



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division

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OFF-HIGHWAY MOTOR VEHICLE RECREATION COMMISSION

West Sacramento, CA

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STAFF REPORT: Law Enforcement/Public Safety

STAFF: Luke Ware, Law Enforcement Superintendent II

SUBJECT: Rubicon 2025 Report

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division has been conducting pro-active law enforcement deployments on the Rubicon Trail. Law Enforcement Officers from OHMVR Division along with other State Park Peace Officers from throughout California have been working in partnership with other local law enforcement agencies to provide unified patrol efforts along the Rubicon Trail. These agencies include El Dorado County Sheriff's Office (EDSO), Placer County Sheriff's Office (PCSO), Tahoe National Forest (TNF), El Dorado National Forest (EDNF), and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) through a series of deployments to the Rubicon Trail and the surrounding area.

Each agency has varying responsibilities and jurisdiction related to the segments of the Rubicon Trail. Each separate agency provides law enforcement personnel to assist with enforcement and education along the Rubicon Trail. Most law enforcement patrol efforts are focused on periods of high visitation including weekends, holidays, and special events.

The purpose of this long-standing cooperation between agencies is to provide for public safety and ensure the Rubicon Trail and surrounding public lands remain a safe and enjoyable place for the OHV community. The results of these efforts can be seen in the overall safety and increased resource protection in areas along the trail.

Discussion

Background

The Rubicon Trail was established as a stagecoach road in the 1890's between Georgetown and Lake Tahoe, originally known as McKinney-Rubicon Springs Road. It has evolved into a world famous 22-mile 4x4 trail that attracts visitors from all over the world. Visitors are drawn to its natural beauty and extreme difficulty. Several annual "Jeep" events occur on the trail annually, dating back to the 1950's.

Because of its popularity and heavy visitation, several issues prompted the Central Valley Water Authority to issue a Clean-Up and Abatement Order, which has now been rescinded. The areas of concern included sanitation, contamination, and erosion.

Focus of Deployment

Support from CA State Parks law enforcement began over a decade ago in what started out as foot patrols from the staging areas to various parts the trail. Officers now use specialty equipment including Jeeps and Recreational Off-highway Vehicles (ROVs) to access the entire length of the trail.

While the issues surrounding the Clean-Up and Abatement Order have been addressed, the trail needs ongoing management to mitigate future and present concerns. OHMVR officers patrol for OHV related vehicle code violations and resource crimes, educate users along the trail, and provide emergency response when required.

Officers typically work as a pair. OHMVR strives to have officers on the trail most weekends throughout the summer season. Depending on the weekend, officers travel to Rubicon Springs from either the Loon Lake trailhead or the McKinney Rubicon Staging Area in Tahoma. Officers typically spend two nights camping on the trail during a deployment period. Officers are on-call while not on active patrol and available to respond to calls for service, drastically reducing response times. Occasionally, officers will do mid-week deployment or a day trip for increased patrol presence.

Participating Agencies

- El Dorado County Parks & Trails
- El Dorado County Sheriff's Office
- County of Placer
- Placer County Sheriff's Office
- El Dorado National Forest (USFS)
- Tahoe National Forest (USFS)
- Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS)

Results

In the Summer 2025 season starting in May and concluding in October, OHMVR officers participated in 23 deployment days. During these patrols, OHMVR officers made over 550 OHV related contacts with members of the OHV community. The majority of these were consensual and made by pro-active officers to disseminate information, answer questions, and participate in OHV community engagement. Enforcement contacts were made for various alcohol-related violations, resource crimes, as well as vehicle equipment and safety violations.

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

None