



STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

SpringHill Suites by Marriott

West Sacramento, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Update on State Park Planning Projects

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SUBJECT: State Park Planning Projects

OBJECTIVE

Summary

Several planning efforts and studies are underway at State Park units and statewide, including general plans, management plans, Cornerstone Documents, and visitor studies. This report describes each plan's purpose, process, and current milestones.

INTRODUCTION

This section describes the purpose of general plans and management plans.

General Plans

The General Plan defines the park's primary purpose and establishes a management direction for its future. It guides day-to-day decision-making by providing a clear purpose and vision, guidance on long and short-term goals, and guidelines. It also serves as the basis for developing focused feasibility and management plans, specific project plans, and other management actions necessary to implement the goals of the general plan. The development of the general plan includes a complete programmatic Environmental Impact Report, which is considered a project under CEQA.

The general plan is primarily a "goal-based" rather than an "objective-based" document. General plan goals and associated guidelines define park managers' and system operators' ultimate purpose and intention but stop short of defining a specific accomplishment and timeframe for accomplishing those goals. Subsequent planning documents, such as management or specific project plans, develop this level of

specificity. The development of a general plan includes a complete programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR), considered a project for CEQA (California Public Resources Code (PRC) Division 13. Environmental Quality, Chapter 1, Commencing with [Section 21000](#)). See PRC Section [5002.2](#) about General Plans and related State Park and Recreation Commission's duties for reviewing and approving them.

Management Plans

Management plans provide specific guidance and direction for implementing the goals and guidelines of a park unit's general plan. These plans typically implement one resource of the general plan's goals and guidelines, such as cultural and natural resource management, facilities, interpretation and education, or trails. For example, road and trail management plans examine a park's existing road system and provide specific direction for its long-term construction, maintenance, and management. An environmental review document may be required per CEQA compliance.

GENERAL PLAN PROJECTS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY

Alameda-Tesla Property Classification and General Plan

More than two decades ago, State Parks acquired the Alameda-Tesla Property with the intent of expanding the adjacent Carnegie SVRA. After challenges to this plan in 2021, SB 155 (PRC sec. 5090.42) authorized planning work to determine the best use of the land. It specified that the property shall not be designated as a state vehicular recreation area (SVRA) or be considered for any future expansion of off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation. This project includes classifying and naming the property as a new park within the State Parks system and then developing a general plan and environmental impact report. These two planning efforts will determine land use and public access and guide future management.

The Alameda-Tesla Classification and General Plan Project has two phases: I) Park Classification and Naming and II) General Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) development. During both phases, the public will have multiple opportunities to share input that will inform project outcomes, as shown on the [Participate](#) page of the project webpage (www.alamedateslaplan.com).

The project is currently in Phase I, Classification and Naming. The park classification process includes preparing a resource summary identifying a site's significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources. These resources are evaluated for opportunities to provide outdoor recreation and to interpret and protect natural and cultural resources. The project team will use the assessment, inventory, and analysis, along with input from the public and requirements outlined in PRC Sections 5019.50-5019.74, to recommend a park classification and name to the State Park and Recreation Commission for approval. This report will be brought to the Commission for review in Fall/Winter 2024.

For more information on the park classification process, visit the Project's [Resources page](#). Most recently, the State Park and Recreation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commissions participated in a site visit of the property on April 17, 2024. The project is expected to finish in 2028.

Clear Lake State Park General Plan

Clear Lake State Park (SP) is an approximately 590-acre park on the southeast shore of Clear Lake, the largest freshwater lake in California. The park is located within unincorporated Lake County, about 125 miles north of San Francisco and 100 miles northwest of Sacramento. The Northern Buttes District manages the park. Clear Lake SP was fully opened to the public in 1952. Since then, the park has grown to include a visitor center, four campgrounds, cabins, a day-use picnic area, a boat launch and marina, a swimming beach, and hiking trails.

A guiding 'General Development Plan' map was created for Clear Lake SP in 1966, but no other long-term plan for the park exists. A general plan will provide an opportunity to consider opportunities to improve the visitor experience, identify priority resource management and infrastructure needs, and allow the public to provide input on the park's management.

The General Plan process began in February 2024 and will be completed over three years. The EIR process will begin in early 2026 and be completed in early 2027. Please visit the Clear Lake SP General Plan project [webpage](#) to learn more about the project, take a visitor experience survey, sign up for updates, and get involved.

Delta Meadows Classification and General Plan Project

Delta Meadows is a 470-acre unclassified unit in Sacramento County, adjacent to Locke and Walnut Grove and 37 miles south of Sacramento. The property also includes a separate unclassified unit, the Locke Boarding House—a one-acre historic building and museum in the town of Locke. The Department acquired the Delta Meadows property in 1985 and adopted a purpose statement in 2000. Diablo Range District manages the property.

The Locke Boarding House was acquired and named in 2005 and is part of the Locke Historic District, designated as a National Historic Site in 1990. This historic house museum is open to the public and operated through a concessionaire agreement by the Locke Foundation. The Delta Meadows Property is closed; however, the public can access non-motorized trails within the property, a popular outdoor space with residents. A general plan and classification will provide an opportunity to consider opportunities to improve the visitor experience, identify priority resource management and infrastructure needs, and allow the public to provide input on the park's management.

Both units will be considered in the classification and general plan project, which is now underway. State Parks is developing a project webpage, and public engagement will start in Summer 2024. The project is expected to finish in 2028.

Dos Rios Classification and General Plan Project

Located about 8 miles west of Modesto in the Central Valley, the approximately 1,600-acre Dos Rios property is the largest public-private floodplain restoration project in California to restore habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife at the Tuolumne and San Joaquin Rivers. The property is between Modesto and Patterson in Stanislaus County and is adjacent to the San Joaquin River National Wildlife Refuge. The Central Valley District manages the proposed park.

A portion of the park will be open to the public on June 12, 2024, through a partnership between [River Partners](#), California State Parks, and the California Conservation Corps.

The Dos Rios Classification Process and General Plan Project includes work to classify and name the property as a new individual park within the California State Parks system and the development of a General Plan and EIR. The project will start in the Summer of 2024 and is anticipated to take approximately three to five years to complete. Please visit the Dos Rios Classification and General Plan project [webpage](#) to learn more about the project, sign up for updates, and get involved.

Great Valley Grasslands State Park General Plan

Great Valley Grasslands SP is a 2,826-acre park unit along the San Joaquin River in California's Central Valley. It is located in Merced County, about 25 miles west of Merced and six miles east of Gustine. The Central Valley District manages the park.

Great Valley Grasslands SP, which encompasses the former Fremont Ford State Recreation Area and San Luis Island Project, was opened to the public as a state park in 1992. As of 2024, the park is largely undeveloped and a prime example of native grasslands, wetlands, and riparian forests on the floor of the Central Valley. The park's west side contains a boat launch, parking area, restroom, and a short trail. There is no developed access to the eastern portion of the park, which features five miles of unpaved roads for hiking and biking. Local anglers frequently use both sides of the park.

The General Plan process began in February 2024 and will be completed over three years. The EIR process will begin in early 2026 and be completed in early 2027. Please visit the General Plan project [webpage](#) to learn more about the project, take a visitor experience survey, sign up for updates, and get involved.

Gaviota State Park, Refugio State Beach, and El Capitán State Beach Joint General Plan Update

El Capitán SB, Refugio SB, and Gaviota SP are all located off U.S. Highway 101 in Santa Barbara County, approximately 20-30 miles north of Santa Barbara. They provide unique recreational experiences to visitors from across the state and residents of nearby cities and towns like Lompoc and Santa Ynez. These three parks provide coastal access, developed day use, and overnight camping facilities and are rich in recreational opportunities and natural, cultural, and tribal resources.

In 1979, General Plans were adopted for Gaviota SP, Refugio SB, and El Capitán SB. These original plans included a thorough inventory of wildlife, historic and archeological assets, and the parks' natural features and facilities. They also outlined park-wide and area-specific issues and recommended addressing these concerns.

All three parks have experienced many changes since the original General Plans were adopted, and the guidance provided in the 1979 plans is now outdated. Ongoing damage from severe winter storms, impending sea-level rise and other climate change impacts, aging infrastructure, significant acquisition of new property, high recreation demand, and the need to protect natural, cultural, and recreational resources all contribute to the need for updated plans that reflect the current realities at El Capitán SB, Refugio SB, and Gaviota SP.

This effort aims to prepare the parks for the next 30 years by developing plans and strategies that meet state-wide sustainability goals, improve park resilience, protect park resources, and ensure visitor safety and enjoyment for future generations.

The General Plan process began in 2023 and will be completed over five years. Please visit the General Plan project [webpage](#) to learn more about the project, take a visitor experience survey, sign up for updates, and get involved.

Sutter's Fort General Plan Amendment

The Draft Sutter's Fort General Plan Amendment is an agenda and action item for the June 11, 2024, State Park and Recreation Commission meeting. Please see the Draft Sutter's Fort General Plan Amendment Staff Report for more information.

CORNERSTONE DOCUMENTS

The Cornerstone Document summarizes what is known about a park, establishes the Department's position as to its primary purpose(s), and highlights its fundamental resources and values. It is based on research and technical advice from diverse disciplines and input from community stakeholders, including California Native American Tribes. The Cornerstone Document forms the basis for future, detailed strategies and projects for park operation and improvements. It is a dynamic document that can be revised as new information about a park is discovered or as public recreation values change. Because a Cornerstone Document sets the foundation that serves as the basis

of all future decisions for a park, each unit of the California State Park System should have one.

Eight (8) Districts are working on completing nine (9) Cornerstone Documents. A Consultant is assisting eight (8) park units in the preparation and development of their Cornerstone Documents. The Big Basin Redwoods State Park Cornerstone Document was completed in October 2023. An update on the parks currently working on Cornerstone Documents and the planning milestone is provided below:

Castle Crags SP (Northern Buttes District): The project began in August 2023, and the draft Cornerstone Document is undergoing internal review.

Andrew Molera SP (Monterey District): The project restarted in August 2023, and the draft Cornerstone Document is undergoing internal review.

Emerald Bay SP/D.L. Bliss SP (Sierra District): The project restarted April 2024. Background literature research and data compilation is in progress and a site visit with district staff is scheduled for July 12. A draft Cornerstone Document will likely be ready for review in August 2024.

Tolowa Dunes SP (North Coast Redwoods District): The project began in August 2023. Background research and data compilation are in progress to inform the Cornerstone Document and a site visit with district staff is scheduled for June 20. A draft Cornerstone Document is in progress and will likely be ready for review in August 2024.

Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve and Mendocino Woodlands SP (Sonoma-Mendocino Coast District): The project began August 2023. Background research and data compilation is in progress to inform the Cornerstone Document. A site visit with district staff will occur in summer 2024 with a draft Cornerstone Document likely ready for review in September 2024.

Colonel Allensworth SHP (Great Basin District): Based on the results from environmental studies, two alternatives for locating the Visitor and Learning Center project elements are being considered. Coordinated engagement for the Cornerstone Document, Visitor and Learning Center project, and African American History and Engagement project will begin in Winter 2024 and carry into 2025.

Railtown 1897 SHP (Central Valley District): The project began January 2024 and a site visit with district staff occurred in April. Background literature research and data compilation is in progress and a draft Cornerstone Document will likely be ready for review in July 2024.

Trione-Annadel SP (Bay Area District): A draft Cornerstone Document is in progress and being completed by the district.

STATE VEHICLE RECREATION AREA GENERAL PLANS AND STUDIES

Carnegie SVRA General Plan Update

Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) is a 1,533-acre off-highway vehicle (OHV) park operated by the Diablo Range District of State Parks. The park is located within unincorporated Alameda and San Joaquin Counties, approximately 15 miles east of Livermore and 12 miles west of Tracy.

Carnegie SVRA has been operated as an SVRA since 1980 when the Department of Parks and Recreation (the Department) purchased the site. The original 1,575-acre property had been used by off-highway vehicles (OHV) since the 1940s and was operated as a private motorcycle park from 1970 to 1979 before being purchased by the Department.

State Parks previously prepared a General Plan Revision and Program EIR for the original Carnegie SVRA and the adjacent 3,100-acre Alameda and Tesla Expansion Area in 2016. While the General Plan Revision was approved and the EIR certified by the OHMVR Commission in 2016, the Commission rescinded these decisions in 2021 due to several lawsuits. The lawsuits and subsequent legislation requiring that the Alameda and Tesla Expansion Area not be designated as an SVRA has resulted in the Department and the Division electing to prepare a standalone General Plan Update for the Carnegie SVRA. This proposed General Plan Update and EIR are limited to the 1,533-acre original Carnegie SVRA and specifically excludes the Alameda-Tesla Property. The General Plan Update began in 2022 and will be brought to the OHMVR Commission for consideration in Fall 2024.

Copies of the Preliminary General Plan and Draft EIR may be reviewed online at the project website: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30807.

Hungry Valley SVRA General Plan Update

Hungry Valley SVRA is located in the Tejon Pass north of Los Angeles and along the Interstate 5 corridor. It offers 19,000 acres and over 130 miles of scenic trails for street-legal vehicles, motorcycles, All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV), dune buggies, and 4x4 recreation. The Great Basin District manages Hungry Valley SVRA.

A lot has changed in and around Hungry Valley SVRA since the last General Plan was prepared in 1981. State Parks is updating the General Plan to address changing conditions, analyze the latest information and data, and incorporate lands added to SVRA since the existing 1981 General Plan was approved.

The Hungry Valley SVRA General Plan has a project website at www.PlanHungryValley.com to facilitate public involvement and communication.

Interested parties should visit the project website and register to receive email notifications regarding project progress. The planning team is preparing the Preliminary General Plan and Draft EIR for public review in Winter/Spring 2025.

Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan

Ocotillo Wells SVRA and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) El Centro Field Office are developing a joint general plan for the Ocotillo Wells SVRA/Ocotillo Wells Special Recreation Management Area. This joint planning document will meet the State Park's General Plan and BLM land management requirements for a California State Park unit General Plan, a BLM Recreation Management Plan, and a California Desert Conservation Area Land Use Plan Amendment. The latter two plans are federal planning documents. The combined Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) will meet the requirements of both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The core team working on the joint plan comprises staff from State Parks, BLM, and AECOM (consultants).

The Ocotillo Wells General Plan Project started in 2008 and was paused several times due to budget constraints. It restarted in 2024 and is expected to be completed in 2026. State Parks is working on relaunching the project webpage and public engagement process in Summer 2024. The next step in the project will be completing the Preliminary General Plan and Draft EIR/EIS and preparing the documents for public review.

Prairie City SVRA Road and Trail Management Plan

The purpose of the Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) is to provide specific guidance and direction for implementing the goals and guidelines of the 2016 Prairie City SVRA General Plan. The RTMP is a comprehensive planning document that examines the SVRA's existing system of roads and provides specific direction for their long-term construction, maintenance, and management. It considers current and potential public use, park operations, and the protection and enhancement of cultural and natural resources to ensure recreational trail opportunities are available at their fullest potential. Comprehensive trail planning also considers regional recreational opportunities and connectivity and includes extensive public outreach and input into designing new trails and experiences. The planning process began in Spring 2023 and will continue through Fall 2024.

Visit the Prairie City RTMP [webpage](#) to learn more about RTMP and public participation opportunities. Please send any other project-related questions or concerns to trails@parks.ca.gov.

Off-Highway Vehicles/Over-Snow Vehicles Demographic and Economic Contributions Study

State Parks is concluding a three-year study of statewide Off-Highway Motor Vehicle (OHV) and Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Recreation. The study will provide updated demographic information about OHV and OSV recreationists and the associated economic contributions these recreation types have on local economies. The study was conducted through an interagency agreement with California State University, Fresno. A final report and related study products will be available on the OHMVR Division webpage in Summer 2024.

OHV Access Initiative

In September 2021, [Senate Bill 155](#) (Ch. 258, Statutes of 2021) amended Public Resources Code (PRC) Section (§) [5090.42](#), directing the California Department of Parks and Recreation, popularly known as State Parks, to explore the acquisition and development of properties and opportunities to expand off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation in new and existing facilities. This bill also recommended prioritizing opportunities that serve large urban areas such as the Bay Area and Central Valley and offer potential recreational opportunities for OHV recreation and motorized access to nonmotorized recreation. State Parks have many options for expanding OHV recreation throughout the state – through acquisition, lease, land swap, partnership, donation, transfer, legislation, and other means as established in PRC §5005, 5006, et seq.

Since November 2022, State Parks has held six public meetings for the OHV Access Project and a workshop with the OHMVR Commission. The last workshop in this series was held virtually in December 2023. The project next steps include:

- Meetings with land managers (BLM, USFS, etc.) – Spring to Summer 2024
- Refine a list of potential sites based on results of site suitability analysis and feedback from stakeholders.
- Prepare a preliminary report with a list of potential regions.
- Community workshops to report back on project outcomes.

State Parks has a website for the [OHV Access Project](#) that provides more information about the planning process and ways to participate.

NEXT STEPS

For information only.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

COMMISSION ACTION(S)

N/A