



OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING Borrego Springs, CA

November 16, 2013

STAFF REPORT: Outreach Program Update

STAFF: Natalie Lohi, Outreach & Interpretation Program Manager

SUBJECT: Division Wide Outreach, Education, and Marketing Update

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division oversees a robust and intensive statewide outreach program. By its simplest definition, public outreach is the practice of conducting awareness activities through targeted community interaction. Our Outreach Program incorporates a dedicated team of professionals throughout the state that includes interpreters, rangers, seasonal park aides, volunteers, state and federal agencies, and non-profit partners.

Discussion

Program Overview:

The Division Outreach Program was developed to support all six goals of the OHMVR Strategic Plan, but specifically addresses Goal 4, which is to develop an informed and educated community. We accomplish this goal by utilizing various methods of education and interpretation, hands-on safety training, and targeted social media messaging. Education and interpretation are accomplished using non-personal and personal interaction. Non-personal methods include displays, informational kiosks, interpretive panels, printed materials, and media. Personal methods include face-to-face interactions at our parks, in schools, at outreach events such as trade shows and county fairs and other community gatherings such as enthusiast club and homeowner association meetings.

In order to accomplish hands-on safety training, the Division contracted with the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America to provide off-highway vehicle safety training for the public. Through the contract, State Parks employees and volunteers are trained as instructors and can then provide free ATV training classes for the public at our SVRAs. Dirtbike and Recreational off-Highway Vehicle training can be provided free or at a reduced cost with financial assistance from individual SVRA cooperating associations.

Social media is a rapidly growing form of communication that spans many cultures and age groups. Recognizing the massive potential for targeted and broad-scope messaging, the Division designated its first-ever Social Media Specialist. This individual coordinates and assists with social media campaigns at each SVRA, providing guidance, training, and technical assistance. This person is also responsible for tracking statistics, data, and trends, as well as reporting issues of concern. While this program is in its infancy, great strides have been made and social media is already emerging as a critical component of the Outreach Program. Visit and Like the OHMVR Division Facebook page www.facebook.com/CAStateParksOHV.

Sand Sports Super Show:

The OHMVR Division coordinated with Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Oceano Dunes SVRA to provide a massive outreach presence at the 2013 Sand Sports Super Show. Each SVRA and the Division debuted booths featuring an array of educational tools. Ocotillo Wells SVRA's educational exhibits spanned time showcasing fossils, bugs, and modern creatures of all shapes and sizes. Taking the prize for technological innovation, Oceano Dunes SVRA featured several video-based educational exhibits including a dune rider simulator. The OHMVR Division blended traditional California State Park exhibit strategies with a tech edge. In fact, this event was the first for new ATV safety kiosks—interactive ATV computer games. The most popular feature for the kids was the TreadLightly! R/C Jeep Course located at both the Division's and Ocotillo Wells SVRA's booths. This was also a first-time collaboration with the Division of Boating and Waterways Outreach team, who shared our booth at the show. In total, at least 4,000 event attendees visited the State Park booths over the 3-day event and at least half of these were youth. The overarching strategy to attract youth through low-tech and high-tech educational tools was a success!

Year In Review:

2013 has seen a marked expansion of an already robust program. With Division leadership direction to increase and broaden our audience, the Outreach Team has developed new and progressive techniques to engage and educate the public. The existing list of over 100 outreach events attended by Division staff statewide is expanding to include non-traditional venues. We have been highly successful over the years, educating the OHV community. We will continue to do this, but place new emphasis on informing and educating those who are not OHV enthusiasts to help them avoid or repair any negative misconception about OHV recreation. To successfully expand this program, we will need to increase our use of volunteers within the Division. We have seen increased growth in our volunteer numbers through the years with the majority of our volunteers now providing education and outreach in some capacity. In September, we finalized the purchase of specific volunteer tracking software which will be deployed and operational in all of our SVRAs by January 1, 2014, with a training period scheduled to begin next month. The Department currently releases one basic volunteer report each March or April. This new software will allow the Division to create reports at any point in time and track various aspects of the program, including total

numbers, amount of time, and monetary value of volunteers providing outreach in the Division.

Looking Ahead:

Plans for 2014 include a continued increase and diversification of outreach venues and methods. The Division plans to fully embrace the Director's mandate to promote the California State Parks 150th anniversary celebration. The OHMVR Division attended a collaboration meeting with the Western Fairs Association, a new State Parks partner for the promotion of the 150th. We were recognized at this meeting for our experience and expertise in the area of outreach and interpretation and will provide leadership and guidance to the extent possible throughout the year. The Division will also be reorganizing and expanding the hands-on safety training program to provide increased public and agency off-highway vehicle training. The development of a marketing plan for the Environmental Training Center will support this reorganization and establish the center as a statewide resource for education in the area of off-highway vehicle recreation. "Community outreach" was defined at the beginning of this report. If you define outreach alone, it means "to exceed beyond a limit." This is precisely what the statewide OHMVR Division Outreach team has done in 2013 and what we will continue to do. We strive to exceed expectations and go beyond the minimum requirements because this is what will ultimately ensure continued OHV recreation opportunities and land stewardship.

Commission Action

For information only

Attachments

None