



## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

### Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla and Ocotillo Wells General Plan December 12, 2007

- To:** State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Individuals and Organizations
- Subject:** Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla and Ocotillo Wells General Plan
- Lead Agency:** California Department of Parks and Recreation  
Ocotillo Wells District  
5172 Highway 78  
P.O. Box 360  
Borrego Springs, CA 92004  
Phone: (760) 767-1084  
Contact: Eric Hollenbeck, Senior Environmental Scientist
- Consultant:** EDAW, Inc.  
1420 Kettner Boulevard, Suite 500  
San Diego, California 92101  
Phone: (619) 233-1454  
Contact: Chris Moore, Senior Project Manager

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), as Lead Agency, is preparing a General Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area and the Ocotillo Wells District. The CDPR has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) pursuant to Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. The purpose of the NOP is to inform agencies and the public that an EIR is being prepared for this project and to invite specific comments on the scope and content of the EIR. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. The project description, location, and possible environmental effects are contained in this NOP.

Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response should be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than **60 days** after the issuance of this notice, which establishes the final deadline as **February 13, 2007**.

Please send your written response to:

Chris Moore, Senior Project Manager  
EDAW, Inc  
1420 Kettner Boulevard, Suite 500  
San Diego, California 92101

Responses should include the name of a contact person at your agency.

## **PROJECT TITLE**

Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla and Ocotillo Wells General Plan and Environmental Impact Report

## **PROJECT LOCATION**

The Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla and Ocotillo Wells General Plan and EIR will address the future land use directives, management zones, and environmental considerations for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area, which is cooperatively managed by the Ocotillo Wells District and the Colorado Desert District of the CDPR, as well as other lands managed by the Ocotillo Wells District of CDPR. The project area is located in portions of San Diego County and Imperial County, California, within a low elevation inland desert environment. The boundaries of the project area are shown in the attached project location map.

The General Plan will address the following land management units:

1. Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) (approx. 85,000 acres);
2. Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area (approx. 12,000 acres); and
3. Heber Dunes SVRA (approx. 380 acres).

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA is governed by the 1981 Ocotillo Wells SVRA General Plan. The Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area and the Heber Dunes SVRA are new acquisitions, which necessitate the development of new management directives. It is the intent of CDPR to develop a comprehensive General Plan to address these three land units through this planning process.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

CDPR is initiating the process of preparing a General Plan and an associated EIR for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area and the Ocotillo Wells District. The purpose of the General Plan is to guide future development activities and management objectives of the project area. The General Plan will address the approximately 97,380 acres of the Ocotillo Wells District, including the existing Ocotillo Wells SVRA; Heber Dunes SVRA; as well as the Freeman Trust properties (under cooperative management as noted above), which were recently acquired with state Off-Highway Vehicle Trust Funds; and other land within the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area. The General Plan will evaluate

and address active recreation and resource management needs and designations. Determinations will be for unit naming, classification, and departmental management jurisdiction for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla tract. Jurisdictional interface issues with area local, regional, state, federal, tribal and special districts will be considered for the lands within the project area. In addition, the General Plan will address environmental and facility management goals, objectives, and policies to ensure long-term management of the lands within the project area.

Preparation of the General Plan is in its early stages, so ultimate land use and resource management provisions have not yet been determined. CDPR is currently in the process of evaluating existing resources and management opportunities and constraints within the project area that will aid in the development of the General Plan. Extensive resource-based surveys are underway in the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area on a cooperative basis by both the Ocotillo Wells District and Colorado Desert District.

Issues that will be considered part of the General Plan process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Protection and long-term management of sensitive natural and cultural resource areas;
- Habitat connectivity and corridor protection and enhancement;
- Property acquisition or management partnerships;
- Motorized and nonmotorized recreational trends, opportunities, and constraints;
- Access and circulation;
- Special event management;
- Law enforcement and public safety;
- Education and interpretation opportunities;
- Concessionaires and special event management;
- Inter-agency coordination; and
- Unit naming, classification, and departmental management jurisdiction for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area.

The General Plan and EIR process will include ample opportunity for public participation, which will be guided by a public participation program currently under development.

## **POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

Although ultimate land use and resources management provisions of the General Plan have not yet been determined, generally expected types of environmental impacts that may occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan and continued recreational use of the properties within the project area can be identified. Based on the resource characteristics of the project area and generally anticipated recreation uses, potential environmental effects that will be addressed in the EIR include effects to the following resource areas:

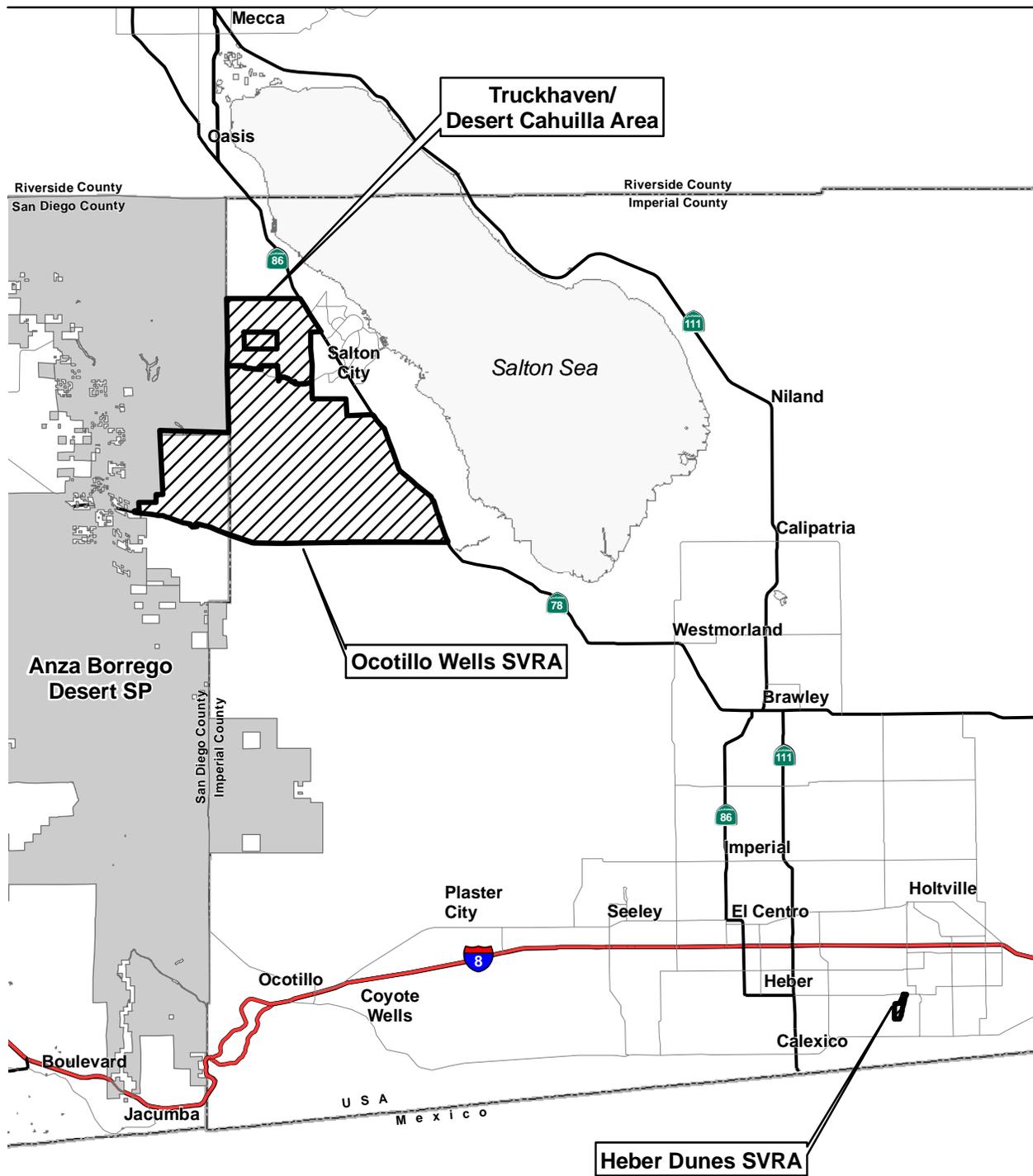
- Historical, archeological, Native American, and other cultural resources;
- Land use and management including the potential development of alternative energy sources;
- Biological resources, including, but not limited to species such as: Peninsular bighorn sheep, flat-tailed horned lizard, fringe-toed lizard, sensitive avian species, California fan palm, and other botanical resources;
- Long-term management plans and secondary environmental effects that may result from public service and utility needs;
- Environmental effects related to special events, including safety and traffic management;
- Geological and paleontological resources;
- Air quality, including dust generation and control;
- Noise; and
- Potential for global climate change effects.

CDPR is in the process of developing a detailed scope of work for the EIR. The EIR will be a full-scope EIR, addressing all of the potential environmental issues and impacts that could occur with implementation of the General Plan. Further refinement of the scope of the technical issues to be addressed will be occurring through the planning process, including input received in response to this NOP.

## **INTENDED USES OF THE EIR**

CDPR will use the EIR component of the General Plan to consider the environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives, when reviewing the proposed General Plan approval. The State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission will use the EIR to support decisions made related to their respective administration jurisdictions. The EIR will serve as the CEQA compliance document for adoption of the General Plan. It will also serve as the programmatic environmental document that may be referenced in implementing future actions included in the General Plan. Subsequent project-level activities identified in the General Plan will be examined in the light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared prior to project approval and implementation (State CEQA Guidelines 15168(c)).

**Attachment:** Project Location Vicinity Map



Source: California Department of Parks and Recreation 2007; ESRI 2003



### Project Location Vicinity Map

## Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla and Ocotillo Wells General Plan and Environmental Impact Report

Path: P:\2007\07080197 Ocotillo Wells District General Plan\SGIS\MXD\NOP\Regional Vicinity Map.mxd, 12/11/07, KochertE