



**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Upper Lake, CA 95485**

February 28, 2014

STAFF REPORT: Outreach Program/OHPALs Update
STAFF: Natalie Lohi, Outreach & Interpretation Program Manager
SUBJECT: Division Wide Outreach and OHPALs Program Update

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division Outreach Program saw an incredible year of growth in 2013, and 2014 is shaping up to be even more exciting! We have seen a marked increase in requests to participate and present at diverse events, conferences, and workshops as subject matter experts. Demand is so high for information about our activities and techniques that we have developed “quick sheets” to provide to the various inquiring agencies and non-profits. Finally, we continue to elevate and improve our program, resulting in a significant increase in public contacts. In fact, we broke a Division record for number of public contacts at a recent event. This has all been possible due to effective management, a dedicated group of talented people, partnerships, and the OHMVR Commission.

Discussion

OHPALs

The Division Outreach Program utilizes various methods of education and interpretation, hands-on safety training, and targeted social media messaging. The Off-Highway Police Activities League (OHPALs) is part of the hands-on training component of the Outreach Program. OHPALs was developed in 1995 as a youth mentoring program that uses the attraction of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and a comprehensive curriculum to develop resiliency, civic-mindedness, and positive relationships with peace officers and California State Parks. OHPALs provides a vital connection between youth and the outdoors that they might not otherwise experience.

OHPALs has not been without its challenges. Lack of dedicated staff to facilitate the program due to low staffing levels and hiring constraints, difficulty in maintaining and/or replacing aged equipment due to stringent outside-agency purchasing and reporting requirements, and difficulty engaging other PAL groups for participation due to their own internal constraints (such as funding and transportation of groups) have all taken a toll on the momentum of the program. Due to these limitations, OHPALs became somewhat

inactive for a time. However, in the last two years, the Division has been focusing on addressing these challenges. A significant number of volunteers has been certified to instruct ATV and dirt bike classes. Restructuring of the Outreach Program is currently underway to provide a Division Training Officer to oversee the hands-on training program. In addition to being a Chief Instructor, this person would be field oriented, and directly communicate with the SVRAs, the PAL organization, and the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA). Approximately two years ago, the Division contracted with SVIA to provide OHV safety training for the public. Through the contract, State Parks employees and volunteers are trained as instructors. We began increasing the number of OHV training classes offered to the public, including free ATV training for youth. Through outreach efforts and word of mouth, OHV training opportunities at our SVRAs and at partner locations have gained steadily in popularity and increased in demand. We have also recently seen an increase in interest from other agencies to reinvigorate their Police Activities Leagues, incorporating OHPALs.

At the last Commission Meeting, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office (LASO) presented a proposal to work with the OHMVR Division to offer OHPAL classes. They requested support from the Division. Since that time, we have facilitated a meeting between LASO and Hungry Valley SVRA. Through the SVIA contract, Hungry Valley staff has provided ATV training for eight LASO officers as well as park and facility orientations. In March, those same eight officers will be trained and certified as ASI instructors and have the ability to provide OHPAL classes. They are highly motivated and have the staff as well as a group transport vehicle to provide regular OHPAL classes. This situation will be the model as we continue to invigorate and aggressively market the program through various methods of outreach.

Outreach Events

The OHMVR Division brought a world of motorized recreation opportunities to visitors during the International Sportsmen's Exposition in Sacramento during January. In addition to a booth that featured information on safe and responsible recreation in the exhibit hall, the OHMVR Division outreach team set up an adventure playground for the whole family in the Outdoor Youth Fair building. Kids of all ages operated remote control Jeeps through an obstacle course to apply the Tread Lightly! principles, tested their riding skills on the ATV safety simulator, and played the ATV safety challenge computer games. The OHMVR Division partnered with Boating and Waterways Division as new exhibitors at the Youth Fair to add motorized fun to the traditional fishing and hunting activities. This partnership resulted in 7,400 public contacts and a shared message of safe and responsible recreation, land stewardship, and California State Park's 150th anniversary. Our booth and participation was advertised in conjunction with a public service announcement on Radio Disney. Our PSA focused on safety and land stewardship and ran for two weeks leading up to the event.

We participated in the 2014 King of the Hammers event February 1 through the 7. We provided four full days of interactive, hands-on educational activities for children and

adults alike. Our outreach booth provided a wealth of knowledge allowing us to address questions ranging from vehicle code to grant funding.

Statistics on our statewide outreach efforts are currently being gathered and compiled. We will have a statewide outreach update at the next Commission Meeting. The OHMVR Division continues to receive recognition from other Divisions, other agencies, and most importantly – the people of California. We look forward to future collaboration with other Divisions and agencies, and most of all, to even more opportunities to share our knowledge with the people of California.”

Commission Action

For information only

Attachments

None