (buildings, sanitation facilities, etc.) or formerly cultivated lands. Small areas such as staging areas and campgrounds may also be exempted from this policy; however, the Area Manager may also close portions of these intensively used areas for rehabilitation, after consultation with the Chief, Resource Protection Division. Unique plant communities shall be protected in a trails-use zone (see section on Allowable Use Intensity for definition). Such closure shall occur only after consultation with the user, the advisory group, and with the Regional Director's approval.

6. Page 24, paragraph one, first sentence after "documentation", add:

   ", and physical testing."

7. Page 62, paragraph one, after "unit", add:

", and those mitigation measures that prove to be feasible and effective will be implemented."

8. Page 26, paragraph seven, after first sentence, add:

"The boundaries for the proposed cultural preserve shall be established after additional field work and consultation with user groups. The classification of the cultural preserve will be presented to the Commission as a separate action, in the future."

AMENDMENTS TO THE OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN
DATED DECEMBER 1981
AS ADOPTED BY THE STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION APRIL 9, 1982

1. Page 33, paragraph six, add the following:

"Provided if there is excessive use of any presently existing trail connecting the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area which results in damage to the resources of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park, such trail connection shall be closed by action of the Regional Director after notice to, and consultation with, the Ocotillo Wells Advisory Committee."

2. Page 33, paragraph three, add the following:

"If it is found that a trail in a 'trails only' area needs to be closed for either safety or resource protection reasons, it can only be done by the Regional Director after consultation with the users and advisory committees."

B-0947L

OCOTILLO WELLS STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA

PRELIMINARY GENERAL PLAN, INCLUDING A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ELEMENT (REPORT)

SCH 81122310

Copies of the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area Preliminary General Plan, including a Draft Environmental Impact Element (Report) were sent to the following thirty-two (32) individuals, organizations, and agencies on December 24, 1981:

State Clearinghouse (10 copies)

Honorable William Craven, Member of the Senate

San Diego County Comprehensive Planning Organization

Imperial County Agricultural Commission

Mr. Gerlad Hillier, Director of Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Joe Edney, Bureau of Land Management

Mr. Howard G. Wilshire, U.S.G.S.

Mr. Wayne Flannigan, Soil Conservation Service

Mr. Dan Rabey, Soil Conservation Service

Naval Weapons Center, China Lake

Dr. Robert Mark, Sierra Club, State Park Task Force

Mr. Murray Rosenthal, Sierra Club, State Park Task Force

Salton City Community Services District

Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area Citizens' Advisory Committee (11 copies)

California Off-highway Vehicle Advisory Committee (10 copies)

Mr. Steve Hill, San Diego Off-road Coalition

Mr. Ed Dunkley, California Association of 4WD Clubs, Inc.

C.O.R.V.A. (3 copies)

Mr. Howard Harris, Harris Consulting

Cycle News

Mr. Mark W. Anderson, Motorcycle Industry Council

Mr. Vic Wilson

Mr. Bob Rasor, A.M.A. Association, Director

Mr. Ed Hollingshead

California Endura Riders Association

California Off-road Vehicle Association

Mr. Dick McPhearson

Mrs. Henry T. Read, Chairman, Anza-Borrego Committee

County of San Diego, Department of Land Use and Environmental Regulations

The Desert Protective Council, Inc.

* California Department of Parks and Recreation, Anza Borrego Area (2 copies)
* California Department of Parks and Recreation, Southern Region (2 copies)
* Main Library, San Diego State University (2 copies)
* Imperial County Library, Imperial (2 copies)
* Salton City Branch Library (2 copies)
* Borrego Springs Branch Library (2 copies)

NEWSPAPER ADS WERE PLACES IN THE FOLLOWING NEWSPAPERS: (see attached example)

Borrego Sun

Imperial Valley Press

San Diego Union

COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE FORTY-FIVE (45) DAY REVIEW PERIOD:

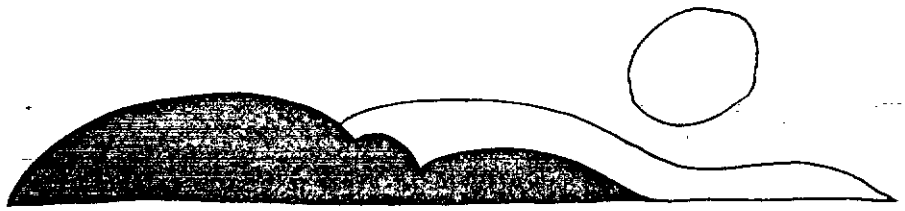
Mr. H. G. Wilshire, President, Committee for Green Foothills

Following are the comments on the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area Preliminary General Plan, including Draft Environmental Impact Element (Report) and our response to those comments. Numbers adjacent to the comments correspond to the numbered responses following the comments:

* Sent for public review and reference to the above locations

COMMITTEE FOR GREEN FOOTHILLS
Peninsula Conservation Center
2253 Park Blvd., Palo Alto, California 94306

Phone: 327-5906 or 328-5313



1/31/82

Mr. James M. Doyle
Dept. of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 2390
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Mr. Doyle,

The Committee For Green Foothills has the following comments to make on the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Preliminary General Plan:

Inasmuch as the Department has actively sought only the input of citizens interested in the use of ORVs, and did not include that of conservation groups who helped enact the Chappie-Z'berg and Chappie-Gregorio laws, the plan is beset by many environmental inadequacies. 1

The Preliminary plan violates provisions of the PRC, or modifies them without justification: 2

(1) As indicated in the Resource Element, the PRC "requires confinement of OHV impacts to department-administered lands," and the policy is stipulated (p.25) that "Impacts shall be confined within unit boundaries." In the assessment of environmental impacts (p.60) it is stated that dust from the site "can be blown miles east of the unit", and "Erosion by water...will carry loosened soil and debris downstream in San Felipe Wash." 3 The proposed mitigations (p.61-62), however, do not include any directed at fulfillment of the policy and the requirements of the PRC -- no catchment dams on San Felipe drainage, no seasonal closures, no wind erosion mitigation ("study of wind breaks) should be an active policy of wind break construction/planting as they are well-known workable mitigations). 4

(2) It is stated (p.24) that areas will be rehabilitated "when important natural resource values are in danger of being lost." In respect of soil erosion, this modification of the PRC cannot be justified. The PRC places no value judgement on soils other than all are important resources. 5

The plan to monitor resource damage is very inadequate. The methods proposed (p.24) are very elementary in view of the state of the art. The methods of measuring sediment discharge established at the Hollister SVRA should be used, and a comprehensive network of airborne dust monitoring stations should be established, as minimal beginnings. The monitoring program is not supported by an adequate inventory of resources, and is not tied to any useful plan of action. The latter is especially important because even good monitoring programs--such as that started at Hollister but now abandoned--produced no useful actions to retard the erosion it documented. 6

The plan to close a resource management unit for rehabilitation

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"when half the natural vegetative cover is lost" could lead to permanent adverse impacts because there is no inventory on which a management decision can be based, no indication is given of where the baseline is (now? 40 years ago?), the approach assumes that vegetative loss is a linear function of impact and that such a stopping point will save the rest, and it has not been demonstrated that such systems can be rehabilitated, or if they can, whether it is feasible. That should be demonstrated before any of the land is opened to 50% loss of vegetation. 7

The Committee recommends that the plan to connect unit "trails" to existing OHV trails in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park be abandoned. This is an open invitation to those accustomed to driving anywhere they want to to do the same in Anza-Borrego. In this respect, we request that the entire facility be fenced so that incoming traffic is controlled and so that there is no opportunity to cross the facility boundary into neighboring land. If people what to use the OHV trails in Anza-Borrego, they should go to Anza-Borrego, not wander in as they please from a free-for-all area. 8

The policies for soil resource protection (p.25) are inadequate. Acceptible standards for soil loss are well-known, including current ones for ORV use. The methods of monitoring mentioned give no rigorous standards.

What kind of "monitoring" of impacts on vegetation and wildlife will be done (as policy states, p.26)? There are standard techniques in wide use for these kinds of monitoring too. 9

The Committee recommends that no additional lands be acquired until it has been demonstrated that rehabilitation has been achieved in like-lands in the existing facility. 10

Statements made on p.57, 4th para., p.57, 5th para., p.58, 1st para., and p.60, item 1 all acknowledge that provisions of the PRC will be violated. 11

A viable alternative that could satisfy the PRC requirements as well as the interests of conservation groups, namely prepared trail systems, was not considered. 12

It is our opinion that this document is inadequate and should be extensively revised. Much more specific programs of regulation, monitoring, rehabilitation, and prevention of off-site effects, are possible, and the public deserves a more reasonable range of alternatives than presented.

Sincerely,

H.G. Wilshire, President

1. The General Plan was sent out for review to many organizations, agencies, and individuals, as listed in the cover letter. We feel that views of conservation groups were made known and were important in preparing the General Plan. We invite cooperation and voluntary advisement in implementing the General Plan.

2. The Department has attempted to conform to the Public Resources Code as it pertains to State Vehicular Recreation Areas. Each of your specific points are responded to below.

3. The Draft Environmental Impact Report states that dust and soil could be carried off the site. The amount that would naturally be carried away and the accelerated amount lost by State Vehicular Recreation Area use is difficult to separate. The Department plans to establish monitoring equipment to document the quantity, causes, and origins of the erosion taking place at Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area.

4. The alternatives you suggest will be studied along with other mitigation methods of controlling erosion. Rather than recommend specific mitigation measures at this time, the Department will initiate erosion monitoring programs. Then the Department will implement mitigation measures as necessary.

5. The statement "when important natural resource values are in danger of being lost." refers to losing resources such as wildlife habitat resources or topographic features due to sedimentation. We agree that the soil resources are also important.

6. The policy regarding monitoring of erosion is not a monitoring plan. Methodology is not specified in the policy. Historical experience at Hollister Hills S.V.R.A. and Carnegie S.V.R.A. will be employed and appropriate modifications will be made for the desert environment.

7. The policy on page 25 relating to 50% of vegetation is based on surrounding undisturbed natural desert land of similar character. A paper by Liddle, MJ (1973), the effects of trampling and vehicles on natural vegetation, Ph.D., thesis University of Wales, states that recovery is possible after 50% destruction (taken from bibliography by Webb and Wilshire).

8. The border of the S.V.R.A. is signed and patrolled by State Park Rangers. Only designated trails will cross the border between the State Park and the State Vehicular Recreation Area. The same is true with the other borders. BLM has designated trails traversing its property.

Most trail use in the north portion of the unit is by 4x4 vehicles rather than motorcycles. Motorcycle use is concentrated in the areas near State Highway 78.

9. Monitoring specifics will be developed. We will use current "state-of-the-art" methodologies.

10. These recommendations will be considered.

11. The amount of natural erosion and accelerated erosion will be better assessed after monitoring is performed, and scientific analysis has been applied to the data. The Department will strive to manage the unit so that erosion is controlled within the unit. The natural conditions of the past are responsible for offsite impacts which we must recognize.

12. Requirements of the Public Resources Codes have and will be followed. Several well established trails meet these requirements.

ATE OF CALIFORNIA—THE RESOURCES AGENCY
EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor
EPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
O. BOX 2390
CRAMENTO 95811
(916) 445-2358

MAR 5 - 1982

Honorable James Whitehead, Chairman
and Members
State Park and Recreation Commission

Dear Commissioners:

This is to inform you of our responses to late comments related to the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan (Attachment 1) and to propose revisions to the text of the preliminary General Plan (Attachment 3).

A number of comments were received pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act requirements after the deadline for such comments. The Department is not legally obligated to respond to late submittals; however, the staff feels that responses to these comments would be useful in view of the Commission's scheduled hearing on the General Plan in April at Borrego Springs, California. For this reason, staff has prepared the enclosed responses (Attachment 2) to these late comments, and they are being submitted to the Commission for your information.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me at the above number or Mr. Kolster of my staff at (916) 324-1395.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

Pete Dangermond, Jr.
Director

I-0652L

Enclosures

RESPONSES TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT COMMENTS RELATIVE TO OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA GENERAL PLAN

ATTACHMENT 2

1. The California Department of Parks and Recreation has acquired, developed, managed, and operated state vehicular recreation areas in a manner consistent with enabling and funding legislation, as well as the Public Resources Codes.

   The Department is aware of the philosophical gap that exists between those who desire minimum management of the SVRAs and the Department's current management approach. The Department's position at this time is based on the premise that an active management program that minimizes environmental degradation is mandated by the Legislature and is desirable from an economic and user standpoint. The OHV program is dependent on challenging sites. Past experience has shown that sites which have lacked management to the point of becoming unusable are soon abandoned in favor of new sites, which experience the same fate. Once sites are badly degraded, the cost of rehabilitation becomes prohibitive, even if borne by the OHV program. Consequently, the Department feels that the present approach is essentially appropriate.

2. The Department does not knowingly or intentionally acquire SVRA lands with the express purpose of closing them to OHV users.

3. The Department has attempted to manage SVRAs in a reasonable fashion that reflects the nature and variety of OHV activities. In the case of Ocotillo Wells, 85 percent of the site is proposed for unrestricted riding and 15 percent is proposed for trails-only use. Most of the trails area is somewhat self-limiting in that the topography itself tends to restrict use to the trails. Nevertheless, this designation is aimed at assuming protection of significant native vegetation, minimizing erosion, buffering the administrative area.

4. The policies proposed in the General Plan were developed by the Department staff (including persons operating the unit) with assistance from the OHV users of California. These policies were developed around the premise of sustaining a quality off-highway vehicle recreation experience now and for future generations. These policies also include management of all resources (including recreation) for the perpetual enjoyment of everybody visiting the unit.

   With reference to safety, the Department's policy (California State Park and Recreation Commission Policy No. 23, Public Safety) is intended to reduce the possibility of serious accidents involving OHV users in the interest of preventing injury to persons and property.

The Department understands that users do not desire major improvements. This plan proposes only those improvements deemed necessary by the Department staff and the users participating in the planning effort. They include facilities to manage and maintain the unit and to provide for the health and safety of the visitor. Those improvements desired by visitors participating in this planning effort include water, sanitary facilities, telephone, and an information/bulletin board. Other facilities proposed include a trailer sanitation station required by law and administrative facilities needed by staff.

5. The Department does not view OHV recreation and protection of resources as conflicting uses. In fact, the legislation regarding funding and management of SVRAs recognizes the importance of natural and cultural resources within SVRAs and directs the Department to assure protection of important values (Public Resources Code 5019.56(c)). Significant resources present are proposed to be managed in such a manner that they can be enjoyed by the off-road enthusiast without irreversible adverse impact.

6. Ocotillo Wells did not receive as intensive use 40 years ago as it does today or in the late 60s and 70s. Although use in the 80s has declined somewhat (as estimated by ranger staff in the Area), use in the future cannot accurately be predicted. Land use policies are proposed to provide for sustained use in a manner which reflects established use patterns. Areas other than the open use zone (which make up 15 percent of the project) historically and currently have not been used extensively as free play areas. Consequently, resources in these areas have not been excessively impacted and they include important natural and cultural values.

7. One of the most commonly asked questions regarding SVRAs is, "Why must we have land use zones or protect certain features?" For the on-site visitor, the only means of answering these questions is through interpretive information. Interpretive messages can also explain what to do in an emergency, where to reach help, where to get gas or water, as well as orient the unfamiliar visitor. Specific requirements for implementation are set forth in Park and Recreation Commission Policy No. 26.

   The Department's rangers have had basic peace officer training, and all qualified in advanced first-aid, with emphasis on treating heat exhaustion and heat exposure. While most of Ocotillo Wells rangers have emergency medical training, it is the Department's goal to qualify all rangers in EMT. As part of their training, all rangers have received classes in desert survival and safety.

8. The intent here is to inform the visitor of the recreational opportunities to be found in the desert. This includes educating the non-familiar visitors of the opportunities present in the SVRA.

9. The need for these facilities is documented in Appendix 1, Item 2 of the Ocotillo Wells General Plan. Water has long been in demand at Ocotillo Wells and is essential for a trailer sanitation station. The expectation of increased visitation is an assumption. With the establishment of

management policies and support facilities, the Department can assume use to increase, based on an improved recreational environment. To assume otherwise would reflect cynicism of the plan's objectives.

10. The Ocotillo Wells General Plan is the product of citizen and departmental contributions. All Department-related advisory committees are advisory in capacity and do not have the authority to make policies.

    The letter contained in the plan from the Ocotillo Wells Citizens Advisory Committee is the product of the committee's activities. The committee conducted their last meeting in March of 1979, prior to being officially reactivated on December 7, 1981. The committee has reviewed the current plan and commented on it. Currently, the committee meets periodically to discuss issues and make recommendations to the Department. Their new by-laws stipulate committee involvement for five years. This will be adequate for the committee to monitor the implementation of the plan. During the committee's inactive period, the Statewide Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee assisted with the plan (see December 4, 1980 minutes of that committee).

11. It is the combination of these facts and the composite picture they present that help the staff understand the makeup of Ocotillo Wells. This baseline data will help provide background for these and future management decisions.

12. The northeastern part of the unit is proposed as a trails use only for several reasons, one of them being the erosion hazard present there. The other two are the unique desert buckwheat plant community (General Plan Appendix 2) and the significant geologic features present in this area (General Plan, page 15, paragraph five and page 24, paragraphs four through seven).

13. While parts of the washes have been denuded of vegetation from OHV use, sediment scouring during torrential downpours also results in loss of vegetation.

14. Until subsequent legislation is passed, the Department is obligated to uphold Section 5019.56 C of the Public Resources Code.

15. The purpose of Ocotillo Wells SVRA is to make available to the public opportunities for recreational use of the site. Recreation in this instance must be defined broadly to encompass the wide variety of interests of the off-highway vehicle enthusiasts.

16. If important and significant resources are found within the SVRA, they shall be defined within a natural or cultural preserve (Section 5019.56 C, Public Resources Code). They may also be modified to enhance the recreation experience. The policies of this General Plan reflect this modification. To remove such features would not be economically feasible or practical in this case.

    Interpretation policy is explained in response No. 7.

17. Within the context of the Ocotillo Wells General Plan effort, the Department notes that it is difficult to make a distinction between OHV-caused erosion and naturally-caused erosion. Such a determination would require a time-consuming and costly study. Yet, the Department is mandated by Section 5019.56 C of the Public Resources Code to prevent unnatural erosion to the extent possible. The most practical attempt to prevent unnatural erosion is reflected in the hydrology and erosion policies on pages 23 and 24 of the General Plan. Monitoring programs will be initiated to document current erosion conditions and mitigation of negative effects will follow, employing current state-of-the-art methodologies. We cannot attribute all erosion in the unit as resulting from natural conditions. The supporting evidence for such a statement does not exist.

18. Such meteorological data is essential to the Department's ability to monitor unnatural erosion, including off-site, air-borne particle transport.

19. Please refer to response No. 17.

20. Please refer to response No. 17.

21. Because the northeastern area is remote, it has not in the past been excessively impacted by OHV users. Since the approval of the 1978 Resource Element, the Department has been managing this area as a natural preserve. Staff has found that not identifying the area as such has proved to be a successful management tool. Please refer to response No. 3 for further clarification.

22. The resource element presents a summary of resource descriptions and the general policies for managing the unit's resources. Details for implementing the policies will be worked out in later implementation programs (Resource Element, page 13).

23. The General Plan is a planning tool to establish guidelines for management of OHV recreation and resources within the unit. Specific rehabilitation and development programs will be carried out individually in subsequent proposals. Please refer to comments Nos. 6 and 4 of the Citizens Advisory Committee letter for additional recommendations.

24. DART indicates that it supports the protection of plant and animal life from willful and flagrant destruction. This underscores the need for stated policies relating to resource protection. While it is not the Department's intention to unnecessarily restrict OHV activity anywhere on the site, it is necessary to have established policies to deal with the individual who is not considerate of the environment and who insists on the prerogative to do as he or she wishes in spite of damage or cost involved. Without these stated policies, the staff at the unit cannot effectively manage the site or prevent destruction.

25. Resource people within the Department feel that these studies are essential to continued management of the program.

26. The primary cultural resource is the Barrel Springs site. The significance of Barrel Springs is two-fold. Not only is the Barrel Springs site a cultural crossroads, but it is a historic natural spring providing water for various cultures and for the essential survival of desert wildlife. Artifacts from the site have been found during a partial excavation (10 percent) by the Department in 1977.

The General Plan proposes a one-acre cultural preserve to protect the cultural remains and the natural spring. Vehicle use within this acre will not be allowed. Visitors will be permitted to enter without their vehicles for interpretive purposes. No trail use only buffer zone is proposed around this site.

27. The esthetic resources policy was developed in conformance with Public Resources Code Section 5019.56 C to preserve important scenic values found in the unit. Highway 78 is a designated scenic highway in this area, and the Department is concerned with the visible effects of OHV use in the unit as seen from the highway. However, the majority of the unit is flat, and no restrictions on OHV use are proposed as the result of scenic resources.

28. The Department draws on use figures generated since the facility has been operated as an SVRA (1978). Furthermore, the Department would be interested in obtaining documented figures prior to 1978. The difficulty in determining how many users the facility can support results from the fact that OHV users are of a much more mobile nature than the traditional park visitor. Because of this, visitors can be widely dispersed or in a highly concentrated group at any one time. Use intensity levels here are recommended to manage those areas in the unit identified as naturally or culturally sensitive. There is no practical way of limiting use at this time.

29. The Department of Parks and Recreation is not providing free housing for its employees. The General Plan proposes five trailer sites for ranger residences in addition to the existing residence. Rangers and unit personnel generally provide their own trailers, as well as maintenance. On-site trailer housing is an established policy to assist in avoiding vandalism and to speed emergency responses.

On-site ranger housing will provide ranger presence for 24 hours a day with capabilities of responding to emergency situations at any time. This ranger presence will also help provide security for the unit's maintenance facility. The location of housing sites will be chosen in such a manner to have minimum impact on the existing trails system. Since many new trails are developed almost weekly, the location of trailer sites to avoid major trails may mean the relocation of a trail of lesser magnitude.

30. Please refer to response No. 9.

31. Camping is permitted in Ocotillo Wells, and the majority of campers utilize self-contained vehicles. Title 25 of the California Administrative Code states that sanitary facilities must be provided for

the use of campground tenants. It also states that trailer sanitation stations shall be installed where recreational trailers/vehicles are not provided with drain inlets to receive discharge of toilets.

32. Please refer to responses No. 7 and 8.

33. The references used in preparation of the General Plan and Environmental Impact Statement are listed on pages 65 through 70 of the General Plan. "Off-Road Vehicles on Public Land" by David Sheridan is not listed in the bibliography of this plan; however, the report is quoted on page 58. The writer's concern is noted.

34. Part of the general plan process is to assess the public needs in relation to the unit being planned. Several public meetings were held, both on and off the site, to help assess the desires of the visitors. The public input provided during these meetings is used, along with other data gathered to make land use and facility decisions. Facilities proposed in the General Plan are reflective of the needs communicated to the Department from the public.

35. The programs and policies proposed in the plan are appropriate to manage the unit in conformance with Section 5019.56 C of the Public Resources Code.

36. The general plan process is not complete until the California State Park and Recreation Commission approves the plan and a final plan prepared and filed. DART's comments and the Department's responses are part of the general plan process. All comments and responses will be forwarded to the Commission prior to the public hearing for their evaluation. Only after the public hearing can the Commission decide to have a plan rewritten or reevaluated.

37. The correction will be made.

38. The acquisition process for public lands is governed by existing law. No assurance can be made that lands identified in the General Plan for possible future acquisition will ever be actually acquired by the Department due to a number of factors, including but not limited to: the availability of funds and the willingness of present owners to sell.

    In regard to environmental studies related to future expansion, the Department is not able at this time to carry out such studies. The State Department of Finance has frozen funds that were to be used for this purpose. The Department has requested funds in the 1982/83 fiscal year to continue this effort. When funds are available, the studies will be initiated and could take up to six months, depending on the season of the year. Spring is the most desirable time to identify significant vegetation.

    The net result of these considerations is that a schedule for completion of these actions is unpredictable.

39. Please refer to response Nos. 2 and 3.

40. Please refer to response No. 10.

41. The need for a designated unlicensed user area was not identified during the planning process. The Department shares the writer's concern for user safety; however, it is felt that the ample size of Ocotillo Wells SVRA mitigates against the need for such a designated area. If such a need becomes evident, an area could be established for this purpose administratively at any time within the project. Recommendations from the Ocotillo Wells Advisory Committee would be solicited prior to any action by the Department.

    The Ocotillo Wells SVRA ranger staff conducts a "youth certification program" for the unlicensed driver. This proposal is aimed at educating the youngsters to the safe operation of off-highway vehicles. This successful program also stresses safety in the desert and OHV etiquette.

42. Volunteer efforts are welcomed by the Department at any time. The Department stands ready to cooperate with any group to promote and implement worthwhile public efforts that will enhance the safety, enjoyment, and/or use of the SVRA.

43. Experience has shown that dispersed camping is a workable alternative at this site and preferred by many.

44. Please refer to response Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4.

45. Please refer to response No. 12.

46. Please refer to response No. 10.

47. Staff feels that the proposed one acre (208 feet by 208 feet) is the minimum necessary to improve this important archeological resource.

48. The Department plans to monitor and document impacts upon natural resources. It will separate natural and unnatural impacts, recognizing the fact that not all unnatural impacts are caused by off-highway vehicles. For specifics on vegetation, see response No. 50.

49. Staff cannot agree that the Commission adopt a change in the Resource Element.

50. Staff does not agree that the first paragraph below Plant Life, page 25, should be deleted. The staff recognizes that vegetative loss occurred prior to acquisition of the SVRA and that other types of use caused disturbance to the natural vegetation. Also, some areas are naturally less vegetated than other areas. Careful and unbiased comparisons to undisturbed areas outside the SVRA boundary will be assessed. Revegetation will help control erosion and lengthen the life of the project so future generations of off-highway users can come to enjoy Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

51. Staff recommends the specified text change be adopted.

52. The requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act dictate that the preliminary General Plan be submitted to the California State Park and Recreation Commission in April intact in its present form with comments and responses.. The Advisory Committee is invited to participate in the hearing at that time, in addition to its regularly scheduled meetings which are supported by the Department.

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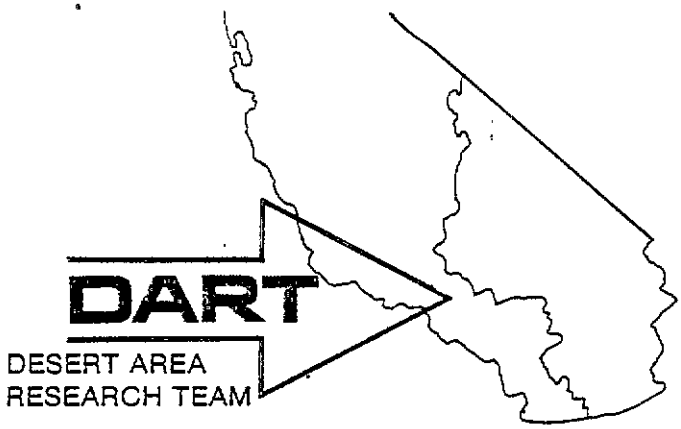

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January 29, 1982

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Preliminary General Plan for the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area. DART and its members have long been interested in the Department's planning efforts for the various vehicular recreation areas under its jurisdiction. DART believes that the Department has been less than successful in fulfilling its responsibilities toward California's off-road vehicle users.

DART believes that the Department has failed in four major ways:

1. The Department has imposed regulations far in excess of those necessary and proper to the management of the SVRAs to the effect that large percentages of the SVRAs have become out-of-bounds for ORV use. (1)

2. The Department has deceived the ORV user public concerning its intention to operate lands for ORV use.

3. The Department has used OHV Fund monies to purchase acreage for the express purpose of closing it to ORV use. (2)

4. The Department has imposed management plans which actively hamper the intended purposes of the SVRAs. (3)

The Preliminary General Plan for the Ocotillo Wells SVRA suffers all of these flaws. DART hopes that the Department may be persuaded to reverse its current direction and revise this plan into one which meets the needs and desires of California's ORV users.

RPI

DART's submission consists of three parts: the first is a statement on our philosophical point of view, the second is a point-by-point comment and analysis of the plan, and the third is a summation and our recommendations.

Philosophy

The relationship between ORV users, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the management of the OHV Fund is at best a tense one. The ORV user perceives himself as having been made the scapegoat for all the land's problems. He finds himself being vilified, both as an individual and as a member of a group. He finds lands being closed to his use at an increasingly faster rate, often for no perceivably valid reason.
The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for operating and maintaining the parks and recreation lands of the state of California. As stated in the Department's policies, the Department is to "acquire, protect, develop, and interpret for the inspiration, use, and enjoyment of the people of the State a balanced system of areas of outstanding scenic, recreational, and historic importance." In developing the organization to manage the State Park System, the Department has become imbued with a "preservationist" spirit. While this is appropriate to the management of a wilderness oriented park, it leads to attitudes and perceptions which are wholly inappropriate to the management of an ORV use area.
ORV users, recognizing the dominant trend in land management, land closure, supported the establishment of the OHV Fund. Their support was predicated on the promise to acquire land for ORV use. In our research, we have found a constant outcry by the ORV community for the purchase, from OHV Fund monies, of lands to be used as "open riding areas". ("Open" being defined as it is used in the Bureau of Land Management's Desert Plan: vehicles may travel anywhere within the area.) In every case the lands purchased have been encumbered by a host of regulations, restrictions, and management actions which have placed the SVRA into a category more akin to a 'state wilderness with riding trails'.
DART believes this to be wrong! The Department's actions in acquiring and developing SVRAs are wrong for two reasons. First, the Department has broken faith with California's ORV users. The user has participated in, and consented to, the development of the current system with the understanding that, through the use of his money, he would be gaining "havens" approximating the conditions found on open public lands in preceeding years. This has not happened. Second, in the overall land use picture, the current management philosophy will lead to unwanted results.
The concept of the "open riding" area is an answer to an entire sheaf of behaviors and perceived needs. With more and more public land being restricted to "existing routes of travel" and "designated roads" management schemes, the existance of "open" areas provides an important, and necessary, safety valve. In the future, these needs will have to be met in order to preserve other areas.
The Bureau of Land Management has recognized these needs and has responded to them with the Multiple-Use Class I designation. This land classification provide for vehicle recreation areas wherein vehicles may travel anywhere within the area. The Bureau has provided approximately 500,000 acres of Multiple-Use Class I land within the Desert District, including the 7,700 acre Arroyo Salada Open Area east of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.
DART believes that the Department would do well to adapt this concept in relation to its management plans for the SVRAs.

In summary, DART believes that ORV users have a need for, and a right to, open use ORV areas. The OHV Fund was established by, and is supported by, ORV users to meet this need through the purchase of land. DART believes that it is incumbent upon the Department to acquire and manage certain properties, wherein the needs of ORV users hold primacy over all other considerations.

Comment and Analysis

Summary (pages 3-4)

We shall provide summary judgement on the plan's major recommendations in the third section. But, some comment must be made concerning the Department's assertions that this plan represents "management policies and developments considered essential for improving visitors' safety and enjoyment, unit operation and resource protection". DART asks: "Considered essential by whom?" By bureaucrats? By preservationists? Possible, but certainly not by the owners of the property, the ORV users of California. It cannot be stated too strongly. ORV users, as demonstrated by their testimony over the last ten years, do not want "improvements". ORV users seek to be rid of the orderliness and conformity of modern society. Thus, improvements are not needed. As to "resource protection" the land was purchased for its potential as a haven for ORV use. That is the resource which needs protection. (4)

Introduction (page 7)

For page 7, paragraph 2, the comment directly above applies nicely. It should be noted that, as the unit was purchased for ORV use, DART considers the Department's "resource protection" plans to be a "conflicting recreational use". Therefore, we believe that such plans should be revalued and restricted as provided for in the Department's policies. (Policies, Rules, Regulations and Orders of the Park and Recreation Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation; Policy Number 16, page 15.) (5)

General Plan Objectives (pages 7-8)

Objective 1: As noted on page 31 of the plan, this unit has been used for the past fifty years as an "open area" or "free play area". We must believe that over this period of time those resources subject to destruction have indeed been destroyed. Thus, it seems unlikely that a current program of land use designations will produce any concrete benefits. As to accommodating recreational activities, it would appear that the historical and current "open use" classification is quite pleasing to ORV users. (6)

Objective 2: In general, we feel that the Department's interpretive programs are a useless, but quite expensive, frill. As to educating the user about desert safety, in general, we have found that the users are the experts. Would the Department care to state its qualifications to teach safety and desert survival? (7)

Objective 3: It is unclear as to exactly what is intended. (8)

Objective 4: This topic will be dealt with later in this paper.

Objective 5: The need for such facilities is undocumented. Nowhere does the Department provide evidence that increased visitation can be expected. Historically this has not been the case with Department projects. Currently, due to economic and other factors, we appear to be experiencing a decrease in ORV use and visitation in many areas. (9)

Planning Process and Public Involvement (page 8)

The Department claims that this document is the product of citizen involvement, citing the activities of the Ocotillo Wells Citizens Advisory Committee. DART has been unable to find anyone in the major statewide ORV organizations, in a policy-making position, who is aware of the existance or actions of this committee. We note that the letter presented to vouch for the committee's activities is almost four years old and the recommendations contained therein are basically of a "housekeeping" nature. These recommendations do not, as implied, support the Department's management plans, but rather detail a desire for the unit to remain as an open use area. We believe it to be unfortunate that there is currently no user committee specifically guiding the development of this plan. (10)

Resource Element pages 13-27)

Natural Resources (Pages 13-18)
At this time we should like to summarize the material presented in this section which is salient to the operation of the SVRA.

- Topography
1. The unit is relatively flat.
2. Many drainages created by rapid storm runoff interlace the area.

- Meteorology
1. Annual normal rainfall is 3.45 inches.
2. Moist unstable air from the east and southeast during the summer months causes occasional rainstorms.
3. This system is responsible for most of the region's rainfall.
4. These summer storms can produce thunderheads, strong winds and fierce cloudbursts that cause flash floods which erode the landscape.

- Hydrology
1. Four washes enter the SVRA from the north and west (from Anza-Borrego Desert State Park).
2. San Felipe Creek west to east across the the southern portion of the SVRA.

- Geology
1. Most of the unit's formations are young sediments.
2. There is widespread unconsolidated alluvium.
3. Infrequent but torrential rains cause rapid topographic changes, erosion and deposits.

- Soils
1. The soils are sparsely vegetated due to the low rainfall and low soil fertility.
2. Most of the area is covered by gently sloping alluvial fans (2 to 9% slopes), alluvial washes, playa deposits and generally flat alluvial plains.
3. In general, the soils are unconsolidated alluvium.

What can be deduced from these facts in relation to the operation of the SVRA? The soil type and structure of the unit, unconsolidated sedimentary deposits, and the dominant meteorological feature, infrequent torrential rains, forespeak a rather high natural erosion rate during torrential rainstorms. The generally flat topography precludes a large ORV induced erosion increase. The topography will also be a major control in sediment transport. Most runoff generated sediments will tend to remain within the unit. It appears that there might be some transport southeastward along the washes towards the San Felipe Marsh during flash flood events. It appears that there is major sediment transport into the unit from the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The low rainfall and the low soil fertility promise little in the way of ground cover. In summary, Ocotillo Wells SVRA is a relatively flat, sparsely covered, area experiencing high natural erosion during periods of heavy "catastrophic" percipitation due to unconsolidated soil types. (11)

Two statements within the section deserve special comment.

In the soils section (page 16, paragraph 5) the Department states that the northeastern part of the unit is to be classified a "trails-use only", due to high erosion rates. Field inspection of this area demonstrates evidence of extremely high erosion rates during rainstorms, but little evidence of activity caused erosion is present. As a consequence of the highly dissected topography of this area ORV use appears to be almost completely confined to the bottoms of the washes. Sediment transport would tend to remain within the unit, or, during flash flood events be transported southeasterly via Bank Wash. As a consequence, there appears to be no reason to define the area as a "trails-use only" area. (12)

In the plant life section (page 17, paragraph 3) the Department states: "Parts of the unit have been denuded of vegetation from continuing ORV use, especially in the washes." Due to the general lack of vegetation within the unit, this is a somewhat "chancy" judgement, except in the camping areas. The washes, in the main, appear to be "denuded" primarily through sediment scouring. (13)

Resource Policy Formation (pages 22-26)

Classification (page 22)

The Department has reprinted section 5019.56 (c) of the Public Resources Code. We are informed that Assemblyman Young has recently introduced legislation, AB 2397, to remove this section from the PRC. Therefore it may well be academic to discuss policy formation based on this section. (14)

Declaration of Purpose (page 22)

On page 22, paragraph 4, the Department outlines the "purpose" of the SVRA. We must disagree. The purpose is to provide an area for vehicular recreation - period. All else is secondary. Other recreation opportunities may be permitted if they do not become a conflicting recreational use, as provided for by Policy Number 16 (Policies, Rules, Regulations, and Orders of the California State Park and Recreation Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation, page 15.). (15)

"Fragile, rare, and irreplacable natural and cultural resources" may be managed and protected, but they may also be "modified". Such modification might include removal from the SVRA.

Interpretation may be a worthy goal. But, it is not a legislatively mandated necessity, and might well be considered an expensive frill. (16)

Resource Management Policies (pages 23-26)

In order to comment realistically on the Department's proposed Policies For Natural Resources, it is necessary to keep several concepts clearly in mind.

1. Prior to the start of ORV use the unit was experiencing flash floods and high rates of erosion and sediment transport.

2. Sediment transport within the unit and from the unit to the surrounding territory is by way of well defined washes.

3. Such sediment transport is a natural feature produced by an ongoing natural process: the break-up of the sedimentary deposits laid down upon the bottom of ancient Lake Cahuilla, following the retreat of the lake shore.

4. There appear to be no baseline measures of naturally occurring erosion rates. The generally flat terrain and the generally unconsolidated nature of the sediments should sustain little further in the way of ORV caused erosion.

5. The washes, found throughout the region, contain the flood waters and transported materials.

Public Resources Code section 5019.56(c) requires that "no adjoining properties incur adverse effects from the operation and maintainence of vehicular recreation areas" and that "conditions of accelerated and un-natural erosion shall be anticipated and prevented to the extent possible". The majority of erosion sediment is naturally produced. The ORV induced component has been present for the last half century. As erosion and sediment transport occur only during 'flash flood' events, it should be held that all erosion upon the unit is natural. This is reasonable due to factors noted in the plan (e.g. flatness of terrain and unconsolidated nature of the soils). (17)

Meteorology Policy (page 23)

We can see no benefit to be gained by establishing, at ORV user expense, a "weather station". As most percipitation occurs as torrential downpours, little is to be gained from rain guage data. It is fun to know the temperature and humidity, but hardly essential. Wind conditions? Why? The Department has shown absolutely no reason for establishing any meteorological monitering facilities. (18)

Hydrology Policy (page 23)

DART believes the Department's policy to be unrealistic. As we have stated the vast majority of the erosion and sedimentary transport products occur persuant to natural processes. As such, no action is required under PRC section 5019.56(c). That portion of the total erosion caused by ORV use is small compared to the natural component. Thus it would be nonsense to attempt to control total total erosion and sediment transport in order to control the small ORV component. (19)
The policy states: "The Department shall prevent off-site impacts caused by ORV use in the unit." The inferred impact is sediment transport off of the unit. As this "impact" only occurs during "flash flood" events and then only as a small portion of the natural occurrence, DART believes it is beyond the scope of the Department's mandate to initiate controls

upon all sediment transport mechanisms.
The policy states: "Sedimentation patterns in the major washes shall be monitored and steps taken to assure that the adjoining properties do not incur adverse impacts...." Monitoring the washes is a useless exercise due to the intermittent and "catastrophic" sediment transport mechanism extant on this property. DART disagrees that sediment transport within the washes, even out of the SVRA into the surrounding territory, constitutes an adverse impact. It is a natural process, even as the process which formed the Grand Canyon of the Colorado was a natural process.
The policy states: " Where major washes leave unit boundaries and channel sediments and water to non-SVRA lands, erosion control measures shall be started to prevent adverse impacts to off-site areas (PRC section 5019.56 c)." First, PRC section 5019.56 (c) does not mandate such controls for ecosystem control. Second, as the Department has noted, the unit is basically flat with soil consisting of unconsolidated sediments. The majority of the unit is covered with Rositas Loamy Coarse Sand. Such soils cover all the upper elevation areas draining towards Highway 78. The Department, on page 81, notes: "Rositas loamy coarse sand, 0 to 2% slopes. This soil is nearly level. Runoff is very slow and the erosion hazard is slight." We would expect that water entering the washes would carry very little of this type of material, and in passing out of the SVRA would carry little material which might cause an adverse impact. This must be true, as we note that the Department has not taken such steps on the Department's Anza-Borrego Desert State Park property where the five watercourses leave the state park and enter the SVRA. DART has found no evidence that any "adverse impact" has occurred from the lack of erosion control measures. We see no reason to impose such controls downstream. (20)

Erosion Policy (pages 23-24)

In the setting of the Ocotill Wells SVRA, the policy calling for documentation of OHV caused erosion and land closures is ridiculous. "Erosion" will only be apparent during and after "torrential downpours". At that point, who can say what is natural and what is ORV caused? DART suggests that this policy be deleted.

Geologic Hazard Policy (page 24)

DART agrees that all structures which are built on the SVRA should be earthquake safe.

Protection of Significant Geological Features Policies (page 24)

DART disagrees with the designation of the northeastern corner of the SVRA as "designated trails only". The author, having traversed the area on numerous occasions, sees little reason to believe that the area will suffer significant damage with continuence of the current management. The relative remoteness of the area and the associated terrain act to dissuade use of the area. This area should not be used for competitive events, unless careful consideration is given to route siting. (21)
DART disagrees with the establishment of a trail-use zone to protect sandstone concretions. In many cases the Department should collect the concretions and place them on protected display. In special cases the Department might erect a low barrier around a small patch and erect interpretive signing.

Soils Policies (pages 24-25)

Erosion policies have been dealt with elsewhere in this paper.

DART agrees that the soil maps should be completed. We suggest that such studies be carried out in cooperation with the state university.

It is impossible to discuss the final policy without further details. Scope of rehabilitation must be defined. To what level? With what expectations? (22)

Plant Life Policies (page 25)

The policies for plant life preservation are totally unrealistic when considered in the light of the purpose of this unit. The concept of rehabilitation is a difficult one under these circumstances. The reasons for rehabilitation and the goal standards should be clearly stated and understood. Given the purpose of the area, rehabilitation of the area to the pristine condition or to that approximating adjacent lands is clearly unreasonable. Rehabilitation to current condition upon reaching a 50% reduction may, or may not, be appropriate, depending on conditions within that sub-unit. DART believes that arbitrary policies such as this must be avoided. DART would much prefer to see specific conditions evaluated and handled on an individual basis. (23)

Animal Life Policy (page 25)

DART supports the protection of animal and plant life from flagrant and willful destruction. (24)

General Ecology Policies (pages 25-26)

We feel that we must disagree with the implications of these two policies. The Department has demonstrated no concrete reason, essential to the day-to-day operation of the SVRA, for the OHV Fund to support these projects. We suggest that such studies, if the Department still sees a need for them, be performed on a volunteer basis through agreement with the state university. (25)

Cultural Resources Policies (page 26)

The topic of preservation of cultural resource materials presents special problems for SVRA operation, especially in an area such as Ocotillo Wells SVRA. In general, the plain surrounding the Salton Sea is "littered" with numerous "archeological sites". Most are on the order of scatters or isolated artifacts. As the crust is weathering more "sites" will surely be found. As this unit was purchased for use other than "resource preservation" we suggest that newly discovered sites be examined by competent authorities and the artifacts be removed. Such artifacts would make a fine interpretive display. (26)
The Barrel Springs site is a more complex assemblage. Apparently it does warrant further study. We suggest that the Department draft a plan and timetable for the completion of the excavation and evaluation of the Barrel Springs site. At the completion of this process, the site should be returned to open use. Possibly a small interpretive display might be planned for this site. Under no circumstances could we countenance, at any time, a "trail-use only" buffer zone around this site.

Esthetic Resources Policy (page 26)

As a primary goal this policy is totally inappropriate to the operation of an SVRA. Delete it. (27)

Allowable Use Intensity (page 26)

We disagree that it is difficult in this setting to determine the number of users the area can support. The area has been "open" for at least 50 years. The peak load of the early 1970s is known or can be calculated. Since that time the load has decreased, and will probably continue to do so. Management of load by the Department should be through opening additional facilities to reduce peak yearly load on any one SVRA, rather than on adding restrictions to the SVRA. (28)

The Department states: "The siting of ranger residences may require relocating existing trails to provide a buffer between residences and OHV activities." We are appalled! This land was purchased by ORV users for their use, not to provide free, or subsidized, housing for the state bureaucracy. We assume that the Department pays its personnel a decent wage. Ranger residences must be off the SVRA, and should be maintained at their expense, not at the ORV users expense. On-duty personnel would, of course, use the "administrative" facilities. (29)

Land Use and Facilities Element (pages 31-35)

We tend to be skeptical of the Department's projections of attendance. Historically, they have not been accurate. We have noted errors of up to 70%. We expect that attendance will drop following the implementation of this plan. (30)

Previous comments on "ranger residences" are applicable.

Proposed land uses have been discussed previously.

The Department proposes the construction of a trailer sanitation station. Such a facility has merit, but it should not be part of the SVRA. We suggest that the Department urge the construction of the facility in the surrounding community. Then those wishing such service could obtain it for a fee, and the OHV Fund would not have to support a facility of dubious merit to most ORV users. This would obviate the need for much of the extra water capacity. (31)

Any permanent restrooms should be of the vault, or pit, type.

Interpretive Element (pages 39-43)

We must doubt the need for, and utility of, the vast majority of the proposed interpretive themes.
Maps, written handouts, and formal displays of artifacts and plants appear to us to be the most beneficial concepts and media. Demonstrations, tours, and campfire programs would, we feel, be a waste of money. We suggest that the Department consult with the various ORV organizations as to what would be appropriate and to seek volunteer assistance. (32)

Potential Acquisition (pages 51-52)

At this point, we must oppose the acquisition of this land by the Department. As much of the proposed acquisition is a Bureau of Land Management

Open Area or Bureau managed land, we feel that the ORV user will benefit most from continued Bureau management. If and/or when the Department demonstrates any competence in managing ORV lands, then our position might change.

Environmental Impact Element (pages 55-63)

Most areas covered in this section of the plan have already been discussed earlier in this paper. However, we feel it necessary to comment on the Department's use of "Off-Road Vehicles on Public Land" by David Sheridan as its sole reference on ORV effects. It is widely believed, and with some justification, that this report was more of a "hatchet job" than an evaluation of extant data. As such, we disagree with its use as the only reference for this section. We suggest that the Department's scholarship is faulty. And that such actions hint at either laziness or bias, neither of which can be tolerated. (33)

Summation and Recommendations

After exhaustive study of the Department's Preliminary General Plan, DART has come to the conclusion that the Department has once again demonstrated a thorough misunderstanding of the ORV user's wants and needs. (34) The plan's programs and policies are delivered as "necessities" with no supporting material to validate the conclusions. (35) The plan appears to be grossly over-restrictive and has not demonstrated the need for any such restrictions. We suggest that the Department perform a complete re-evaluation of the project. (36) Of the plan's major recommendations, as listed on pages 3-4, DART can only totally support the establishment of an identifiable entrance and the connection of unit trails to trails in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The rest are flawed in one or more respects as discussed within this paper.

DART recommends that:

1. An advisory committee, consisting of representatives from the various ORV groups, be established to re-evaluate this project and re-write the Preliminary General Plan.

2. The Preliminary General Plan be re-issued for comment following revision.

3. ~~Proposals for acquisition of additional acreage be tabled until such~~ time as an acceptable plan for the current SVRA can be produced.

DART will continue to follow the progress of this project. Please us on the mailing lists for all information on this project, and keep us informed of further developments.

Sincerely,

Richard T. Gochnaur

Richard T. Gochnaur
Director
Desert Area Research Team

cc: Livermore
D-37
Hollingsworth
MacPherson

United States Department of the Interior

IN REPLY REFER TO
6290
(C-063.2)

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
California Desert District
1695 Spruce Street
Riverside, California 92507

James M. Doyle, Supervisor
Environmental Review Section
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 2390
Sacramento, CA 95811

FEB 04 1982

Dear Mr. Doyle:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan and Draft EIR. It has been reviewed by staff at this office and at our El Centro Resource Area.

When the plan is revised, the reference on page 25 should be changed to BLM, California Desert District. The "desert planning staff" no longer exists as an organizational entity. (37)

The brief potential acquisition section on page 49 does not reflect any of the procedural requirements associated with acquiring public lands. It leaves the impression that acquisition automatically follows if your agency's studies are favorable. The section would be improved if it contained a time table for completing your studies and a process of interagency coordination and public involvement such as the recent public meetings on the EIR for expansion. We hope to work closely with you in assessing the expansion so that all relevant data is available prior to our making a decision. (38)

We appreciated the opportunity to comment and look forward to working with your agency in developing a sound recreation program in this area.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Hillier
ACTING District Manager

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FEB - 8 1982
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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF 4WD CLUBS INC.

5831 Rosebud Lane, Unit M-1
Sacramento, CA 95841
(916) 338-4540

February 4, 1982

Department of Park and Recreation
Mr. James M. Doyle, Supervisor
Environmental Review Section
P. O. Box 2390
Sacramento, Ca. 95811

Re: Ocotillo Wells SVRA General Plan

Dear Mr. Doyle,

The subject plan has been reviewed and we object to the extraordinary emphasis placed on the natural resources environment and cultural values supposedly identified with this area. The original idea was to locate a SVRA in an area that would be the least affected by ORV use, and I would have to agree Ocotillo Wells fits the description. There needs to be an improved method of identifying areas considered critical or sensitive to OHV use prior to acquisition of such lands. (39)

There is no mention of an ongoing OHV advisory committee to see that SVRA development is carried out as approved and initiate recommended changes to benefit all concerned. The operation at Hollister Hills SVRA is a typical example of our concern on this subject. (40)

In addition to the citizen advisory committee recommendations, we offer the following:

All unlicensed OHV drivers shall be confined to a designated OHV play area under direct supervision of their parents or guardian. (41)

There is no mention of cooperative users volunteer program to assist the department, maintain, restore, rehabilitate and develop park facilities and areas, nor is there any mention or the users promoting a drivers education training program. (42)

We agree camping facilities should be limited to level ground, water, sanitation and litter facilities only. In fact, dispersed camping in the area may prove to be more popular than a single campsite area. (43)

We thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Ed Dunkley,
Administrator

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA—RESOURCES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
P.O. BOX 2390
SACRAMENTO 95811

EDMUND G. BROWN JR., *Governor*

February 9, 1982

James M. Doyle, Supervisor
Environmental Review Section
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 2390
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Mr. Doyle,

I have enclosed a photocopy of a letter which was sent to you from Desert Area Research Team. DART obviously feels that the Preliminary General Plan for the Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area could use some improvement. I tend to agree with the general ideas of the letter and I would like to make my feelings known to you.

The idea which I think strikes home the most when we discuss SVRA's is number 1 on DART's list; "the Department has imposed regulations far in excess of those necessary and proper to the management of SVRA's". At times DPR has taken regulations to such an extent that SVRA's may as well be baseball diamonds. Large areas of SVRA's are closed for reasons which do not made sense to the general public, yet are justified by the PRC, when taken to the most conservative view possible. (44)

Something many organizations have mentioned to me regarding both Ocotillo projects, the existing SVRA and the proposed acquisition, is strong opposition to a wilderness, or roadless areaa occuring in what is commonly called "Pumkin Patch". This area lies in the northeastern section of the SVRA and the northwestern section of the proposed acquisition. Pumpkin Patch is indeed beautiful, but I must assert that enthusiasts have used the area in the past and must be allowed to use the area in the future. A designated trails only system would be unacceptable in that the area is remote and significant damage is unforseeable in the future. Remember this is an SVRA! I do agree with DART's idea that the area should not be used for competitive events, but its future use for noncompetitive events must be guaranteed. (45)

I am sure other members of the OHV Advisory Committee will take an opportunity to comment on the Preliminary General Plan and we will probably schedule follow-up meetings in the Ocotillo Wells/Borrego Springs area.

Sincerely,

Jim Livermore
Chairman

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Directors Office

FEB 16 1982

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DEPT. PARKS & RECREATION

To: Pete Dangermond, Jr.
Director, Parks and Recreation

Dear Mr. Dangermond,

The Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area Citizen's Advisory Committee has reviewed the Preliminary General Plan for the Area and have the following recommendations:

1. The Advisory Committee is to be included in every stage of development of the General Plan regarding policies, improvements and procedures. (46)

2. The Barrel Springs Cultural Reserve to be reduced to one half (1/2) acre and to include the spring itself. (47)

3. The Mudhills and Sandstone policies are agreeable. Signs and rocks as small boundary area borders are acceptable, if not overdone.

4. The policies dealing with Plant life that require comparisons be limited to comparisons in the SVRA from the time of acquisition and be studied solely with respect to OHV impact and not be influenced by adverse natural elements. (48)

5. Resource Element, Page 23 - Policies for Natural Resources - Add to first paragraph: Changes in environmental factors such as erosion, plant life and animal life will be calculated from the SVRA acquisition date. (49)

6. Resource Element, Page 25 - Plant Life - First Paragraph. Delete entire paragraph beginning with vegetative conditions and ending with Ocotillo Wells. (See No. 4 for clarification.) (50)

7. Operations Element, Page 48, No. 2. Change sentence "A greater effort will be made to assure that drinking alcoholic beverages and the operation of OHVs do not mix." to "A greater effort will be made to assure that alcohol abuse and the operation of OHV's do not mix." (51)

In conclusion, the committee would like to reemphasize its desire to have direct and more timely input regarding the Final General Plan. (52)

Respectfully,

Thomas E. Smith
President
Ocotillo Wells SVRA Advisory Committee

cc: Herbert Heinze
Gary Shannon
Dick Edwards
OWSVRA Advisory Comm. members

State of California

The Resources Agency of California

Memorandum

Date : March 31, 1982

To : Stephen V. Williamson
State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

From : Department of Parks and Recreation

Subject: General Plan for Ocotillo Wells
State Vehicular Recreation Area
SCH 81122310

The State Clearinghouse recently commented on the subject document.

The possible acquisition of the land to the east as an addition is being treated as a separate action. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (SCH 81090416) was circulated earlier and the Department is collecting additional information for the Final Environmental Impact Report.

The acquisition environmental document of the Department deals with broad effects to determine if the property is suitable for State Park System purposes. The General Planning process after acquisition allocates land for various uses, identifies areas to be protected, and dictates management practices.

This process is in accordance with Section 5002.2-3 Public Resources Code.

If you believe we can provide any additional information, please telephone me at (916) 322-2481.

James M. Doyle, Supervisor
Environmental Review Section

State of California
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH
1400 TENTH STREET
SACRAMENTO 95814

EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
GOVERNOR

February 5, 1981

James M. Doyle
State Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 2390
Sacramento, CA 95811

SUBJECT: Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan, SCH# 81122310

Dear Mr. Doyle:

The State Clearinghouse submitted the above named environmental document to selected state agencies for review. The Clearinghouse has commented, however, no other state agencies have chosen to comment.

The draft Environmental impact report (EIR) for Ocotillo Wells adequately discusses impacts resulting from continued use of the unit as an off highway vehicle (OHV) recreation area. Mitigation measures to minimize impacts from public use of the property are also adequately discussed.

The "Potential Acquisition" section of the document is of concern to the Clearinghouse. Impacts resulting from acquisition of lands adjacent to Ocotillo Wells and subsequent use of these lands as an OHV recreation area should be addressed in an environmental document before actual acquisition. Further, we suggest the general plan amendment, acquisition, and environmental impacts resulting from use of the area as an OHV park are addressed in one document. Following these procedures will provide for a logical sequence of events and save time and money for the applicant.

When preparing the final EIR, you must include all comments and responses (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15146). The certified EIR must be considered in the decision-making process for the project. In addition, we urge you to respond directly to the agencies' comments by writing to them, including the State Clearinghouse number on all correspondence.

A recent Appellate Court decision in Cleary v. County of Stanislaus clarified requirements for responding to review comments. Specifically, the court indicated that comments must be addressed in detail, giving reasons why the specific comments and suggestions were not accepted and factors of overriding importance warranting an override of the suggestion. Responses to comments must not be conclusory statements but must be supported by empirical or experimental

4. Water quality should not significantly deteriorate. Sediments from erosion may temporarily increase after construction but will diminish with reestablishment of vegetation. The runoff carrying contaminants from impervious surface areas (roadways, parking areas, and buildings) will increase but will be small in comparison to total watershed runoff. Water quality impacts from development and land management activities on other properties in the watershed could be significant and could cumulatively create problems for the lagoons and the wetlands.

5. No rare or endangered plants and animals, or unusual plant associations, will be significantly affected by the proposed development.