

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Parks Takes Ownership of Freeman Property

SACRAMENTO –California State Parks announced today that escrow has closed on the Freeman Property and that State Parks is now the official owner of the property, also known as Truckhaven and Desert Cahuilla.

The Freeman property is located west of the Salton Sea, bordering both Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Ocotillo Wells State Vehicle Recreational Area.

“We are pleased that we have acquired a parcel of land that is important to a variety of community groups and individuals because of its important resource values and its value as a recreational site,” said Ruth Coleman, Director of California State Parks. “Our intention is to take the steps necessary to protect the valuable environmental, archeological, historical and cultural resources on the property, while at the same time, recognizing the importance of the current level of recreational use. We believe that we can administer both with the cooperation of all concerned.”

The Freeman property consists of approximately 4,000 acres. The Department of Parks and Recreation has been working in partnership with the Trust for Public Land for acquisition. Sections of the property have significant and unique scenic, ecological, archeological, historical, geological, and pale ontological features. The property also has a 50-year history of diverse recreational use by motorized and non-motorized recreational vehicles.

State Parks understands the concerns from all sides regarding the issues surrounding this property and believes the best way to decide the future management framework for this land is through a deliberative public planning process that will use science and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to arrive at appropriate land use decisions. It is the intention of State Parks to lead an open and balanced public planning process that works with all concerned groups and individuals to insure that we develop a management plan that addresses the many features and potential uses for the property. While long term stewardship strategies are being developed, it will be managed jointly by the State Parks’ management teams from

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both Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Ocotillo Wells State Vehicle Recreation Area.

The history on this acquisition is that on May 19th, 2006, the Off-Highway Vehicle Commission voted unanimously to approve plans to move ahead to use OHV Funds for the acquisition of the property. Following that, on August 18, 2006, the State Public Works Board voted to allow the acquisition, clearing the way for the purchase. This purchase prevents the property from being sold for housing and commercial development.

This is a purchase by the Department's Off-Highway Vehicle Division, not using General Fund money, but rather, using Federal SAFETEA (Transportation Enhancement Act) grant funds and funds from the OHV Trust Fund account, which comes from taxes on gasoline used in off-highway vehicles in California. \$670,000 is from the Trust and \$680,000 is from federal funds, for a total acquisition price of \$1.35 million for the 4,000 acres.

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