

# News Release



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\$17 million Allocated

## Off-Highway Vehicle Funds Support Conservation, Enforcement Programs

SACRAMENTO -- With off-road vehicle riding reaching record levels, California State Parks today announced the allocation of \$17 million in competitive grants to support conservation and law enforcement programs in off-road recreation areas in the state.

The OHV grants are awarded by California's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission to cities, counties, special districts, federal agencies and non-profit organizations. The money comes from OHV registration fees and fuel taxes, and under law must be used for such purposes.

"These funds allow us to provide substantial support to existing programs," said Tony Perez, chief of the OHMVR Division, noting that the funds are provided as an augmentation and not as a sole source of funding for projects.

"It's a very competitive process, and these grants are very important to the applicants, especially in the face of the tremendous increase in both sales and the number of visitors to the off-road areas that are available for recreation in the state," said Perez,

The large increase in visitation was evident over the last major holiday -- November's long Thanksgiving weekend -- at many off-road recreation areas around the state. In the desert, for example, Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area recorded a 30 percent increase in visitors when the SVRA saw more than 128,000 campers over the holiday weekend. Large turnouts were also recorded at Hungry Valley and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Areas, and on federal lands.

A large portion of the grant funds allocated by the OHV Commission go annually to the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, reflecting the huge amount of off-road activity that takes place on federal land.

In California alone, the Forest Service and BLM manage more than 99 percent of the land that is available for OHV activity within California and which accommodates approximately four million visitors annually.

With nearly five out of every 10 acres of California's landscape in federal ownership, California's partnership with the federal government is critical in managing OHV recreation where it actually takes place. The more than 90,000 acres of state-owned OHV facilities could never realistically accommodate California's existing and future OHV activity.

"The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation program has been a very important partner to the enthusiast community, local agencies and the federal land managers in the grant program," said James Keeler, OHV coordinator for the BLM. "But California's OHV program has also been at the forefront of leadership in establishing a broader stakeholder process that allows a diverse group participating in planning and managing current OHV activities."

According to Keeler, the funding "establishes a more sustainable and less contentious future for OHV, and for all other Californians who truly love the wild parts of California."

As a result of legislation (AB 2274) signed into law in September 2002, a major portion of the \$17 million grant program, or \$10.6 million, is earmarked for conservation and enforcement, with a special emphasis on restoration projects that are typically associated with the closure and rehabilitation of illegal or unauthorized trails or areas that have been impacted by OHV use.

The commission's December meeting was the second of two that were held to make the allocations. The first was held in October in Sacramento.

NOTE: For a list of recipients and cooperative agreements approved by the OHV Commission, please go to [www.ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov) and Grants and Regulations.

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