



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Sacramento, CA**

July 28, 2021

STAFF REPORT: Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division Resources Update - Wildlife Habitat Protection Plans

STAFF: Michelle Winn, Environmental Scientist

SUBJECT: Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division Resources Update on the Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan Development Progress for State Vehicle Recreation Areas.

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVRD) and the Natural Resources Division (NRD) has started working with State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) staff to prepare and implement updated Wildlife Habitat Protection Plans (WHPPs) [PRC §5090.32 (g)]. Each WHPP will consider state and regional conservation objectives [PRC §5090.32(g)], contain an updated Wildlife Inventory [PRC §5090.35(c)(1)], apply best available science [PRC §5090.39(a)(1)], provide opportunity for public comment [PRC §5090.39(a)(2)], and implement annual monitoring [PRC §5090.35.(d)]. WHPP updates are estimated to be complete by December 31, 2022.

Discussion

Background:

Wildlife Habitat Protection Programs were first introduced to SVRAs in 1987 by Senate Bill (SB) 877 to sustain viable species composition [PRC §5090.53]. WHPPs were developed by the SVRAs as adaptive management plans to assist in ensuring that SVRAs sustained a viable species composition. In 2007, SB 742 was passed which again called for Wildlife Habitat Protection Programs to sustain viable species composition [PRC §5090.53]. In 2017, SB 249 amended a number of the requirements for the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) which provided the WHPPs with additional significance and scope.

SB 249 called for OHMVRD to prepare and implement updated WHPPs [PRC §5090.32 (g)], which considers state and regional conservation objectives [PRC §5090.32(g)],

contains an updated Wildlife Inventory [PRC §5090.35(c)(1)], and implements annual monitoring [PRC §5090.35(d)]. Additionally, SB 249 called for the Department to apply best available science and allow for public comment on the WHPPs [PRC §5090.39(a)].

To address the updates presented by SB 249, OHMVRD and NRD formed a WHPP Working Group, consisting of staff from each SVRA along with staff from OHMVR and NRD, tasked with developing a guidance document for the WHPP update. The WHPP Working Group developed the WHPP Framework which was written for Department staff to provide a roadmap for the revision and update of the WHPP for each SVRA using the principles of adaptive management. The Draft WHPP Framework went through multiple rounds of review by staff at OHMVRD, NRD, and District and Executive Management, in addition to a legal review. The WHPP Framework was finalized in April 2021 and is attached for reference.

Update: Carnegie, Clay Pit, Hollister Hills, Heber Dunes, and Prairie City SVRA staff are currently drafting their WHPP update, to be completed by approximately December 31, 2021. Oceano, Ocotillo Wells, Onyx, and Hungry Valley SVRA plan to start their WHPP update in January 2022, to be completed by approximately December 31, 2022. Updating half of the WHPPs in 2022 and the other half in 2023 allows OHMVRD to devote more staff resources to assist in development, surveys, and review for each WHPP update. OHMVRD coordinated with SVRA staff to decided which SVRA's would complete their update in 2022 and 2023 based on each SVRA's staff availability.

For the SVRA staff completing their WHPP update in 2021, OHMVRD and NRD staff meet monthly with each of the WHPP teams to follow WHPP update progress, offer assistance, workshop ideas, and ensure best available science is applied to the update process. Each of the 2021 WHPP update teams are currently working to develop the first draft of their WHPP. WHPP progress thus far has focused on utilizing existing background information in the updated WHPP, updating wildlife and vegetation community inventories, researching state and regional conservation objectives, and developing WHPP objectives, monitoring activities, and management actions. SVRA staff are striving to have their first WHPP draft developed by August 2, 2021.

Next Steps: Once a first draft of the WHPP has been developed. Each WHPP update will go through multiple review and comment periods. The draft WHPP will first be reviewed by OHMVRD and NRD staff, followed by a public review period, and final review by legal and executive staff. For all SVRA WHPP updates, the public review period will be accompanied by a presentation to the OHMVR Commission on their specific WHPP update. We anticipate that these presentations will be provided in October 2021, January 2022, October 2022, and January 2023.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

1. WHPP Framework