
State of California – The Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report
and Environmental Impact Statement for the
Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area

General Plan/Recreation Area Management Plan/California
Desert Conservation Area Land Use Plan Amendment

AND

Announcement of Public Scoping Meetings

- Date:** March 6, 2015
- To:** State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Individuals and Organizations
- Subject:** Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the Ocotillo Wells General Plan/Recreation Area Management Plan/California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment
- Lead Agency:** California Department of Parks and Recreation
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
Ocotillo Wells District
5172 Highway 78, # 10
Borrego Springs, CA 92004
Contact: Tina Robinson, General Plan Project Manager
- Consultant:** AECOM
401 West A Street, Suite 1200
San Diego, CA 92101
Phone: (619) 610-7600
Contact: Valarie Yruretagoyena, Associate Project Manager

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), as Lead Agency, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is preparing a General Plan/Recreation Area Management Plan/California Desert Conservation Area Land Use Plan Amendment (General Plan/RAMP/LUPA) and associated Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA). CDPR has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) pursuant to Section 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. This NOP informs agencies and the public that an EIR/EIS is being prepared to address potential impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan/RAMP/LUPA for Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

An NOP that included the Ocotillo Wells SVRA General Plan EIR was previously distributed on December 12, 2007, under the title, "Notice of Preparation: Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla and Ocotillo Wells General Plan." The December 12, 2007, NOP announced preparation of one EIR for one General Plan that would have applied to the following three land management units:

1. Ocotillo Wells SVRA (more than 85,000 acres)
2. Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area (approximately 12,000 acres)
3. Heber Dunes SVRA (approximately 380 acres)

CDPR subsequently determined that a separate General Plan and associated EIR would be prepared for each land management unit. Accordingly, a separate NOP was issued for Heber Dunes SVRA in 2010. Moreover, in October 2010, Senate Bill 855 divided the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area between Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Anza Borrego Desert State Park; thus, portions of the Truckhaven/Desert Cahuilla area were annexed to Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Anza Borrego Desert State Park. The portion annexed to, and administered as part of, Ocotillo Wells SVRA is referred to as the "Truckhaven" area. Therefore, this NOP informs agencies and the public that an EIR is being prepared to address implementation of the proposed General Plan/RAMP/LUPA for Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

RESPONSES TO THIS NOP

Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than April 6, 2015. Please send your written responses, including the name of a contact person, to the following:

Contact: Tina Robinson, General Plan Project Manager
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division
Ocotillo Wells District
5172 Highway 78, # 10
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Phone: (760) 767-1302

Email: info@planocotillowells.org

Project website: www.PlanOcotilloWells.org

Online comments: www.PlanOcotilloWells.org/comment

In addition, as indicated in the Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register (<https://federalregister.gov/a/2015-02551>) on February 9, 2015, the BLM will accept comments on the project by any of the following methods:

- Website: www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/elcentro.html.
- Email: BLM_CA_Ocotillo_Wells_RAMP@blm.gov.
- Fax: 760-337-4490
- Mail: Attn: Carrie Simmons, BLM EI Centro Field Office, 1661 S. 4th Street, El Centro, CA 92243.

PROJECT TITLE

Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area General Plan/Recreation Area Management Plan/California Desert Conservation Area Land Use Plan Amendment

PROJECT LOCATION

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is an off-highway vehicle (OHV) park operated by the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division (OHMVR Division) of CDPR. Ocotillo Wells SVRA is more than 85,000 acres in size and is located just west of the Salton Sea, in the Colorado Desert in Southern California. It is approximately 90 miles northeast of the city of San Diego near the intersection of State Route (SR) 78 and SR 86. The community of Ocotillo Wells is adjacent to Ocotillo Wells SVRA on the south, and the community of Salton City is adjacent to the east. Figure 1 shows the regional location of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The General Plan is the primary management document for each unit of the California State Parks System, including SVRAs. The General Plan establishes the primary purpose and a management direction for the park unit. The current General Plan for Ocotillo Wells SVRA was developed by California State Parks in 1982, following the designation of Ocotillo Wells as an SVRA in 1976. The updated General Plan/RAMP/LUPA will reflect changing conditions and issues, and will incorporate lands acquired by Ocotillo Wells SVRA after 1982. Thus, OHMVR Division has initiated the process of preparing the General Plan/RAMP/LUPA and an associated EIR/EIS for Ocotillo Wells SVRA. In addition, the BLM decisions include whether to amend the CDCA plan to change the land use designation of some BLM parcels in the SVRA. This may include making changes in OHV area designations in accordance with 43 Code of Federal Regulations 8342. The CDCA Plan Amendment will consider a proposal to designate the Ocotillo Wells SVRA as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). SRMA designations recognize public lands where recreation is the predominant land use. In response to a California State Parks Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP Act) application, the BLM will also identify lands within the planning area that would be available for leasing or patent to the State of California through the R&PP Act or other land transfer or disposal processes.

GENERAL PLAN TOPICS

Topics being considered as part of the General Plan process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Physical, biological, and aesthetic resources
- Cultural resources
- Land use and facilities
- Visitor use and experiences
- Operation and maintenance functions
- Planning influences, such as regional population projections and public input
- Motorized and nonmotorized recreational trends, opportunities, and constraints
- Access and circulation
- Law enforcement and public safety
- Education and interpretation opportunities

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Although the ultimate management direction for Ocotillo Wells SVRA has not yet been determined, generally expected types of environmental impacts that may occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan/RAMP/LUPA and continued recreational use of the property can be identified. Based on the resource characteristics of the project area and generally anticipated recreation uses, potential environmental effects anticipated to be addressed in the EIR/EIS include effects to the following resource areas:

- Air quality
- Biological resources
- Cultural resources
- Geological and paleontological resources
- Hydrology and water quality
- Land use and management
- Noise
- Public services and utilities
- Circulation
- Potential for global climate change effects

SCOPING MEETINGS/PLANNING WORKSHOPS

EIR scoping meetings/planning workshops have been scheduled to provide additional information about the General Plan/RAMP/LUPA process, provide interested parties with the opportunity to provide input into potential uses of the site, and give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the scope and potential environmental effects of the project. Scoping meetings/planning workshops will be held at the following times and locations:

Wednesday, March 18, 2015
3:30–8:30 p.m.
Temecula Conference Center
41000 Main Street
Temecula, CA 92590

Saturday, March 21, 2015
12:00–4:00 p.m.
Ocotillo Wells SVRA
Discovery Center Building
5172 Highway 78
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

CDPR will use the EIR to consider the environmental effects of the proposed General Plan/RAMP/LUPA, provide mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts resulting from General Plan/RAMP/LUPA implementation, and evaluate alternatives for site use. The OHMVR Commission will use the EIR to support decisions made related to its respective administration jurisdictions. The EIR will serve as the CEQA compliance document for adoption of the General Plan. It will also serve as a program EIR 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 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: Figure 1: Regional Location

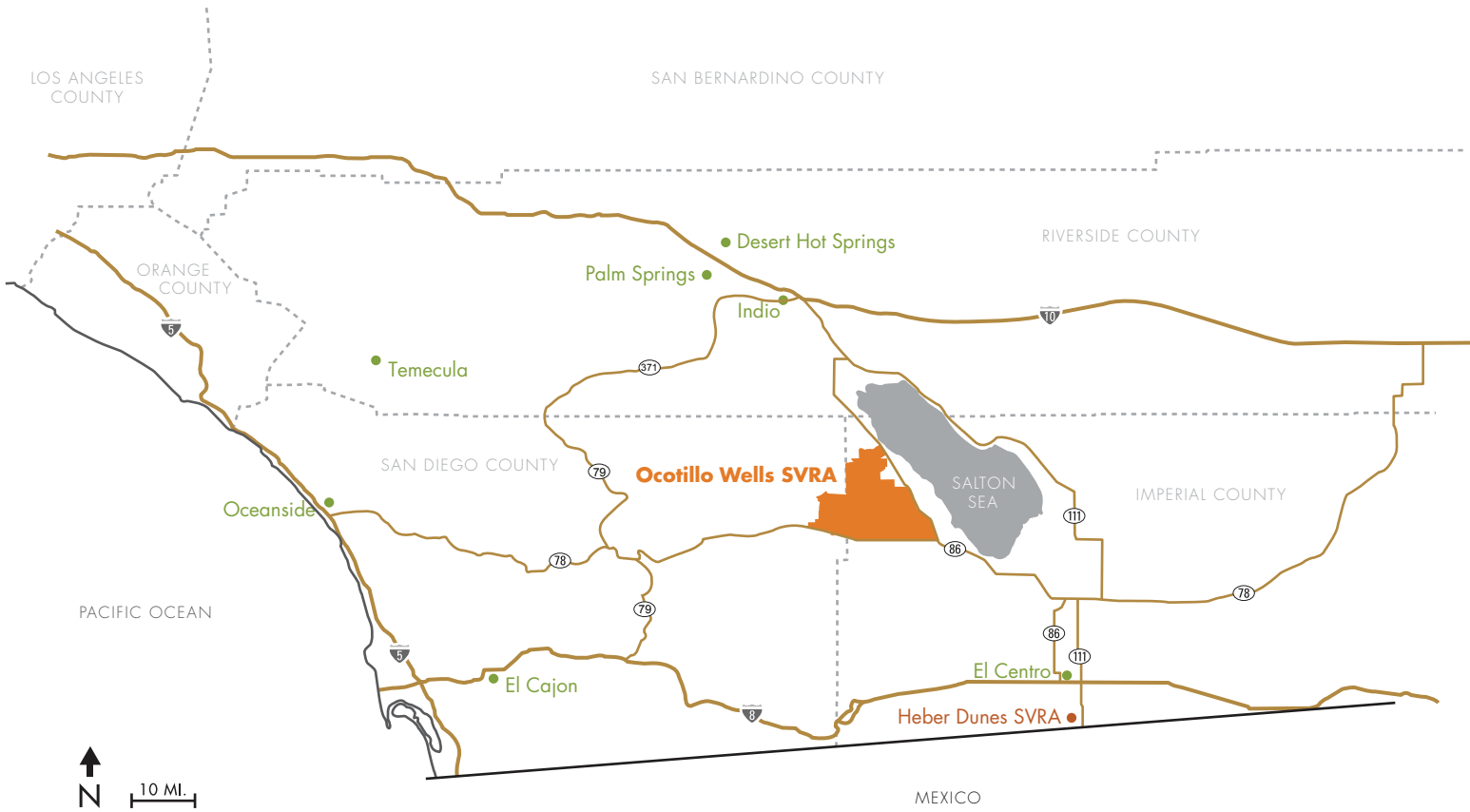


Figure 1

Regional Location