



**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Folsom, CA**

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STAFF REPORT: Hangtown Classic – Prairie City

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SUBJECT: Prairie City SVRA Program Overview

Summary

Prairie City State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA), located at the base of the Sierra Nevada foothills, provides a unique opportunity for visitors thanks to its history and landscape. The park offers a variety of interesting terrain and trails for off-highway vehicles (OHV), safety and educational programs, and a positive recreational outlet for children and adults. Provision of recreational opportunities is balanced with protection of the park's natural and cultural resources.

Prairie City started as an OHV park in 1973 under private ownership. Between 1975 and 1976, Sacramento County purchased the park with a grant from the state's OHV Trust Fund. In 1988 the OHMVR Division acquired the park, and began operating it as an SVRA.

OHV RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Presently, Prairie City SVRA includes approximately 1,400 acres. The SVRA offers a variety of recreational opportunities including riding areas and trails, tracks for motorcycles, ATVs, 4x4s, RUVs, motorcycles, karts, and quarter midgets.

In the fall of 2012, a project was completed to provide significant improvements and upgrades to the 4x4 area. With input from off-road enthusiasts, park staff designed and constructed a 4x4 obstacle course that includes a "Rubicon Trail" rock course, three hill climbs, a 4X4 pyramid obstacle, a sand pit, a cobble traverse, a boulder traverse, and a four stage rock climbing wall. These facilities accommodate every 4x4 enthusiast, from the first time off-roader to the most extreme and advanced off-roader, while simultaneously protecting the resources.

In addition to the many tracks and other facilities on the park, a park store is available. Mud Mart, located in the main staging area of the park, provides parts, gear, apparel, food and beverage, and services for ATVs and dirt bikes. The Mud Mart also offers ATV and RUV rentals.

HANGTOWN AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

The largest special event at Prairie City is the Annual Hangtown Motocross Classic, a premier, nationally televised event drawing as many as 30,000 spectators. This exciting motocross race is the oldest and one of the most notable trophies on the 12 race Lucas Oil AMA Pro Motocross Championship series, and has been dubbed as the “crown jewel” of the series. The Hangtown Motocross Classic is only event on the schedule that is still run by a motorcycle club, and held on public lands, illustrating the successful partnership between Dirt Diggers North Motorcycle Club and California State Parks OHMVR Division.

The Hangtown Classic was first held in 1969 outside of Placerville. The race took its name from Placerville, which was known as “Hangtown” in the gold rush days. An estimated 2000 spectators attended this first Hangtown race, which offered a winner’s purse of \$600. The event was moved to Plymouth in Amador County, and by 1977 the fan attendance had swelled to 30,000 spectators, with a purse of \$17,000. Hangtown had outgrown its Plymouth venue, and in 1979 the race was moved to Prairie City. Hangtown has remained at Prairie City since then, and many facility improvements have been completed to support the event. In 2012, the Hangtown Classic generated gross revenues of over \$700,000.

Upwards of 120 other special events per year are held at the park. Overall, in 2012, Prairie City special events brought in over \$1 million in gross revenue which created over \$100,000 in rent deposited to the OHV Trust Fund.

INTERPRETATION AND OUTREACH

The goal of the Prairie City Interpretive Team is to help preserve sustainable OHV opportunities by educating off-highway enthusiasts on environmental responsibility and safe practices. This is done through a variety of hands-on interactive programs, booths at special events, community outreach, and safety programs. Last year, the Interpretive Team spoke to over 10,000 visitors. The majority of these visitor contacts took place in the park, with about one-fourth of the contacts taking place at outreach programs for community events and schools.

The Environmental Training Center was designed to teach safe and environmentally responsible off-highway recreation practices. The facility consists of a classroom, two training ranges, and a three-acre trail system landscaped with California native plants. The trail system allows trainers to instill respect for the land, while challenging participants to real-life riding conditions.

Whenever possible, the Interpretive Team strives to develop partnerships with other public, private, and nonprofit organizations. These partnerships often lead to

collaborative events and interpretive programs. Two examples of this are Visitor Appreciation Day and the new Tread Lightly! Radio Control (R/C) program.

Visitor Appreciation Day brings together visitors, off-highway dealers, nonprofit clubs and organizations together to experience the many recreational opportunities that the park has to offer. Visitors are able to get into the park for free, take demo rides, participate in educational activities, learn safe recreational practices, and demonstrations.

The Tread Lightly! R/C program is a partnership between the OHMVR Division, Jeep, and Axial. The partners have teamed up to put together an exciting hands-on Tread Lightly! program. Participants are challenged to operate the R/C vehicles through the course while following the Tread Lightly! principles.

RESOURCE PROGRAM

Habitat Monitoring System

Like all of the SVRAs, Prairie City conducts a Habitat Monitoring System (HMS) program. This program includes annual surveys of birds, amphibians, mammals, and vegetation. Park staff have increased the range of the San Joaquin Pocket Mouse, identified 72 different species of birds, and added 88 different plant species in the vernal pool areas.

Soil Standard

The soils and trails program at Prairie City SVRA is guided by the OHMVR Division's *2008 Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines*. Using Geographic Information System (GIS) and Global Position System (GPS) technologies, a trails inventory has been established and is monitored annually. Trail assessments are also performed annually to help ensure the integrity of the trail's design. The results of these efforts are summarized in an annual report.

Resource Restoration Program

Every year, Prairie City SVRA implements resource restoration projects to protect habitat, improve storm water quality, and provide for long term sustainable recreation. Prairie City Staff annually provides a "rotational hillclimb" on Oak Hill, a strategy of temporary sectional closures that lessens the sediment by half, which is then caught in a sediment basin. All soils that have been retained in the sediment basins are recycled for use in the park on other restoration projects. All restoration projects are seeded with a variety of native grass and forb seeds.

Cultural Resources

In 2012, the OHMVR Division conducted a cultural resources survey for Prairie City SVRA. The survey focused on areas in the park that had not been heavily impacted by off-highway vehicle use. The archaeological survey of Prairie City SVRA identified no prehistoric sites, and one historic-era site, Capitol Dredging Company Diggings.

FUTURE

Management of Prairie City SVRA is currently guided by a Master Plan approved in 1991. Since then, State Parks has acquired additional land immediately adjacent to the SVRA. Before this land may be opened for recreational use, a long range plan must be completed. The resulting General Plan document will be used to guide future management and operation of Prairie City SVRA. The plan is currently in the first phase, which consists of starting initial surveys and planning public workshops. A comprehensive General Plan, once adopted and implemented, will ensure OHV recreational opportunities and enjoyment for future generations, while also providing stewardship for the SVRA's many resources.

Commission Action

For Information Only