

Chappie-Shasta OHV Area: A National Case Study in America's Public Land Stewardship

How one Bureau of Land Management recreation area became a model for balancing outdoor freedom, conservation, and collaboration

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As America celebrates the Department of the Interior's FREEDOM 250 initiative, few places better illustrate the evolution of modern public land stewardship than the Bureau of Land Management's Chappie-Shasta Off-Highway Vehicle Area near Redding, California.

While millions of Americans enjoy the area's scenic trails each year, many are unaware that Chappie-Shasta represents more than just another off-highway vehicle destination. It is the product of more than five decades of visionary legislation, congressional leadership, innovative land management, and dedicated public-private partnerships that together transformed how America manages motorized recreation on public lands.

“Chappie-Shasta reflects the spirit of Freedom 250 by showing how outdoor freedom grows through shared purpose,” said Jennifer Mata, BLM Redding Field Manager. “When partners, volunteers, and communities come together, we create landscapes where innovation, access, and stewardship move forward as one — ensuring these public lands remain inspiring, resilient, and accessible for generations to come.”

Today, Chappie-Shasta stands as a national case study demonstrating that responsible recreation, resource conservation, and active stewardship are not competing priorities—they are mutually reinforcing objectives when agencies, recreationists, volunteers, industry, and local communities work together.

The Vision Begins in 1971

Recognizing the rapid growth of off-highway recreation throughout California, Assemblyman Gene Chappie championed the bipartisan landmark Chappie-Z'berg Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Law, creating one of America's first comprehensive OHV recreation programs.

Rather than viewing recreation as a management problem, Assemblyman Chappie envisioned designated riding opportunities supported by professional planning, dedicated funding, rider education, law enforcement, trail maintenance, conservation, and responsible stewardship.

California's pioneering program became the blueprint for many state and federal recreation systems that followed, influencing how agencies across the nation approached managed OHV recreation.

Naming the Chappie-Shasta OHV Area in Chappie's honor reflects not only his legislative leadership but his enduring vision for balancing recreation access with environmental responsibility.

Congress Builds Upon the Vision

By the early 2000s, the Chappie-Shasta recreation area consisted of a patchwork of Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service managed lands. Riders often crossed invisible jurisdictional boundaries, while land managers faced duplicated administration, differing policies, and unnecessary complexity.

Working collaboratively with local stakeholders and federal agencies, Congressman Wally Herger partnered with Senator Diane Feinstein to have Congress include the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Administrative Jurisdiction Transfer within the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009.

The legislation transferred approximately 11,760 acres within the Chappie-Shasta OHV Area from the U.S. Forest Service to the Bureau of Land Management while transferring roughly 5,000 acres of other federal lands to the Forest Service where they could be managed more efficiently.

Implemented during 2010, the exchange created a more unified recreation area, streamlined administration, simplified visitor experiences, and allowed BLM managers to oversee the area as a cohesive destination rather than a collection of fragmented jurisdictions.

The transfer serves as an excellent example of how Congress can improve recreation opportunities not by acquiring more land, but by placing public lands under the agency best equipped to manage them.

Partnerships Make the Difference

What distinguishes Chappie-Shasta is the enduring partnership between the Bureau of Land Management and the recreation community.

Organizations including the Redding Dirt Riders, Black Sheep 4x4 Club, Post Wildfire OHV Recovery Alliance, Quiet Warrior Racing, Shasta Rock Rollers ATV Club, and other stakeholders have invested thousands of volunteers hours maintaining trails, post fire recovery projects of recreation facilities, providing rider safety education and training, and supporting conservation efforts.

The California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division’s Grant Program has invested millions of OHV Trust fund monies to help the BLM maintain trails, improve or construct new facilities, and improve public access to high-quality OHV recreation experiences.

The powersports industry continues to support on-the-ground efforts at Chappie Shasta and other federal riding areas through grant programs such as the Right Rider Access Fund, the Yamaha Outdoor Access Initiative, and the Polaris Trails Grant Program. These efforts will become even more important as agencies increasingly rely on partnerships and collaborative capacity to help sustain recreation opportunities in fire-impacted forests.

Positioned for the Next Generation

The Department of the Interior's implementation of the bipartisan EXPLORE Act provides another opportunity for Chappie-Shasta to demonstrate national leadership.

Under Secretary Doug Burgum's direction, the Department is modernizing recreation permitting, streamlining Special Recreation Permit administration, expanding online services,

strengthening partnerships, and reducing unnecessary administrative burdens so field staff can devote more time to managing public lands and serving visitors. Many of these reforms mirror practices already demonstrated at Chappie-Shasta.

A more efficient permitting process can help facilitate volunteer workdays, OHV group campouts, competition events, OHV safety training, and stewardship projects that have long characterized the area.

Rather than replacing successful partnerships, these administrative improvements strengthen them by allowing BLM staff and community partners to focus more on conservation, visitor services, and recreation management.

A Freedom 250 Legacy

As America celebrates the Department of the Interior's Freedom 250 initiative, Chappie-Shasta tells a uniquely American story.

It is the story of visionary legislation that created one of the nation's first managed OHV recreation programs.

It is the story of Congress improving public land management through thoughtful jurisdictional reform.

It is the story of federal land managers embracing partnerships with local communities and volunteers.

It is the story of recreationists who understand that access carries responsibility.

And it is the story of a recreation area that continues to evolve as new ideas, technologies, partnerships, and management tools emerge.

For more than fifty-five years, Chappie-Shasta has demonstrated that America's public lands are strongest when legislation, sound management, volunteer stewardship, and responsible recreation work together and stands as an enduring legacy of Gene Chappie's vision.

It also serves as the foundation for the next generation of public land stewardship—one in which outdoor freedom is preserved not simply through access, but through collaboration, conservation, and shared responsibility.

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Don Amador is a co-founder of the Post Wildfire OHV Recovery Alliance and has been in the trail advocacy, post wildfire recovery, and recreation management profession for 35 years and served as former Chair of the CA State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission.