



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division  
PO Box 942896  
Sacramento, California 94296  
Telephone: (916) 902-8598

Armando Quintero, *Director*

## OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Tracy, CA

October 24, 2024

**STAFF REPORT:** Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan Update Project

**STAFF:** Katie Metraux, Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Division

**SUBJECT:** Draft General Plan Update and Final Environmental Impact Report

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### Summary

State Parks is submitting the Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) and Draft General Plan Update to the OHMVR Commission for its proposed certification and approval.

### Discussion

#### Project Location and Setting

Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) is a 1,533-acre off-highway vehicle (OHV) park managed by the Diablo Range District of California State Parks. The SVRA is located within unincorporated Alameda and San Joaquin Counties, approximately 15 miles east of Livermore and 12 miles west of Tracy. Carnegie SVRA has been operating as an SVRA since around 1980 when California State Parks purchased the property. The original 1,533-acre site had been used by OHVs since the 1940s and was operated as a private motorcycle park from 1970 to 1979.

Carnegie SVRA is mainly a destination for intermediate and advanced off-highway motorcycle riders from multiple age groups. Known for steep hillsides and challenging terrain, the SVRA attracts families, groups, and single riders who want to ride for a few hours, camp and ride for several days, or compete in or watch hill climbs or other special events.

#### General Plan Background

The first General Plan for Carnegie SVRA was approved in 1981. In 2016, California State Parks prepared a General Plan Revision and associated Program EIR for the original Carnegie SVRA and the adjacent 3,100-acre Alameda and Tesla Expansion

Area. While the General Plan Revision was approved and the EIR certified by the OHMVR Commission in 2016, the Commission rescinded these decisions in 2021 due to several lawsuits. The lawsuits and subsequent legislation requiring that the Alameda and Tesla Expansion Area not be designated as an SVRA resulted in the Department electing to prepare a standalone General Plan Update for the Carnegie SVRA. The Department is conducting a separate planning effort for the Alameda and Tesla Expansion Area to determine a suitable classification and future use of these properties. Therefore, this proposed General Plan Update and EIR are limited to the 1,533-acre original Carnegie SVRA, specifically excluding the Expansion Area. The 1981 General Plan is the current general plan for the SVRA.

The 2024 General Plan Update will guide the management and development of the park unit for public use and resource protection for the next several decades. The plan establishes goals and guidelines to assist in the daily and long-term management of the units to ensure the natural and cultural resources are protected while allowing for various appropriate recreational opportunities. Consistent with State Parks Planning efforts, the General Plan includes a programmatic Environmental Impact Report that analyzes the environmental effect of implementing the General Plan. Specific projects proposed by the General Plan may require subsequent California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance at the time of implementation in the form of second-tier environmental evaluations of the potential impacts of the specific project. Once approved, this General Plan will supersede the 1981 General Plan.

### **Carnegie SVRA General Plan and EIR Timeline**

The following is the timeline for the preparation of the General Plan and EIR:

- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR was circulated to the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies from March 31 through April 30, 2022. A virtual public meeting was held on April 19, 2022, from 4:30 to 5:15 p.m.
- The Preliminary General Plan and Draft EIR were published for public review from January 16 to March 1, 2024.
- The Department held a public tour of Carnegie SVRA with the OHMVR Commission on April 17, 2024. A second public tour of the SVRA will be held on October 23, 2024.
- The Final EIR was prepared between March and September 2024. It was available for review on the [Carnegie SVRA General Plan Update project page](#) and the [OHMVR Commission Meetings](#) page.
- The OHMVR Commission hearing to consider the approval of the General Plan and certify the Final EIR is scheduled for October 24, 2024.

- The Final General Plan Update and Final EIR will be published after the Commission hearing and the adoption of the associated resolutions.
- A Notice of Determination will be filed with State Clearinghouse following the certification of the Final EIR at the October 24, 2024 OHMVR Commission hearing.

## **General Plan Proposed Changes and Additions**

### *Declaration of Purpose*

The Declaration of Purpose describes the purpose of Carnegie SVRA and is the broadest statement of management goals designed to fulfill the vision of the SVRA. A Declaration of Purpose is required by California PRC Section 5002.2(b). The previous Declaration of Purpose for Carnegie SVRA, adopted in December 1981, was updated during this General Plan process:

The purpose of Carnegie SVRA is to provide effectively managed, responsible off-highway vehicle and related recreational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the SVRA's valued cultural and natural resources.

### *SVRA Vision*

The vision for Carnegie SVRA describes the SVRA in future years when State Parks' OHMVR Division has achieved its General Plan objectives. The following vision was developed for Carnegie SVRA during the General Plan planning process:

Carnegie SVRA will be a regional destination where children and adults of all skill levels can ride, play, and learn in an outdoor recreational setting. Carnegie SVRA will continue to be an affordable location where visitors can enjoy a wide variety of OHV recreation. Carnegie SVRA will be a model of exciting and well-managed OHV recreation as well as excellent environmental stewardship. Visitors will be able to learn about and contribute to the long-term sustainability of diverse cultural and natural resources present within the SVRA.

### *Proposed Projects*

The General Plan proposes projects that include new and improved visitor experiences and operations facilities, which would be constructed under the General Plan. Chapter 4, sections 4.3.1.3 through 4.3.1.5, provides a detailed description of each project. The CEQA analysis detailed in the EIR accompanying this General Plan covers future projects as long as the projects are consistent with the General Plan's goals and guidelines. Some actions described in the General Plan may require additional CEQA analysis before implementation. This additional analysis would be conducted once the project details are known before project implementation. According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, projects that may be implemented in the future as a result of adopting this General Plan must first be subjected to CEQA review, in light of the information in the General Plan EIR, to determine whether additional CEQA documentation is

necessary. According to Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines, State Parks may refer to the EIR prepared for this General Plan as a starting point for a “tiered” CEQA analysis when implementing future projects requiring additional environmental review.

Proposed visitor services facilities improvements include:

- **Campground Remodel.** The existing campground includes 26 individual campsites. Proposed improvements include clearly delineating campsites, adding amenities like electrical hookups, shade ramadas, picnic tables, safety improvements, buffer areas, and native plant revegetation.
- **New Group Campsite.** State Parks will consider several locations on previously disturbed land within the SVRA’s gathering and services visitor experience area to develop a group campsite. One location currently under consideration is at the SVRA’s northwest corner.
- **New Recreational Vehicle Dump Station.** The SVRA currently does not have an RV dump station for campers. State Parks will construct one on previously disturbed land (e.g., near the campground or the SVRA main exit). The dump station will be accessible to the public for a fee.
- **New Campfire Center.** State Parks will design and construct a campfire center on previously disturbed land on the west end of the existing campground (will require relocating the water tower to another previously disturbed area, such as the area west of the existing ATV track).
- **Concession Store Upgrade and Relocation.** The existing leased concession store, MotoMart, is next to the SVRA day-use and campground area. The store may be replaced and potentially relocated to the west side of the SVRA entrance.

*Proposed operations and maintenance facilities improvements include:*

- **SVRA Maintenance Area Improvements.** The SVRA maintenance area is located at the county line near the SVRA’s western boundary and is accessible from Corral Hollow Road. Maintenance area improvements may include expansion of the existing footprint to install two new prefabricated buildings (e.g., ranger office and sector building), auto shop remodeling/addition, fuel system upgrade (2,000 gallons for unleaded gas and 1,000 gallons for diesel), carport roof and siding repair/reconstruction, solar PV installation on carport, power maintenance shop upgrade, new fencing, paving/concrete surfacing for parking, and shade structures. The auto shop garage/warehouse layout may be redesigned and improved to include the shop space, office space, and a break room (see Appendix B of the EIR - Auto Shop Conceptual Floor Plan Design). State Parks may also replace the maintenance area bridge.
- **Ranger Station Expansion:** The SVRA entrance and ranger station are located near the center of the SVRA’s northern boundary and accessible from Corral

Hollow Road. State Parks will expand and redesign the existing ranger station building and yard layout.

- **Emergency Helicopter Pad Relocation:** The emergency helicopter pad is near the SVRA maintenance area. To better support and improve emergency medical response, it will be relocated to an area just east of the existing ranger station. The pad will be a hardscaped surface.
- **Volunteer Training Area Enhancements:** A small area east of the ranger station and north of the main SVRA road, including a small storage shed and picnic tables, is used to train SVRA volunteers. The area will be expanded further east (potentially up to the location of the proposed greenhouse) to include facilities and features such as a classroom for safety training/meetings (no larger than 30 feet by 30 feet) and additional picnic tables.
- **Campground Host Sites.** State Parks will develop up to four campground host sites, potentially near the volunteer training area. These sites will provide features such as a parking spur, electricity hook-up, water, picnic table, shade ramada, and fire ring.
- **New Greenhouse:** A greenhouse will be constructed just west of the existing visitor day-use area. State Parks will also install picnic tables for plant cuttings and educational programs. The greenhouse will likely be a cold frame structure and approximately 20 feet by 84 feet with a minimum 6-foot arch on the center arch and 5-foot side walls and poly on the roof, sides, and ends.
- **SVRA Headquarters Area Improvements.** This area is located north of the campground and Corral Hollow Road and east of California Fire Station 21. Project area improvements may include filling the drained pond for additional developable space, upgrading or expanding the existing office space and other operations facilities and staff housing, such as a new wood shop, a new resource work/storage building, additional storage sheds/space, a new double-wide modular home for SVRA staff, additional staff trailer pads, and/or expanding the parking area.
- **Water Treatment Facility Upgrade:** The existing SVRA water treatment facility is too small, over 50 years old, frequently breaks down and has become expensive to keep in good repair. The system will be upgraded to increase water treatment capacity and provide a backup system to generate power to produce water during outages. The project will replace the old system with a modern, pressurized system. The project will also include a new water treatment facility building, new water monitoring equipment with a chlorine injection system, and other modern efficiency and safety features.
- **Miscellaneous.** Other potential operations facility projects may include new or improved low-water creek crossing(s), maintenance of creek crossings, SVRA staff and public electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and an ATV and/or MX

track sprinkler system. Additionally, facilities for communication or technology support could be in any of the SVRA use areas, except for limited recreation areas. Maintenance and resource management activities include shade ramada replacement, as needed, and tree planting.

*Proposed recreational projects and improvements include:*

- **New kid's minibike track.** A kid's minibike riding area with a simple flat oval dirt track will be installed on a small portion of the camping area at the east end of the campground and the loading/parking area to the east of the peeler core fence, and north of the SVRA's main road.
- **New pedestrian interpretive loop trails.** State Parks will construct two new pedestrian interpretive loop trails east of the campground and existing ATV track. The loop trails would be on the north and south sides of the main SVRA road.
- **New Creekside pedestrian trail.** This new native surface/dirt trail will run along the north side of Corral Hollow Creek, located south of the main SVRA road.
- **New Front Hills single motorbike trail.** This new two-way native surface/dirt trail will run along the hillside to the south of and parallel to Corral Hollow Creek and the SVRA's main road, with turnouts for motorbikes.
- **Additional visitor recreation area.** The special event/day-use area north of the existing Motocross (MX) track is currently underutilized. State Parks will consider redeveloping the area into one or more new visitor facilities, such as a remote-control car track with small features mimicking the natural environment with hills, bridges, and obstacles; a trials motorbike area; and an additional ATV track.
- **Reopening the Waterfall Canyon Area to Non-Motorized Trail Use.** State Parks is considering the rehabilitation of existing trails in in the southeast corner of the SVRA for non-motorized use, such as hiking and mountain biking (see Figure 4-1). Details about the trails and their allowed recreational uses will be provided in an SVRA Roads and Trails Management Plan. The alignment of trails will consider potential viewpoints, areas for picnic tables, benches, interpretive signage, terrain and drainages, and sensitive resources.
- **Franciscan Riding Area.** State Parks will finish rehabilitating the area (the area south of the Franciscan loop trail that was damaged in the 2015 Tesla Fire) into a sustainable trail network for advanced riders.
- **Miscellaneous.** Another restroom may also be added near the existing MX track, designed like the existing restroom in that area. Additionally, potential additions to the existing 4x4 riding area include driving obstacles, such as a teeter-totter or pyramid, as feasible.

**Revisions after the preliminary general plan and draft EIR**

Public comments were received following the release of the Draft Preliminary General Plan and Draft EIR in January 2024. Staff carefully considered all comments received when formulating the final Draft General Plan. Throughout the planning process, some changes were made in consideration of the comments received, which are listed below. The revisions to the General Plan have been made for clarification purposes or, where needed, to add information or correct minor errors.

- 2.3.3 Cultural Resources -- Cultural Resources-- added California Native American tribal consultation and archaeological survey investigation work conducted by California State University, Sonoma.

## **Major Issues**

Chapter 3 of the Draft Final General Plan discusses the primary planning issues. Key issues highlighted here are cultural and natural resources management, public access, motorized and nonmotorized recreational use, aging facilities, and the Interpretation and Education Program. Chapter 4, the Plan, addresses these issues through various goals and guidelines and proposed projects.

### **Visitor Experience**

Corral Hollow Canyon has been used for OHV recreation since the early 1940s. Off-highway motorcyclists have been the main users of the area, with less use by other OHV enthusiasts. State Parks has received many suggestions regarding additional recreation opportunities, including additional OHV recreation facilities, nonmotorized recreation, and camping.

### **Aging Visitor and Operations Facilities**

Carnegie SVRA became a unit of the State Park system in July 1980. The 1,533-acre site was operated as a private motorcycle park from 1970 to 1979 before being purchased State Parks. Many of the existing facilities at the SVRA are outdated and the existing space has become inadequate and inefficient, impacting operations and the visitor experience.

#### **3.3.2.3 Inadequate Power and Power Outages**

As described in Chapter 2, Carnegie SVRA is located in a rural area in Alameda and San Joaquin counties. As such, the SVRA has inadequate power to power everything, particularly in the maintenance yard, and often experiences power outages. The Carnegie SVRA General Plan includes goals and guidelines to consider alternative power sources, including solar photovoltaic panels installed on buildings, carports, and shade canopies.

### **Relationships with Adjacent Landowners**

Carnegie SVRA is located in Corral Hollow Canyon. Neighboring landowners include ranching operations, research facilities, agencies, and a few private residences. State

Parks strives to maintain good relations with its neighbors and has invited them into the planning process as key stakeholders. Some of the neighbors have easements or other agreements with State Parks. State Parks will continue to engage with neighbors to facilitate positive interactions and to address common issues, such as maintaining the water quality of Corral Hollow Creek.

### **Stormwater Management/Water Quality**

The *Corral Hollow Watershed Assessment* was published in 2007. This assessment found that three sources contribute to the total suspended solids found in Corral Hollow Creek: erosion caused by OHV activities, historical mining activities in areas near the SVRA, and off-site flows from Baker's Ravine. Since publication of the watershed assessment, State Parks has created, and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) has approved, a stormwater management plan for the SVRA that includes site-specific structural and nonstructural best management practices (BMPs) aimed at reducing total suspended solids. State Parks staff members are working to implement these BMPs throughout the Carnegie SVRA. State Parks also received a letter from the RWQCB in 2017 stating the improvements that State Parks made to surface water.

Coordination with the Central Valley RWQCB is ongoing for all projects and was specifically conducted to support the General Plan. The General Plan contains numerous goals and guidelines to maintain and improve water quality in the Carnegie SVRA and to guide the design and implementation of future projects envisioned in the General Plan to avoid adverse effects on water quality.

### **Soil Conservation**

Soil conservation is a priority at Carnegie SVRA. Several soil types in the SVRA are highly susceptible to wind erosion, and many are susceptible to water erosion. As a result, these areas can contribute substantially to erosion and sediment mobilization. Staff members engage in assessment, maintenance, and monitoring activities consistent with the *Soil Conservation Standard and Guidelines* (State Parks 2020) and for all projects funded by the OHV Trust Fund. The General Plan also includes goals and guidelines for protecting and conserving soil while maintaining a quality OHV recreational experience. These activities are undertaken so that all OHV facilities are managed for their sustainable prescribed use without causing the loss of soil that cannot be restored and without causing erosion or sedimentation that significantly affects resource values.

### **Aesthetic Resources**

Several people have expressed concerns about the visual effect of OHV use, as seen from Tesla Road/Corral Hollow Road. State Parks staff members are working to assess, maintain, and restore resource management areas in the SVRA to address resource and aesthetic issues. Trails are closed and rotated as needed to restore soil and/or vegetation. State Parks will assess the impacts of future uses on the aesthetics of the SVRA, and the General Plan includes goals and guidelines to reduce them.



## **Noise**

Some stakeholders have expressed concern about noise levels from existing and future OHV use at Carnegie SVRA. Concerns include the potential effects of noise levels on visitor experiences at cultural resource sites, local wildlife, and the effects of noise levels on neighbors. State Parks will assess noise levels during CEQA review as required by state law. The Carnegie SVRA General Plan includes goals and guidelines aimed at reducing noise impacts on sensitive receptors.

## **Fire Safety**

Fire safety is a constant concern during dry California summers. Fire prevention is an important management issue at Carnegie SVRA. State Parks requires that wildfire management plans be prepared for all state park units. State Parks and CAL FIRE adopted the Carnegie SVRA Wildfire Management Plan in June 2020, and wildfire risks would be offset by State Parks' compliance with fire safety and wildfire suppression measures identified in Section 3.20 in Chapter 3 of the EIR associated with the General Plan. State Parks would prepare wildfire and prescribed burn management plans as well as implement additional SVRA fire management programs designed to meet park resource management objectives while ensuring that firefighter and public safety are not compromised as required by the State Parks District Management Plan. Visitors to the SVRA are also subject to the provisions identified in the Carnegie SVRA Camping Regulations, which provides regulations for lighting, building, or use of campfires, and PRC 4311, which prohibits lighting, building, or use of fire except in a camp stove or fireplace provided, maintained, or designated for such purpose. In addition, State Parks would enforce Division 16.5, "Off-Highway Vehicles," of the California Vehicle Code that provides regulation related to the use of off-highway motor vehicles on lands other than a highway.

Furthermore, the General Plan includes goals and guidelines related to fire safety. State Parks should evaluate fire hazards and coordinate with local fire and safety agencies to address fire hazards with appropriate management techniques, including future updates to the wildfire management plan.

## **Biological Resource Management**

Carnegie SVRA is located within and contains U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service–designated critical habitat for several federally listed species. In addition, multiple special-status species and locally unique species have been found near or on the SVRA property. Part of the mission of State Parks is to conserve and protect natural resources. Known habitat and special-status species locations were considered in the development of the Carnegie SVRA General Plan. The planning team also consulted with the resource agencies while preparing the General Plan. The SVRA's environmental scientists regularly consulted with the regulatory agencies for ongoing and planned projects. Preparation of the General Plan also included an extensive review of relevant databases and planning and policy documents. In addition, the

General Plan includes many goals and guidelines addressing how these natural resources will be managed in the future.

### **Cultural Resource Management**

The planning area contains cultural resources, including historic-era and pre-contact sites. State Parks has conducted a cultural resource inventory of the existing SVRA in the 2010 *A Cultural Resources Study of the Portions of the Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area, Alameda, and San Joaquin Counties*, and the significance of a large majority of the known resources has been evaluated by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In 2012, the SHPO concurred with the determination of eligibility of the Tesla Mining and Industry Historic District for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Nine of the 22 contributing elements of the district are within the planning area. This information was used to guide the planning effort. State Parks will continue to manage cultural resources as required by law and conduct constraint analysis, as needed, before the development of the General Plan to ensure that uses and facilities are situated to avoid adversely affecting significant resources. In addition, the General Plan contains numerous goals and guidelines to manage and protect cultural and tribal cultural resources.

### **Interpretation and Education**

Carnegie SVRA is located in an area rich in biological and cultural resources. This provides a great opportunity to educate visitors about the unique resources in and around the SVRA. Many people have expressed an interest in the various cultural and natural resources at the SVRA. While the SVRA employs a full-time interpreter, interpretation is still somewhat limited today, given the lack of additional staff, a volunteer program for interpretive services, and on-site interpretive facilities such as at the concession. There also is no cooperating association for the SVRA to support interpretive services. No interpretation master plan has been developed to guide the direction and implementation of educational programs at Carnegie SVRA. In addition, opportunities exist to use interpretation and education activities to promote responsible OHV recreation. The General Plan calls for developing an interpretation master plan and contains numerous goals and guidelines to further develop interpretation and educational services at Carnegie SVRA and through online resources. Chapter 4 of the General Plan also proposes adding a campfire center, interpretive trails, a greenhouse, signage, and potentially a visitor's center that supports interpretation and education programs.

### **Legal Issues**

No known legal issues relate to the OHMVR Commission's approval of the Draft Final General Plan/Final Environmental Impact Report for Carnegie SVRA.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is no immediate fiscal impact because of the adoption of the General Plan.

### **Commission Action**

California State Parks recommends that the Commission take actions related to the Carnegie SVRA General Plan Update by adopting resolutions to:

- Approve the Draft Final General Plan
- Certify the Environmental Impact Report.

**Attachments:**

Carnegie SVRA General Plan Preferred Alternative Map and Management Zones