



**OHMVR DIVISION COMMISSION MEETING
Graeagle, CA 96103-1466**

June 3, 2016

STAFF REPORT: Education, Interpretation, and Outreach Program
STAFF: Donna McGuire, Outreach Program Manager
SUBJECT: Statewide Education Outreach Program Overview

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division provides an engaging, active, and flourishing statewide Education, Interpretation, and Outreach Program. The year 2015 proved to be highly successful by reaching a broader, more diverse audience with interpretive programs that offer a variety of opportunities for the public to learn about safe, lawful off-highway vehicle (OHV) operation and environmental stewardship.

Discussion

The Division's Education, Interpretation and Outreach Program supports all six goals of the OHMVR Division's Strategic Plan and specifically addresses Goal 4 which is to develop an informed and educated community. During 2015, the Outreach Program continued to flourish by reaching a broader, more diverse audience and by launching new programs and expanding current popular programs. The Division offers an array of educational programs that utilize traditional and innovative methods to create meaningful connections to audiences and employs a variety of outreach strategies.

In addition to in-park programs, community events, county fairs, and major OHV events, such as the Sand Sports Super Show and the Hangtown Motocross Classic, the Division provides outreach to audiences who may be less aware of the Division's commitment to well-managed recreational lands. Attendees at the California Native Plant Society Conference were very receptive to learn about the Division's ecologically-sound land management practices. During the California Parks Training Conference at Yosemite, Division staff provided a session to federal, county, and city professionals about our innovative methods to educate the public about recreating safely while protecting cultural and natural resources. In addition, our education programs address many State Parks initiatives, such as engaging younger generations and underserved audiences in order to connect youth to nature and the outdoors.

One strategy to reach underserved youth audiences who may not have the opportunity to visit a state park is to bring learning about the park to the local schools with a Junior Ranger After-School Club. This community outreach program is offered to third and fourth graders on a weekly basis throughout the school year. Kids learn the Junior

Ranger Promise, play learning games, make crafts, explore nature, and have the opportunity to earn Junior Ranger badges and certificates. The program provides a series of mini lessons tied to the common core and science education standards and introduce or reinforce the school curriculum in an experimental, minds-engaged, and hands-on format.

By implementing SVRA science-based day camps, first-time visitors participate in a curriculum-based outdoor education and interpretation program. After the school bus arrives and the clouds of bug spray and spray-on sunblock dissipate, staff begin the important process of extinguishing fears of bugs, ticks, snakes, poison oak, mountain lions, etc. Then, the learning can begin. Students participate in geocaching activities to learn about the local plants and animals, geology, and the management practices to balance OHV recreation and resource protection. Science camp students participate and assist staff in projects involving re-vegetation with native plant species, invasive species removal, and habitat monitoring. These programs provide awareness and understanding of the complexities of resource protection. With using a hands-on approach of digging in the dirt and observing wildlife scientifically, these students have a higher probability of bringing their families to the parks and ultimately becoming park stewards.

During the annual Kids' Adventure Connection Weekend, children complete a series of outdoor activities based on the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights that was developed by California State Parks with an OHV recreation twist. The event kicks-off with the kids learning about the Tread Lightly! Principles and then apply them while operating remote controlled Jeeps® on a simulated mini obstacle course. After learning about safe and responsible OHV recreation, families gear-up for an off-highway trail ride to discover California's past. At one destination, members of the Imperial Gem and Mineral Society share the history of prospecting in the area. The kids step back in time a bit more and try their luck at dry-panning for gold. Back at camp, the kids participate in an interpretive version of the Olympics. Kids jump like jack rabbits, do push-ups like an iguana, and howl like coyotes. The day's activities top off with a hot dog dinner, stargazing, songs and stories around a blazing campfire, and s'mores. Following a night in a sleeping bag under the stars, families spend the morning exploring the desert, playing tug-o-war, participating in a pick-up football game, and doing arts and crafts activities. The weekend program engages participants through experiential learning to appreciate the natural world and learn about their heritage.

As a strategy to reach teens, the OHMVR Division has a partnership with the *SportStars Magazine* that is marketed to youth and their parents. The Division publishes a monthly article and ad. The topics of the articles include all-terrain vehicle (ATV) safety and training, the career path of a young dirt biker to become an OHV ranger, and the success of two teens as hillclimb champions. In addition to promoting visitation to the SVRAs, the ad includes the Division's web address and hyperlink in the online version for magazine subscribers to learn how to recreate safely and responsibly. With a distribution of 300,000 print copies to school libraries and other locations throughout California and an additional 150,000 online subscribers, *SportStars Magazine* is a valuable communication tool to reach youth using a nontraditional interpretive method that is accessible for teens.

The OHMVR Division’s statewide Education, Interpretation, and Outreach Program proved to be highly successful during 2015 serving more than 233,000 people. Talented and dedicated staff throughout the state will continue to provide high-quality interpretation programs that are relevant to a diverse population and encourage the public to become part of an educated community that will protect resources for sustainable recreational opportunities.

OHV Interpretation Training

The OHMVR Division hosted a dynamic weeklong training with a content rich and action-packed syllabus for the SVRA and Division Headquarters interpretive staff during May 2 - 6, 2016, at Prairie City SVRA. Training sessions focused on interpretive methods that included technology-based learning tools and best practices to educate today’s audience. The training generated such enthusiasm that the Interpreters will continue working collaboratively on statewide interpretive projects with consistent messaging that address the OHMVR Division’s Mission and Strategic Plan.

2015 Statewide Interpretive Contacts		
Unit	Venue/Event Resulting in Most Contacts	2015 Total Contacts
Heber Dunes SVRA	Imperial County Mid-Winter Fair & Festival	6,529
Ocotillo Wells SVRA	In-Park Interpretive Exhibits & Programs	58,856
Hungry Valley SVRA	Fiesta Days	2,993
Oceano Dunes SVRA	Mid State Fair	106,067
Hollister Hills SVRA	San Benito County Fair	13,293
Carnegie SVRA	Visitor Appreciation Day	1,932
Prairie City SVRA	Hangtown Motocross Classic	4,533
Clay Pit SVRA	Visitor Appreciation Day	1,300
OHMVR Division HQ	Amador County Fair	38,151
Total Statewide 2015 Interpretive Contacts		233,654

Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

None