

Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Heber Dunes SVRA General Plan

Major Themes Working Paper





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1 Introduction

PURPOSE

The purpose of this working paper is to provide a synopsis of issues and ideas gathered from park visitors and stakeholders during initial public outreach for the Heber Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) General Plan project. This input was gathered through a visitor survey and stakeholder interviews. The issues and ideas voiced through the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews will guide project research, alternatives analysis, and recommendations.

The visitor survey and stakeholder interviews represent the first stage of the public participation process for the Heber Dunes SVRA General Plan project. Accordingly, the public participation program will involve several additional outreach efforts throughout the General Plan process. As a first step toward incorporating stakeholder input into the General Plan process, information generated during the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews has been synthesized into the major themes presented in this working paper.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SVRAs are off-highway vehicle (OHV) parks that are operated by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVR) of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The OHMVR Division has recently launched a process to develop a General Plan for Heber Dunes SVRA. The General Plan will serve as a guide for future management, development, and enhancements to Heber Dunes SVRA. It will establish a long-term vision for the SVRA, identify potential recreation and facility improvements, and direct future SVRA management, resource stewardship, and appropriate public use. Major themes presented in this document will guide the identification of key planning issues to be addressed through the General Plan process. See side panel for contact information for the OHMVR Division project manager.



OHMVR Division Project Manager

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The public participation program includes:

- **On-site Visitor Survey**, using a person-to-person questionnaire. The surveys were conducted at Heber Dunes SVRA in February and March 2009.
- **Stakeholder Interviews**, conducted with a cross-section of stakeholders regarding potential ideas, concerns, and common goals associated with development of Heber Dunes General Plan. The interviews were conducted in March 2009.
- **Two Public Workshops**, to be held to gather public input during the formulation of the Heber Dunes General Plan. At the first workshop, scheduled for late Summer 2009, OHMVR will present concept alternatives for the SVRA. During the second workshop, which is tentatively scheduled for late Fall 2009, the Heber Dunes vision and land use plan will be presented.
- **Fact Sheets and Newsletters**, providing background information on the project, updates on project progress, and announcements of the public workshops.



Heber Dunes SVRA General Plan Public Participation Process | Step-by-Step



2 VISITOR SURVEY AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Input gathered through the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews has been synthesized into “major themes” for this working paper. The two sections that follow describe the visitor survey and stakeholder interview processes.

VISITOR SURVEY

The purpose of the visitor survey was to understand visitors’ use patterns, concerns, and needs. Information on visitor demographics, visitor use patterns, identification of valued places and activities at Heber Dunes, opportunities for improvement, and safety concerns was collected. The surveys were not designed to be statistically representative of all visitors to Heber Dunes; nevertheless, these results provide valuable insight for the planning process. EDAW AECOM conducted the survey on behalf of the OHMVR Division.

EDAW AECOM obtained information from Heber Dunes SVRA visitors through person-to-person “questionnaire” interviews. Based on input received from the OHMVR Division, family groups are the primary visitor type on Sundays (typically after 2:00 p.m.) and dedicated solo riders are the primary visitor type during the week. In order to capture the greatest variety in visitor types, EDAW AECOM was on-site to conduct surveys on two Sundays and on one Friday. EDAW AECOM administered surveys from approximately 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the following dates:

- Sunday, February 22, 2009
- Sunday, March 1, 2009
- Friday, March 6, 2009

EDAW AECOM personnel read the survey questions to the interviewees and recorded the responses on the survey instrument. Both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking personnel administered the surveys. Upon the completion of each survey, the surveyors provided interviewees with a bilingual fact sheet containing information about the Heber Dunes General Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) planning process. A total of 49 surveys were completed. Tabulations of survey responses are provided in Appendix A.



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS



The purpose of the stakeholder interviews was to understand stakeholders' ideas, concerns, and common goals with respect to Heber Dunes SVRA. Meetings with a cross-section of stakeholders were conducted on March 25 and 26, 2009. The interview participants—representing local planners, public agencies and utilities, public safety entities, OHV interests, social groups, civic organizations, environmental concerns, and Heber Dunes visitors and neighbors—shared their perspectives on long-range planning issues, ideas, concerns, and opportunities.



The majority of the interviews were conducted in small groups of two to five people, organized by area of interest and/or experience. For those stakeholders who were unable to attend the group stakeholder meetings, one-on-one interviews were conducted in person or through phone calls. A total of 27 individuals participated in the meetings, which lasted between 30 minutes to an hour. EDAW AECOM staff facilitated the meetings. Broad, open-ended discussion questions were used to guide the discussions. Key points from stakeholder interviews and a complete list of interview participants are provided in Appendix B.

3 Major Themes

The major themes presented in this section represent a synthesis of input on ideas, concerns, and common goals related to Heber Dunes SVRA. In effect, the major themes encapsulate the topics that were raised most through the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews.

MEETS IMPORTANT LOCAL RECREATIONAL NEED

Stakeholders frequently raised the observation that Heber Dunes SVRA fulfills an important local recreational need. The SVRA is close to several population centers within Imperial County and the results of the visitor survey indicate that the overwhelming majority of visitors choose to visit Heber Dunes because it is “close to home.” Interestingly, over 90 percent of visitors surveyed indicated it takes them less than 30 minutes to travel to Heber Dunes. Tied to some of these concepts were comments about the potential for camping at Heber Dunes and the need to consider whether overnight use would shift the character of the SVRA from a local recreation area to an amenity that primarily serves regions beyond Imperial County.



RECOGNITION OF IMPROVED SVRA MANAGEMENT

One of the strongest recurring themes that surfaced during the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews was the impression that Heber Dunes is generally cleaner and safer under OHMVR management (Heber Dunes was originally a County park. California Department of Parks and Recreation acquired Heber Dunes in December 2007, in part, because the County lacked sufficient operational funding for the park.) During surveys many visitors mentioned that they appreciated the improvements made by OHMVR since acquiring the SVRA, including efforts to improve maintenance and safety conditions, as well as the installation of new restrooms.

Many visitors stated that Heber Dunes appears to be much cleaner since coming under OHMVR management. In terms of safety conditions, visitors and stakeholders commented that enforcement and patrol activities by the California Department of Parks and Recreation resident ranger, such as issuing tickets for double-riding and riding without helmets, have improved safety conditions at the SVRA. Likewise, some visitors pointed out that the mere presence of an on-site ranger may deter illegal and/or irresponsible activities at the SVRA. Many parents commented that they feel that Heber Dunes is a safe and comfortable place to recreate with their children because of these efforts. Some stakeholders noted that Heber Dunes had problems with trespassing and associated public safety issues, such as vandalism and unauthorized late night parties, in the past. It was acknowledged that the presence of an on-site ranger and the ability to close the entrance gate overnight has likely controlled these issues.





IMPROVING SAFETY FOR ALL SVRA VISITORS

There was widespread acknowledgement that safety conditions at Heber Dunes are generally good. At the same time, visitors and other stakeholders would like to see safety enhanced as part of the General Plan process. Of particular concern, was improving safety for children at Heber Dunes.

Some safety concerns expressed during the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews centered on how to reduce the potential for OHV collisions, as well as collisions between OHVs and non-riders. The importance of rider education was also raised as a consideration. Comments were also made about opportunities to enhance safety through designation of use areas (for example, free ride area, children's trail, and group picnic areas) and the establishment of associated management approaches.

It should be noted that when visitors were asked if "they generally feel safe" at Heber Dunes nearly all visitors surveyed responded positively. Given that safety concerns related to OHV operation surfaced at other points in the survey – as well as in the stakeholder interviews – it is likely that visitors responded to this survey question in terms of personal safety (for example, visitors feel safe because they are not worried about petty theft or assault).



ENHANCING THE RECREATION EXPERIENCE FOR FAMILIES AND GROUPS

The results of the visitor survey and stakeholder interviews indicated that most visits to Heber Dunes occur during weekends. These weekend visitors tend to be large groups of family and/or friends with children. Almost two-thirds of the visitors surveyed were in groups of 6 or more people and visitors under the age of 14 accounted for nearly one-third of all visitors present on the days of the surveys. Dedicated solo riders tend to use the SVRA during the week.

Most visitors that go to Heber Dunes in large groups stay in the SVRA for a good portion of the day, yet the total time spent riding OHVs is typically only a few hours. Specifically, the survey results indicate that 80 percent of visitors stay more than 4 hours, yet most visitors spend under 4 hours riding OHVs. The primary additional recreational activities that Heber Dunes visitors take part in include gathering with family and friends, picnicking and barbecuing, watching people ride OHVs, and viewing scenery. Many people stated that there is a need for additional passive recreational opportunities at Heber Dunes that are compatible with OHV use. Suggestions tied to these discussions included barbeque facilities, additional shaded areas, additional small and large group picnic areas, additional restrooms, additional drinking water fountains and spigots, established riding trails removed from picnic areas, and creation of a children's trail.

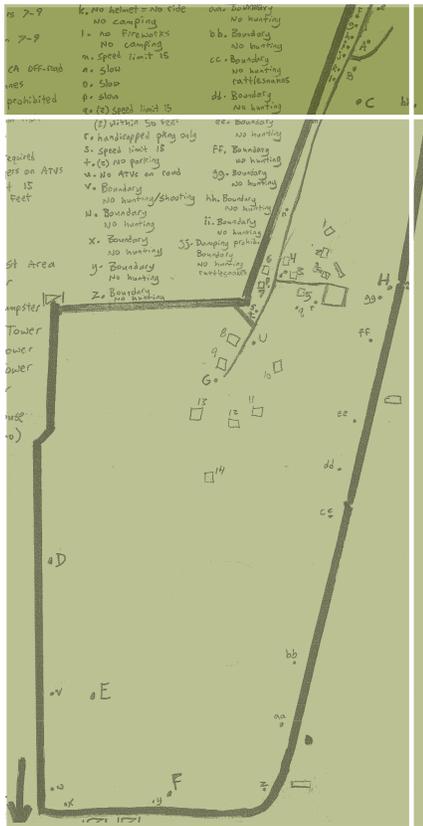
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS

Environmental considerations for the planning process that were raised most frequently involved natural areas and air quality. Heber Dunes is primarily sand dunes with pockets of vegetation (both native and non-native) located throughout the SVRA. Many visitors and other stakeholders value the natural characteristics and open area of Heber Dunes.

Most existing trees are tamarisk, a non-native, invasive species. The value of the existing trees for shade and natural characteristics was cited repeatedly. Tied to these discussions was dialogue about tamarisk's invasive qualities and the relatively high rate at which it absorbs water. Some stakeholders would like to see the tamarisk replaced by native vegetation. Other stakeholders commented that a tamarisk removal program would be costly and difficult, and that it would be challenging to establish native vegetation in its place.

Air quality impacts from dust and engine emissions were raised as a concern. Dust was recognized by many as a regional air quality issue. Discussion also included the role of existing trees in stabilizing sandy soils and thereby potentially reducing dust dispersion.





A. Visitor Survey Tabulation

HEBER DUNES SVRA GENERAL PLAN/EIR

VISITOR SURVEY TABULATION

1. We would like to know what kinds of improvements, changes, or development would make the park a better place for visitors. I will read a list of potential improvements to you and when I have finished I will show you the list. I will then mark your highest priority with a 1, your second priority with a 2, and your third priority with a 3.

LIST OF ALL POTENTIAL RESPONSES

1. Signs with information about the park	2. Walking trails	3. Protect plants and animals
4. Improve rider safety	5. Visitor's Center	6. Additional restrooms
7. Park map	8. Barbeque facilities	9. Expand the park
10. Additional parking	11. Drinking water fountains/spigots	12. Shaded areas
13. Large group picnic area	14. Small picnic areas	15. Volleyball field
16. Softball field	17. More lighting	18. Horseshoe pits
19. Fire rings	20. Established riding trails	21. Dirt soccer field
		99. Other:

***** SEE TABULATED VISITOR RESPONSES ON FOLLOWING PAGE *****

*****Q.1 TABULATED RESPONSES FROM VISITORS*****

Note: This table presents a list of improvements/changes/developments organized by frequency of response. The responses are categorized into columns by 1st, 2nd, and 3rd priority responses. For example, the top row of the "1st Priority" column contains "Barbeque facilities" and the "Number of Responses" column reflects the fact that 8 interviewees stated that barbeque facilities were their first priority for potential improvements to the SVRA. Likewise, the first entry in the "2nd Priority" column indicates that 6 interviewees stated that large group picnic area was their 2nd priority for potential improvements.

1st Priority	Number of Responses	2nd Priority	Number of Responses	3rd Priority	Number of Responses
Barbeque facilities	8	Large group picnic area	6	Shaded areas	11
Improve rider safety	6	Additional restrooms	4	Improve rider safety	6
Additional restrooms	5	Shaded areas	4	Barbeque facilities	4
Drinking water fountains and spigots	5	Park map	4	Expand the park	3
More lighting	3	Expand the park	3	Signs with information about	2
Expand the park	3	Established riding trails	3	Walking trails	2
Shaded areas	3	Drinking water fountains, spigots	3	Protect plants and animals	2
Established riding trails	3	Horseshoe pits	3	Additional restrooms	2
Signs with information about the park	2	Improve rider safety	2	Large group picnic area	2
Volleyball field	2	Visitor's center	2	Small picnic areas	2
Softball field	2	Barbeque facilities	2	More lighting	2
Walking trails	1	Volleyball field	2	Visitor's center	1
Visitor's Center	1	Softball field	2	Park map	1
Protect plants and animals	1	More lighting	2	Additional parking	1
Large group picnic area	1	Walking trails	1	Volleyball field	1
Horseshoe pits	1	Protect plants and animals	1	Horseshoe pits	1
		Additional parking	1	Fire rings	1
		Small picnic areas	1	Established riding trails	1
				Dirt soccer field	1

1a. Can you think of one other improvement, change, or development that you would like to see undertaken at the Park?

*Note: Question 1a is a follow-up question to Question 1. For Question 1, we read a list of 21 potential improvements and asked interviewees to prioritize their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice for improvements they would like to see undertaken. For Question 1a, we asked visitors if they could think of **one other improvement aside from the 21 improvements mentioned above**. Thus, this tabulation represents those improvements that visitors would like to see above and beyond those potential improvements listed in Question 1.*

Any Other Improvement	Frequency
Extend open hours	4
Youth track/designate slow area for kids	4
Lighting at night	4
Camping	3
Refreshment stand/kiosk	2
One way trail/trail with signs	2
Drag race track	2
Paintball	2
Shaded areas	1
Barbeque too close to ground	1
No tickets from ranger	1
Water fountain	1
No entrance fee	1
No developments like Glamis	1
More restrooms throughout park	1
Enforce speed limits in family areas	1
Electrical outlets for cooking/music	1
Grass for baseball	1
Emergency call center	1

2. Recreation Area Use

[INTERVIEWER PROMPT: I'm going to ask you a question and I want you to name all the things you can think of. I will write down all of the things you say, as if we were making a grocery list. We'll start with the first thing that pops into your head and we'll continue to list activities until you can't think of anymore. The question is: "When you come to the Park what activities do you take part in?".

List Activities Here:

Activity	Frequency of Response
Ride OHV	43
Barbeque/picnic	34(25/9)
Hang out w/family	19
Relax/socialize	10
Watch kids/take kids to ride	7
Enjoy the day/have fun	4
Drag racing	3
Walk	4
Volleyball	2
Baseball/catch	2
Football	1
Ride bike	1
Be safe	1
Sit under tree	1
Hang out w/friends	1
Dominoes	1
Holiday gathering	1
Sit by fire	1
Soccer	1
Use restrooms	1
Camp	1
Listen to music	1
Play basketball	1

2a. You mentioned several activities, now we are going to go through a list of activities that people take part in at the Park and I'd like you to indicate whether you or members of your group take part in these activities. ("Y/N")

****POTENTIAL RESPONSES****

	1. Ride OHV		2. Watch people ride OHV		3. Hiking/walking
	4. Bicycling		5. Use park as rest stop when traveling		6. Picnic
	7. Gathering with family/friends		8. Barbecue		9. Viewing scenery
	10. Bird/wildlife viewing		11. Volleyball		12. Horseshoes
					99. Other:

****TABULATED RESPONSES****

Activity	Frequency of "Yes" Response
Gathering with family/friends	46
Ride OHV	45
Picnic	42
Watch people ride OHV	41
Barbecue	39
Viewing scenery	38
Hiking/walking	14
Horseshoes	12
Volleyball	7
Bird/wildlife viewing	6
Use park as rest stop when traveling	6
Bicycling	5

2b. Of these activities that you or your group members take part in, is there one activity that is done the most?

Note: Out of all the activities that interviewees indicated that they take part in when responding to Question 2, this table presents their primary activity, organized by frequency of response

Primary Activity	Frequency of Response
Ride OHV	34
Gathering with family/friends	3
Picnic/barbeque	3
Watch people ride OHV	1
Viewing scenery	1
Volleyball	1

3. We are interested in how Park use varies by season. In the *Fall months (October through December)*, how many times per month do you visit the Park during the week? And on weekends or holidays?

[INTERVIEWER: repeat question for each season.]

	Fall-Weekday	Fall-Weekend	Winter-Weekday	Winter-Weekend	Spring-Weekday	Spring-Weekend	Summer-Weekday	Summer-Weekend
Total Number of Visitor Days Per Season	31	94	47	105	27	86	10	38
Average Number of Visits Per Month	1	2	1	2	1	2	0	1

4. Why do you sometimes choose to visit this park instead of other parks?

Response	Frequency
Close to home	37
Safe	9
No crowds/lots of space	9
Family friendly	5
Able to watch kids/better for kids/safer for kids	5
Restrooms/clean restrooms	5
No fee	5
Shade	3
Familiar	3
Ride OHV	2
Small	2
No permits	2
Picnic areas	1
Stores nearby	1
Terrain hard-packed	1
Renovation	1
Clean	1
Enclosed	1
Easier to meet with friends	1
No problems with law enforcement	1
All locals	1
Volleyball	1

5. How many hours do you typically spend in the park?

(1.) 0-2 ___ (2.) 2-4 ___ (3.) 4-6 ___ (4.) 6-8 ___ (5.) 8+ ___

Response	Frequency
0-2 hrs	0
2-4 hrs	9
4-6 hrs	27
6-8 hrs	9
8+	2

6. When you are at the park, how many hours do you spend on an OHV?

(1.) 0-2 ___ (2.) 2-4 ___ (3.) 4-6 ___ (4.) 6-8 ___ (5.) 8+ ___

Response	Frequency
0-2 hrs	19
2-4 hrs	18
4-6 hrs	9
6-8 hrs	1
8+	0

6a. What kind of OHV?

Response	Frequency
ATV	39
Dirt bike	11
Four by Four	5
Side-by-Side	3
Dune buggy	3
Pre-runner/race truck	2
Sand Rail	2

7. Where are your favorite places to visit in Heber Dunes?

7a. Please show me on the attached map.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES: For the most part, visitors prefer to ride and set up their picnic/gathering area south of Heber Beach Road. Visitors reported that they only set up picnic/gathering areas where shade is available. Overall, most visitors prefer to set up under the shade of trees rather than at ramadas. Visitors report that they tend to use their picnic/gathering area as their “home base” throughout the day, where they “hang out” with family and/or friends and individual members of the group take turns going out for rides on OHVs. While most riders reported that they prefer to ride south of Heber Beach Road, some visitors commented that they enjoy a relaxed, slow ride along the perimeter of the property.

Visitors accompanied by children reported somewhat distinct favorite places from the overall group of visitors. Most visitors accompanied by children preferred to gather at the ramadas near Heber Beach Road for the following reasons: 1) to ensure easy and safe access to the restrooms; and 2) parents are able to see their children clearly when riding in the area because views are not obstructed by topography or vegetation.

8. Thinking about the Park and what it means to you, what do you value and care about?

[INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ POTENTIAL RESPONSES. MARK THE APPROPRIATE CATEGORY WITH AN "X" OR NOTE RESPONSE IN "OTHER" CATEGORY.]

****POTENTIAL RESPONSES****

	1. Close to home		2. Space for group events		3. Enjoy the open area
	4. Value the habitat		5. Value natural characteristics		6. Freedom of recreational use
	7. Safety		8. No entrance fee		99. Other, specify:

****TABULATED RESPONSES****

Response	Frequency
Clean Facility/Very Well Maintained	18
Safety	14
Close to Home	13
No Fee	10
Open Area	6
Value Natural Characteristics	6
Family Friendly Atmosphere	5
Freedom of Use	4
Shade	4
Bathrooms/Clean Bathrooms	3
Space for Group Events	2
No Crowds/Privacy	2
Likes the sand to ride on	2
Value the Habitat	1
"No harrassment from law enforcement"	1
Picnic tables	1
Riding	1
Relaxing	1
Family Using for Years	1
Scenery	1
"Like the Desert Valley"	1
Long Hours	1

9. Do you generally feel safe at Heber Dunes?

Yes _____ [If Yes, proceed to next question]

No _____

Note on this response: Given that visitors mentioned safety issues in response to other questions (see Questions 1, 1a, 4, and 8), it is likely that visitors responded to this question in terms of personal safety (e.g., visitors are not concerned about petty theft, assault, etc.). In other words, visitors do not see personal safety as a concern, but they are concerned about rider safety and potential rider and non-rider collisions.

Response	Frequency
Yes	46
No	1

[If No] **9a. What makes you feel unsafe in the park? (You may list as many things as you wish.)**

[INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ RESPONSES ALOUD. CHECK THE CATEGORY THAT BEST CORRESPONDS TO THE INTERVIEWEE'S RESPONSE.]

Note: These responses are from the single interviewee that responded "No" to Question 9

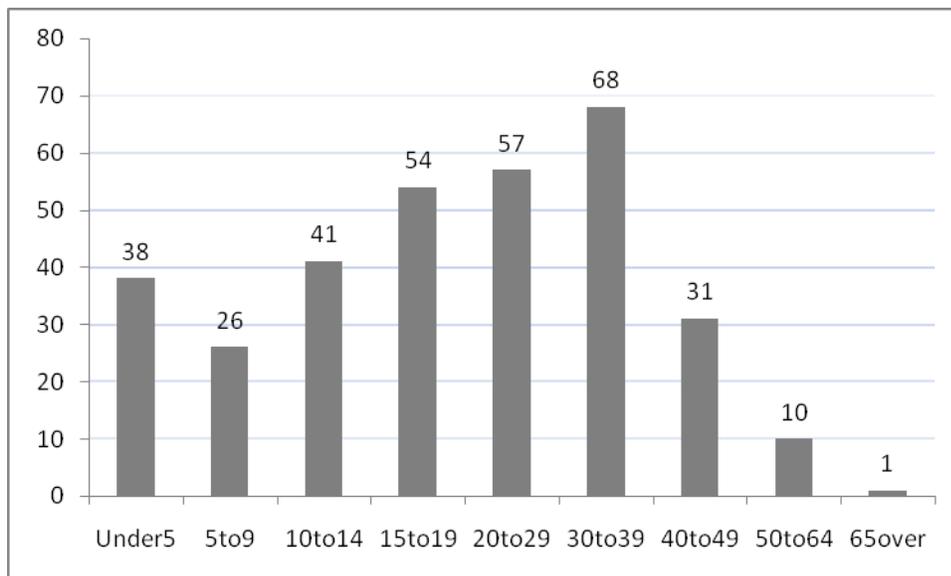
Response	Frequency
OHV-visitor interactions	1
OHV-OHV collisions	1
Level of lighting	1

10. How many people are you here with today? _____

Number of People in Group	Frequency
<5	20
5-10	25
>10	8

10a. Could you tell me the approximate ages of all the people in your group?

[INTERVIEWER: Mark the appropriate number of people for each category.]



11. How long did it take you to get here today?

1. ___ ≤ 30 min. 2. ___ 30 min. – 1 hr. 3. ___ 1 – 2 hrs 4. ___ 2-4 hrs 4. ___ ≥ than 4 hrs

Response	<30 minutes	30-1hr	1-2hrs	2-4hrs	≥4hrs
Frequency	41	2	0	1	0

11a. Where do you live? City: _____ Or check here if resident of Mexico _____

City	Frequency
Calexico	12
El Centro	10
Holtville	8
Imperial	7
Heber	5
Brawley	2
(British Columbia)	1
Santee	1

12. What year were you born? _____

Age	Frequency
65 and over	1
50-64	1
40-49	8
30-39	20
20-29	10
15-19	7
10-14	0

[INTERVIEWER: Note gender of respondent ___ Male ___ Female ___Unknown]

Males	Females
27	17

Closing Statement

[INTERVIEWER: FEEL FREE TO CONVEY THIS INFORMATION IN YOUR OWN WORDS.]

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Your input will be helpful for planning future park improvements. To give you a bit of background, we are doing these surveys because the OHMVR Division of California State Parks is undergoing a planning effort to create a General Plan for Heber Dunes. A General Plan is a policy document that guides future changes and development in a given area, such as a park or a city. We will be organizing meetings occasionally to allow interested community members to provide input on the General Plan and future operation of the park. This fact sheet provides information about the park and the planning process. Would you like to provide input on the park at a future meeting?

[If yes, record contact information below.]

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Mailing address: _____

STAKEHOLDER MEETING PARTICIPANTS

County of Imperial Planning Division

Patricia Valenzuela, Planner III

City of Calexico Planning Division

Mark Vasquez, Associate Planner

City of El Centro Planning Department

Michael Coyne, Assistant Planner

San Diego Gas & Electric

Brian Swanson, Land Management Representative

Bob McDonald, Contracting Administrator

Roger Berry, Construction Supervisor

Imperial County Air Pollution Control District

Monica Soucier, Environmental Coordinator

Imperial County Fire Department

Rob Scott, Assistant County Fire Chief

City of Calexico Fire Department

Pete Mercado, Fire Chief

County of Imperial Intergovernmental Relations

Bob Ham, Director

Desert Protective Council

Terri Weiner, Imperial County Projects and Conservation Coordinator

Imperial County Clean Air Initiative

Lucy Hernandez, Clean Air Initiative Coordinator

Boyscouts of America, San Diego-Imperial Council, Desert Trails District

Joe Ungaro, District Executive

Blake Miles, active in Boyscouts of America

El Centro Chamber of Commerce

Cathy Kennerson, CEO

United Desert Gateway/Imperial County Film Commission

Charla Teeters, Program Manager (for both organizations)

Area resident

Philip Durham and family

ATV Safety Institute
Amber Purcell, Manager

American Motorcycle Association – District 37
Dick Christensen, District Legislative Officer

California Trail Users Coalition
Ed Waldheim, President

American Sand Association
Bill Jones, Chairman

National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council
Dana Bell, Educational Consultant – OHV Recreation Education

Caltrans
Jacob Armstrong, Chief, Development Review Branch
Leila Ibrahim, Transportation Planner

Imperial Irrigation District
Paul Peschel, Supervisor for Engineering Services

Imperial County Farm Bureau
Linsey Dale, Natural Resources Director

Comite Civico del Valle
Luis Olmedo, Executive Director

KEY POINTS FROM STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Attributes

- Serves local communities/important local recreation opportunity – needs protection over long-term
- Small dunes and small size of park make Heber Dunes safer than other OHV parks in area
- Family-friendly; relatively safe for kids
- No OHV impacts to high-quality habitat (habitat relatively degraded already)

Safety

- Personal safety doesn't seem to be a concern; however potential for OHV collisions is a concern
- Primary causes of collisions: alcohol, visibility
- SVRA feels safer (in terms of potential collisions) since State Parks acquired SVRA
- Designated areas for picnicking and OHV riding

- Consider establishing a speed limit
- Should any vehicle types be prohibited because of safety issues (e.g., 4x4, dune buggies, rails)?

Emergency Response

- Emergency call boxes (at central location) should be considered
- Improved water availability for fire response would be helpful
- Place identifiers would be helpful so that visitors can describe where they are within SVRA in case of emergency

Air Quality

- Public health concerns/air quality impacts of OHV use
 - AQ impacts occur because OHV riders loosen soil then wind picks up soil/dust (during extreme winds, greater area of dispersal)
- Consider installation of AQ monitor
- El Centro has policies to reduce PM10 (e.g., requires developers to water construction sites)
 - PM10 producing activities at Heber may conflict with El Centro's efforts to reduce PM10, especially if increased visitor use is encouraged
- Imperial County Air Pollution Board (ICAPB) will likely require control measures for PM10 if they review GP
 - ICAPB indicated that only feasible control measure is watering trucks
- Agricultural community doesn't want to absorb the entire burden of mitigating AQ concerns (should be divided between agriculture, construction, and OHV users)

Traffic

- Increased visitor use would increase traffic, which could impact County roads

Salt Cedars

- Maintain for shade or remove because non-native?

Improvements

- More picnic tables, including group picnic area
- More shade (ramadas and clusters of ramadas for big groups)
- Make more family-friendly (improve safety, separation of uses)
- Designated trails
 - Children's trail
 - Older kids' trail

- Consider how to create compatibility if open riding and designated trails are both pursued
- Create opportunities for activities aside from riding (interpretive signage, etc.) because multiple types of activities/users protects OHV areas over the long-term

Considerations

- Should park be day use (local park) vs overnight (regional draw)?

