



**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING  
Palmdale, CA 93551**

**March 13, 2015**

**STAFF REPORT:** San Andreas District  
**STAFF:** Kathy Weatherman, District Superintendent  
**SUBJECT:** Eastern Kern County Property Update

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**Summary**

The OHMVR Division has successfully acquired approximately 25,000 acres of land in Eastern Kern County. The land acquisition was approved by California's Public Works Board (PWB) in November 2014 as the *Eastern Kern County SVRA, Onyx Ranch* project. The newly acquired property is part of the San Andreas District. San Andreas District staff have begun implementing management measures as specified in the Eastern Kern County Property Acquisition Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

**Background**

The Eastern Kern County property was identified years ago as a target OHMVR Division acquisition as it is surrounded by mostly Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land and the area has long been used for OHV recreation. The Eastern Kern County property is adjacent to the popular Dove Springs and Jawbone Canyon Open Riding Areas. If the property had been purchased by a private party, the parcels could have been fenced to exclude OHV recreation and further fragment the existing checkerboard of BLM land. Acquiring the land has helped to ensure that continued, sustainable OHV recreation in the area will continue now and into the future.

The acquisition parcels and BLM land is also in close proximity to the Sequoia National Forest where additional OHV recreation opportunities exist. The acquisition has helped to better consolidate public lands in the area which provide for OHV recreation.

In addition, the OHMVR Division has been providing OHV Grant funding to the BLM and Friends of Jawbone for years to help support and maintain this important OHV recreation destination.

Funding for the acquisition was OHV Trust Funds originally appropriated by the legislature in 2010 and re-appropriated in 2013.

## Discussion

The Eastern Kern County property has been incorporated as part of the San Andreas District which includes Hungry Valley and Hollister Hills SVRAs. San Andreas District staff have begun implementing the following management measures pursuant to the Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan (MMRP) of the acquisition EIR.

**Public Education:** Four new kiosks have been installed at strategic locations with information on OHV recreation opportunities and regulations. This includes a map of the acquired land, the Department of Parks and Recreation policy on hunting, firearms, and safety information regarding valley fever. Traditional and current forms of recreation which occur in the area will remain mostly as they have been although with an increased emphasis on public education, safety, and protection of resources.

Carsonite State Park Boundary Markers have begun to be placed along the travel routes which cross through the Eastern Kern County property. This will help improve the visitors' knowledge of the checkered land ownership in the area.

**Law Enforcement:** State Park Peace Officers have been assigned to patrol, provide public education, and orient other District staff about the property. San Andreas District staff have been visiting the area to become acquainted with the property and the existing OHV trail system in the area. San Andreas District staff have been concentrated on providing information and education about the acquisition.

**Cultural Resources:** A cultural resource management plan is being developed along with additional cultural resources inventorying and Native American consultation.

**Geology/Soils:** Staff is developing a Soil Conservation Plan and assessing erosion conditions. A contract is being drafted for aerial imagery using Lidar in order to help establish baseline conditions on the property.

**Grazing:** Staff has been in contact with the area's livestock grazing stakeholders and will be developing a monitoring and grazing management plan.

**Wildlife:** San Andreas District staff will be working on a wildlife habitat protection program and will be developing a Habitat Monitoring System (HMS). Wildlife monitoring activities are currently being conducted by San Andreas District Environmental Sciences staff.

During the initial tour of the property post-acquisition, staff noticed that the Butterbredt Springs Area had been trespassed on by a motorcycle. The existing wire fence had been cut to gain access. In order to prevent similar problems in the future, the wire fencing has been replaced by peeler post fencing. This will allow for improved non-motorized access while further preventing future OHV trespass. San Andreas District staff have been in contact with the Audubon Society which keeps watch over this Important Bird Area (IBA) and looks forward to working collaboratively with them in the future to ensure this IBA remains well protected and open to the public.

**General Plan Process:** Recreational land uses, future facility development, and the overall purpose and vision of the Eastern Kern County property will be addressed through a general plan process. Public involvement during the general plan process will be key to ensuring the desired recreational opportunities and resource conservation efforts are realized.

The general plan process for the Eastern Kern County property is tentatively scheduled to commence in 2016.

**Partnerships:** The OHMVR Division staff has been working with the other agencies, non-profits, and businesses active in the Jawbone Canyon/Dove Springs OHV Areas and will continue to build working relationships with these entities.

**Commission Action:**

For Information Only

**Attachments:**

None