

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2001

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## **New Teams Give Objective Review to Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Requests**

Two independent teams are giving new, objective perspectives to the review process for all grants sought by federal agencies from the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of California State Parks.

The team efforts resulted from a Division meeting between California State Parks Deputy Director David L. Widell and top-level representatives from the U.S. Forest Service to discuss ways to improve the grant program. The Forest Service, and later the federal Bureau of Land Management, agreed to develop independent teams to review all of the federal grants before they are submitted to the Division and, subsequently, to the OHV Commission.

"These independent teams are a very important and necessary element in the grant process," said Widell, whose Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division is charged with providing financial assistance to these agencies through grants for the operation, maintenance, development and conservation and enforcement needs associated with off-highway vehicle recreation in California.

"This internal peer review by the grantee, along with public input, will assure that the OHV program has been thoroughly reviewed by biologists, hydrologists, archeologists, law enforcement officers, and the regional headquarters of these agencies," said Widell.

The concept in bringing in these objective specialists is a simple one: it assures that the OHV program complements USFS and BLM operations and management elements for the areas under their jurisdiction.

The BLM and USFS are moving forward in the review process. The BLM team has reviewed Southern California grants, and asked applicants to make several changes to assure that the grants comply with BLM policy and OHV regulations. The USFS team underwent the same process, and requested changes.

Members of the USFS interdisciplinary team are: Rich Farrington, team leader; Diane MacFarlane, Threatened and Endangered Species Program leader; Ken Wilson, Heritage Program, Six Rivers National Forest; Roger Poff, soil scientist, Roger Poff and Associates; Mark Daniel, law enforcement officer, Inyo National Forest; Kathy Mick, OHV manager, Upper

Lake Ranger District, Mendocino; Jerry Usrey, engineering, Stanislaus National Forest; Dick Andrews, regional environmental coordinator; and Jim Weigand, BLM ecologist.

Members of the BLM team are Weigand and Richard Smith, BLM chief ranger.

The teams are ongoing and will review all future grant applications. These independent reviews are especially critical because more than 90 percent of California's off-highway riding opportunity takes place on federal lands that are managed by the USFS or BLM, the two federal agencies that receive a high percentage of the grant funds because they provide OHV opportunity that simply is not available from any other jurisdiction. And, they control the largest and most popular OHV destinations in California

In the 1999/2000 fiscal year, 94 percent of the OHV grant funds were awarded to federal agencies. In the 2000/2001 fiscal year, 80 percent of the OHV grant funds were awarded to federal agencies and 20 percent to local agencies, a change associated with a significant increase in grants to local law enforcement agencies.

In 2000/2001, the OHV Commission awarded roughly \$11.2 million in grants to the USFS and BLM for operations, maintenance, conservation and enforcement in federal and local OHV grant areas.

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