



# Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Access and Enhancement Plan

December 2024





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## INTRODUCTION

### REPORT PURPOSE

The Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Access and Enhancement Plan (the Plan) is a strategic roadmap to guide the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks or the Department) in enhancing OHV access statewide. It outlines State Parks' strategy for prioritizing improvements and allocating resources to plan for new or expanded OHV facilities, visitor amenities, and connectivity between OHV recreation areas.

The Plan is a culmination of the OHV Access Initiative, a community engagement and planning effort led by State Parks in response to Senate Bill 155 (SB 155), which mandated the Department identify new opportunities for additional OHV facilities and recreation access in California.

SB155 contains three key directives:

- Prioritizing properties that have the potential to serve large urban areas such as the Bay Area and Central Valley.
- Offering potential new opportunities for OHV recreation and motorized access to nonmotorized recreation activities.
- Considering areas within existing State Parks (SPs), State Recreation Areas (SRAs), State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs), and other public lands.

The Plan is the first step in a three-part strategic planning process designed to meet the SB 155 mandate. Following the Plan's adoption, State Parks will conduct feasibility studies on selected sites with the highest potential and initiate conversations, both internally within State Parks and externally with potential partners, on the next steps.

## ABOUT CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

State Parks manages 280 units, over 340 miles of coastline, 970 miles of lake and river frontage, 15,000 campsites, 5,200 miles of trails, 3,195 historic buildings, and more than 11,000 known cultural and historic archaeological sites. Annually, the Department supports more than 68 million visitors to California State Parks. The Department's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) and Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Divisions spearheaded the OHV Access Initiative. The OHMVR Commission, a body appointed by the Governor and State Legislators to support the OHMVR Program and Department, provided guidance and support for this initiative.



*Side-by-Side Off-Highway Vehicle*

## MISSION OF STATE PARKS

The Department's Mission is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protect its most valued natural and cultural resources, and create opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

## OHMVR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

State Parks' OHMVR Program has two major components. The first is nine State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs) that provide motorized recreational opportunities on approximately 145,000 acres of State Parks owned and managed lands dedicated to OHV recreation and related use. The second component is a grant program that provides financial assistance to local, state, and federal agencies, Native American tribes, nonprofits, local conservation corps, and educational institutions, enabling these agencies to implement sustainable, environmentally responsible OHV recreational opportunities. In addition to land

management, the OHMVR Program has offered an array of services and activities that support recreation, conservation, education, and safety for over 50 years.

## **OHMVR DIVISION'S MISSION & VISION**

The OHMVR Division administers and manages the OHMVR program. The mission of the OHMVR Division is to: *Provide leadership statewide around OHV recreation; to acquire, develop, and operate state-owned vehicular recreation areas; and to otherwise provide for a statewide system of managed OHV recreational opportunities through funding to other public agencies.*

The OHMVR Division works to ensure that quality recreational opportunities remain available for future generations by providing for education, conservation, and enforcement efforts that balance the impacts of OHV recreation with programs that conserve and protect cultural and natural resources.

In concert with the Division's mission, the OHMVR Division also has the following vision: The OHMVR Division will assure ongoing access to a wide variety of high-quality OHV recreational opportunities through our commitment to prudent resource management, outdoor recreation, community education, and environmental stewardship.

## **A BRIEF LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE OHMVR PROGRAM**

The OHMVR program was created in 1971 because of the Chappie-Z'berg Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Law (the OHV Law). The OHV Law was founded on the principle that "effectively managed areas and adequate facilities for the use of OHV and conservation and enforcement are essential for ecologically balanced recreation" (PRC § 5090.02 (b)). The OHV Law required maintenance and oversight to allow sustainable OHV use consistent with sound environmental stewardship.

Since then, several successive legislative actions have evolved and expanded the OHMVR program. In 2017, the passage and adoption of SB 249 permanently reauthorized the program, extending the OHMVR Act's provisions indefinitely.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RECREATION DIVISION**

The Strategic Planning and Recreation Services (SPRS) Division supports various department initiatives, programs, and functions, including long-range planning for state park units. The OHV Access Initiative was jointly led by the OHMVR Division to oversee project management functions, ensuring that the Department fulfilled the SB 155 mandate.



## PROJECT PROCESS

The OHV Access Initiative was a two-year effort that began in November 2022. It involved multiple components that occurred simultaneously. The public had numerous opportunities to provide input through community engagement, as discussed in Chapter 3, "Community Engagement." The OHV Access team had numerous conversations with the OHV community, partner agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service, and State Parks staff to understand potential locations suitable for accommodating new OHV facilities.

The team also participated in a large-scale effort to gather data on existing off-highway vehicle resources, aiming to understand unmet visitor needs, and conducted extensive analysis to identify areas most suitable for new OHV facilities.

## CONCURRENT OHV DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

OHVs and Over Snow Vehicles (OSVs) are popular recreational pursuits for many Californians. While OHV/OSV recreationists are aware of their recreation activities and expenditures, very little information is known about the overall demographic characteristics of these users and the economic impact of these recreation industries in California.

State Parks contracted with the Department of Recreation Administration at California State University, Fresno (CSU Fresno) Division in 2020 to prepare a study that estimates expenditures, activities, ownership and operation trends, and economic impacts related to OHV/OSV recreation. This study reports data collected from users of SVRAs, federal lands (United States Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region 5), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as well as municipal and private OHV areas.

This study was completed in 2024, and the data and analysis were utilized in the OHV Access Initiative. The project process timeline is shown in Table 1.



Table 1. Project Process Timeline

| Event  | Date                        |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Workshop #1: Pomona  | Thursday, November 3, 2022  |
| Workshop #2: Pleasanton  | Thursday, February 16, 2023 |
| Workshop #3: Palm Springs  | Friday, March 31, 2023      |
| Initial Survey Released (Survey #1)                                  | February 2023               |
| Data Gathering   | Summer 2023                 |
| Initial Survey Closed  | September 2023              |
| Workshop #4: Pomona  | September 29, 2023          |
| Workshop #5: Redding   | October 23, 2023            |
| Workshop #6: Bakersfield   | November 16, 2023           |
| Workshop #7: Online via Zoom   | December 6, 2023            |
| Evaluation of Potential Sites  | Winter – Spring 2024        |
| Conversations with partner agencies and internal CA State Park staff | Spring – Fall 2024          |
| Plan Adoption  | Spring 2025                 |



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### INTRODUCTION

California State Parks offers a variety of programs and services to meet the high demand for off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation in a safe and sustainable manner. Each year, about 68 million visitors, including many from neighboring states, engage in OHV activities. This form of recreation is diverse, catering to participants of all ages and abilities. The information gathered on the current demand and scope of OHV recreation helps California State Parks as it continues to expand its services.

State Parks is responsible for managing lands and programs in various settings and seasons to support OHV recreation. The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division oversees the OHMVR Program and coordinates Winter Recreation Programs in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol, counties, and community organizations.

The Winter Recreation Program consists of two sub-programs: the Over-Snow Vehicle (OSV) program and the SNO-PARK program. The OSV program offers over 1,700 miles of groomed trails in 11 national forests for snowmobiles and other over-snow vehicles. The SNO-PARK program provides access to snow-cleared parking lots and sanitation facilities at trails in seven national forests.



## WHAT IS AN OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE?

OHV recreation encompasses a diverse range of activities and equipment. It is the general use of OHV vehicles, which are any type of vehicle capable of driving off-road on non-paved surfaces. Off-highway vehicles include all registered vehicles not registered for use on highways, which typically have traditional license plates. They are registered using identification decals issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The equipment used for OHV recreation varies just as widely as the activities, as shown in Figure 2-1. Some of the more common OHVs include all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), dirt bikes, sand rails, dune buggies, recreation utility vehicles (RUVs), golf carts, snowmobiles, go-karts, Jeeps®, recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs), and 4x4s. The California Vehicle Code classifies vehicles for off-highway use. For more information about laws and requirements for OHVs, please visit the [OHMVR Program webpage](#).



All Terrain Vehicle (ATV)



Dirtbike



Sandrail



Side-by-Side



Rock Crawler Vehicles



Over-snow Vehicles (OSV)

**Figure 1. Examples of OHV equipment**



# WHO USES OHV?

## DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Two major studies documenting the demographics of OHV users in California include a 2008 nationwide report from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE)<sup>1</sup> and a 2024 study of the demographics and economic impacts of OHV/OSV users in California.

Both survey reports show that a significant percentage of respondents are men. About 60 to 80 percent of survey respondents were men, likely reflecting a large male population in the community. Women and people who self-identified also responded in significant amounts. The 2008 report shows that the largest section of users is under the age of 30, followed by people between 30 and 50 years old. The smallest group were people over 50. The newest report shows that users above 50 were the largest group of users, followed by people between 30 and 50 years old. The smallest group in this survey was people under 30. This could demonstrate that fewer users start participating in OHV at younger ages.

There is also a distinction in the race and ethnicity of users between the 2008 and new survey reports. Both identify that the largest percentage of users are white. However, the 2008 survey shows an equally large user group of Native Americans, which differs from the considerably small number in the 2024 survey. Both surveys show smaller but consistent percentages of Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and African American OHV users.

## MOTORIZED ACCESS TO NON-OHV ACTIVITIES

### SUPPORTING NON-OHV ACTIVITIES

The OHMVR Program promotes motorized access to activities beyond just OHV recreation. State Parks manage 1,377,329 acres of public lands across 280 park units. Among these, nine units (SVRAs) are designated specifically for OHV recreation. A significant percentage of State Park land is allocated for other recreation types.<sup>2</sup> For instance, a park visitor may want to drive their vehicle on designated park roads to reach camping, fishing, hiking, and other activities in more remote areas of the park.

Senate Bill 155 emphasizes the importance of maintaining motorized access to non-OHV activities as a vital service provided by State Parks. When considering the expansion of OHV opportunities, the Department may prioritize several factors, including potential avenues for motorized access to nonmotorized recreation. This approach will improve access for individuals of all abilities to scenic and recreational areas within the vast park landscapes.

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<sup>1</sup> "Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in the US, Regions and States." National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, 2008. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.fs.usda.gov/recreation/programs/ohv/IrisRec1rpt.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/recreation/programs/ohv/IrisRec1rpt.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "Statistical Report." California State Parks, 2024. <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/463df0ca8732409fbca12dfbcb975c2/page/Map-Explorer-dep/>.

## DEMAND FOR OHV

Motorized access to non-motorized recreational areas promotes fairer use of park lands. Individuals with limited mobility or disabilities often face challenges when trying to reach scenic and recreational spots that are more remote, particularly if these locations are accessible only by unpaved or rough trails and roads. By prioritizing areas with better access or improving accessible pathways, we can reduce barriers to park lands and create more equitable access for all visitors.

To better understand the demand on park systems by OHV recreation, the OHMVR Commission issued a survey to OHV users from 2021 to 2023 that included questions about activity participation.<sup>3</sup> The survey found:

- 74% use OHVs to access non-motorized recreation.
- Over 75% reported they participated in hiking/walking activities.
- Other reported activities include water sports (over 65%), motorcycle riding (over 60%), fishing (over 50%), road and mountain biking (over 45%), hunting and target shooting (over 45%), bird watching (20%), organized sports (over 15%), and horseback riding (over 10%).

The survey demonstrates that OHV activity often involves other non-motorized activities in remote areas with limited access.

## OHV AT STATE PARKS

The largest component of the OHMVR Program is the management of a system of nine State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs), which provide motorized recreational opportunities on land owned and managed by the State Parks. SVRAs are situated across the state, offering diverse terrain and facilities for various OHVs and activities.

## SVRAS AND SRA DESIGNATED USES

The nine SVRA areas include:

- Carnegie SVRA (1,500 acres)
- Clay Pit (220 acres)
- Eastern Kern Onyx Ranch (25,000 acres)
- Heber Dunes (341 acres)
- Hollister Hills (6,623 acres)
- Hungry Valley (19,000 acres)
- Oceano Dunes (3,600 acres)

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<sup>3</sup> “OHMVR Commission Program Report.” OHMVR Commission, 2022. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://ohv.parks.ca.gov/pages/1140/files/2022\\_OHMVRC\\_Report\\_ADA.pdf](https://ohv.parks.ca.gov/pages/1140/files/2022_OHMVRC_Report_ADA.pdf)

- Ocotillo Wells (85,000 acres)
- Prairie City (1,047 acres)

Figure 2-2 illustrates the SVRAs in the state.

In addition to SVRAs, specific areas within State Recreation Areas (SRAs) may be designated for OHV recreation. An example is Mammoth Bar, an OHV area within Auburn SRA.

## RANGE OF OHV ACTIVITIES

SVRAs offer numerous facilities and recreational opportunities, including practice, training, and racing tracks catering to various experience levels and vehicle types. Trails and open riding areas are also available for various vehicle types. Visitor amenities include safety training tracks, equipment rentals, parts and accessories stores, and repair facilities. SRAs offer additional recreation activities such as boating, hunting, fishing (where available), hiking, bicycling, wildlife viewing, camping, picnic areas, shade ramadas, and bathroom facilities.

## OHV AUXILIARY ACTIVITIES

Beyond OHV riding, the OHMVR Division supports a variety of related activities. Staff members participate in regional fairs and special events to offer educational opportunities, including guided riding programs, 4x4 history tours, campfire programs, traveling animal exhibits, direct participation games, an ATV simulator, and the Tread Lightly! Radio Control Jeep® course. In addition, the OHMVR Division developed Ride Safe! an OHV safety-themed interactive video game to teach safe and environmentally responsible OHV recreation practices using visually engaging graphics and text.

## TERRAIN AND SETTINGS

SVRAs provide a wide variety of terrain and settings to accommodate many OHV activities.

- **Clay Pit SVRA** is the northernmost SVRA, located near Oroville, and is characterized by open grasslands.
- **Prairie City SVRA** is located where the river delta meets the Sierra Nevada foothills. It is close to Sacramento's large urban metropolitan area and includes flat grasslands, rolling hills, and rock cobbles.
- **Carnegie SVRA** is in Alameda and San Joaquin Counties near Tracy and Livermore. It is characterized by rolling hills, dry, rocky washes, and steep, rugged canyons, which offer outstanding opportunities for hill climbs.
- **Hollister Hills SVRA** is located near Hollister and San Jose in the Gabilan Mountains and includes woodlands, rolling hills, lush canyons, and seasonal creeks.
- **Oceano Dunes SVRA** is located on the coast south of San Luis Obispo and includes vast dunes to ride on, beach play, and camping.



- **Hungry Valley SVRA** lies west of I-5 at the southern end of the Central Valley. The Los Padres National Forest shares the western boundary. The terrain offers a range of beginner-to-experienced riding, including mixed grasslands, canyons, wooded areas, and hills.
- **Onyx Ranch SVRA** is near Bakersfield and includes trails and open riding at the edge of the Mojave Desert, which occasionally has snow. This area is adjacent to BLM's Jawbone Canyon and Dove Springs OHV Areas and other BLM lands.
- **Heber Dunes SVRA** is near Calexico at the Mexico border and includes winding trails through the creosote-studded dunes, large fine-sand dunes, and dry lake beds with hard-packed clay.
- **Ocotillo Wells SVRA** is the largest SVRA, located between Palm Springs and San Diego. It offers vast desert landscapes with various features such as dunes, washes, gas domes, and riparian areas. This area is connected to additional remote OHV areas on BLM land.

### State Vehicular Recreation Areas



**Figure 2. SVRA locations**



Carnegie SVRA



Clay Pit SVRA



Eastern Kern Onyx  
Ranch SVRA



Heber Dunes SVRA



Hollister Hills SVRA



Hungry Valley SVRA



Oceano Dunes  
SVRA



Ocotillo Wells SVRA



Prairie City SVRA

**Figure 3. Pictures of the nine SVRAs**

## SPECIAL EVENTS

OHV-related special events draw thousands of visitors who occupy hotels and benefit merchants. The annual Hangtown Motorcycle event at Prairie City SVRA is the largest outdoor pro-motocross event, attracting approximately 25,000 visitors. King of the Hammers draws 70,000 visitors to the desert communities of Barstow and Twentynine Palms.<sup>4,5</sup> Meanwhile, the Rubicon Trail is a popular event that brings numerous OHV users to Sierra Nevada communities in Placer and Eldorado Counties near Sacramento.

<sup>4</sup> "OHV 101." CA Department of Parks and Recreation, 2016

<sup>5</sup> "OHMVR Commission Program Report." OHMVR Commission, 2022.

## OTHER OHV AREAS

Off-highway vehicle recreation is offered in designated areas within State Recreational Areas (SRAs), including Auburn and San Luis Reservoir SRAs. Many SVRAs and SRAs are adjacent to federal public lands supporting OHV recreation. The Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service oversee extensive OHV trail systems with diverse terrains. The OHMVR Program also provides grants to help manage these OHV resources.

## OHV IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

OHV recreation is a considerable part of regional economies. There is an estimated \$66 billion in direct annual OHV-related expenditures nationwide and an estimated \$10 billion in California alone. The benefits to California's economy are evident in the sales of OHVs, other recreational vehicles, trailers, toy haulers, and parts and accessories. OHV recreationists occupy hotel rooms and campgrounds and buy groceries and fuel throughout California. The 2010 Economic Impact Study reviews the economic effects of OHV use at the Oceano Dunes SVRA. The study showed an economic impact of \$160 million. The study also noted that 67% of OHV users traveling to that area would no longer visit if there were no OHV areas.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

There are an estimated 1,084,314 OSV (over-snow vehicle) users and 7,951,637 OHV (off-highway vehicle) users in California, with many owning both types of vehicles. Existing OHV facilities are also well utilized. Future OHV facilities should prioritize providing connections to non-motorized activities, such as hiking trails and water sports opportunities. They should also strive to provide OHV users with a range of activities across the state, but with an enhanced priority near urbanized areas. In the same 2023 survey, almost 70% of survey respondents reported participating in dual sport motorcycle, motorcycle, and dirt bike activities.<sup>6</sup> Over 45% of respondents mentioned participating in activities for four-wheel drive trucks and Sports Utility Vehicles. The next largest recreational activity includes riding ROVs or side-by-sides, with over 35% of respondents participating. A similar number of people reported using all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Survey participants also reported using Jeeps®, Dune Buggies, Sand Rails, and snowmobiles. Another 5% of respondents reported participating in other activities.

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<sup>6</sup> "OHMVR Commission Program Report." OHMVR Commission, 2022. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ohv.parks.ca.gov/pages/1140/files/2022\\_OHMVRC\\_Report\\_ADA.pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ohv.parks.ca.gov/pages/1140/files/2022_OHMVRC_Report_ADA.pdf)





## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INTRODUCTION

Between Fall 2022 and Spring 2024, State Parks conducted outreach throughout the state to gather input for the OHV Access Initiative (Initiative). The outreach activities allowed the public to interact with State Parks, get informed about the Initiative, and share ideas on where to expand OHV facilities across California.

The public had four major opportunities to participate. Collectively, more than 1,000 people participated in the outreach efforts.

These include:

- OHMVR Commission meetings and workshops (November 2022 – March 2023)
- Initial Survey (February 2023 – September 2023)
- Visioning Workshops (September to December 2023)
- Visioning Survey (November 2023 – March 2024)

This report documents the outreach efforts and summarizes the major themes heard. Please refer to Appendices A, B, and C on the survey results and comments received from the workshops.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

### WORKSHOPS

State Parks began the community engagement effort with a series of public workshops. At the events, State Parks introduced the project to the public, discussed options for expanding existing or creating new OHV facilities, and listened to participants' ideas for potential OHV locations and concerns about the project. The list below provides an overview of where sessions took place.

1. Pomona, held on November 3, 2022, from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel & Conference Center, 601 W McKinley Ave, Pomona, CA
2. Pleasanton, held on February 16, 2023, from 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm, at the Pleasanton Marriott, 11950 Dublin Canyon Rd, Pleasanton, CA
3. Palm Springs, held on March 31, 2023, from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at the Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel, 888 Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA

### INITIAL SURVEY

In support of the workshops, State Parks administered an online survey via Google Forms to gather input from a broader audience for the Initiative. The survey consisted of seven questions designed to help State Parks understand where people would like to see more access to OHV facilities and the types of OHV activities, they would like to participate in. Survey respondents also shared ideas for potential new locations for OHV trails and recreation, and general comments. The survey was available from February to September 2023 and received 501 responses. Appendix A, Initial Survey Summary, contains more information about the Initial Survey and comments received.

### VISIONING WORKSHOPS

In Fall 2023, State Parks hosted four visioning workshops at locations across the State, while the last event was held virtually via Zoom. The in-person workshops had three components:

- **Introductory Presentation:** State Parks briefly introduced the project, discussing the process, opportunities, and challenges of identifying new off-highway vehicle (OHV) sites.
- **Questions & Answers:** Team members fielded and responded to questions from participants.
- **Interactive Stations:** Participants were invited to engage with project team members at four interactive stations.

The virtual workshop had many of the same elements, but it was adapted to an online format, allowing for a longer questions-and-answers portion. Appendix B, Visioning Workshops Summary, documents the Visioning Workshops and the feedback State Parks received from participants.

The list below provides a summary of the workshops' dates and locations:

1. Pomona, held on September 29, 2023, from 9:00 am - 12:00 pm, at the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel & Conference Center, 601 W McKinley Ave, Pomona, CA.
2. Redding, held on October 23, 2023, at 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Sheraton Redding Hotel at the Sundial Bridge, 820 Sundial Bridge Drive, Redding, CA 9600.
3. Bakersfield, held on November 16, 2023, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm at the Four Points by Sheraton Bakersfield, 5101 California Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93309
4. Online via Zoom, held on December 6, 2023, from 6:00 pm-7:30 pm, Virtual via Zoom

## VISIONING SURVEY

Between Winter 2023 and Spring 2024, State Parks conducted a Visioning Survey to gather input from community members about their vision for the future of OHV recreation and access in the State. The Visioning Survey had two components:

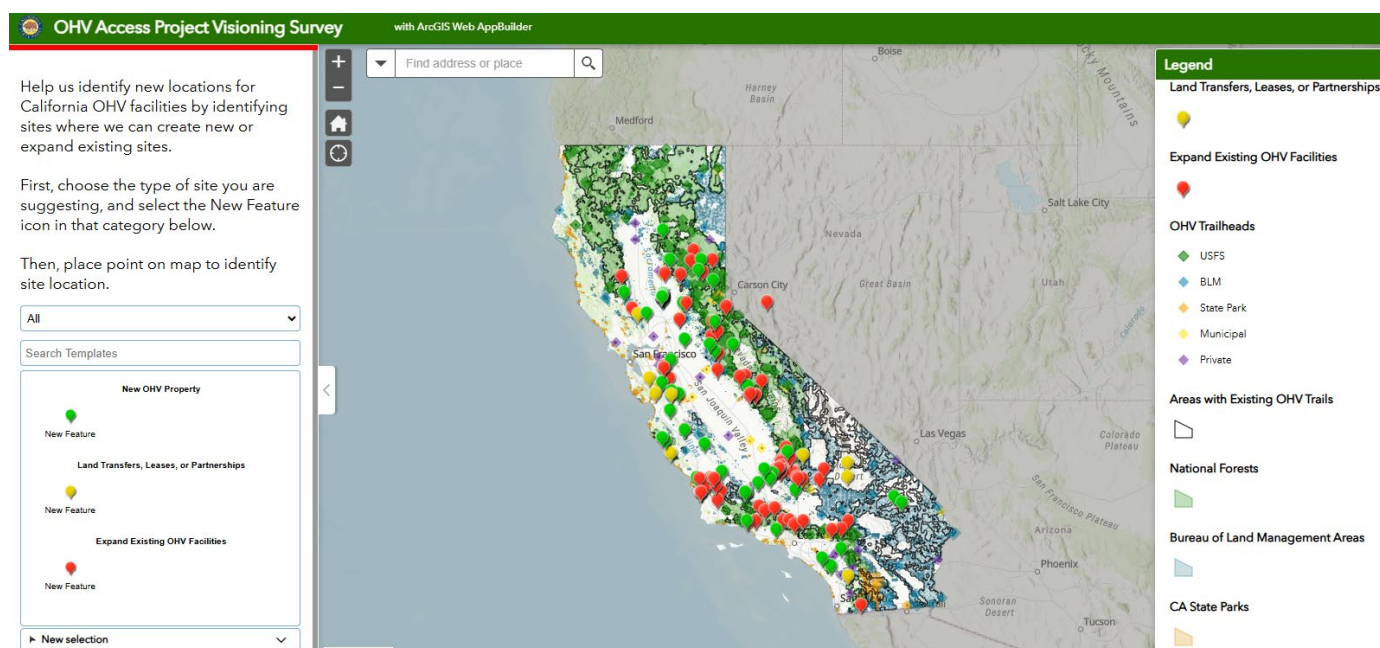
- **Multiple-choice survey:** The survey consisted of six questions, which were like those on the activity boards from the Visioning Workshops and adapted for the survey.
- **Mapping exercise:** Community members were asked to provide location-specific comments on an interactive web-based map.

The survey reflected the activities from the Visioning Workshops, providing community members who did not attend the workshops with an opportunity to contribute to the initiative. It was available from November 2023 to March 2024, and 454 responses were received. More detailed information about the Visioning Survey is available in Appendix C, Visioning Survey Summary.



*Participants interacting with State Parks staff at a station at the Visioning Workshops.*





**Figure 1. Visioning survey interactive mapping exercise**

## WHAT WE HEARD

The following is a synthesis of the major themes that State Parks heard from the community engagement process. For more information on the key takeaways from the initial survey, visioning workshops, and visioning survey, refer to Appendices A, B, and C.

**OHV as a form of transportation to reach other destinations:** Many people use OHV as a mode of transportation to reach destinations that are not accessible through other modes. Examples of such destinations include historical/cross-country trails, remote camping, fishing sites, abandoned mines, old mine towns, cemeteries, and old buildings.

**Use OHV to access nature:** OHV is also used as a way of experiencing the outdoors for those who are physically impaired. Participants shared touching stories of using OHV to enjoy nature due to mobility issues or health concerns.

**Wonderful memories of OHV:** People had many wonderful memories at OHV facilities across the State. The memories contained common themes such as family, comradery with friends, exploring new places, and teaching the next generation to appreciate and care for nature. Some people had major life events and holiday celebrations at OHV sites, like weddings and Thanksgiving family gatherings.

**Potential locations for new or expanded OHV facilities:** Participants expressed their desires for a range of areas across the State. Areas with the highest concentration of response suggestions include the San Francisco Bay area, as well as Yuba County, Madera County, and areas from San Luis Obispo to Bakersfield in San Luis Obispo and Kern Counties. Central California and the Northern Sierras show the

next largest concentration of response suggestions. Significant interest is shown in other areas including Sacramento Valley area, the North Coast, and Southern California.

**Popular OHV activities:** Two of the most popular OHV activities were single-track trails and group camping trips. Other favored activities include multi-use trails, bike trails, long-distance multi-day trails, access to non-motorized activities, natural resource management programs, vehicle-specific challenge courses, and competitions and events.

**Ideas for expanding OHV recreation:** There were many creative ideas that State Parks could use to expand OHV recreation. A selection of the ideas includes:

- More camping/lodging/overlanding options.
- More routes & trails, such as adventurous routes with scenic/historic features, single-track motorcycle trails, and non-motor bikes-only trails.
- More activities such as mud and sand obstacles / areas and enduro obstacle courses.
- Put OHV facilities at private parks instead of State Parks.
- Use disturbed land instead of wilderness/ natural areas and fire roads.
- Have smaller OHV areas in urbanized areas.
- Offer areas for younger users to practice and learn how to operate their vehicles.
- Use a reservation system or contractor to manage OHV usage at the State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs).
- Conduct outreach campaigns to teach people about the benefits of OHV.

**Amount of time to reach OHV facilities:** Participants in the Visioning Workshops and Visioning Survey offered divergent perspectives on how long they would like to drive to reach OHV facilities. Survey respondents were more interested in driving short distances (less than three hours) to get to OHV facilities such as trails (multi-use, single-track, one-way, and bike) and on-site experiences (motocross tracks, four-wheel drive obstacles, vehicle-specific challenge courses, and competitions). However, participants at the Visioning Workshops supported driving long distances to participate in OHV activities and use the facilities.

**Resource management priorities:** Proper trail layout and maintaining roads and trails were the two most important efforts to manage resources at OHV facilities. Other well-liked options included monitoring wildlife habitat, implementing erosion control measures, protecting sensitive habitats, and protecting riparian areas.

**Ideas for resource management:** Participants shared many strategies that State Parks could consider helping manage resources. Examples include educational programs about the natural environment and how to use OHV facilities, interpretive signage, programs for families and youth, environmental- focused activities such as tree planting and clean-up days, pre/post-wildfire mitigation of facilities, archeological protection, protection for sensitive plant communities, and planning for the end user.

**Operation and maintenance of the OHV facilities:** State Parks could consider limiting the destruction / having more protection for natural resources, promote electric OHVs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enforce adverse behaviors, and better maintain trails and facilities.

**Appreciation for State Parks:** Many people expressed their gratitude for CA State Parks and the OHV Access Initiative.

**Opposition to OHV in the State and at Henry Coe State Park:** Several people voiced their opposition to allowing OHV use in the State and/or in Henry Coe State Park.

## WHO PARTICIPATED

Over the course of 2 years, State Parks received more than 1,000 responses/comments from many people and groups across the State on behalf of this Initiative. Participants were affiliated with environmental organizations, OHV recreational clubs, and other recreational activity groups. Many participants were involved with OHV recreational clubs or other recreational activity groups, and they were appreciative of the OHV Access Initiative. CA State Parks also received many comments from, and engaged with, many people who expressed opposition to OHV access at Henry Coe State Park or OHV in general.





## **OPTIONS FOR EXPANDING OHV ACCESS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

State Parks have multiple methods for off-highway vehicle (OHV) access. The merit of each method depends on the characteristics of the appropriate site, and an intensive review is required to achieve the most effective enhancement strategy.

These options include acquiring new property, land swaps with other public entities, acquiring in-holdings with existing State Vehicle Recreation Areas (SVRAs), leases and partnerships with other agency landholders, designation of a section of a State Recreation Area (SRA) as an OHV area, acquiring easements and rights-of-entry, and other means as established in Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5005, 5006, and other State and Department policies.

### **OPTIONS FOR EXPANSION**

#### **NEW PROPERTY**

Acquiring new property would allow State Parks to develop a SVRA with various OHV recreation opportunities and experiences. However, the costs of land acquisition and the length of time needed to purchase, plan, and develop the property before it can be opened to the public should be considered when prioritizing options for expanding OHV access.



## **LAND SWAP WITH OTHER PUBLIC ENTITIES**

A land swap with another public entity, such as the US Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), county, or city, could be less costly but depends on land availability for exchange. Land swaps could be used anywhere in the state to develop a new SVRA. Figure 4-1 illustrates some potential opportunities for land swaps along the Rubicon Trail.

## **ACQUIRE IN-HOLDINGS WITHIN EXISTING SVRAS**

Like a land swap, this option would acquire land adjacent to existing SVRAs and consolidate State Park property to offer better trail connectivity and recreation opportunities. It is feasible because State Parks would acquire smaller parcels of land, as shown in Figure 4-2, an option for acquiring in-holdings at Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

## **LEASES AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER AGENCY LANDHOLDERS**

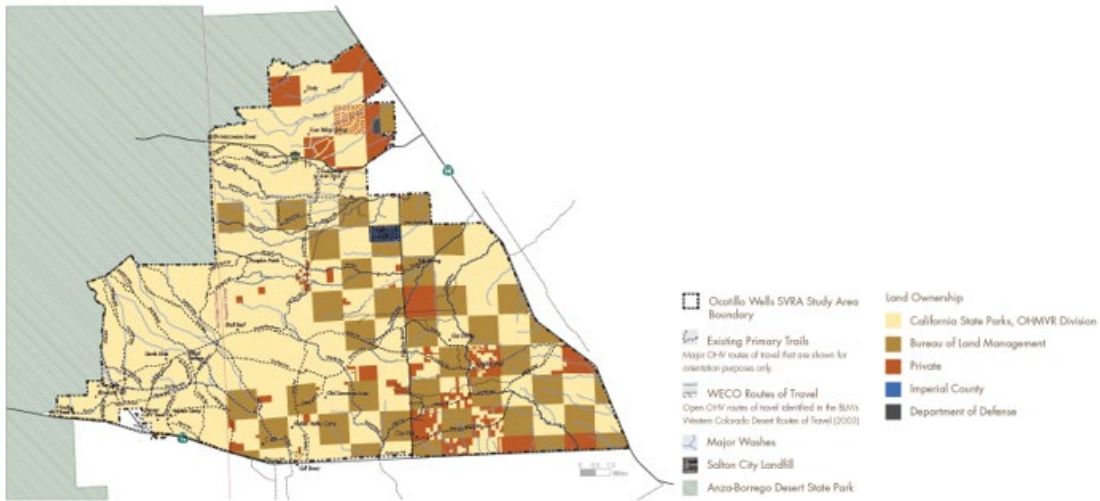
In this scenario, State Parks would lease or partner with other agency landholders with a developed property. For example, State Parks could lease an OHV area owned by another agency but closed due to a lack of staff or other resources.

## **DESIGNATE A SECTION OF A STATE RECREATION AREA (SRA) AS AN OHV AREA**

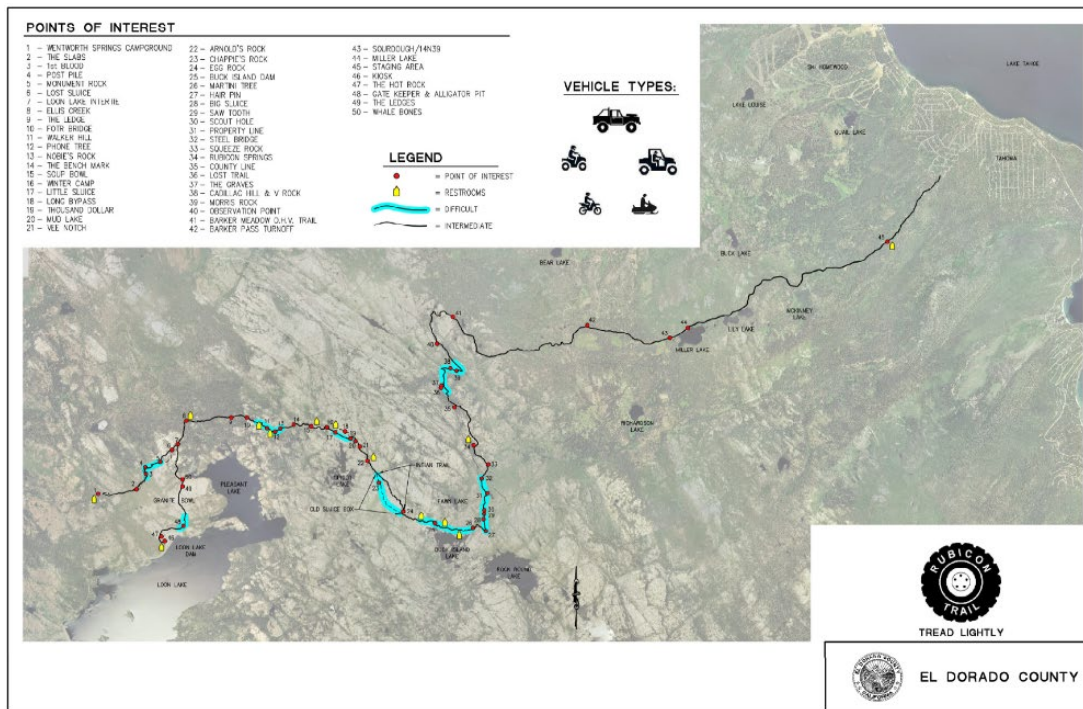
The SRA classification allows State Parks to designate an area within the SRA for OHV recreation if it meets certain requirements. This option is potentially the most cost-effective and quickest way to develop additional OHV opportunities on existing State Park land. Figure 4-3 provides an example at the Mammoth Bar SRA.

## **EASEMENTS AND RIGHTS OF ENTRY**

Easements and rights-of-entry permits are agreements between public and/or private landowners that grant legal access to recreational trails and/or areas on that property. They are often used to connect long-distance recreational trails like the Pacific Crest Trail. These agreements can also designate legal access to OHV areas from state highways, county roads, and/or privately owned land.

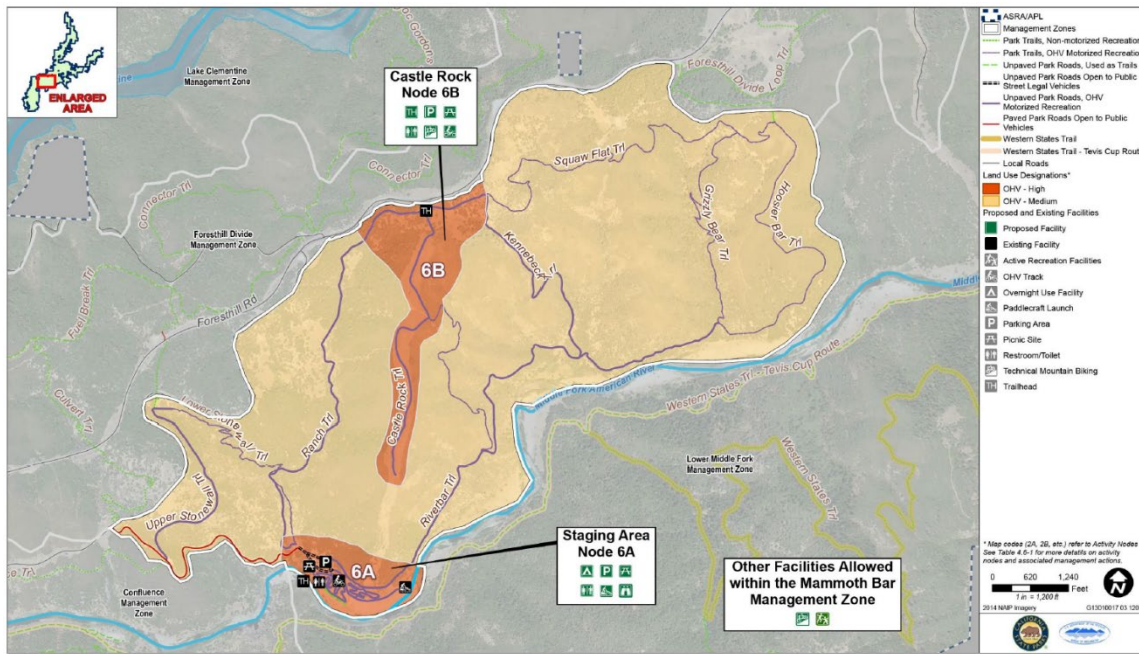


**Figure 2. Opportunities for land swap along the Rubicon Trail**



**Figure 6. Map of Ocotillo Wells SVRA Showing in holdings**

**Figure 7. Potential to designate a section of Auburn SRA, Mammoth Bar SRA for OHV**



Source: Compiled by Arcis Environmental in 2017





## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Framework provides a roadmap to guide State Parks in prioritizing improvements and allocating resources to plan for new or expanded OHV facilities, visitor amenities, and connectivity between OHV recreation areas. It primarily focuses on potential sites that State Parks can conduct more in-depth research on to evaluate for feasibility based on the methods described in *Chapter 4, Options for Expanding OHV Access*. The Framework also discusses actions for next steps that State Parks can take to move towards expanding OHV access in the state.

### PRIORITIES FOR NEW OHV FACILITIES

The priorities from Senate Bill 155 guide the Strategic Framework:

- Prioritizing properties that have the potential to serve large urban areas such as the Bay Area and Central Valley.
- Offering potential new opportunities for OHV recreation and motorized access to nonmotorized recreation activities.
- Considering areas within existing State Parks (SPs), State Recreation Areas (SRAs), State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs), and other public lands.

## INITIAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

State Parks conducted an Initial Feasibility Study to explore potential locations in the State that meet SB 155 priorities. The comprehensive analysis reviewed land across the state to identify suitable sites, and it included four steps:

1. **Elimination Process.** Unusable land was identified and removed from the review. Examples include specific park areas (e.g. National Parks and the Pacific Crest Trail), protected areas (e.g. BLM Wilderness Areas, protected wildlife habitats, and natural spaces for education and recreation), and occupied land (cities, urbanized areas, and farmland areas preserved by the Williamson Act or categorized in the Important Farmland Program as prime, unique, or having local or state importance, etc.). Table 5-1 shows the metrics used in the Elimination Process.
2. **Scoring Process.** The remaining areas were ranked with suitability scores for multiple characteristics, which include proximity to existing amenities, such as campgrounds, and populated urban spaces. A sum of all the scores was calculated and mapped as a composite score to identify areas with the highest overall suitability. Metrics used in the Scoring Process are shown in Table 5-2, Scoring Matrices.
3. **Site Identification.** Potential sites in areas with the highest overall suitability were identified. Sites also included input received from the community engagement process, as well as suggestions from State Parks staff. This process yielded 70 sites.
4. **Site Review.** State Parks conducted a manual review of the initial list of sites for more refined metrics to evaluate the possibility based on the methods discussed in *Chapter 4, Options for Expanding OHV Access*. From there, a final list was prepared.

**Table 2. Elimination Metrics**

| Eliminated Areas  | Eliminated Areas  | Eliminated Areas   |
|---|---|--|
| National Parks  | California Protected Areas Database (CPAD) Protected Areas            | California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Coastal Zone          |
| Pacific Crest Trail   | California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Coastal Marsh       | Cities   |
| California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) 30x30 Marine Areas | California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Eelgrass            | Department of Conservation Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland |
| California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) 30x30 Land Areas   | California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Estuaries           | Williamson Act preserved Farmland and Open Space                 |
| Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wilderness Areas              | California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Predicted Substrate | N/A  |

| Eliminated Areas   | Eliminated Areas  | Eliminated Areas |
|--|---|------------------|
| Bureau of Land Management (BLM)<br>Areas of Critical Environmental<br>Concerns | California Department of Fish<br>and Wildlife (CDFW) Wetlands | N/A              |

**Table 3. Elimination Scoring Metrics**

| Criteria   | Scoring Classification   | Score |
|--|--|-------|
| Distance to Existing OHV Resources (trailheads)  | < 10 miles   | 2     |
| Distance to Existing OHV Resources (trailheads)  | > 10 miles < 25 miles  | 5     |
| Distance to Existing OHV Resources (trailheads)  | > 25 miles < 50 miles  | 8     |
| Distance to Existing OHV Resources (trailheads)  | > 50 miles   | 10    |
| Distance to Existing Amenities (Campground)  | > 10 miles   | 0     |
| Distance to Existing Amenities (Campground)  | > 5 miles < 10 miles   | 3     |
| Distance to Existing Amenities (Campground)  | > 1 mile < 5 miles   | 7     |
| Distance to Existing Amenities (Campground)  | < 1 mile   | 10    |
| Spending on Recreational Vehicles (Dollars per<br>Median Household Income)                     | Below County Median  | 0     |
| Spending on Recreational Vehicles (Dollars per<br>Median Household Income)                     | Above County Median  | 5     |
| GAP Status Code  | 0 – Not Open Space   | 2     |
| GAP Status Code  | 1 – Managed for Biodiversity (disturbance<br>events proceed or mimicked) | 0     |
| GAP Status Code  | 2 – Managed for Biodiversity (disturbance<br>events suppressed)          | 2     |
| GAP Status Code  | 3 – Managed for Multiple Uses (subject to<br>extractive or OHV use)      | 10    |
| GAP Status Code  | 4 – No known mandate for Biodiversity<br>Protection                      | 10    |
| Number of cities with at least 75,000 people within a<br>60 miles radius of the potential site | 1 City   | 2     |
| Number of cities with at least 75,000 people within a<br>60 miles radius of the potential site | 2 Cities   | 4     |
| Number of cities with at least 75,000 people within a<br>60 miles radius of the potential site | 3-5 Cities   | 6     |
| Number of cities with at least 75,000 people within a<br>60 miles radius of the potential site | 6-20 Cities  | 8     |
| Number of cities with at least 75,000 people within a<br>60 miles radius of the potential site | 20+ Cities   | 10    |



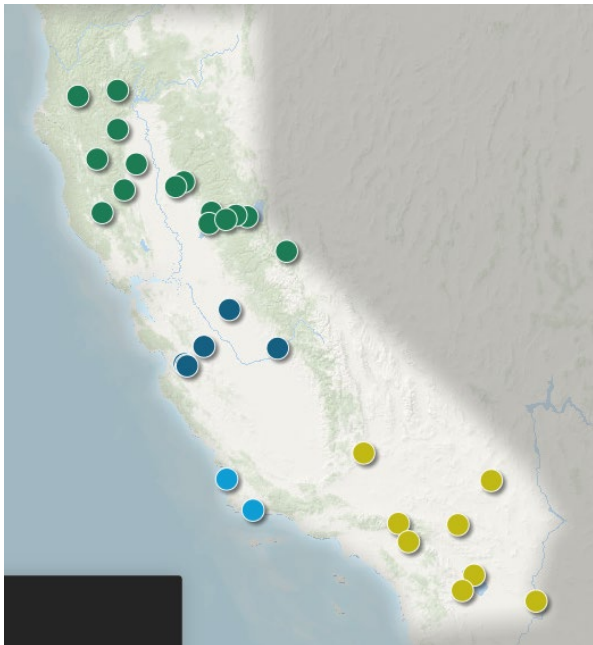
## PRIORITIZED AREAS TO EXPAND OHV ACCESS

The Initial Feasibility Study reviewed hundreds of potential sites. Examples of potential sites include areas located in BLM land, private lands, and state recreation areas.

Based on the study, 31 sites were identified with the potential for State Parks to conduct additional research and evaluation. The sites are located at the following State Parks Field Divisions:

- Northern Division – 15 sites (Green dots)
- Central Division – 6 sites (Dark Blue dots)
- Coastal Division – 2 sites (Turquoise dots)
- Desert Division – 8 sites (Yellow dots)

The sites are also shown in Figure 5-1, Sites for Further Evaluation



**Figure 3. Sites for Further Evaluation**

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

State Parks could follow several steps to implement the priorities from the SB155 directive.

- **Conduct Additional Research.** State Parks could further evaluate the potential priority sites to understand the options available to expand OHV access at the sites. Some sites may be currently available, while others may become available in the future.
- **Identify “Easier Implementation” sites.** State Parks could further refine the strategy to prioritize sites for expansion that are easier to implement. The prioritization strategy could be based on how quickly sites could help to expand OHV access, which includes funding availability and the easiest method, as discussed in *Chapter 4, Options for Expanding OHV Access*.
- **Coordinate with Potential Landowners.** Implementation of OHV access at many of the identified sites would require coordination with landowners. Conversations with potential landowners would facilitate a coordinated effort towards understanding opportunities and constraints for expanding OHV access at those sites.
- **Coordinate with State Parks staff at potential SVRAs and SRAs for OHV expansion.** Some sites may be located within existing SVRAs and SRAs. State Parks could coordinate internally on potential ways to expand OHV facilities within existing SVRAs and SRAs.
- **Prepare Site Feasibility Studies.** Some priority sites may be available for the planning phase. For those sites, State Parks could prepare site feasibility studies to further evaluate them for opportunities and potential locations for OHV recreation and programming.
- **Explore Funding Opportunities.** Expanding OHV access in the State would require additional funding, whether it’s for planning, acquisition, implementation, administration, or other tasks to facilitate the process. State Parks could explore a variety of funding options or partnerships with other organizations for funding opportunities.
- **Continue to Provide Grants and Leverage Partnerships.** State Parks administers an annual grant program that provides funding to partner agencies that offer OHV recreation. State Parks could continue to provide more grants and leverage the partnerships developed to have a more visible presence at those existing OHV facilities.

