

2009-2010 OHV Grant comments – Los Padres National Forest

Please see the following comments. Bruce Whitcher, CCMA

Ground Operations:

Grant applications seem to allocate most of the money to administrative support and very little to actual work. There is definitely a need for administrative support of an OHV program, but the funding emphasis seems skewed toward administration instead of work on the ground.

It appears the salaries for OHV managers and technicians are derived from state grant funding, yet these are federal positions. It would be helpful to understand how much salary is supplied by the Forest Service and how much is provided by OHV grant funds and the rationale for the shared responsibility between Forest Service and OHV Division.

Hiring student interns and seasonal workers has been a tremendous help with general maintenance in the field. This practice should continue.

There has been increased emphasis on mechanized trail maintenance because this is the only way to control erosion on a large trail system, but single track trail systems cannot be maintained without hand work. It is good to see that SLRD has applied for trail crew funding. It would be more cost effective to use inmate crews than other crews on trails that are within the required distance of correctional facilities. Use of hand crews should also be encouraged on the MPRD due to the single track trails on that District.

On the SLRD not all ML 2 roads are covered under the grading contract. It would be helpful to know which are maintained under the grading contract and which are maintained with OHV grant funds.

A significant amount of funding is being requested and allocated for maps (over \$30,000). There is a general trend away from hard copy materials and toward electronic media. Downloadable maps were until recently posted on the web site but are no longer available. Better format maps for easy downloading and printing from the web site such as those used for Travel Management could result in a significant cost saving over printed maps.

There should be a line item for fuel for the SLRD tractor rental as this is a significant expense. We could use an allocation of \$1500v for rental of a mini excavator. Funding should be made available for a tractor operator. We have hired a retired operator and there could be a \$5000 salary item for that person.

The Fraizer Mtn Trailhead planning project is projected to provide \$94,000 in match. That is a significant cost and more details of this project should be made available, especially since this is phase two and the project has not yet been implemented.

SLRD Safety and Education:

The grant request of \$10,450 is very modest given the importance of the program. The SLRD is providing considerable match through staff support and volunteer support. This program is only a year old and shows promise. It is largely volunteer driven. The program deserves continued support and needs greater participation by club members.

Navajo Flats Project

It's good to see this project moving into the implementation phase. This is not an elaborate project, mostly improvements to an existing area. Even at today's costs the amount being requested seems high for a project of this type.

There are several layers of cost associated with administration of contracts under the "contract" section (2) on page 4, are all of these justified?

There are existing pipe fence barriers around the staging area as well as a trail gate on McGinnis trail that needs repairs. The budgeted amount of 113,950 plus 7,000 for the gate seems excessive unless the entire pipe fence needs to be replaced and an entirely new trail gate constructed. This is the single largest item in the budget. There is a potential opportunity for cost saving here.

Several new picnic tables were installed just this year. How many total are planned for the project?

Under the scoring criteria, the area is used occasionally by dune buggies/rails on jeep roads. This box should be checked on item 3, "diversified use".

It would be good to have a second SST installed in a different location. The present SST is located next to a major trail thoroughfare so users have to cross a busy section of trail to get to it.

There are very few illegal trails along McGinnis Creek. There are a few braided route sections that have developed along the trail by riders avoiding whoops. Some logs located to divert traffic plus grading the trail would easily solve this problem.

SLRD Restoration

This grant would fund restoration of old closed routes and user created trails that are not part of the designated system. Any intensively used OHV area exhibits a certain amount of off trail riding, and maintenance keeps this under control. We have made excellent progress over the past few years with simple measures such as wire fencing and placing brush on closed routes. This grant would help conserve trail maintenance funds. We support restoration of closed routes and areas of trespass to demonstrate that riders are good stewards of the land.