



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
1725 23rd Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, California 95816
Telephone: (916) 324-5801 • Fax: (916) 324-0271

Armando Quintero, *Director*

**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Sacramento, CA**

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STAFF REPORT: Vegetation Mapping at the SVRAs Using VegCAMP
STAFF: Melissa Patten, Environmental Scientist
SUBJECT: Updates on the status of the VegCAMP mapping project

Summary

Vegetation community maps are one of the best tools available to inform natural resource management in wildlands. With the passage of Senate Bill 249, OHMVRD has been charged to compile an inventory of native plant communities within each SVRA by December 31, 2030. To meet this requirement, OHMVRD and CDPR's Natural Resources Division (NRD), are implementing the State of California's Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program (VegCAMP). This program represents the best available science for classification and mapping of plant communities. OHMVRD is also charged with developing for each SVRA a Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan (WHPP) that takes into consideration state and regional conservation objectives (PRC 5090.32 (g)). Using VegCAMP will meet these legislative mandates by compiling a mapped inventory of native plant communities, as well as contributing to a standardized state-wide mapping effort. **The objective is to produce fine-scale vegetation community maps using best available science, with results available in time to inform the development of the WHPP for each SVRA.**

The VegCAMP program was created when the State Legislature required the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop and maintain a vegetation classification and mapping standard for the state. The standards were developed in collaboration with state resources departments including CDPR as well as other federal, non-profit, and private entities. The VegCAMP program implements and maintains those standards, with a goal of mapping and classifying all vegetation communities throughout the state. VegCAMP is considered the "industry standard" within California and is widely used in wildlife and plant conservation, fire management and analysis, development and planning, climate change analysis, invasive species monitoring, and hydrology and

watershed studies. The program seeks to map the entire state of California, and more than half has been completed at this time.

OHMVRD and NRD staff are jointly leading the effort to map vegetation communities at the SVRAs using VegCAMP. Additionally, CDFW VegCAMP staff are providing guidance, training, and peer review throughout the field sampling and mapping process. VegCAMP methods involve field assessment, data analysis, desktop mapping using aerial imagery, and a field accuracy test of the finished map. Mapping will generally be at a 1-acre minimum mapping unit, meaning that each vegetation type polygon is no smaller than 1 acre, which is the standard scale for VegCAMP. Vegetation types will usually be classified at the alliance level, which incorporates the dominant and diagnostic species of a vegetation type, for example, the blue oak woodland alliance.

The VegCAMP maps will provide valuable information for park resource managers. Maps and associated reports will provide an inventory of native vegetation community types, including rare types and non-native or invasive types. Additionally, vegetation is a powerful proxy for wildlife habitat, and vegetation maps will help inform wildlife management decisions at the SVRAs. Completed maps will also establish a standard baseline which can be referred to in the future in order to track and predict change over time, including changes due to fire, land use, restoration, or climate change.

The specific goal is to complete mapping for half of the parks in 2021 (Clay Pit, Prairie City, Carnegie, Hollister Hills, and Heber Dunes), and half in 2022 (Oceano Dunes, Hungry Valley, Onyx Ranch, and Ocotillo Wells). The resulting vegetation inventories and maps will be incorporated into each SVRA's WHPP and will be updated as necessary along with the WHPPs, every 5 years. Completed maps will also be incorporated into CDFW's publicly accessible inventory of VegCAMP mapping throughout the state.

Field sampling and data analysis began in spring 2021. Currently, draft maps are complete for Clay Pit, Prairie City, Heber Dunes, and Carnegie, with Hollister Hills halfway completed and due to be finished by November 2021.

In spring 2022, field sampling will be conducted at Oceano Dunes, Hungry Valley, Ocotillo Wells, and Onyx. Regional vegetation maps that comply with VegCAMP standards already cover most of Ocotillo Wells and Onyx, therefore, maps for these parks will need only minor updates. Additionally, Oceano Dunes has vegetation community maps from 2015 that will be updated as necessary to account for changes due to restoration and natural sand movement. Hungry Valley does not have any previous fine-scale vegetation mapping and will require significant effort to sample and map.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

Prairie City Map