



Public Works Plan

Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area Public Works Plan

Volume 2: Existing Conditions

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Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes
State Vehicular Recreation Area

Public Works Plan

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Prepared for:

California State Parks

1725 23rd Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95816

Contact:

Alexandra Stehl, Project Manager

Prepared by:

AECOM

2020 L Street Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95811

Contact:

Petra Unger, Principal



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APCD	Air Pollution Control District
ATV	all-terrain vehicle
CalFire	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDPR	Department of Parks and Recreation
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CGS	California Geologic Society
County	San Luis Obispo County
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
GIS	geographic information system
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
K-9	canine
MOUs	Memoranda of Understanding
mph	miles per hour
OHMVR	Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation
OHV	off-highway vehicle
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric Company
PM	particulate matter
PMRP	Particulate Matter Reduction Plan
PORTS	Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Student
PRC	Public Resources Code
PWP	Public Works Plan
ROV	Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles
RV	recreational vehicle
SMG	Strategic Marketing Group
So Cal Gas	Southern California Gas Company
SOA	Stipulated Order of Abatement
SR	State Route
SVRA	State Vehicular Recreation Area
U.S.	U.S. Highway
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
UAS	unmanned aircraft systems
WHPP	Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan





1.0 Introduction

Volume 2 contains detailed descriptions of the “Existing Conditions” in the Public Works Plan (PWP) planning area. It includes an introduction and planning area setting; Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) background and history; park operations, maintenance, visitor services, and resource management programs overview; public access, special events, and recreational opportunities; education and community engagement programs; related regional state, and federal plans; planning issues; and associated appendices.





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2.0 PARK HISTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 Local and Regional Setting

Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA are units of the California State Park System and are located on the central California coast in southern San Luis Obispo County (County). The City of Pismo Beach is to the north, and the City of Grover Beach and the unincorporated community of Oceano are to the east. Oceano Dunes SVRA borders Pismo State Beach to the south. The Phillips 66 refinery and privately-owned agricultural land is to the east of Oceano Dunes SVRA, and the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge is to the south. Regional routes to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA are U.S. Highway (U.S.) 101 and State Route (SR) 1. Local street access to the parks include Grand Avenue, Pier Avenue, and Oso Flaco Lake Road off SR 1 (See Figure 1-1 in Volume 1, “Regional Location Map”).

2.2 Pismo State Beach

Pismo State Beach comprises approximately 1,515 acres, including the beach, campgrounds, Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve (Dunes Preserve), and Pismo Lake. The Park includes two developed campgrounds (Oceano and North Beach), a concessionaire-operated golf course and restaurant, the Pismo State Beach Butterfly Grove day-use area (Butterfly Grove), approximately 2 miles of beachfront, accessible by street-legal vehicles between Grand and Pier Avenues, and 3.2 miles of non-motorized trails. The entrances also provide access to Oceano Dunes SVRA to the south. The Oceano Dunes District corporation or maintenance yard within Pismo State Beach includes the ranger station, trades and maintenance offices, resource program office, a staff residence area, and other storage and support facilities (See Figure 1-2 in Volume 1, “Existing Park Land Use and Facilities”).

Pismo State Beach offers diverse recreational opportunities like beach camping, surfing, swimming, fishing, equestrian riding, vehicle touring, nature viewing, observing western monarch butterflies, and enjoying free educational programs. There are also walking trails along the coastal dune habitat and around the freshwater Oceano Lagoon.

The City of Pismo Beach manages an approximately one-mile-long portion of Pismo State Beach (north of Addie Street) under an operating agreement with State Parks that has been in place since 1951. This portion of the beach includes a parking lot and restrooms. The City also contracts with concessionaires on the pier. Although the City of Pismo Beach operates this portion of the State Beach, State Parks staff, through mutual aid and joint projects, assist with public safety, law enforcement, aquatic response, environmental support, and other natural resource management support requested or as necessary.

2.3 Oceano Dunes SVRA

In 1974, the State of California acquired the original 847-acre parcel from Pacific Gas and Electric as an off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation area. It was the first SVRA established in the State Parks System. The SVRA now comprises 3,490 acres, including land partially owned by San Luis Obispo County and some non-contiguous private parcels, known as the La Grande Tract, and operated by State Parks an operating agreement with the County. The SVRA also includes land owned by the Union Oil and Phillips 66 corporations. State Parks leases



select SVRA unit lands near Oso Flaco Lake to local agricultural operators (See Figure 1-2, “Existing Park Land Use and Facilities”).

State Parks allows OHVs and street-legal vehicles on roughly 3.5 miles of beach and approximately 1,300 acres of dunes in the SVRA open riding area; nearly 2,100 acres or almost two-thirds of the SVRA outside the open riding area are restricted from OHV use.¹

Oceano Dunes SVRA offers recreational activities like dispersed beach camping, beach play, nature exploration, fishing, horseback riding, ocean sports, and a wide range of education and safety programs. Only street-legal vehicles, including motorhomes, vehicles towing trailers, and other camping vehicles, can access the SVRA via sand ramps at the end of West Grand Avenue in the City of Grover Beach and Pier Avenue in the community of Oceano. Street-legal vehicles drive south on the beach to and throughout the open riding area, which begins approximately one mile south on the beach from Pier Avenue at marker Post 2. Visitors must tow their OHVs to this point via street-legal vehicles before unloading. OHVs can operate only within the open riding area. An all-terrain vehicle (ATV) safety-training center is near Post 4 in the riding area.

Oso Flaco Lake is an area within the SVRA, located south and southeast of the open riding area. State Parks manages this day-use area for passive pedestrian use only, and it is a popular destination for fishing, bird watching, nature viewing, and beach play. It has a day-use area, picnic shelters, interpretive panels, restrooms, walking paths, and a boardwalk that crosses a portion of the lake and dunes to overlook points. State Parks offers popular science programs for K–12 grade students and water and motorized recreation safety programs at Oso Flaco.

2.4 Environmental Setting

This section describes the environmental setting of the Park (including Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA) and summarizes baseline information on climate, topography, geology, natural resources, and cultural resources.

2.4.1 Climate

The Park has a Mediterranean climate characterized by year-round mild temperatures with little diurnal fluctuation, moist winters, and warm, dry summers. A band of low clouds often forms along the immediate coast during the summer months. The low clouds typically move inland during the night and early morning hours and recede offshore during the afternoons. Because of the Pacific Ocean influence, temperatures along the coast remain moderate year-round. Average maximum temperatures in the summer are typically in the 60s and 70s Fahrenheit; average minimum temperatures in the winter are typically in the 40s and 50s Fahrenheit.

Along the central coast of California, where the Park is located, wind predominately blows from the west and northwest. These prevailing wind patterns are most pronounced from March to June. During this period, hourly average wind speeds in the Park often exceed 20 miles per hour

¹Area available to riding may change depending on resource management projects, park operations, and regulatory requirements.



(mph) or more from mid-morning to late afternoon. There is little to no variation in the prevailing wind direction. The winds become light and variable at night, and in the early morning hours.

2.4.2 Topography/Geology

The Park is within the Coast Range geomorphic province of California at the Pacific and North American tectonic plates. The province is characterized by northwest-trending mountain ranges and valleys, almost parallel to the San Andreas Fault, located about 40 miles east of the Park. Most of San Luis Obispo County sits atop a 180-million-year-old mix of consolidated igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rock.

The Park is at a low elevation, ranging from about zero to 192 feet above mean sea level. The shoreline comprises flat, broad beaches backed by dunes with intersperse lakes, creeks, and wetlands.

The dunes are part of the second-largest active coastal dune system in California, the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex, and are a defining feature of the Park landscape. Beach sand is the dominant soil in the Park, much of which is devoid of vegetation. Soil permeability is high and rapid, and wind- and wave-action erosion is high. The dune sands originate from rivers and streams that wash out to the ocean and deposit back onto the beach by ocean currents. The dunes are active and dynamic, influenced by prevailing ocean winds and seasonal spring winds shaping the dunes. Dune crests generally run north to south. On the western, windward side, dune slopes are gentle while slopes are steep on the dunes' eastern leeward side. Wave action, wind, and water erosion cause dunes to slowly move inland. King tides, seasonal tide and storm trends, and rising sea levels change the beach's width in the Park over time.

2.4.3 Hydrology

The PWP planning area comprises three major and one minor watersheds - the Meadow Creek watershed in the northern portion of the planning area, the Arroyo Grande Creek watershed in the middle part the Oso Flaco Creek watershed in the southern portion. The smaller Pismo Creek watershed is on the northside of the Park.

The Meadow Creek watershed is the smallest of the three major watersheds. The upper watershed encompasses 3,740 acres and drains into Pismo Lake, and the lower watershed is about 2,688 acres below Pismo Lake. Much of the upper watershed lies above the U.S. 101 crossing at Oak Park Boulevard in the City of Pismo Beach and the rural area of Arroyo Grande. The sheet flow drains into the upper watershed from grazing lands and rural/residential development, and the Meadow Creek lower watershed initiates at the outflow of Pismo Lake. Much of the input to the lower watershed comes from the City of Grover Beach and the community of Oceano's streets.

The Arroyo Grande Creek watershed encompasses roughly 96,000 acres in southern San Luis Obispo County. Water uses upstream influence the water quality and the quantity of Arroyo Grande Creek and estuary. The Lopez Dam impounds runoff from about 43,000 acres of the watershed and is the primary water supply for local municipalities and agricultural interests.

Small domestic and agricultural water uses downstream of Lopez Dam also



reduce the amount of surface water available for the lower reaches of Arroyo Grande Creek. In dry or drought years, groundwater pumping and surface diversions may cause portions of lower Arroyo Grande Creek to completely dry up, resulting in dry creek beds and a much smaller lagoon (Rischbieter 2008, 2009, 2013). When the water supply is low during summer months or extremely dry winters, the creek becomes impounded and forms a lagoon instead of flowing into the ocean. Below Lopez Dam, Arroyo Grande Creek is on the Clean Water Act section 303(d) Impaired Waters List for E. coli and fecal coliform from urban run-off, grazing, and agricultural activities (State Water Resources Control Board 2010).

Within the planning area, the Arroyo Grande Creek watershed historically also included the lower portion of Pismo Creek, located to the north of Arroyo Grande Creek. Before 1911, when an extreme flood event occurred, Pismo Creek shared an ocean outfall with Arroyo Grande Creek following the current path of Meadow Creek. The Pismo Lake catchment area was a sub-basin of the larger Arroyo Grande and Pismo Creek complex. In 1911, Pismo Creek, either naturally or with human help, breached its current location near Addie Street. Meadow Creek is the remnant of that channel and is sustained by drainage from the Pismo Lake watershed. Grading in the 1950s rerouted Pismo Creek to its current configuration. The Pismo Creek channel/lagoon system trends southerly with a break in the barrier beach, generally occurring one to several hundred yards south of Addie Street. The lagoon forms seasonally at the mouth of Pismo Creek, varying annually in size, depending on rainfall and sand drift and accumulation.

Pismo Lake lies 0.5 miles east of the Pacific Ocean and is part of the Meadow Creek/Arroyo Grande Creek watershed. Pismo Lake then flows into the lower reaches of Meadow Creek at the Union Pacific Railroad crossing and SR 1. The construction of the Union Pacific Railroad was likely one of the first major alterations to this watershed hydrology. Meadow Creek is a remnant marsh drainage system that drains Pismo Lake, flows south to the North Beach Campground, through the Pismo Beach Golf Course, and empties into the Oceano (Meadow Creek) Lagoon. Meadow Creek then enters Arroyo Grande Creek, just upstream of its confluence with the ocean. Floodgates were installed when Meadow Creek meets the Arroyo Grande Creek Flood Control Channel levee to prevent storm surges from infiltrating the lowland marsh area and damaging homes in this area. Carpenter Creek is a small outfall off Meadow Creek that occasionally connects to the Pismo Creek Lagoon south of the North Beach Campground.

The Oso Flaco Creek watershed contains approximately 7,400 acres, consisting primarily of agricultural land. Oso Flaco Creek flows into Oso Flaco Lake and ultimately to the Pacific Ocean. Oso Flaco Lake is the largest of the freshwater lakes associated with the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes complex. Water quality in the Oso Flaco watershed has been found by the Regional Water Quality Control Board to be impaired by several pollutants, including pesticides, nitrate, and excessive sediment (CSLRCD 2013).

2.4.4 Scenic Resources and Visual Characteristics

The PWP planning area is within the City of Pismo Beach, the City of Grover Beach, and the San Luis Obispo County Coastal Zone. Visibility of the planning area is restricted to views from within Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA and from the entrances at Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue and the adjacent stretch of SR 1. Observers can see dunes,



native and non-native vegetation types, beaches and ocean, and visitors recreating. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has not designated SR 1 and U.S. 101 as State Scenic Highways through the Park (Caltrans, 2017). SR 1 becomes a State Scenic Highway north of the City of San Luis Obispo, about 14 miles north of the planning area. The planning area contains scenic resources such as riparian corridors and non-native eucalyptus groves; however, none of these resources are within view of a state scenic highway.

2.4.5 Adjacent Land Use

Land uses adjacent to the Park include extensive urban development, including housing and commercial and tourism-related businesses, on the north and northeast boundaries of the Park area. Neighboring communities have the cities of Pismo Beach and Grover Beach and the unincorporated community of Oceano. Agricultural fields are contiguous with the Dunes Preserve to the east. The Dune Lakes Limited property, a large, privately held, and mostly undeveloped land area with numerous small freshwater lakes adjoins the northwest border of Oceano Dunes SVRA. The Phillips 66 Refinery is located immediately east of the Phillips 66 leasehold. Agricultural fields line the southeast boundary of Oceano Dunes SVRA, and the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Wildlife Refuge adjoins the SVRA at the southern border. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) owns and manages the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge.

2.5 Biological Resources

The following is a summary of the biological resources occurring in the park. For more detailed information, see the Oceano Dunes District Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Chapter 6, “Biological Resources,” Section 6.2 “Environmental Setting” (CDPR 2020).

2.5.1 Park Area Habitats

Habitat types in the Park include open sand, foredunes, Central Coast dune scrub, dune lakes, freshwater creeks, coastal lagoons, wetlands, riparian habitats, woodlands, and vegetated islands. The vegetated islands are pockets of vegetation situated in hollow areas of active coastal dunes, mostly composed of willow and dune scrub.

The sandy beaches in the Park area are a harsh environment where most plants are unable to survive. Located behind the beaches are the dunes, divided into two zones—foredunes and backdunes—characterized by their location and dominant vegetation. Foredunes begin at the high tide line and include vast natural areas of open sand sheet. These areas comprise low wind-deposited dunes sparsely vegetated with the hardiest dune stabilizing plants. Where vegetation can gain a foothold, only low-growing plants with deep root systems, such as sand verbena and beach bur, can survive. The strong winds, storm waves, salt spray, lack of freshwater, nutrient-poor substrate (i.e., sand), and alternating sand burial and erosion periods create conditions where only foredune adapted vegetation can become established and thrive. Dune scrub forms downwind of the foredunes in more stabilized areas and vegetated due to less wind and other erosive forces. Dominant dune scrub plant species include mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), silver dune lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*), seacliff buckwheat (*Eriogonum parviflorum*), and dune ragwort (*Senecio blochmaniae*).



Wetland and riparian habitats surround Oso Flaco Lake, Little Oso Flaco Lake, and Pismo Lake. They are scattered throughout the South Oso Flaco area, the Phillips 66 leasehold area, and along the streams in the Park. Wetlands include salt marshes, fresh- and brackish-water marshes, swamps, mudflats, and the dune-slack lakes (i.e., seasonally flooded marshes and flats near sea level). Plants that live within these coastal wetland environments are adapted to dynamic environmental conditions, including high salinity concentrations and extreme temperatures.

Woodland habitats in the Park are limited in size and largely composed of non-native species, including eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* sp.) and Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*). Native arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) and California wax myrtle (*Morella californica*) are present, and a few native coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) are scattered as single trees in the backdunes. Monterey pines are similarly scattered, but eucalyptus trees form groves at some sites, including the Butterfly Grove near SR 1.

2.5.2 Vegetation Types

Table 1 shows the extent of vegetation types/alliances in the planning area. The locations of the dominant alliances in the Park are described below.

Table 1. Vegetation Types and Other Land Coverage, Including Acreages within the Planning Area

Vegetation Type	Acres	Percentage of Total HCP Area
Sand	2,499	49.93
Silver dune lupine-mock heather scrub	1,079	21.56
Arroyo willow thicket	370	7.39
European beachgrass sward (invasive)	192	3.84
Dune mat	140	2.80
Native wetland alliances	136	2.72
Agriculture	134	2.68
Other non-native alliances	120	2.40
Other native upland alliances	89	1.78
Perennial veldt grass stand (invasive)	88	1.76
Disturbed/developed	86	1.71
Open water	72	1.43
Total	5,005	100.00

Source: California State Parks, 2019
HCP = Habitat Conservation Plan



There are almost 2,500 acres of open sand in the planning area, 1,814 acres of native vegetation, and 534 acres of non-native vegetation and agricultural production lands.

Active dunes are a natural phenomenon and represent the most common habitat type found within the planning area. The principal characteristic of this habitat is its lack of vegetation.

Vegetation types are defined by their dominant or co-dominant species, following the classification system in the Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition (Sawyer et al. 2009). These vegetation types are known as vegetation alliances. The dominant vegetation type in the Park area is the native upland silver dune lupine-mock heather scrub alliance covering 1,079 acres of the active interior Dune. This alliance also referred to as coastal dune scrub, is characterized by a more well-developed vegetative cover and soils that are considerably more stable than those of the foredune vegetation alliances. Silver dune lupine and mock heather are the most common native plants that stabilize the sides and tops of the park's dunes. Other common native plants that occur within this vegetation alliance include lizard tail (*Eriophyllum staechadifolium*), California croton (*Croton californicus*), seacliff buckwheat, California sandaster (*Corethrogyne filaginifolia*), and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

Arroyo willow thickets are the second most prevalent alliance, covering 370 acres of the dynamic interior dune. Although, arroyo willow is considered part of the wetland alliance (described below), standing water or other wetland species are not associated with every arroyo willow stand. Arroyo willow thicket is often mixed with wax myrtle and found growing alongside coastal dune scrub. Arroyo willow and wax myrtle are found in moist dune hollows that typically lack standing water and sometimes border dunes and riparian areas (marshes and ponds). Arroyo willows have an extensive root system that enables them to tap moisture in the lower water table even as building dunes make the water table less accessible. Other native plants associated with the Arroyo willow/wax myrtle thicket include poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), straggly gooseberry (*Ribes divaricatum* var. *pubiflorum*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*), and California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*).

European beachgrass is a non-native, invasive species, and its swards are the third most pervasive alliance that covers over 192 acres of foredune habitat. European beachgrass has been extensively planted within the Oceano Dunes SVRA in the past for dune stabilization. Beachgrass spreads primarily by runners and completely outcompetes and dominates the native vegetation.

Dune mat is a native herbaceous alliance that occurs in 140 acres of foredune habitat. In this alliance, red sand verbena (*Abronia maritima*) and beach bur (*Ambrosia chamissonis*) mix with other perennial herbs, grasses, and low shrubs to form a low canopy and is the most common native vegetation type on the foredunes in the Park.

Native wetland alliances cover 136 acres and are dominated by plants that usually or always occur in wetlands. Native wetland alliances include stands of wax myrtle, arroyo willow thickets, and salt rush swales. Oso Flaco Lake consists of a large wetland extending from drifting dunes to actively cultivated agricultural lands. Arroyo willow thickets extend up the adjacent dune slopes as upland habitat. Wetlands support emergent freshwater marsh habitats,



including California bulrush marsh, cattail marsh, and duckweed blooms. A sand blow-out on the western shore of the lake keeps saltgrass flats.

Open water occurs within 72 acres of the park. In the southern portion of the Oceano Dunes SVRA lie Little Oso Flaco Lake and Oso Flaco Lake, the largest of the freshwater lakes associated with the 18-mile-long Guadalupe-Nipomo Dune Complex. These lakes are associated with a large wetland extending from the base of the drifting dunes. As these lakes receive direct inflows from Oso Flaco Creek, a large area of both lakes has filled with sediment, thereby decreasing the amount of open water present and creating suitable habitat for an extensive marshland.

Non-native perennial veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*) stands cover about 88 acres of the backdunes in the planning area. The remaining 40 native and non-native alliances range in size from less than 1 acre to 45 acres and mostly occur in the more heavily vegetated interior dunes.

Invasive exotic weeds like European beach grass and veldt grass are the single largest threat to habitats within the Guadalupe Nipomo Dune System. Invasive species compete with native dune species and can alter the physical processes that sustain this dune system. These species were planted to stabilize the dunes many years before the State Parks acquisition (California Geological Survey 2007) and are sometimes planted by neighboring landowners. These invasive species stabilized the foredune system of the Dunes Preserve, where they form dense mats. The Preserve's foredunes are taller than the foredunes in Oceano Dunes SVRA, stabilized with native vegetation. The Oceano Dunes District actively controls European beach grass, veldt grass, jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*), ice plant (*Delosperma littorale*), Cape ivy (*Delaira odorata*), and Russian wheatgrass (*Thinopyrum junceiforme*) via herbicide application, hand pulling, and prescribed fire.

A compilation of aerial imagery from the 1930s, a time that predates modern OHV recreation in the dunes away from the shoreline, shows that the dune vegetation during that time looked somewhat different from today. The recreational use of vehicles equipped with the technology to traverse inland onto the active dunes did not grow until the 1950s (California Geologic Society (CGS), 2011), making the 1930's aerial imagery a good representation of the dune landscape before motorized vehicle recreation in the dunes. Before OHV recreation, much less vegetation occurred in the dunes' northern area, in what is now known as the Pismo Dune Preserve. Much less vegetation also occurred in the southern area, in and around Oso Flaco Lake (CGS 2010).

An analysis comparing the 1930's imagery to aerial imagery from 2010 documented an overall gain in dune vegetation within the Park boundaries. Vegetation gain was particularly pronounced in the areas north (Pismo Dune Preserve) and south (Oso Flaco area) of the SVRA's OHV open riding area. In large part, the vegetation gain in these locations is due to invasive exotic weeds increasing in these areas. For example, European beachgrass was introduced in various early- and mid-twentieth century attempts to stabilize the dunes.

When the SVRA began operation under State Park management in 1982, Parks personnel began native vegetation planting efforts primarily within isolated dune areas (vegetation islands) within the OHV riding area and in the areas east of the OHV area. The imagery



analysis that compared 1930's imagery to 2010 imagery showed an overall gain in dune vegetation of approximately 650 acres (CGS 2010), a large portion within the Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo Dune Preserve. In areas east of the OHV riding area, the vegetation gain, consisting mostly of native dune vegetation planted by Parks personnel, is approximately 200 acres (CGS 2010).

A later analysis of the 1930's imagery and 2010 imagery showed that approximately 80 acres of vegetation had been lost within the boundaries of the OHV riding area compared to the historic extent (CGS 2019). Planting efforts under the Air Pollution Control District (APCD) Stipulated Order of Abatement (SOA), initiated in 2018, have covered approximately 180 acres of the dunes within the riding area with native dune vegetation. This has led to a vegetation gain of roughly 100 acres. Therefore, about 100 acres more vegetation in the riding area than has ever existed before OHV recreation (CDPR 2020).

2.5.3 Common Wildlife in the Park Area

Numerous saltwater and freshwater fish, reptiles and amphibians, birds, mammals, and invertebrates depend on the dune ecosystem. State Parks surveys of Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA have detected at least 19 species of fish (D. Rischbieter, pers. comm. 2017), 28 species of reptiles and amphibians, 19 species of mammals, and numerous bird species (State Parks 2017). Two hundred eighty-three bird species live in or migrate through Oso Flaco Lake within the Oceano Dunes SVRA (eBird 2020). Common wildlife observed in the Park area are discussed below.

Active dunes represent the most common habitat type found within the park. Even though vegetation is mostly lacking from active dune environments, many animals still use these bare sand areas for nesting, including species like California least tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*), western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), and killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*). Also, evidence of small mammals, large mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates have been documented dispersing throughout the active dune areas in the OHV and non-OHV areas of the park. In a recent small mammal study, kangaroo rats were recorded dispersing between vegetation islands and foraging in the open riding area at night. There is also evidence that kangaroo rats, California mice, California pocket mice, and deer mice are moving between islands that have recently been connected through revegetation, suggesting that restoration efforts are regarded as beneficial to the small mammals in the park. Continued restoration efforts and connectivity of vegetation islands are predicted to increase small mammals' diversity and colonization rates. They could benefit other taxonomic groups such as large mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.

The beach receives nutrients from the ocean that feed its burrowing invertebrate populations. Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*), marbled godwits (*Limosa fedoa*), and sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) search for food in the sand. Several gulls (*Laridae* sp.) frequent the beach to scavenge, as do some terrestrial birds such as Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). Behind the beach, wind-created dunes and the associated silver dune lupine-mock heather scrub vegetation offer some protection for wildlife. White-crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), California towhee (*Melospiza crissalis*), and wren-tit (*Chamaea fasciata*) take advantage of the insects and seeds provided by



the dune vegetation. Deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) and black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*) forage in the dune scrub and may become food for predators such as great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*). Migrating waterfowl frequent the wetlands in the Park.

The riparian habitats, with their available water and dense, diverse vegetation of trees, shrubs, and herbs, provide abundant food and cover many wildlife species. The moist riparian area produces abundant insect life, food for many insectivorous amphibians, birds, and mammals such as the Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris [Hyla] regilla*), western skink (*Eumeces skiltonianus*), Wilson's warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), Pacific-slope flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*), northern rough-winged swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*), and ornate shrew (*Sorex ornatus*). Omnivorous inhabitants include the big-eared woodrat (*Neotoma macrotis*), opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), and raccoon (*Procyon lotor*). Predators include the garter snake (*Thamnophis* sp.), black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), and gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*).

Freshwater creeks provide habitat for aquatic macroinvertebrates. Along with vegetative detritus in leaf litter and woody debris, these invertebrates create the stream food chain base. The freshwater streams or creeks in the Park support resident rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and steelhead (i.e., anadromous rainbow trout) and other native fishes such as threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) and prickly sculpin (*Cottus asper*). Slow-moving streams provide important habitat for native amphibians and reptiles such as California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*). Ephemeral and intermittent tributary streams may provide important habitat for western toad (*Bufo boreas*) and other amphibian species. Many insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals utilize the riparian vegetation associated with freshwater streams.

2.6 Cultural and Historic Resources

State Parks represents the most diverse natural and cultural heritage holdings of any land management agency in California. These lands support a stunning array of the state's landscape provinces, ancient Native American sites, and historic properties. The Park contains rich and diverse prehistoric and historic resources. For a detailed timeline of Historical Events that affect the Park, please see Appendix A of Volume 2, Existing Conditions.

2.6.1 Ethnographic Background

The planning area is within the Northern Chumash or Obispeño and Purisimeño language territory. The Obispeño practiced a regular seasonal round of population dispersal and aggregation in response to the location and seasonal availability of different food resources (Hoover 1990) (Greenwood, 1972) (Greenwood, 1978). They exploited various fish and shellfish food sources (Pismo clam, mussel, abalone, etc.) and hunted small and big game (Greenwood, 1978). Their diet also included gathered acorns, seeds (chia), and plants (roots, tubers, greens) (Hoover, 1990) (Moratto, 1984). Scholars estimate the Chumash population at the time of Spanish Colonial occupation of Alta California as between 15,000 and 20,000.

The Chumash occupied a wide-ranging dispersed settlement structure. A Chumash village could include up to 1,000 residents, representing the most



populous settlement in the aboriginal Far West (Moratto, 1984). Villages were not occupied year-round and likely disbanded into smaller social groups and dispersed to other areas for seasonal hunting or gathering. There were six major Chumash villages adjacent to the planning area. Starting in the north and working southward, these villages include Pis mu', Chilikuni, Lachito, Stemetatimi (or Nipomo), Ajuaps (or T maps), and Atajes. Chumash villages were headed by a chief (wot or wocha) who embodied an inherited authority over the entire village (Kroeber, 1925, p. 556).

The first record of Spanish Colonial encounters with the Obispeño near the Pismo/Oceano area occurred between 1769 and 1770 during Don Gaspar de Portolá's expedition from San Diego Monterey in support of their occupation of Alta California. The key to Spain's occupation and settlement was establishing a series of Catholic missions to convert the native people into Spanish Colonial society. The Pismo and Oceano property is located between Mission San Luis Obispo (1772) to the north and Missions La Purisima (1787) and Santa Ynez (1804) to the south. The Spanish established their colonial system to institutionalize their claim to the territory by introducing new land uses such as intensive agriculture and stock grazing. They also introduced new social and political networks that rapidly altered the Chumash's centuries-old cultural landscape and disrupted their traditional way of life. By the early 1800s, most remaining Chumash were integrated into and became reliant upon the mission system for support, except for those who had fled into mountains and the inland valleys (Grant, 1978, p. 505).

When Mexico received its independence from Spain in 1821, the power and authority of the missions declined. In Alta California, the Mexican government secularized the missions and distributed their former lands and property to private citizens (also known as Californios). This displacement and other factors, such as widespread disease, further decimated the Chumash population during the Mexican Republic period.

With the United States' occupation of California in 1847 during the Mexican War and the subsequent decades after, the Chumash population was subjected to even further institutionalized disenfranchisement, displacement, discrimination government-sanctioned violence. As with all California's Native people, the Chumash experienced a significant decline (Madley, 2016). In 1855, land near the Santa Ynez Mission became the first sanctioned permanent settlement for 109 Chumash. This reserve, known as Zanja de Cota, was 75 acres in size and was the smallest official Indian reserve in the state (Grant, 1978, p. 507). It has grown to over 1,000 acres with a large land purchase in 2010.

Throughout the 20th century, Native California tribes continued to battle unjust policies and treatments damaging to cultural persistence. Their persistent voices have led to important legislative changes that provide increased protection for their cultural practices and heritage resources. Today, multiple Northern Chumash groups persist and continue their cultural traditions along the central coast. They actively engage in protecting their ancestral sites, which are important components of their heritage today. Furthermore, local Chumash groups provide important knowledge and insights that benefit cultural resource protection, land management, and sustainable practices.



2.6.2 Prehistoric

The prehistoric occupation of the Central California coast is categorized into several accepted chronological sequences based on diverging site and settlement structures and artifact assemblages. These Periods include Paleo-Indian, Millingstone, Early, Middle, Middle-Late Transition, and Late. These cultural sequences facilitate the interpretation of the regional archaeological record. Following is a brief explanation of the general archaeological signatures and timeframes associated with each.

2.6.2.1 *Paleo-Indian Period (pre-10000 BP)*

This is the oldest and least-known phase of human presence on the Central Coast. Currently, isolated large fluted projectile points are the only evidence of this phase in the region. These points likely reflect hunting of big game. It is unknown how much their diet was divided between plants and animals. Groups were likely small and nomadic, and the overall population density low.

2.6.2.2 *Millingstone Culture (10000-5500 BP)*

As the name suggests, the Millingstone culture is characterized by well-made milling slabs and hand stones. Large side-notched projectile points, crude core/cobble-core tools, and a sparsity of flake tools are additional indicators. Pitted stones, lanceolate projectile points, and crescent tools have been observed in Millingstone assemblages. Contracting stem points, while more frequent in later contexts, are also found. Faunal remains at Millingstone sites indicate a diverse diet, including mammals, birds, fish, and shellfish (Jones et al. 2007: 135).

2.6.2.3 *Early Period (5500-2600 BP)*

Several technological changes occurred during this period. Contracting-stem and Rossi square-stemmed (Central Coast stemmed series) and large side-notched points appear in increased numbers. Handstone and milling slabs continue while portable mortars and pestles first appear in the record. Site types begin to diversify, representing specific activity areas often focused on particular resources. Residential sites seem more settled as group mobility decreases. An increase in obsidian and exotic shell beads implies an expansion in interregional exchange (Jones et al. 2007: 138).

2.6.2.4 *Middle Period (2600-1000 BP)*

Shell fishhooks and increased fishing technology appear while square-stemmed and large side-notched projectile points are no longer present. Mortars and pestle presence increase while hand stone and milling slabs persist in lower numbers. Saucer type *Olivella* beads and circular fishhooks become visible in the record. Also, pitted stones and grooved stone net sinkers have become common. Small leaf-shaped projectile points arrive at the end of this period, marking the bow and arrow (Jones et al. 2007: 138-139).

2.6.2.5 *Middle-Late Transition (1000-700 BP)*

A rapid shift in artifact assemblages and settlement organization occurred during the Middle-Late Transition. Arrow points become much more prevalent while stemmed points fade from the record. Coastal sites appear abandoned while interior sites increase and



reflect smaller decentralized settlements. Faunal remains indicate a terrestrial focus, specifically small game, and an increase in acorn use. A decrease in obsidian may reflect decreased interregional trade. Postulations for the abrupt changes include environmental stressors, such as drought, and possible population movements of interior groups moving west (Jones et al. 2007: 143).

2.6.2.6 Late Period (700 BP-Contact)

The Late Period is demonstrated by bedrock mortars, hopper mortars, increased arrow points (Desert side-notched and Cottonwood types), and small bead drills. Beads include Class E (lipped) and Class K (cupped) *Olivella* beads and steatite disk beads. Beads appear to become a standardized medium of exchange. Midden deposits are often smaller and more discrete than before. Some Late Period sites indicate terrestrial focus, while others suggest marine resource intensification. These subsistence practices appear linked to locally available resources (Jones et al., 2007: 143-144).

2.6.2.7 Oceano Dunes Prehistory

A paucity of formal archaeological excavation and research in the Oceano Dunes limits detailed conclusions of prehistoric chronology and area use. The number of archaeological sites and the type of deposits suggest the dunes served as an important component of marine resource harvesting and temporary settlement. Limited chronological information, primarily in artifact typologies, indicates the use of the dunes dating back at least 3,000 years and continuing through the Late Period. The mobile dune environment and increased sand deposition throughout the Holocene have likely buried older deposits.

2.6.3 Historic - First Exploration Through American Era (1849 – Present)

2.6.3.1 First Exploration, 1769 to 1949

The 1769 Portolá Expedition traveled through present-day San Luis Obispo County and represents the earliest recorded Spanish/Euro-American exploration in today's County. Many of San Luis Obispo County's current place names and those in the planning area were given by Portolá and his party of soldiers and missionaries. The group named present-day Oso Flaco (Spanish for "skinny bear") and Dune lakes after a lean bear they killed in the area (Dart, 1978, p. 10). The first mission to be established near the planning area was Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa on September 1, 1772 (Robinson, 1957, p. 6). Spain and later Mexico claimed the dunes and surrounding land, with more people arriving in the dunes area in the late 1700s as part of the mission's land holdings. Settlers found productive grazing land nearby, where mission stock was raised. The native Chumash and Salinan Native American Tribes, Spanish soldiers, missionaries, and settlers disrupted pre-occupation traditional land-use practices by introducing an agricultural economy. Native Americans who were baptized into the Catholic religion (known as Mission neophytes) provided much labor.

During the Mexican Republic period, the Californio government granted large tracts of land to private citizens. Cattle grazing was the major economic activity of the Mexican rancho land grants. In 1840, present-day Pismo Beach, Oceano, Grover Beach, and other cities became part of the Mexican land grant, *Rancho El Pismo*, granted to José Ortega. Cultivation of the land ensued, and stable areas within the dunes gave way to agricultural



fields. Streams and creeks sustained such agricultural use by constantly depositing sand, silt, and clay to create tillable soil. The ocean supported other activities. Shallow, nutrient-rich seawater made perfect growing conditions for nearshore fisheries and Pismo clam beds for which these beaches later became famous.

2.6.3.2 Early American Era, 1850-1900

Following the War with Mexico and California's admittance into the United States, the need for good overland transportation was clear. California had no reliable road system before the war. The state's population was very small, and the need to convey people, mail, raw materials, and information long distances with any frequency or regularity was limited. The self-sufficient rancheros were more dependent on oceangoing ships than overland wagons to deliver goods from the outside world in the nineteenth century. As the state's population increased, and its industry and commerce expanded into a complex network spanning the state, the need for a system of interconnecting roads grew accordingly. The railroads filled part of this need and created an even greater demand for a reliable road system.

Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and the Central Pacific merger with the Southern Pacific (SP), the SP's network of rail lines began to extend north and south throughout the state. Because of government land availability, SP decided to build a line through the San Joaquin Valley first, before turning their attention to a coastal route.

By 1886 the Southern Pacific Railroad had reached King City in the Salinas River valley. Residents to the south were eager and hopeful that the giant transportation company would continue to extend its line southward, eventually connecting with a coastal line running from Saugus (in Los Angeles County) to Ellwood (west of Santa Barbara).

The Pismo townsite was laid out in 1891, named after the Mexican land grant. The word "Beach" was added after 1904, most likely to emphasize its coastal location and the growing recognition of the area's value as a seaside resort for inland residents.

The community of Oceano was founded in 1893 and was originally to be called Deltina. Within a few weeks, the name was changed to La Bolsa, and then to Oceano, Spanish for ocean. It was a real estate name to capitalize on its location.

On May 5, 1894, the first SP engine steamed into the town of San Luis Obispo. It was a momentous event, as the arrival of the railroad effectively terminated the region's isolation. The road was extended to Oceano by 1896, and "the gap" was closed in 1901, bringing San Luis Obispo County within the economic spheres of the state's two largest cities, Los Angeles and San Francisco. The original Oceano depot was built in 1896 and destroyed by fire in 1903. It was rebuilt the following year and relocated to its present location in 1978.

The railroad's arrival heralded the Central Coast's entry into the twentieth century, lessening its reliance on coastal transport and expanding its potential markets beyond the other limited pre-railroad distribution days.

During this same period, other technological changes were in the making.



2.6.3.3 *Early Twentieth Century Recreation and Residents*

In 1895-96 two members of the newly appointed Bureau of Highways made a 7,000-mile reconnaissance of the state, preparing a report to the governor recommending a state highways system. These roads would traverse “the great belts of natural wealth which our state possesses, connecting all large centers of population, reaching the county seat of every county and tapping the lines of county roads to utilize them to the fullest extent.” The development of the State’s road and highway system and the automobile’s advent did more to change the California landscape than any other factor.

The national interest in good roads was not initially the result of automobile enthusiasts but bicyclists. It is to their credit that a concerted effort to improve the nation’s road system was instigated, long before the horseless carriage coughed and bumped its way down the roads originally intended for horse-drawn and human-powered vehicles. Cycling advocates were primarily urban-based, but their cause soon spread to the country’s rural areas when ranchers and farmers took up the reason. They felt isolated from their markets and controlled by the railroad trusts and viewed the good roads movement to support publicly funded, constructed, and maintained roadways for everyone’s benefit. To the farmer and the rancher, public roads offered an appealing alternative to what they perceived to be the expensive and unfair monopoly of the railroads.

The development of the Pacific Coast Highway (SR 2, now known as U.S. 101) through San Luis Obispo County had its origins in forming the California Highway Commission in 1911. The following year, the commission recognized the need for a coastal highway to run between Los Angeles and San Francisco cities, roughly contiguous with the historic (and highly romanticized) El Camino Real that had historically connected the Spanish missions presidios, and settlements.

Another benefit of the improved transportation system was the increased ease with which tourists and travelers could trek to the Central Coast. The hot springs of Paso Robles and Avila Beach had long been an attraction, as was Pismo Beach and the “Gibraltar of the Pacific,” Morro Rock. The establishment of California Polytechnic School in San Luis Obispo in 1902, the twin fairs in California heralding the Panama Canal opening in 1914, and the proliferation of automobiles all contributed to the rise of San Luis Obispo County as both an overnight layover and a business and vacation destination. The American Automobile Association estimated that by 1933 there were 30,000 “tourist cottage and camp establishments” lining the nation’s highways.

Mrs. Ethel Billing Birkhead, a Central Coast resident since 1898, wrote in her memoir that “The coast, the shore, was the mecca for [San Joaquin] valley residents as far back in time as when the American Indians camped on the bluffs and strands. Relief from the summer’s and early autumn’s heat, misery for man, but a blessing for crops, made a journey to the coast an ever-present, evergreen dream.”

According to pioneering regional historian W. W. Robinson, “In early days, the sands at Pismo Beach are said to have been ‘paved’ with the huge clams, and there were no restrictions on clamming. Farmers plowed the sand, turned up the big bivalves, and collected them for hog and chicken feed. In 1911 a limit of 200 per day was prescribed with a minimum



size—the first protective legislation. Until 1919 the clams were here in great abundance. Hordes of amateur clammers have since depleted the supply, taking as many as 45,000 clams in a day.”

The Oceano Dunes proved to be a transportation challenge, even following the railroad and highway construction. Frederic Taber Cooper, in *Rider’s California: A Guide-Book for Travelers* (1925), wrote, “Pismo Beach, a hard, level boulevard of clean white sand, 500 ft. wide, extends for 17 miles along San Luis Obispo Bay and makes a favorite automobile course....For some 14 miles or from Pismo to Guadalupe, the train passes through a region of shifting sand. On the R. [right], a prominent ridge of dunes has already encroached upon rich farms. At other points, the dunes have advanced inland across the tracks, and the railway company has had an expensive task in keeping the roadway open.”

The first documentation of motorized vehicles being operated on the beach was a 1906 newspaper article announcing that the Ford Motor Company was meeting in Pismo Beach for a rally between California’s northern and southern car dealerships. Early photos depict families enjoying the beach and dunes in horse-drawn carriages and on bicycles as well.

Pavilion Hill, a large, vegetated dune just south of beach post marker 4, is named for the huge Victorian-style dance pavilion built at the turn of the twentieth century to serve the growing tourist and summer vacation market. Construction began in 1905, and the grand opening was held on July 4, 1907. There was also a pier extending into the ocean in front of the Pavilion.

The F.P. Guiton Improvement Company finally tore down the Pavilion in 1921 as it was in disrepair after years of existence on a naturally moving dune. The lumber from the old Pavilion was used for many original buildings in the town of Oceano. In 1931, Oceano pier, built-in 1906, was removed, due to its deteriorated nature, and in preparation for automobile speed trial races held for the first time on the beach, on August 30, 1931.

More lumber was appropriated by the resident “Dunites,” as well as other Oceano residents and businesses. During the 1930s and 40s, the Dunites were a group of free-thinking people that included mystics, nudists, artists, writers, and hermits. The Dunites believed that Oceano Dunes was one of the centers of creative energy in California. Bert Schievink, the last of the Dunites, died in 1974.

2.6.3.4 World War II and the Post-War Population Boom

The Great Depression impacted travel and tourism, but then California was transformed during World War II. Many major industries sprang up in the state, virtually overnight, for the war effort. Henry J. Kaiser built steel mills and shipyards. The federal government acquired hundreds of thousands of acres of land for military bases. Hundreds of thousands of troops passed through California on their way to and from the Pacific War.

Camp San Luis Obispo and Camp Roberts, in southern Monterey County, were two of the largest training camps for Army troops in the United States, serving as training grounds for more than 500,000 military personnel during the war years. The nearby proximity of other military reservations, including Camp Cooke (now Vandenberg Air Force Base), Fort Hunter Liggett, and Fort Ord, meant that many thousands of troops passed



through the Central Coast on their way to the war in the Pacific or the European theater. Many of these soldiers resolved to return to the Central Coast following the war. Moreover, civilians who came to work here during the wartime effort opted to stay and enjoy the small-town atmosphere, geographical diversity, and beautiful natural scenery, and recreational opportunities.

Between 1940 and 1950, San Luis Obispo County's population increased by 50%, from 33,246 to 51,417. The state's population doubled between 1940 and 1950, to 10.5 million, and increased by another five million in the next ten years, to 15.8 million. Today it stands at about 38 million. A corresponding increase in public works – water projects, the highway revolution, building thousands of miles of freeway, and the state college and university system's rise—was required to accommodate the growth. Tremendous environmental, social, economic, and recreational impacts also occurred during this time.

2.6.4 Energy

California has a long and important history relative to energy development, beginning with the hide and tallow trade of the Mexican era (tallow being used for candle making) and extending into the present day. Whales were once hunted off the California coast, their blubber rendered into oil for domestic and industrial purposes. The use of oil seeps near Los Angeles for kerosene production later led to a burgeoning energy industry (especially petroleum and gasoline) throughout the state. The Kern oil fields and San Joaquin oil and gas fields utilized pipelines to deliver their products to the Central Coast for shipping to refineries in the San Francisco Bay area and Los Angeles. Frederic Taber Cooper, in *Rider's California* (1925) wrote, "Six pipelines bring oil from adjacent counties for shipment from Port San Luis, and there is an oil storage farm with a capacity of nearly 9,000,000 barrels...[San Luis Obispo] county's chief mineral resource lies in its oil wells, which have demonstrated that the Monterey shale, found over the greater portion of the coast side, is an extension of the great Santa Maria oil fields that immediately adjoin the county. Port San Luis, the terminus of three pipelines from the Santa Maria fields, is one of the largest oil ports. The well-known Coalinga, Kern River, Midway, Sunset, and McKittrick fields are also connected by pipeline with this port."

By the 1930s, oil companies began to acquire large tracts of land in the Guadalupe dunes for oil development, with oil production starting in earnest by 1948. The Union Oil Company, a major landholder in the region from the 1890s, built its refinery on the Nipomo Mesa in 1955, the same year that Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) began to consider atomic energy use for peacetime domestic application. In 1962 they acquired 1,100 acres of coastal dunes in southern San Luis Obispo County to build a nuclear energy power plant. In that same year, San Luis Obispo County designated the area as "M2," which was the land-use zoning ordinance for heavy industry.

The Sierra Club, meanwhile, advocated for the dune system to be preserved "for scenic recreation purposes" under the auspices of the California Division of Beaches and Parks. In 1965, when the Baxter Report acquired the Pismo Dunes #7 on its priority list of all proposed nuclear power plant acquisition projects in the state, the San Luis Obispo County supervisors went on record as opposing the listing. The following year, PG&E, in concurrence with the Sierra Club's recommendations, dropped the Nipomo Dunes as its preferred site



for the nuclear power plant and instead proceeded with its siting of the plant at Diablo Canyon. The 847 acres of land was sold to the Department of Parks and Recreation in 1974 for one million dollars.

Ten years later, the Reagan administration proposed selling offshore oil leases off Point Sal and Point Arguello, which would have required port facilities to service the offshore platforms. Santa Maria area businessman George Smith proposed a Ventura-like harbor built in the dunes, north of the Santa Maria River mouth. He supported Port San Luis Harbor District Director Gerald Parsons, and the opposition of attorney Elizabeth Scott-Graham, President of the People for a Nipomo Dunes National Seashore. The property, known as the “Mobil Tract,” was acquired by the California Coastal Conservancy in 1989. Ten years later, Unocal Corporation began its cleanup of the Guadalupe oil field, the site of one of the largest oil spills in United States history.

2.6.5 Entertainment and Recreation

Another of early twentieth century California’s major new industries also left its mark on the dunes region. In 1923 D.W. Griffith used the Nipomo Dunes to film his epic silent film “The Ten Commandments,” using the dunes as a stand-in for ancient Egypt. Although south of the current park property, these remains are now a recorded archaeological site reflective of the state’s massive economic and culturally influencing entertainment machine.

During this time, the region’s reliance on tourism and recreational assets was also entrenched. The following excerpts describe tourism and recreation development as a complement to the area’s agricultural-based economy.

According to Reginald Nuttall, who wrote the following for the San Luis Obispo Telegram in 1925, “A new era is dawning for the county bordering on San Luis Bay which is the natural outlet of the upper portion of the San Joaquin Valley, and the various resources of this county, which will aid in establishing an industrial center of great importance to the state.

“The Ocean Beach Resort Company...is perfecting plans for the installation of a seawall, the construction of bungalows, amusement concessions, and commercial facilities, these to center about the present Oceano Pavilion; and D.C. Walton and his associates have actively engaged in the development of Lakeside Park, adjacent to the holdings of the Ocean Beach Resort Company. Low lots are being filled at Ocean Park, a channel dredged by the two companies’ cooperation, and building is underway. This includes constructing several buildings for the Honolulu Oil Company, designed as a summer rest camp for their employees in the San Joaquin Valley.

“Another scenic entrance to Oceano is the drive down the beach from Pismo, which is a beautiful trip enjoyed by many motorists at favoring stages of the tides...a tremendous stretch of beach and wide spaces of dunes approach the water just what it should be for a beach town...”



2.6.6 Off-Road Vehicle Activity History

After World War II, a huge surplus of light off-road vehicles like the Jeep (of which many World War II veterans had become familiar) and rugged motorcycles were available on the market. The Jeeps were popular with buyers who used them as recreational vehicles to explore California's vast network of secondary roadways, both paved and dirt. This led to the start of off-roading as a weekend hobby. The World War II Jeeps were soon joined by the Jeep company's civilian models and similar vehicles from Japan (Toyota, Datsun) and Great Britain (Land Rover). A similar expansion of available off-road motorcycles or "dirt bikes" in the 1970s saw the U.S. market flooded with new brands from European and Japanese companies to meet the demand.

Several off-road groups utilized and enjoyed the dunes over the years, including the Dune Riders, founded in 1959, who helped State Park managers, PG&E officials, and Sierra Club members tour the dunes on various occasions before the park's establishment. On Labor Day weekend of 1974, the first "Sand Nationals" were held at Pismo State Beach, drawing massive crowds to Pismo Beach and the Oceano Dunes.

At a California State Park Commission meeting held in Santa Barbara in 1966, Commissioner Margaret Wentworth Owings argued for the southern San Luis Obispo County dunes to be acquired for a state park. The park extends south into Santa Barbara County as far as the existing Point Sal State Beach. She was joined in her support for the proposal by other commissioners who were given airplane flights over the dunes by Sierra Club Director and Sunset Magazine editor Martin Litton.

However, Gubernatorial Candidate Ronald Reagan, while at the San Luis Obispo airport, called for scaling back proposed land purchases for state parks, instead favoring the development of existing state parklands. The Sierra Club Executive Committee reaffirmed its support of the Nipomo Dunes as a state park and approved Diablo Canyon as an alternate site for PG&E's proposed nuclear power plant. The subsequent sale of the current OHV parkland to the State resulted in the first official state vehicular recreation area designation. The sale was timely. In San Luis Obispo County, the opportunities to ride or drive on the beaches were becoming increasingly restricted over concerns of overcrowding and environmental damage from previously unrestricted off-road vehicle use. For example, in April of 1970, the Morro Bay State Park sand spit was closed to off-highway vehicles, and in November, the City of Morro Bay banned vehicles from its coastal beaches north of Morro Rock.

In 1982 ORV enthusiast and future OHV Recreation Commissioner Mike Bishop founded the non-profit Dune Patrol, a volunteer organization dedicated to assisting State Park Rangers on busy weekends at the park.

2.6.7 California State Parks

The story of California's state parks began in the mid-1800s, before any organized environmental or cultural preservation movement. California's gold rush had attracted thousands of people in search of riches. New cities quickly sprang up as rich gold and silver deposits fueled economic growth.



The first state park was conceived in California in 1862. Captain Israel Ward Raymond and California's U.S. Senator John Conness wanted to have natural land areas at Yosemite set aside purely for preservation and public enjoyment. At Raymond's request, Senator Conness introduced a Senate bill that quickly passed through both Congressional houses. President Abraham Lincoln signed The Act of June 30, 1864 (13. Stat. 325), granting the "Yo-Semite Valley" and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the State of California. Governor Frederick Low accepted the grant in September of that year. The granted land was eventually returned to the federal government in 1906, becoming part of the surrounding Yosemite National Park formed in 1890.

The actions of turn-of-the-century citizens and lawmakers to preserve islands of California's most valuable lands for future generations put the Golden State in the forefront of the preservation movement. Unlike national parks, state parks, such as Santa Cruz County and Humboldt County's Big Basin and Humboldt Redwoods, did not need to be proven economically useless to mining, timber, or grazing interests before being granted park status. However, unlike newly established western national parks, which were already on federally owned land, most California parklands had to be purchased from private owners.

Before 1927, no comprehensive plan existed for preserving California's recreational, natural, and cultural treasures. However, with leadership from the Save-the-Redwoods League, a broad coalition of groups and individuals united their collective powers into a new campaign for a state park bill. The new bill swiftly gained the Legislature's unanimous approval and was signed into law by Governor C.C. Young in 1927.

The following year, a newly established State Park Commission began gathering support for the first state park bond issue. Its efforts were rewarded in 1928 when Californians voted nearly three-to-one in favor of a \$6 million park bond act. Also, noted landscape architect and park planner Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., completed a statewide survey of potential parklands that defined basic long-range goals and provided guidance for the acquisition and development of state parks. With Newton Drury serving as acquisition officer, the new system of state parks rapidly began to grow.

In April 1929, two public meetings were held in Hanford (Kings County) that resulted in the endorsement of beach property purchase in San Luis Obispo County for state park purposes. A resolution was adopted, reading in part, "...Vast numbers of residents of the San Joaquin Valley go to the ocean during the hot months to enjoy a vacation at the beaches...the citizens of Kings County, at a meeting held in Hanford, April 16, go on record as requesting the State Park Commission to purchase a beach area for a state park at or near the terminus of the roads,..." This led to the creation of both Morro Bay State Park and Pismo State Beach in 1934.

In 1951, Newton Drury became Director of the California Division of Beaches and Parks. During his tenure, much of the state park system's share of offshore oil royalties, which had been suspended in 1947, began to provide significant acquisition and development funding again. When Drury retired in 1959, at age 70, the California state park system was composed of 150 beaches, parks, and historical monuments, which covered 615,000 acres.



During the 1960s, an intense public interest emerged in preserving California's wildlands from encroaching development. Californians approved a \$150 million bond act in 1964, which allowed the acquisition of new state parklands. The 1960s were also a time of change in the structure and hierarchy of the state park system. In 1961, under Director Charles DeTurk, the old Division of Beaches and Parks merged with the Division of Recreation and the Division of Small Craft Harbors.

William Penn Mott, Jr. became director in 1967 and vowed a new growth era even though he was faced with gubernatorial budget cuts and hiring freezes. Mott successfully transformed the Division of Beaches and Parks into the Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR). With the Department's formation, a shift was made to the management of more active recreational facilities.

In 1971, through the enactment of the Chappie-Z'berg Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Law, the State Legislature addressed the growing use of motorized vehicles off-highway by adopting requirements for the registration and operation of these vehicles. The law also provided funding for administering the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Program and provided facilities for off-highway motor vehicle recreation. The law was founded on the principle that "effectively managed areas and adequate facilities for the use of OHVs and conservation and enforcement are essential for ecologically balanced recreation." The law required maintenance and oversight to allow for sustainable OHV use consistent with good environmental stewardship.

Concurrently in 1971, CDPR produced the "California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan" that warned that the California shoreline was in danger. Of the state's more than 1,100 miles of coastline, some 61 percent was privately owned, with another 14 percent owned by the military. The taxpayers and access to that owned only 25 percent was limited and diminishing. The entire coastline was in danger of degradation from pollution, erosion, and increasing residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial development. The department supported the creation of a governing body to protect the coastline. A year later, in November 1972, the voters passed Proposition 20, the Coastal Conservation Initiative. The initiative required developing a California Coastal Plan that was subsequently adopted in 1975 by a newly appointed Coastal Commission. Based on that preliminary work, the California Coastal Act was enacted in 1976 to provide the seashore's long-term protection.

Californians provided a new mandate to acquire and operate state recreation areas and facilities in 1974 when the people of California approved Proposition 1, a \$250 million state park bond issue. By the end of the decade, the California state park system had grown to 500 miles of lake shoreline, 87 miles of river frontage, 200 miles of coastline, 14,000 campsites, and 1,500 miles of riding and hiking trails.

To meet OHV recreation's growth, an entirely new division, the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Division, was added to the Department in 1971. At a meeting in 1974, CDPR Director William Penn Mott stated, "I want to announce a historic first....this land [Oceano Dunes] will not see an atomic power plant built on its beautiful shores. Instead, I am here to announce that the land will become—forever—a part of the California State Park System. And...this will become the very first motor vehicle park in the state system!"



The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle act was signed into state law in 1982 and has since been amended several times. It is now referred to as the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Act of 2003. The legislative intent is that OHV areas be expanded, added to, and managed to sustain long-term motor vehicle recreation areas and that the OHMVR Program supports motorized off-highway access to non-motorized recreation opportunities.

2.6.7.1 Pismo State Beach/Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area

Pismo State Beach (along with Morro Bay State Park) was established in 1934. Unlike Morro Bay State Park, Pismo State Beach remained relatively undeveloped throughout the Depression and World War II. In 1947, Oceano Campground, located on the park's original 140 acres, was completed and opened to the public. Two years later, the Pismo Beach Pier was acquired from San Luis Obispo County, and negotiations between the State and the County took place for the State's acquisition of land adjacent to the pier. The Department added 72 acres to the State Park in 1951 for non-vehicular day-use access to the coast. Over the next dozen years, the state continued to add to its holdings, including the stretch of beach from Grand Avenue south and the dunes south of Pier Avenue, which today constitutes the Dune Preserve. In 1962, in reaction to updated Public Resources Code requirements, the California State Park and Recreation Commission classified the 1,050 acres of state-owned coastline as Pismo State Beach.

In 1963 the Sierra Club Board of Directors passed a unanimous resolution, recommending to the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, that "the shoreline and upland area south of Oceano, bounded by Los Berros Creek and the contour of the Santa Maria Dunes, including the Dune Lakes, bordered on the east in the vicinity of the South Pacific railroad tracks, including the region between Black and Oso Flaco lakes and the dune territory down to and including Point Sal, [be preserved] for scenic recreation purposes under the management of the California Division of Beaches and Parks." Later, Sierra Club President Dr. William Siri toured the Nipomo Dunes with PG&E officials, State Park representatives, and the Dune Riders, Inc. Later that year, the California State Park's "Baxter Report" made the Pismo dunes acquisition #7 on its priority list of all proposed acquisition projects in the state. Still, the dunes were eliminated from a list of proposed state park sites by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors.

At about the same time, a minus-two-foot tide resulted in approximately 143,000 people digging for clams on Pismo/Oceano area beaches; in two days, an estimated one million clams were harvested. Such activities reflected the popularity of Pismo Beach and the challenges of resource management in the pre-Environmental law era.

Nearby Pismo Beach State Beach's Grand Avenue entrance, the Le Sage family began developing a par three golf course on 29 acres north of Grand Avenue and east of the beach; the State acquired the family's property in 1971. The golf course has been run as a state park concession since.

2.6.7.2 Balancing Recreation and Resource Management

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing interest and concern for the environment.

Rampant destruction (often the result of public works projects, suburban sprawl, or in the case of older cities, "urban renewal"), the Vietnam War, Love Canal, the



Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969, and the manned flight program into outer space gave Americans a new perspective on their communities, their country, their planet, and their role in its ultimate preservation or destruction. Several new laws, designed to foster and maintain a viable living environment for all Americans, were passed with overwhelming public support. Several of those laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the Endangered Species Act, recognized the roles that the environment, culture, and history play in our everyday lives. “Quality of life” was no longer the sole interest of a small handful of activists but an issue for countless citizens across the country. That interest and concern continues today.

With the growth of the Environmental Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and its subsequent Federal and State laws and regulatory agency permitting oversight, along with the recent growth and popularity of active vehicular recreation, State Parks’ Pismo State Beach began addressing the balancing of these two mission-based management goals (resource preservation and recreation) in the 1970s. As noted earlier, 1,100 acres of PG&E land in the Oceano Dunes was sold to the California Department of Parks and Recreation for one million dollars to allow for continued use by off-highway vehicles. The new Pismo Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area was classified by the State Park Commission on July 12, 1974, and opened to the public as an extension of Pismo State Beach. In the same year, the Nipomo Dune complex was identified for its unique natural resource values and listed as a National Natural Landmark. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also gave the dune complex a top priority in ranking 49 important California habitats worthy of preservation.

Garlan Salzgeber was the first Superintendent of jointly managed parks. It was the first off-highway motor vehicle recreation park established in the California State Park system. There was no charge for day use and a \$1.50 cost per night for primitive camping on the beach. Two comfort stations were built at Pismo State Beach: one at the foot of Grand Avenue, and the other, one mile south, at the foot of Pier Avenue, the two long-standing vehicular entrances to the beach and dune areas.

In 1977 State Parks acquired an additional 366 acres of coast and dune, including Oso Flaco Lake, which was closed to vehicle use in 1982. Also, the California Park and Recreation Commission established a new park district, and the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division took over the active management of the park. After that, the OHV Commission renamed the OHV park Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area.

2.6.8 Coastal Access and Environmental Protection Background

California’s coastline is not like any other state. First, it is over 1,100 miles long, and it twists and turns in just about every direction. And, despite popular belief (and pop culture memes), it is not all sandy beaches and endless sunshine. There are long swathes of shoreline, tailor-made for swimming, surfing, and sunning, to be sure. But there are also numerous pocket beaches punctuated by rocky headlands, narrow sections that terminate in towering cliffs, and places where the sand piles up and aggregates in huge drifts that are moved incrementally inexorably by high winds and surging tides. That is the nature of the Oceano Dunes, a large and long dune complex that has drawn and sustained, and entertained residents and visitors for millennia.



It is a place valued for its off-highway-recreational vehicle opportunities; the once rich Pismo clam population that existed along its shoreline; the surf fishing, kite flying, surfing, and beach camping experience enjoyed by millions; horseback riding and hiking; exploration of the vast dune complex; and the great natural beauty, where sand, sea, and sky come together and provide habitat to migratory birds that nest on the beach and in the dunes; rare and endangered fish living in the lagoon; and the teeming marine life in the Pacific Ocean.

That is a lot of activity (and, at times, conflicting activity and values) to manage simultaneously. And yet, that is the job of California State Parks. It is embodied in the Mission Statement,

“To provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state’s extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.”

California State Parks represents the most diverse natural and cultural heritage holdings of any land management agency in California. These lands support a stunning array of the state’s landscape provinces, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, threatened species, ancient Native American sites, and historical facilities. With almost 25 percent of California’s magnificent coastline under its care, California State Parks manages the state’s finest coastal wetlands, estuaries, and dune systems.

At the same time, the demands of more than 30 million Californians for recreational opportunities are increasing. In recent years, over 70 million visits annually are made to California State Parks, with most visits occurring between mid-May and mid-September.

Some themes that emerge regarding the Callender-Nipomo-Guadalupe dune complex include:

Geography: the nature of the coastline itself, the deposition of sand at this location, the lack of offshore canyons that would remove sand from the beach, the weather, and the open nature of the land to the prevailing northwesterly winds that blow across thousands of miles of open ocean.

The area’s remote nature and its distance from major metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno, and Bakersfield have been defining characteristics. Note that San Luis Obispo County is on the same latitude as Kern County, to the east.

Transportation: the dunes have been both barrier and facilitator to transportation. The towering dunes and shifting sands challenged early occupants and explorers. The arrival of the railroad both isolated and opened the area to exploration and exploitation. There are very few places where the public can easily reach this long stretch of coastline, and this is due in part to the presence of the railroad tracks and the subsequent land ownership along the rail line. Transportation is also a form of recreation that has evolved, expanded, and been enjoyed by generations over a century.

Technology: this can include the First Peoples who settled in the area, harvested resources, and engaged in trade with their neighbors; the arrival of the Spaniards by ocean and



overland, and who used a weapon to kill a “skinny bear” at Oso Flaco lake; the construction of a railroad through the region; using the dunes as a movie set; the building of buildings and piers on the sand; the arrival of motor vehicles to traverse the land, and which continue to evolve in sophistication and complexity; the energy industry (oil, gas, and nuclear); and the development and dissemination of information by newspaper, film, specialized media (off-highway vehicle magazines) and social media.

There are also unique resources, such as the dunes themselves, the hard-pack sand, the once abundant Pismo clams, and the general lack of residential and industrial development in the dunes.

2.6.8.1 California Coastal Act

In 1971, State Parks produced the “*California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan*” (State Parks, 1971) that warned that the California shoreline was in danger. Of the state’s more than 1,100-mile coastline, some 61 percent was privately owned, with another 14 percent owned by the military. California taxpayers owned only 25 percent, and access to the coast was limited and diminishing. The entire coastline was in danger of degradation from pollution, erosion, and increasing residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial development. State Parks supported the creation of a governing body to protect the coastline. In November 1972, the voters passed Proposition 20, the Coastal Zone Conservation Act. Proposition 20 created the California Coastal Commission. The initiative also required developing a California Coastal Plan adopted in 1975 by the newly appointed Coastal Commission. Based on that preliminary work, the California Coastal Act was enacted in 1976 to provide the seashore’s long-term protection and public access.

2.7 Environmental Protection Legislation

The 1960s and 1970s saw a growing interest and concern for the environment. The state and federal government passed several new laws with overwhelming public support to promote and sustain a viable living environment. These laws include the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), the California Environmental Quality Act (1970), the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act (1972), and the Endangered Species Act (1973), which recognized the roles that the environment, culture, and history play in our everyday lives. Quality of life” was no longer the sole interest of a small handful of activists but an issue for countless citizens. In 1974, the federal government listed the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex as a National Natural Landmark. The USFWS gave the dune complex a top priority in ranking 49 important California habitats worthy of preservation.

2.8 Archaeological Resources and Site Review

A review of the archaeological studies and records held by State Parks, including the results of previous records searches conducted at the California Historical Information System, identified 75 previously recorded cultural resources within the Oceano Dunes District’s management area. Of these resources, five consist of historic-era resources, two are multi-component sites, and the remaining 68 are prehistoric sites.

State Park archaeologists attempted to relocate all previously recorded resources and update site records and geographic information system (GIS) data.



Staff conducted fieldwork for this phase between March and May 2019. The Oceano Dunes District environmental scientist and research analyst provided additional field support.

Of the 75 previously recorded resources identified within the Oceano Dunes District management area, archaeologists relocated 33 (or 44%) as part of the 2019 effort. Staff updated the site records and GIS site boundaries for these resources. Of the resources not relocated during the 2019 fieldwork, one includes a historic era building that was confirmed demolished in 2015. It is assumed that the shifting dune environment buried many, if not most other sites, within the study area.

Staff identified and recorded four new archaeological sites, of which one appears to be historic in age, while the remaining three are prehistoric. Only one site is in an area that may be impacted by a proposed PWP improvement project.

2.8.1 PWP Specific Cultural Resources Review

State Parks conducted a cultural resource review of the Park between January and May 2019 in association with PWP development. The assessment consisted of two elements - a pedestrian survey of all the previously un-surveyed areas within the proposed PWP improvement projects' footprint and revisiting and updating all previously recorded cultural resources within the planning area. In total, archaeologists surveyed 1,180 acres and updated site records for 33 previously identified archaeological resources. State Park archaeologists also recorded five newly identified archaeological sites.

The intensive pedestrian survey of areas within the footprint of PWP Proposed Projects was conducted in January 2019 by State Parks archaeologists. Staff focused the survey on sites that had not been covered by previous archaeological identification efforts, which included the proposed location for the Pismo State Beach Boardwalk Project and the proposed location for the Oso Flaco Improvement Project. Staff spaced survey transects 10 to 15 meters apart.

2.8.2 Pismo State Beach Boardwalk Project

Archaeologists surveyed the entirety of the proposed Pismo State Beach Boardwalk Project route on January 16, 2019. Staff spaced transects 10 meters apart. Ground surface visibility was poor, approximately 5-15%, being obscured by dense vegetation covering. No cultural resources were identified in the proposed project area.

2.8.3 Oso Flaco Lake Improvement Project

Archaeologists conducted a pedestrian survey of the proposed Oso Flaco Improvement Project area between January 15 and 16 and January 29 through 31, 2019. Survey areas included the two agricultural fields within the project area and proposed routes for trails. Transects were spaced 10 to 15 meters apart. Ground surface visibility varied from excellent (100%) in the open sand areas south of Oso Flaco Lake to poor (10%) in the coastal scrub-covered regions north of the lake. Additionally, a portion of the agricultural fields was inaccessible due to current farm operations. One new archaeological resource was identified within the proposed project footprint.



2.9 Park Access, Parking, and Public Transportation

2.9.1 Access and Circulation

Primary access to the PWP planning area is via U.S. 101 at State Route 1 from the north, U.S. 101 at Grand Avenue from the east, and State Route 1 from the south. The Pismo State Beach North Beach Campground and Butterfly Grove are located directly off SR 1 north of West Grand Avenue. The Pismo State Beach Oceano Campground is located off Pier Avenue in Oceano. Visitors can access Pismo State Beach by foot by parking in the lot located off West Grand Avenue or at Pier Avenue. Visitors can access a boardwalk to the beach and through the dunes from the Grand Avenue parking lot. This boardwalk connects to the North Beach campground and public paths in the City of Pismo Beach. There is also an equestrian staging area at Grand Avenue that leads to the beach and an informal equestrian trail. Visitors who park at Pier Avenue can access the beach and adjacent volunteer trails through the dunes. Existing trails and footpaths include the Meadow Creek Trail, Grand Dunes Trail, Oceano Lagoon Trail, and various paths from the Dunes Preserve.

Street legal vehicle access to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA are available at West Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue, with visitors entering mostly via the Pier Avenue entrance. These locations are the only entrances to the vehicle beach camping and the OHV open riding area in Oceano Dunes SVRA.

A portion of Oceano Dunes SVRA, mostly south and southeast of the open OHV riding area, is currently a pedestrian-only area accessible from Oso Flaco Lake Road off State Route 1. Visitors may park their vehicle in a day-use parking lot and access the Oso Flaco Lake area from here. Pedestrian-only access to Oso Flaco Lake is also available seasonally from the SVRA open riding at the Boneyard area. A wheelchair-accessible and pedestrian boardwalk leads from the Oso Flaco Lake day-use area to a pedestrian trail that leads to an overview point and ultimately to the shoreline.

2.9.1.1 Emergency, Maintenance, and Other Access

State Park Peace Officers and Seasonal Lifeguard staff respond to medical and law enforcement emergencies, which can occur anywhere in the park and are essential for maintaining public safety. Emergencies occur any time human health or safety is at risk. Responses may require high-speed travel by medical and law enforcement vehicles (e.g., pick-up truck, sport utility vehicle, four-wheel-drive ambulance), including in areas without frequent vehicular traffic. Past emergencies have included water rescues, boat stranding, and public safety issues such as OHV accidents, trespassing in sensitive areas, and requests for assistance from adjacent property owners or managers.

On occasion, other government agencies and non-State Parks services require access to the park for different reasons, including:

- enforcing federal, state, county, and municipal laws;
- conducting search and rescue for lost watercraft in the ocean;
- marine mammal rescue to remove dead or injured marine mammals;



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- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) wardens enforcing California Fish and Game Code regulations for fishing and other regulations;
 - towing/removing stuck or broken-down vehicles at Oceano Dunes SVRA;
 - repairing utility facilities that are on State Parks property;
 - flying/landing medevac helicopters; and
 - fire suppression and firefighting activities.

These activities may take place throughout the Park but primarily occur along the beach and adjacent shoreline. For these activities, the non-State Parks vehicles generally access areas open to public vehicles. Exceptions include removing vehicles stuck in a closed portion of shoreline, boat salvage, and water rescue. If possible, State Parks will provide a resource monitor to escort these vehicles into closed areas.

2.9.2 Parking and Public Transportation

There are currently approximately 90 visitor vehicle parking spaces available at the paved West Grand Avenue parking lot, with about 200 more in the adjacent unpaved lot. Most equestrians using the Park also stage in the unpaved lot and then cross West Grand Avenue to the south to proceed on horseback down the Dune Trail. There is no legal parking at the Butterfly Grove and limited parking on SR 1 adjacent to the grove. Visitors also access the grove via pedestrian trails from the North Beach Campground. The Oso Flaco day-use area has room for approximately 50 cars; however, typical usage is well below that number. The cities of Pismo Beach and Grover Beach, and the Community of Oceano have additional paid parking options available for visitors. The San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority, South County Transit system offers public transportation to Pismo Beach and Grover Beach from local area cities and communities. There are stops at the Butterfly Grove, at West Grand Avenue and 2nd Street (Amtrak Station) just east of SR 1 and on SR 1 at Le Sage Drive just north of West Grand Avenue. Bus routes are also available from local communities to a stop near Pier Avenue.

2.10 Park Facilities

2.10.1 Overnight Visitor Facilities

Pismo State Beach has two developed campgrounds, North Beach Campground and Oceano Campground, and primitive beach camping at Oceano Dunes SVRA. Reservations are required during peak season and holiday weekends.

2.10.1.1 North Beach Campground

The North Beach Campground is off State Route 1, about one-quarter mile south of downtown the City of Pismo Beach and within the city limits. It has an entrance kiosk, 102 tent or self-contained RV camping sites, restrooms with coin-operated hot showers, a recreational vehicle (RV) sanitation station, and a campfire center. Each camping site has a picnic table and a fire ring. North Beach Campground is located about one-quarter of a mile inland, and visitors can access the beach via two trails through the dunes.



2.10.1.2 Oceano Campground

Located off Pier Avenue, the Oceano Campground features 40 RV sites with water and electrical hook-ups and 39 tent camping sites. The campground also includes an entrance kiosk, restrooms with coin-operated hot showers, and a campfire center. Campsites have a picnic table and a fire ring. Visitors can access the beach from the campground via a pedestrian trail through the dunes or by vehicle via the Pier Avenue entrance. Once in the park, visitors can explore wildlife along the Lagoon (Guiton) Trail, discover the Chumash native plant garden, and visit the Oceano Dunes District Visitor Center.

2.10.1.3 Beach Camping

State Parks permits primitive camping at Oceano Dunes SVRA south of Mark Post 2, including the open riding and camping area (approximately 1,300 acres). It is closely associated with OHV and other recreational activities on the beach. Camping typically occurs on the beach, and some camping also happens behind vegetation islands. State Parks provide vault and chemical toilets, and a concessionaire offers potable water-delivery and holding-tank pump-out services on the beach. Many campers bring their water.

2.10.2 Day Use Areas

2.10.2.1 Pismo State Beach

Pismo State Beach offers visitors many diverse recreational activities for day use. These include but are not limited to surfing, swimming, fishing, bird watching, walking trails, vehicle touring, equestrian riding, golf, a boardwalk, a visitor center, educational programs, a freshwater lagoon, and the opportunity to observe Western Monarch Butterflies. Day use areas at Pismo State Beach include:

- Pismo State Beach allows motor vehicles to access the beach at the end of West Grand Avenue (in the City of Grover Beach) and Pier Avenue in the unincorporated Oceano area. The speed limit on the beach is 15 mph. Park staff recommend that only four-wheel-drive vehicles access the beach. The beach area between Grand and Pier supports day-use activities, including bonfires, fishing, picnicking, beach play, etc.
- The Golf Course and Restaurant is a park concession near the parking area on West Grand Avenue. The golf course is a nine-hole executive course and offers golf carts for rent. Fins restaurant offers indoor and patio dining with views of the dunes and beach. The restaurant and golf course also hosts special events like weddings and community fundraisers.
- The Oceano Dunes District Visitor Center is adjacent to the Oceano Campground, has interactive exhibits and interpretive and educational programs offered by State Parks staff and volunteers.
- The Butterfly Grove has one of the largest overwintering western monarch populations in the state. Visitors can take a self-guided walk, participate in an interpretive program, and follow trails that wind through the grove. From here, visitors may also follow paths that lead to the ocean and miles of sandy beach, meadow creek, and several native plant



installations. Pismo State Beach hosts school field trips in the grove from November through February.

- Pier and Grand Avenue Entrance Stations include accessible parking (including van-accessible parking) and restrooms. Grand Avenue has accessible picnic areas.

2.10.2.2 Oceano Dunes SVRA

Oceano Dunes SVRA encompasses 3,490-acres and approximately three and one-half miles of beach and dunes for OHV recreation. Popular activities at the SVRA also include surfing, swimming, surf fishing, beach day use, horseback riding, bird watching, and day-use at Oso Flaco Lake along the southern end of the park, off Oso Flaco Lake Road. Accessible and covered picnic areas, parking, and vault restrooms are available in the day-use parking lot. The Oso Flaco Lake Trail is a one mile long accessible trail that offers fishing, coastal dunes hiking, and ocean views. The trail begins from the Oso Flaco Day Use Area and travels along an asphalt road roughly 0.25 miles to a bridge. The bridge that crosses over a portion of Oso Flaco Lake is a popular fishing and birding spot. Beyond the bridge, the trail continues for 0.5 mile along a coastal dune boardwalk and terminates at an ocean overlook and the shoreline with beach access. Along the bridge and boardwalk, benches and educational panels invite visitors to rest and learn about the native people, animals, and plants.

2.10.3 Administrative and Operations Facilities

The Oceano Dunes District's corporation or park maintenance yard consists of approximately six acres in Pismo State Beach along State Route 1, between West Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue. It has park residences and administrative and operations facilities, including the Park ranger station and visitor services office; internal administration offices; maintenance and operations buildings (auto shop, welding shop, woodshop, storage); a greenhouse; equipment and materials storage areas; a fleet fuel station, vehicle wash and parking area; heavy maintenance equipment; and parking areas for staff.

The Oceano Dunes District Office houses administrative and managerial staff and is in a leased commercial office space in Pismo Beach, California.

2.11 Utilities

2.11.1 Water System

The Parks receive water from the City of Pismo for the North Beach Campground and from the City of Grover Beach for the Grand Avenue entrance area. The golf course uses well water, and the Oceano Community Services District services the Oceano Campground and the corporation yard. Water is not available at Oceano Dunes SVRA, but a concessionaire provides potable water to campers on the beach as a service.

2.11.2 Wastewater System

Trunk sewer lines from various cities serve Pismo State Beach and deliver wastewater to the South San Luis Obispo Sanitary District's treatment plant. Flush restrooms are available at the two developed campgrounds, at the Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue entrances, at the Plaza Area near Finn's Restaurant, and the visitor center. South of Arroyo



Grande Creek, chemical and vault toilets are available for Oceano Dunes SVRA beach camping and day-use recreation areas. Staff with a pumper-trailer service park facilities and waste is disposed of in sewer lines that lead to the South San Luis Obispo Sanitary District Treatment Plant. There are three vault toilets at the Oso Flaco Day Use Area.

2.11.3 Solid Waste Disposal

Waste bins for visitors are available at various locations in the park, and the Oceano Dunes District provides solid waste pick-up and disposal services.

2.11.4 Electricity and Natural Gas Systems and Providers

PG&E provides Pismo State Beach electricity, and the Southern California Gas Company (So Cal Gas) provides natural gas. There are no services provided in the Oceano Dunes SVRA.

2.11.5 Communication Systems and Providers

AT&T provides landline phone and internet services to Pismo State Beach, and there are no services provided in the Oceano Dunes SVRA.

2.12 Recreation

Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA are popular recreation destinations. Nearly two million people visit the park every year, engaging in camping, motorized access to non-motorized recreation, equestrian use, and other common beach Day Use activities.

Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA are two units of the California State Parks system, consisting of 280 classified park units and major unclassified properties. A summary of the number of different parks in the state system and the number of individual campsites and total attendance to these other parks are provided in Table 2. Pismo State Beach has 181 designated developed campsites, and Oceano Dunes SVRA provides 1,000 camping units (i.e., up to 1,000 camping vehicles are allowed per night anywhere within the open riding area). The PWP planning area accounts for less than one percent of the land area in the state parks system while accounting for 8 percent of the total available camping units (1,185 out of 14,131). See Volume 1, Section 3.6 for a discussion about use limits and carrying capacity.

Oceano Dunes SVRA is unique because it is only one of two California State Parks units that provide OHV recreation within the Central Coast Region. The other unit is Hollister Hills SVRA in San Benito County, which is more than 18 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. There are no county parks, open space areas, or other recreation lands in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, or Ventura counties where OHV recreation is permitted at the county level. Also, Oceano Dunes SVRA is the only state-managed public land in California where motorized recreation and camping are allowed on the beach.



Table 2. Summary of State Parks System Units (Fiscal Year 2016/17)^(A)

Classification ^(B)	No. Units	Total Acreage ^(C)	Camp-sites ^(D)	Day Use Visitors ^(E)	Camping Visitors ^(F)	Total Attendance
State Park	88	1,186,949	5,626	27,483,749	3,058,600	30,542,349
State Beach	62	23,163	2,655	25,690,065	3,271,440	28,961,505
State Historic Park	52	32,345	92	8,263,542	14,257	8,277,799
State Recreation Area	33	185,711	4,190	6,070,559	374,268	6,444,827
State Natural Reserve	16	67,673	0	3,351,255	198	3,351,453
Unclassified ^(G)	16	12,340	0	662,760	0	662,760
SVRA	9	140,622	1,568	1,527,011	546,762	2,073,773
State Historical Monument	1	209	0	764,122	0	764,122
State Marine Park ^(H)	1	--	--	--	--	--
State Seashore ^(I)	1	1,860	0	0	0	0
Wayside Campground	1	66	0	35,719	0	35,719
TOTAL^(J)	280	1,650,938	14,131	73,848,782	7,265,525	81,114,307

Source: CDPR n.d. California State Parks System Statistical Report 2016/17 Fiscal Year. California Department of Parks and Recreation, Planning Recreation and Support Section, Marketing and Business Development Office.

The fiscal year ran from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017.

B These classifications do not include certain “internal” park subunits situated within other park units’ boundaries, including 61 Natural Preserves, 22 Cultural Preserves, and 12 State Wilderness areas.

C Includes CDPR-owned lands and lands owned by others but operated by CDPR in the classification listed.

D Campsite refers to individual family campsites and does not include group campsites. According to the CDPR Statistical Report for 2016/17, individual and family campsites have primitive and developed campsites, including RV hookups, accessible by foot or vehicle. Most campsites are capable of accommodating up to eight people.

E Day use visitor data reflect free and paid day use (non-overnight) visits.

F Camping visitors represent overnight visitors that used individual or group campsites.

G This line item reflects major unclassified units of the state parks system (14) plus two state marine reserves.

H Data is included in the State Seashore line item.

Data includes both state marine reserve (2 units) and state seashore (1 unit).

J Totals may not add due to rounding.



Table 3 shows Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo State Beach recreation opportunities compared to regional public recreation lands.

Table 3. Public Recreation Lands at and Near the PWP Area

Park	Managing Agency	Recreation Activities Available	Size
Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Wildlife Refuge	USFWS	Hiking, fishing, wildlife viewing	2,553 acres
Pismo State Beach	California State Parks	Camping, clam digging, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, shoreline vehicular access and recreation, swimming, wildlife viewing	1,515 acres 185 campsites
Oceano Dunes SVRA	California State Parks	Camping, horseback riding, fishing, hiking, OHV recreation, surfing, swimming, wildlife viewing	3,490 acres 1,000 campsites
Coastal Dunes RV Park and Campground	SLO County	Camping, swimming, access to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA	230 campsites
Oceano County Campground	SLO County	Camping, fishing, picnicking	22 campsites
Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park	Santa Barbara County	Hiking, wildlife viewing	612 acres

Sources: California Protected Areas Database, California State Parks, OHMVR Division, USFWS, SLO County Parks.

¹ Administratively reduced to 500 camping units due to closures for dust control. Separate CEQA review underway.

CEQA = California Environmental Quality Act

OHMVR = Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

OHV = off-highway vehicle

RV = recreational vehicle

SLO = San Luis Obispo

SVRA = State Vehicular Recreation Area

USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

2.12.1 Visitor Attendance and Use Numbers

Oceano Dunes District Staff tracks day use and overnight attendance. The table below shows the attendance data from 2015 to 2019. Over five years, day use and camping numbers are fairly consistent at both park units. Day use includes visitors, and camping consists of both beach and campground attendance. Figure 1 shows the SVRA and State Beach camping and day-use from 2015 to 2019. During the four-year period, an average of 2,025,687 people visited the park, including all camping and day use. The SVRA typically receives more day use and camping than the State Beach.



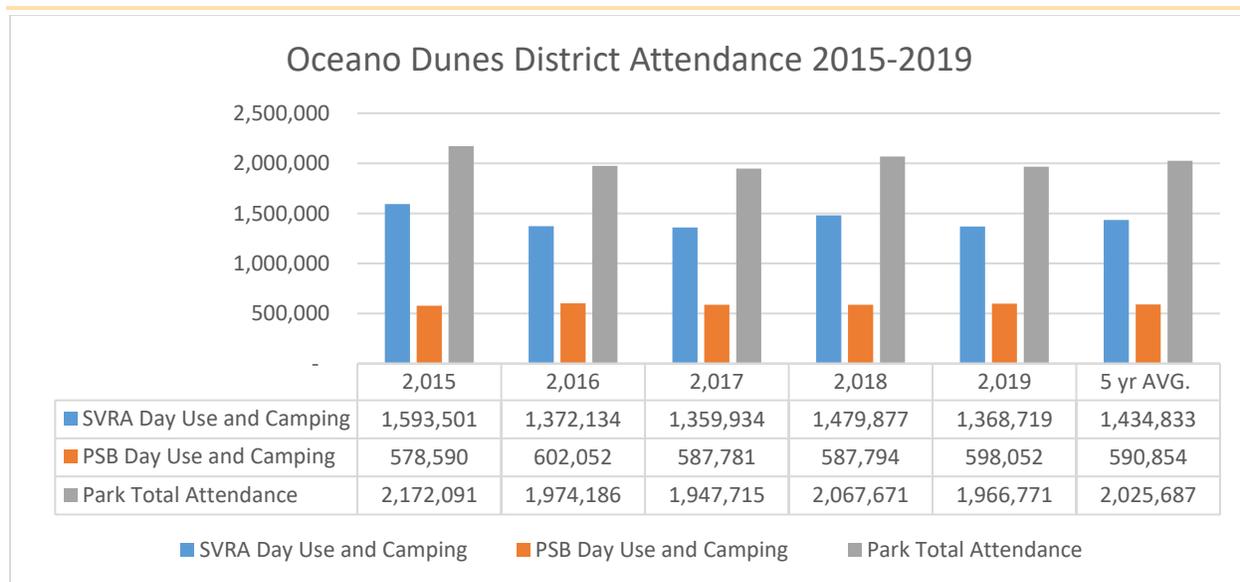


Figure 1. Oceano Dunes District Attendance 2015-2019

Source: State Parks Attendance Data, Oceano Dunes District 2020

Approximately two million people visit the Oceano Dunes District every year, engaging in pedestrian, camping, and motorized vehicle activities. Daily visitation to Oceano Dunes SVRA is lowest Monday through Thursday and highest on the weekend. Seasonally, visitation increases during the summer months (late May to early September) and is lower during the fall, winter, and spring, other than holiday weekends such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. Visitation levels and recreation use types were fairly consistent from 2015-2019.

2.12.1.1 2012 Attendance Study

In 2012, the OHMVR Division undertook a research effort in collaboration with the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration at California State University to measure visitor attendance at SVRAs and collect social data related to SVRA visitors. As part of the research effort, approximately 1,000 visitors to Oceano Dunes SVRA were surveyed regarding their visit characteristics. This survey found:

- 96.5% of survey respondents lived in California, with most of these in-state visitors coming from Fresno County (13.4%), Kern County (11.8%), Tulare County (9.6%), Los Angeles County (8.2%), San Luis Obispo County (7.3%), Kings County (5.6%), and Stanislaus County (5.1%).
- 87% of survey respondents traveled more than 50 miles to Oceano Dunes SVRA, with an overall average trip distance of 217 miles.
- 86% of survey respondents indicated they had camped at Oceano Dunes SVRA on their last visit, with an average stay of 4 nights. Camping at Oceano Dunes SVRA occurred in four main forms, including trailers/fifth wheels (48%), tents (24.4%), RVs (21.9%), and truck campers (4.9%) (Rolloff, Erickson, and Mickel 2017, 112-121).



2.12.1.2 2016 Economic Study

In 2016, the Oceano Dunes District retained Strategic Marketing Group (SMG) to determine the visitors' economic impact to Oceano Dunes SVRA on SLO County and its local communities (SMG, 2018). As part of this study, SMG conducted an after-trip email survey of visitors to the Oceano Dunes District. The top three activities that survey respondents participated in were ATV riding (62%), enjoying a beach bonfire (57%), and enjoying the sunsets (56%). When survey respondents were asked if they would still visit SLO County if Oceano Dunes SVRA were not in existence, 62% indicated they would not visit SLO County. This data suggests that Oceano Dunes SVRA provides a unique location and set of important recreational experiences on a local and regional level. The CSU Sacramento study results are generally consistent with the findings of the economic analysis conducted by SMG during the 2010/2011 time period.

2.12.1.3 2018 PWP Visitor Survey

As part of the Public and Stakeholder Participation Plan for PWP and EIR, the planning team members conducted an on-site and web-based Visitor's Survey in August and September 2018. The survey provided an opportunity for stakeholders to participate in the planning process by identifying how they use the park and their suggestions and ideas for long-term management and possible future improvements. A total of 4,075 people participated in the survey. The visitor survey found:

- Survey respondents were asked to provide their zip codes to determine the distance traveled to visit Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. More than 46 % of respondents reside between 101–200 miles from the project area. About 23 % of survey respondents live between 201-300 miles from Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA.
- Most respondents are frequent visitors of Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. More than 60 % of those who have visited Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA in the past 12 months have done so more than three times. Less than seven percent of respondents had not visited in the past 12 months but had visited sometime previously.
- On Friday through Sunday, 88% of respondents were selected as the most popular days to visit Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA.
- Survey participants identified their preferred activities at Pismo State Beach, and Oceano Dunes SVRA as motorized recreation, beach camping, beach play, campground use, and nature walks/hiking. Responses provided under the “other” category included bonfires, spending time with family, relaxing, camping, and participating in beach clean-ups.
- The majority of participants were frequent visitors to Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. About half of survey participants (49.9 %) fell within the 26–45 age range.

The 2012 Attendance Study and the 2018 PWP Visitor Survey showed fairly consistent results of how visitors use these parks.

When visiting Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA, respondents identified motorized recreation, beach camping, and beach play as their top three activities. The dunes were overwhelmingly selected as the favorite place to visit survey participants, with



94 percent responses. Beach areas, the Monarch Butterfly Grove, campgrounds, and trails and boardwalks were also chosen as favorite places. More than 60 percent of survey participants would like to see improvements to the restroom and trash facilities in terms of possible future changes. Also, respondents indicated a high level of interest (58.8 percent) in having additional concessions available at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. The survey included several open-ended questions, giving participants the ability to provide input on their preferences for other additions or modifications, educational or interpretive opportunities, and suggestions for improving their recreational experience at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA.

Regarding additions or modifications, common responses included: expanding OHV access, increasing camping areas; and limiting or eliminating OHV access. Ideas for types of educational or interpretive opportunities had the ecology and history of the dunes; community beach clean-up events; and OHV-related education and events. Suggestions for improving users' recreational experience generally fell into the following categories: OHV usage, additional facilities, policies regarding camping, park entry, enforcement of fines, dust reduction, and trash.

2.12.2 Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA Recreational Opportunities

Pismo State Beach includes the beach, campgrounds (North Beach and Oceano), Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve (Dunes Preserve), and Pismo Lake. The State Beach also contains a concessionaire-operated golf course and restaurant, the Pismo State Beach Butterfly Grove day-use area, street-legal accessible beachfront between Grand and Pier Avenues that also provides access to the adjacent Oceano Dunes SVRA to the south, and non-motorized trails. Pismo State Beach offers visitors diverse activities, including beach play, camping, surfing, swimming, fishing, equestrian riding, nature viewing, observing western monarch butterflies, and enjoying free educational programs. There are also walking trails along the coastal dune habitat and around the freshwater Oceano Lagoon.

Oceano Dunes SVRA offers various recreational activities, including dispersed beach camping, beach play, nature exploration, fishing, horseback riding, ocean sports, and a wide range of education and safety programs. OHV riding is allowed within the designated SVRA open riding area. An ATV safety-training center is in the riding area east of the Search and Rescue base, along the "sand highway." Almost two-thirds of the SVRA outside the open riding area are restricted from OHV use.

A portion of the SVRA, mostly south and southeast of the open riding area (Oso Flaco Lake), is a pedestrian-only area. Oso Flaco Lake is a popular destination for fishing, bird watching, nature viewing, and beach play. It has a day-use area with sheltered picnic tables, interpretive panels, restrooms, walking paths, and a boardwalk that crosses a portion of the lake and dunes to overlook points.

2.12.3 Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA Recreation

The California Coastal Act defines "coastal-dependent development or use" to mean any development or use that requires a site on, or adjacent to, the sea to be able to function at all (PRC § 30101). State Parks considers beach and dune-oriented recreational



opportunities to be coastal-dependent recreation activities. For this EIR, coastal-dependent recreation activities at Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA include:

- Non-vehicular recreational activities such as sand play, sunbathing, surf fishing, swimming (in the ocean), kiteboarding and kayaking (in the ocean), marine wildlife viewing, and beach and coastal dune horseback riding
- Beach and coastal dune camping
- Beach and coastal dune vehicular recreation

The PWP area comprises 5,005 acres of managed lands, most of which are managed for public recreation purposes (Table 3). There are 844 acres located in the eastern portion of Oceano Dunes SVRA, closed to all public access and recreation; this area includes lands operated by the OHMVR Division but owned by Phillips 66 and lands leased from the OHMVR Division for agricultural purposes. Pismo State Beach consists of 1,515 acres of managed recreation lands, nearly all of which are open to the public. The parks provide both vehicular and non-vehicular recreation opportunities.

2.12.3.1 Non-Vehicular Recreation

Non-vehicular recreation is allowed throughout all areas of Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA that are open to public recreation (4,091 acres) and include, but are not limited to, camping, pedestrian beach uses, dog walking and horseback riding, kite flying, sail sports, hiking, surfing/boating, and occasional bicycle riding. The acreages open to these uses are shown in Table 4. non-vehicular recreation is particularly popular along the shoreline north of Grand Avenue and between Grand Avenue and Post 2. non-vehicular recreation is also popular in the Oso Flaco Lake area in the southern portion of Oceano Dunes SVRA, which includes a parking lot, boardwalk, and other small visitor-serving facilities.

Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve provides opportunities for non-vehicular recreation, except swimming and other water-related activities, because the Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve does not adjoin the beach. Walking trails traverse the preserve, but otherwise, there are no visitor-serving facilities in the preserve.

Pismo State Beach contains various visitor-serving facilities and infrastructure, including a visitor center, education center, golf course, campgrounds, RV facilities, and parking areas.

Each year, Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA host numerous organized non-vehicular events, including beach clean-ups, weddings, family reunions, corporate dinners, bonfires, surfing and other sporting contests, media events, video commercials, and commercial still photography.



Table 4. PWP Area – Public Recreation Opportunity and Access

Park	Total Size (Acres)	Pedestrian Open (Acres)	Pedestrian Closed (Acres)	Equestrian Open (Acres)	Equestrian Closed (Acres)	Street-legal Vehicles Open (Acres)	Street-legal Vehicles Closed (Acres)	OHV Open (Acres)	OHV Closed (Acres)
Pismo State Beach	1,515	1,444	70(A)	1,413	101(B)	273	1,241(C)	208(i)	1,306(D)
Oceano Dunes SVRA	3,490	2,621	869(E)	1,389	2,102(F)	1,097	2,393(G)	1,097	2,393(G)
TOTAL(H)	5,005	4,065	939	2,802	2,203	1,370	3,634	1,305	3,669

Source: OHMVR Division / MIG 2020

- A Pismo Lake (open, but public visitation is not encouraged due to lack of access points)
 - B Pismo Lake, Golf Course, and Ranger Station
 - C Pismo Lake, Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve, Pismo State Beach north of Grand Avenue
 - D Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve and all areas north of Post 2
 - E Phillips 66 leasehold and agricultural lease area
 - F Phillips 66 leasehold, agricultural lease area, and Oso Flaco area
 - G Phillips 66 leasehold, agricultural lease area, Oso Flaco area, vegetated islands, and northern portion of SVRA contiguous with Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve
 - H Totals may not add due to rounding south of Post 2
- OHMVR = Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation
 OHV = off-highway vehicle
 PWP = Public Works Plan
 SVRA = State Vehicular Recreation Area

2.12.3.2 Beach and Coastal Dune Camping

Pismo State Beach has two traditional campgrounds (North Beach and Oceano) with 181 designated campsites. Camping within Oceano Dunes SVRA and the portion of Pismo State Beach open to OHVs is largely a vehicle-dependent activity. Campers are generally based on vehicles driven onto the beach, and camping is only allowed within the open riding and camping area. CDP 4-82-300-A5 limits this beach camping to 1,000 registered campers (“campers” are based on each registered vehicle). There are no designated campsites; however, on a typical day, most camping activity occurs near the beach, between Posts 2 and 6. During busy periods (holidays, weekends, and special events), camping activity can extend farther south and inland.

Many visitors engaging in non-OHV recreation, such as camping and beachcombing, also participate in OHV recreation.

Nearly all visitor-serving facilities at Oceano Dunes SVRA are located within the SVRA’s open riding and camping area. These facilities include vault and chemical toilets, trash disposal areas, and private concessionaires’ mobile services (e.g., drinking water delivery, holding tank pump-out, towing). Besides vehicle recreation, the ability to camp on the beach and dunes at Oceano Dunes SVRA is a significant recreational attraction. This primitive beach and dune camping also represents a very low-cost camping and recreation opportunity. The \$10 fee is



the lowest camping fee available within the Oceano Dunes District (North Beach and Oceano Campground fees range from \$35 to \$50).

2.12.3.3 Beach and Coastal Dune Vehicular Recreation

Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA operate under daily vehicle limits established by CDP 4-82-300-A5, approved in 2001. The permit sets the following daily limits on vehicles within the park units: up to 2,580 street-legal vehicles, 1,000 street-legal vehicles for camping, and 1,720 OHVs). Due to the recent installation of fencing for dust control that closes off over 48 acres of prime camping area, State Parks has administratively reduced camping permits to 500 vehicles. This recreation closure and other effects of dust control measures under CA-44 New Particulate Matter Reduction Plan (PMRP) are being assessed in a separate CEQA document. See Volume 1, Section 3.6 Managing Use Limits for a detailed discussion about use limits.

2.12.3.4 Public Access to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA

Pismo State Beach shares two permanent entrances with Oceano Dunes SVRA at Grand Avenue (City of Grover Beach) and Pier Avenue (Oceano). Street-legal vehicles, including motorhomes, vehicles towing trailers, and other camping vehicles, can access the SVRA via sand ramps at the end of Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue. Street-legal vehicles drive south on the beach to the open riding area, which begins approximately one mile south on the beach from Pier Avenue at marker post (Post) 2. OHVs must be transported to this point via street-legal vehicles before unloading in the OHV staging area at Post 2. Visitors access Oso Flaco Lake via Oso Flaco Lake Road from Highway.

Pedestrian. North of Pismo Creek, visitors may walk into Pismo State Beach via a network of roads and stairways off Price Street (via Ocean Way, Wilmar Avenue, and Kon Tiki Inn) and from State Route 1 (via Cypress and Main) and the Pismo Beach Boardwalk along the beach between Main Street and Addie Street. South of Pismo Creek, visitors can access the beach from the Pismo State Beach North Beach Campground and Le Sage Drive. Visitors may also walk into Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA via Grand Avenue, Pier Avenue, points along Strand Avenue, and South Oso Flaco Lake Road. Grand Avenue has a large parking area that provides easy access to the beach and is, therefore, the most convenient access point for “walk-in” visitors.

Other non-motorized access is also available via River Road and Creek Road just south of the Oceano County Airport (where the private Pismo Dunes Ranch RV Resort is located). These non-motorized access points lead into Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve, a subunit of Pismo State Beach that adjoins Oceano Dunes SVRA. These access points are not close to the beach or open riding and camping area and are less popular than Grand and Pier Avenue access.

Visitors access the Oso Flaco area located at the southern end of Oceano Dunes SVRA from Oso Flaco Lake Road off SR 1. The road is narrow and terminates at the Oso Flaco Lake entrance station and parking lot. This access way is primarily used by hikers, nature walkers, and fishermen. This entrance point does not provide access to the Oceano Dunes SVRA open riding and camping area.



Visitors access Pismo Lake via “informal” access points, as CDPR does not have designated access points to the lake.

Equestrian. Equestrian users primarily access the Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo State Beach through the Grand Avenue entrance at Grover Beach. Due to the presence of an informal staging area) or from the Pacific Dunes Ranch and RV Resort, which offers horseback riding and is located off Silver Spur Place to the east of the Pismo Dunes Natural Preserve. Equestrian access in the Oso Flaco area was eliminated in 1991 for resource protection.

Vehicle. Public vehicle access to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA is only via Grand Avenue in the City of Grover Beach or Pier Avenue in Oceano. These two entrances provide sand ramps that lead vehicles down onto the beach. Visitor data indicate that the Grand Avenue ramp offers approximately 51 percent of the visitors entering Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. The ramp located at Pier Avenue’s foot in Oceano lies around one mile south of Grand Avenue. Commercial establishments line Pier Avenue leading to the entrance kiosk, and sidewalks are located on both the north and south side of the avenue.

2.12.4 Camping

Pismo State Beach has two developed campgrounds -- North Beach Campground and Oceano Campground Current. Camping use limits are managed year-round with an online reservation system and walk-up registration.

Coastal Development Permit A-300-82-A5 set beach camping limits within Oceano Dunes SVRA to 1,000 units. Camping is dispersed throughout the beach and dunes area, though people tend to camp on the beach above the high tide line. During busy summer visitation periods, Park staff establish travel corridors within the beach and camping areas that allow vehicles to move safely between the shoreline and back dunes.

The summer months and select winter holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, and President’s Day) tend to be the highest use periods for camping.

2.12.5 Day Use Activities

Day Use is defined as activities and visitation that occur in one day and are not associated with overnight activities or accommodations. Oceano Dunes District Day Use facilities include Pismo State Beach, including the Butterfly Grove, Oceano Dunes SVRA, including Oso Flaco Lake.

2.12.5.1 Non-Motorized

Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA offer a myriad of non-motorized recreational opportunities. The park is popular for walking, running, equestrian use, picnicking, surfing, beach play, fishing, and kite surfing, to name a few. Oso Flaco, an area within Oceano Dunes SVRA, is a destination popular for walking, hiking, birding, and fishing.



Significant pedestrian use occurs north of West Grand Avenue within Pismo State Beach. In 2018, Pismo State Beach had approximately 132,000 pedestrian day-use visitors.² Oceano Dunes SVRA had nearly 611,000 pedestrian day-use visitors, mostly entering via the Pier Avenue entrance. Pedestrians also visit the Oso Flaco Lake area, most via the Oso Flaco Road parking lot and pedestrian boardwalk, but some walk-in from the open riding area.

Pedestrians have access to most beach areas and all designated trails. Pedestrians are allowed within vegetation islands year-round but are prohibited within the closed Western snowy plover and California least tern nesting areas (i.e., seasonal exclosures) during nesting season. State Parks may restrict certain activities seasonally, including kite flying and kiteboarding, and the use of drones.

Everyday pedestrian day-use activities within the Park area include beach-oriented actions, exploring the Butterfly Grove in the butterfly overwintering season (November–February), bird watching, hiking in the dunes, and occasionally playing in Pismo Lagoon. Campfires and barbecues are allowed in designated campgrounds and on portions of the beach where vehicles are allowed (i.e., south of West Grand Avenue).

Pedestrian access is allowed in the Pismo Creek estuarine lagoon throughout the year, and visitors can access Arroyo Grande Creek and its lagoon from October to February. Occasionally, visitors wade into the water at Arroyo Grande and Pismo creeks. Pedestrians cross Pismo Creek and Arroyo Grande Creek within the surf zone when it flows to the ocean (generally during the winter months) and across the mainstream during periods when the estuaries are impounded. Although no designated crossing exists, pedestrians frequently cross Arroyo Grande Creek to reach the Dune Preserve. Guiton Crossing, a private at-grade crossing in Arroyo Grande Creek, traverses Arroyo Grande Creek upstream of State Parks property and is also used.

State Parks has not developed any trails or other visitor amenities at Pismo Lake, and it is currently not open to the public. However, the area may be later assessed to identify resource protection measures, recreational opportunities, pedestrian access, and community connections.

The following non-motorized recreation activities are also popular at the Park:

- Surfing and stand-up paddleboarding activities generally occur on Pismo State Beach north; however, surfing does occur elsewhere, such as near Post 6 in Oceano Dunes SVRA. Surfers and paddle-boarders typically park on the beach or park at Pier Avenue and walk into the Park.
- Kite flying and drones are allowed except where restricted by Superintendent’s Order.

² Pedestrian visitor numbers are determined by random sampling of pedestrians or by random sampling of cars at the free day use areas and observing the number of individuals arriving in those vehicles.



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- Kiteboarding/kitesurfing/windsurfing activities typically launch between West Grand and Pier Avenues. The windy season, from mid-March to mid-July, is most popular for these activities.
 - Small craft boating – visitors typically use trailers to transport their watercraft to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. However, boating can be restricted if there is a conflict with resource protection. Visitors also boat in the Oceano Lagoon.
 - Fishing – many people fish from the beach every day. Surf fishing typically occurs between Pier Avenue and Post 6. Fishing is also legal year-round in Oso Flaco Lake; however, the Oceano Dunes District has posted fish consumption advisories because of high levels of pesticides found in fish caught from the lake. Surf fishing is popular for the local community at the beach accessed from the Oso Flaco Lake boardwalk. Visitors also occasionally dig for Pismo clams along the shoreline.
 - Horseback riding – equestrians commonly use the beaches and trails at Pismo State Beach, including the Dunes Preserve, and typically stage at the undeveloped dirt area at West Grand Avenue. Equestrians are allowed in the SVRA but do not use it very often. Horses are not permitted in the Oso Flaco area.
 - Hiking – people hike at Oso Flaco Lake, the Dunes Preserve, and on the Grand Dunes Trail, an informal path through the dune area south of West Grand Avenue.
 - Bicycling – visitors use bicycles in designated campgrounds and on the beach occasionally when the tide is low. Bikes are not allowed at Oso Flaco Lake.
 - Golfing – this activity occurs at the Pismo State Beach Golf Course.
 - Nature Viewing – This activity is popular throughout the park units. The Butterfly Grove receives approximately 75,000 people visit here between November 2018 and February 2019. Locals, visitors, and school programs use the Oso Flaco Day Use Area for bird watching, to see wildflowers, and to see marine wildlife at the beach. People may use a motorized accessible vehicle for enhanced ADA access for nature viewing.

2.12.5.2 Motorized Recreation

The park offers opportunities for several motorized activities, including the following:

- **Motorized boating** – Visitors can legally launch boats into the ocean from the beach. Visitors launch boats at Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA south of West Grand Avenue. They cannot launch from or land on the seasonal enclosure shorelines during the snowy plover and California least tern breeding season.
- **Motorized vehicle use** – Street-legal vehicles are permitted to access the beach at both Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA via Grand and Pier avenues. Only street-legal vehicles can operate on Pismo State Beach.



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- **OHV Recreation** – Motorized vehicular use on the beach and dunes is one of the main attractions of the SVRA. OHV recreation and use are permitted at Oceano Dunes SVRA only. All OHVs must be transported to the SVRA via street-legal vehicles and then be unloaded south of Post 2.
 - **Specialty Vehicle Safety Training** – Safety training programs are provided for ATV and ROV operation. Both courses are offered by Park staff and follow industry standards for the specific vehicles. Training occurs at a controlled location within the SVRA and greater areas.

2.12.5.3 Equestrian Recreation

Equestrians are allowed on most of the beach, and most trails at Pismo State Beach, including the Dunes, Preserve, and in most of the Oceano Dunes SVRA. Equestrians must remain on designated trails and pathways and are not allowed at Oso Flaco Lake. Most equestrians stage in the large unpaved lot at West Grand Avenue and then proceed down the Dunes Trail to the beach. Equestrians are prohibited from entering any area closed to visitors, such as the seasonal shorebird nesting exclosures. Most equestrian use occurs on weekends.

2.12.6 Special Events

Each year, Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA host numerous organized events, including beach clean-ups, weddings, family reunions, corporate dinners, bonfires, surfing and other sporting contests, media events, video commercials, commercial still photography sessions, and OHV events. Organized special events hosted by outside agencies, businesses, and organizations may require a special event permit approved by the Oceano Dunes District Superintendent. Special Event Permits describe the activity or event, the estimated number of participants, fee schedule, items sold, insurance requirements, and any special conditions placed on the Oceano Dunes District Superintendent's activity or event. The permit then provides and requires appropriate conditions, including resource protection, public safety, and public health measures.

While special events vary over time, the following are examples of previously approved events:

- **Weddings** – approximately 25 weddings per year are held at Pismo State Beach, with most occurring in either the foredunes and cypress grove near the golf course or near the West Grand Avenue entrance within the non-motorized portion of the beach. Weddings with bonfires or other fire sources are set up within the motorized part of the park.
- **Gatherings and receptions** – the more popular destination is generally the West Grand Avenue entrance.
- **Video production and still photography** – State Parks works with the California Film Commission to support video and photography shoots at the park. These events occur approximately 35–40 times every year. Because shoots may involve impacts to park resources resulting from activities such as standing in the Dunes Preserve or moving vehicles along the back dunes, they require a permit. Film activity permits do not generally authorize activities otherwise prohibited in the areas to be used for production. Drone or unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) filming is allowed on a case-by-case basis. All



UAS operations are required to be consistent with State Parks’ policies regarding UAS use, including acquiring a permit to operate over State Parks lands. UAS operations also require compliance with natural resource protection measures and obeying all applicable safety regulations.

- **Music events** – concerts and other music activities include amplified music and may involve vendors and camping, and typically occur on weekends.
- **Non-motorized sporting events** – event sports such as running races may traverse the beach and dunes. Other non-motorized sporting events include beach soccer, baseball, and kiteboarding tournaments and exhibitions. These events may include vendors and entertainment (e.g., music) and are generally single-day or weekend events on the beach.
- **Poker runs** – these events are non-timed, non-race, self-guided activities during which participants drive to checkpoints along a course within the Oceano Dunes SVRA open riding area. Such events may include a vending/registration/staging area, are typically less than an acre, and are approved within the OCEANO DUNES SVRA. These events are generally single-day events.
- **Vintage car races** – these races may include car displays, races of pre-World War II-era motorcycles, and cars on the hard sand, a beach party, bonfire, and vendors. The race itself comprises two vehicles racing on a short (<1,000 feet) stretch of beach. Cars and motorcycles cross the finish line with an average maximum speed of 35 mph. These events typically take place on weekends.
- **Hucking.** Competitive truck jumping or “hucking” involves an exhibition of trucks jumping off a gradual incline dune ramp with a flat landing area. Hucking events have been held at the Competition Hill portion of the open riding area. Other motorized exhibitions may also be included in hucking events. Such exhibitions are expected to include space for vendors, camping, a stage, and other temporary event facilities closer to the beach. To date, these exhibition areas have been less than 10 acres. The overall event lasts less than a week; however, the exhibition lasts no more than two days.

2.12.7 Holidays

The Oceano Dunes District often sees a significant increase in visitation during long holiday weekends. Even during these busy holidays, weekends, daily camping, and vehicle use, limits on the beach are maintained at Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. When vehicle capacity is reached, the entrances are closed to further vehicle day use. Independence Day (July 4) is typically one of the busiest holidays of the year. The City of Pismo Beach’s commercial fireworks show on the Pismo pier attracts many spectators on the City’s beaches, including Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. However, other than the city’s commercial fireworks display, fireworks are prohibited in State Parks units. Additional State Parks rangers and resource staff are employed during the July 4 holiday to handle the large crowds and associated vehicular traffic. State Parks continues to implement educational efforts and heightened enforcement to reduce illegal fireworks in the Park. Other busy summer weekends include Memorial Day and Labor Day, and the Catholic holiday Saint Anthony.



Busy non-summer holiday times are Columbus Day weekend, Thanksgiving, Christmas to New Years, and Presidents Day.

2.13 Education and Interpretation Program

2.13.1 Park Interpretive Facilities

2.13.1.1 Oceano Dunes District Visitor Center

Oceano Dunes District’s primary interpretive facility is the visitor center, located at 555 Pier Avenue in Oceano, adjacent to Oceano campground. Volunteers and interpretive staff greet visitors from an information desk as they enter. To the entry’s right, visitors see a large table map and a dune diorama that encourages exploration. Exhibits along the center’s perimeter discuss Northern Chumash culture, dune habitat, shorebirds, Pismo clams, history of OHVs at the park, the historic “Dunite” colony, and park resource management. Outside, a partial whale skeleton on the grounds allows for the interpretation of marine mammals. Native plants make up the landscaping around the building and allow visitors to learn about coastal flora.

2.13.1.2 Pismo State Beach Butterfly Grove

The Butterfly Grove shelters one of the largest colonies of overwintering western monarch butterflies in the Western United States. The annual California Western Monarch Day features butterfly talks and educational booths for children’s and adult art activities. Weather permitting, State Parks docents and staff provide information and interpretive talks in the grove when monarchs are present. Docents also set up spotting scopes for close-up viewing. State Park interpreters manage the volunteer program and provide educational school field trips.

2.13.1.3 Campfire Centers

Campfire centers support interpretation and education programming offered by State Park staff, volunteers, and partners. Centers are present at the Oceano and North Beach campgrounds.

2.13.1.4 Boardwalks

Two accessible boardwalk trails with interpretive panels are present in the Park. One traverses a portion of Oso Flaco Lake and the adjacent dune system at the south end of Oceano Dunes SVRA and ends on the beach. The other runs south along the foredunes from West Grand Avenue in Pismo State Beach.

2.13.1.5 Printed and Online Media

Flyers, activity books, and interpretive panels discuss restoration projects, habitat, wildlife, environmental stewardship, safety education, responsible recreation, and other pertinent issues. Printed materials are available at the visitor center, while interpretive panels are available throughout the Park. Park interpreters also manage content on the State Park website and social media platforms.



2.13.1.6 *Portable Interpretive Trailers*

The Oceano Dunes District has two interpretive trailers that can be towed onto the beach or to other locations. Park interpretive staff and volunteers use them for programs, impromptu outreach, and onsite information, interpretation, and sales.

2.13.2 **Park Educational Programs**

During the 2018 school year, approximately 4,000 K-12 students visited the Park for field trips. Program topics included the Northern Chumash, the life cycle and migration of monarch butterflies, and the region's natural history. Educators from several school districts also visited Oso Flaco Lake and the Butterfly Grove.

The Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) is a statewide interpretive program that utilizes distance-learning platforms to reach students who may not visit California State Parks for in-person field trips. State Park interpreters carry out the PORTS program. Oceano Dunes District staff PORTS programs cover monarch butterflies, discovering the dunes, and Northern Chumash.

2.13.3 **Community Participation**

Park staff provide park information from informational booths at local farmers markets and community events. These public event efforts are critical to the Oceano Dunes District's establishment of a broader community engagement program. This program aims to engage with underserved and underrepresented communities and groups. Park staff also attend city managers' meetings and local chambers of commerce meetings to provide park information as needed and actively engage with the local communities.

2.13.4 **Junior Lifeguard Program**

The Oceano Dunes District Junior Lifeguard Program provides water safety education to area youth. The program aims to improve young people's physical conditioning, their understanding and reverence for the environment, and their respect for themselves, their peers, and their parents. Recreation programs include open water swimming, paddle boarding, body surfing, body boarding, surfboard riding, skin diving, and self-rescue. Students also participate in lectures and discussions about pertinent marine and environmental topics. State Parks staff are proud to offer the Junior Lifeguard Program to underserved communities like Oceano and Santa Maria to introduce them to marine education and aquatic recreation.

2.13.5 **Staffing for Interpretive Services**

Oceano Dunes District has a team of State Park interpreters, seasonal staff, and volunteers that manage educational and community outreach programs. Like other disciplines, the interpretation and educational program has several components.

Park staff provide interpretive programs at Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo State Beach. They conduct junior ranger and campfire programs during the summer and on holiday weekends in the non-summer months. Additionally, Park interpretive staff, peace officers, maintenance staff, and natural resource specialists often interact with onsite visitors while



conducting their duties. Visitors often see researchers like natural and cultural resource scientists working in the field and ask various questions.

Roving, where staff interact with visitors and discuss various topics, is a popular communication tool used during heavy visitation periods. Law enforcement rangers also play an essential interpretive role, mainly through informal contacts they make with visitors. Rangers often address issues related to safety and park regulations and orient visitors to appropriate activities.

Oceano Dunes District staff also frequently provide stationary and roving interpretation in the Oso Flaco Lake area, especially in the summer. Roving interpretation may include setting up a table with items of interest, such as animal specimens, and inviting the public to learn about the displays. Staff and volunteers offer interpretive walks in the park.

The Central Coast State Parks Association provides support in the form of funding and advocacy of interpretation and education programs and media.

2.13.6 Recurring Interpretive Special Events

The Oceano Dunes District has recurring interpretive events, including:

- **California Monarch Day** (February) – every year, Pismo State Beach celebrates this special event, which includes tours, booths, and activities
- **Summer Fun Days** – this event is one day a month during the summer season and includes fun family activities and crafts
- **Dunes Safety Day** – rangers, lifeguards, natural resource specialists, maintenance and interpretation staff provide safety information to visitors that teaches them how to recreate safely while in the Park
- **Summer Fun Day Oso Flaco** – provides educational booths with natural and cultural activities along with safety education games

2.13.7 Guided Hikes

Interpretive staff and docent provide guide hikes throughout the district. The Oso Flaco Lake area is a popular location for guided hikes led by local non-profit organizations. Most guided walks are staged on existing trails. During the school year, the Oceano Dunes District may conduct school field trips at Oso Flaco Lake and other park locations, including the Monarch Butterfly Grove and visitor center. Ten to sixty people typically attend these school field trips. The Dunes Center, a local non-profit affiliated with the Guadalupe Nipomo Dunes Collaborative, conducts two to three guided field trips per month at Oso Flaco Lake. The Dune Center field trips typically accommodate 5–30 people. Camp KEEP (Kern Environmental Education Program, an outdoor science school for 6th graders from Kern County) utilizes the foredunes and shoreline northwest of Fins restaurant to provide hands-on sustainability education programming. On average, Camp KEEP provides education to 3,841 students annually.



2.13.8 Trails and Signs

The Oceano Dunes District has several trails, such as walking trails in campgrounds and around the Monarch Butterfly Grove, an accessible boardwalk at Oso Flaco Lake, and over-sand trails in the SVRA. As a primary means for accessing interior areas of the Park, these trails also provide interpretive panel opportunities while surrounded by the resource.

Bulletin boards outside the Visitor Center, in the campgrounds, and at the Ranger Station provide current visiting information. The District has 48 outdoor interpretive panels, including those located along an accessible trail at Oso Flaco Lake and the Monarch Butterfly Grove. Seasonal interpretive signs on Western snowy plover and California least tern nesting are in place from March through September, along with wayside panels that focus on aquatic birds, shorebirds, wildlife-related topics beach/water safety.

2.13.9 Publications

Pismo State Beach offers visitors a printed flyer with maps for both the North Beach and Oceano campgrounds, including various information about campground use and regulations. Oceano Dunes SVRA has a full-color brochure with a map, park rules, and interpretive text. An illustrated *Oceano Dunes District Adventure Guide* includes activities that children can complete to receive a certificate. A *Walking Guide to Oso Flaco Lake* interprets the natural features along the trail and consists of a map and a timeline of cultural history. An *illustrated Stormwater Management Program* brochure explains the importance of stormwater management in the SVRA and State Beach.

The *Outdoor Recreation Guide and Recreation Map for the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex* describe the activities and facilities from Pismo Beach to Point Sal. They are Dunes Collaborative projects involving State Parks and several regional partners. The Central Coast State Park Association prepared a colorful brochure that focuses on the Monarch Butterfly Grove. It includes information about monarch butterfly migration, life cycle, and grove behavior.

The San Luis Obispo County Office of Tourism provides a “Welcome to The Whale Trail” 5” by 7” brochure on glossy postcard stock that includes information on whale migration along the coast and illustrations and short descriptions of a variety of marine mammals. The reverse side provides information about www.thewhaletrail.org.

2.14 Motorized Vehicle Crossing of Arroyo Grande Creek

No camping or OHV use is permitted near Arroyo Grande Creek since it is outside of Oceano Dunes SVRA and the open riding area, but motorized vehicles can cross the creek at its mouth when it is flowing into the ocean. The Oceano Dunes District has established specific guidelines via Superintendent’s Order governing the creek’s closure to vehicular crossings to protect human life, prevent property loss, and protect the waterway from pollution potentially caused by prolonged submersion of vehicles. Implementation of this order has avoided impacts on natural resources associated with the creek. The guidelines from the order have been incorporated into the Habitat Conservation Plan prepared for the park.



Under Superintendent’s Order 554-005-2020, State Parks prohibits street-legal vehicles from crossing Arroyo Grande Creek in any manner other than crossing the creek as close to the ocean waterline as possible and parallel to the ocean waterline. Driving upstream or downstream in the creek channel or any other manner in the creek channel is prohibited. If the creek crossing has a “closed” sign, visitors may not cross the creek. The Oceano Dunes District informs visitors of these creek- crossing rules via outreach activities and through active contact with visitors. Because visitors can still access the beach from West Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue and drive on the beach when it rains and the creek becomes a challenge to cross, State Park rangers patrol the crossing to keep visitors from going across closures are in effect. District staff also implement other measures to protect resources associated with the creek, such as regularly monitoring creek levels and adjusting fencing to keep vehicles out of ponded areas, regular fisheries monitoring, and implementing parks staff guidelines on safe and environmentally benign creek crossings.

2.15 Emergency Response, Medical Aid, and Access/Egress

State Park Peace Officers and Seasonal Lifeguard staff respond to medical and law enforcement emergencies, which can occur anywhere in the park and are essential for maintaining human safety. Emergencies occur any time human health or safety is at risk. Responses may require high-speed travel by medical and law enforcement vehicles (e.g., pick-up truck, sport utility vehicle, four-wheel-drive ambulance), including in areas without frequent vehicular traffic. Past emergencies have included water rescues, boat stranding, and public safety issues such as OHV accidents, trespassing in sensitive areas, and requests for assistance from adjacent property owners or managers.

2.16 Specialty Vehicle Safety Training (ATV and ROV)

Safety training programs are provided for both ATV and Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles (ROV) operations. Both courses are offered by Park staff and follow industry standards for the specific vehicle (ATV and ROV). Training occurs at both a controlled location and within the SVRA training area is fenced for the activity.

2.17 Other Agency and Concession Vehicles

On occasion, other government agencies and non-State Parks services require access to the park for different reasons, including:

- enforcing federal, state, county, and municipal laws;
- conducting search and rescue for lost watercraft in the ocean;
- marine mammal rescue to remove dead or injured marine mammals;
- CDFW wardens enforcing California Fish and Game Code regulations for fishing and other laws;
- towing/removing stuck or broken-down vehicles at Oceano Dunes SVRA;
- repairing utility facilities that are on State Park property; and



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- flying/landing medevac helicopters.

These activities may take place throughout the Park but primarily occur along the beach and adjacent shoreline. For these activities, the non-State Park vehicles generally access areas open to public vehicles. Exceptions include removing vehicles stuck in a closed portion of shoreline, boat salvage, and water rescue. If possible, State Parks will provide a resource monitor to escort these vehicles into closed areas.

2.18 Fire Protection

Fires occasionally occur in or near the Park. Ignition sources include human activities like illegal fireworks, cigarettes, campfires, and natural sources such as lightning strikes. Fire potential in the Park is typically highest from June through September, when dry vegetation and low humidity are common. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) and other local fire authorities provide fire response services in the Park.

2.19 Facility Management

Park maintenance and facility management include maintaining campgrounds, ramps, roads, and trails, collecting garbage, erecting and maintaining fences, and riparian vegetation maintenance. This section describes the variety of activities included in maintaining Oceano Dunes District facilities.

Campground Maintenance – maintenance activities include mowing, implementing a hazardous tree program, restroom upkeep, trash removal, and other general housekeeping. The hazardous tree program entails routine tree inspections and removal of hazard trees, if necessary.

General Facilities Maintenance – facilities maintenance includes regular interior and exterior building maintenance, such as fence, sign, information kiosk replacement, minor vegetation clearing, and maintaining structures such as vault toilets and sheds. The frequency of this work depends on visitor usage and weather-related damage.

Trash Collection – trash collection occurs at the entrances, the Butterfly Grove, and campgrounds. Staff also routinely collect garbage along various creeks or other areas where trash tends to accumulate. Park staff collect waste from smaller trash bins throughout the SVRA by pickup truck and transport it to a collection area at Post 2, where it is deposited into 20-cubic-yard roll-off dumpsters. Usually, two to four dumpsters are deployed at any time, but more may be added during special events and holiday weekends. The dumpsters occupy up to 0.25 acres of sand and typically stay for a week, at which time they are hauled away by trucks to be emptied and returned. Smaller trash bins are collected by truck and transported back to one of the larger roll-off containers from the Oso Flaco Day Use Area.

Wind Fencing Installation, Maintenance, and Removal – the Oceano Dunes District installs approximately 1,700 linear feet of wind fencing directly upwind of Grand Avenue, Pier Avenue, and Strand Way annually from March to July. State Parks staff stretch the plastic fencing material across fence poles in approximately 80-foot sections. Employees also install wind fencing to control natural sand drift from the beach onto public roads, parking areas, and other structures such as residences that front the southern portion of



Pismo Beach. Additional wind fencing has been added for current dust control projects in response to the Stipulated Abatement Order.

Sand Ramps – Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA vehicle beach access is by way of sand ramps located at both park entrances. Staff perform ongoing maintenance to remove and relocate the accumulation of sand to facilitate vehicle access.

Street Sweeping – street-sweeping program removes sand that accumulates on West Grand Avenue in the City of Grover Beach and on Pier Avenue in the Oceano community, from the sand ramps going east to approximately 100 feet. For additional sweeping along Pier Avenue, State Parks contracts with a private company that sweeps up to Air Park Way.

Road maintenance – maintenance involves resurfacing roadways and parking lots and is implemented by maintenance crews on an as-needed basis.

Trail maintenance – pedestrian access maintenance occurs on the Pismo State Beach and Oso Flaco Lake boardwalks and other pedestrian access points, including repairing degraded boardwalk sections. Some trails, such as the Dunes Trail, also require light grading. At Oso Flaco Lake, staff remove vegetation and add a road base to the northern end of the lake access road to ensure continued access.

Beach debris collection and removal – maintenance staff, periodically use a mechanical beach rake to strategically target debris impacted areas within the Park above the wrack line (high tide line). These activities occur infrequently and supplement ongoing, daily housekeeping, and trash collection activities.

Routine riparian and vegetation maintenance – include Pismo Lake spillway maintenance and culvert maintenance at Oso Flaco Lake and Meadow and Carpenter creeks. Additional activities include riparian tree and shrub maintenance, invasive species control, aquatic plant control, vegetation management along trails and roads, invasive plant control, and minor flood maintenance like maintaining existing ditches and culverts. Riparian and vegetation maintenance activities are based on approved resource management plans.

Maintenance of perimeter, vegetation islands, cable boundary fences, and other barriers – these fences and walls are installed, maintained, and removed regularly. Fencing includes perimeter fencing around campgrounds and vegetation islands. A cable boundary fence is also located on the shoreline along the southern boundary of the Oceano Dunes SVRA riding area at Post 8 to prevent vehicular and equestrian intrusion into sensitive habitats near Oso Flaco Lake.

Heavy equipment – staff utilize heavy equipment (e.g., loader, tractor) throughout the Park for everything from removing stranded vehicles or boats, removing perimeter and project fencing, and restoration activities.

2.19.1 Beach Concessions

State Parks contracts with various concessionaires to conduct business on the beach and other areas owned by State Parks (e.g., the restaurant and golf course at West Grand Avenue). In



addition to the restaurant and golf course, the following are examples of concessions that currently operate within the Park:

- **Mobile RV wastewater pumping and freshwater renewal** – concessionaires drive up and down the camping area, offer water and wastewater service, and offer camping-related items such as firewood for sale.
- **Professional Humvee tours** – concessionaires provide guided tours of the dunes in Humvees and use professional drivers.
- **OHV rental** – several local businesses rent OHVs on the beach; staging occurs at milepost 2.
- **Towing** – Local businesses offer towing services and services to remove stuck or broken-down vehicles at Oceano Dunes SVRA.

2.19.2 Oceano Dunes District Staff and Programs

The Oceano Dunes District employs a full range of professionals to provide public access, foster stewardship and safety, manage park operations, and protect resources. This section describes the key responsibilities for each discipline and program.

2.19.2.1 Oceano Dunes District Superintendent

The Oceano Dunes District Superintendent has direct responsibility for managing the visitor services, administrative services, natural resource services, and maintenance services programs of the Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo State Beach. This position's duties and responsibilities include managerial responsibility for the Oceano Dunes District's overall operation, including planning, organizing, directing, reviewing, and controlling a multi-faceted and complex off-highway vehicle operation within Oceano Dunes SVRA and more traditional park operations of Pismo State Beach.

The Oceano Dunes District Superintendent oversees resource management programs in close liaison with regulatory agencies, universities, scientists, and local land managers with similar management issues and concerns. The superintendent is a member of advisory bodies like the Oceano Dunes Technical Review Team and is an invited member of the Scientific Subcommittee and the Scientific Advisory Group.

The superintendent provides the highest level of review within the district for all visitor services programs and enforcement actions; he or she provides leadership for maintaining an active safety policy, including developing, implementing, and monitoring of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with local law enforcement agencies. As a community member, the superintendent establishes positive communications with adjacent landowners and community groups, the Coastal Commission, city governments, and San Luis Obispo County in a highly diversified and politically complex five-city area.

2.19.2.2 Administrative Services

Administrative staff is responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing all Oceano Dunes District administrative services and programs. Duties and responsibilities for



these positions include accounting, budget allocations, verifying and tracking funds, preparing, administering contracts, program evaluation and planning, payroll, revenue program, and personnel services. Other responsibilities include managing concessions contracts, inter-agency agreements, and event permitting. Administrative staff also oversee the special event program and administer film permits.

2.19.2.3 Public Safety and Visitor Services

The State Park Peace Officer (Ranger) series includes professional positions involved in the State Park system's law enforcement and visitor services functions. These classifications have full peace officer powers under Penal Code Section 830.2 and perform the full range of duties. Their duties may include patrol, issuing citations, writing reports, making physical arrests, conducting investigations, taking command in emergencies, performing search and rescue activities, and providing emergency medical aid. Other essential responsibilities include natural and cultural resource protection, administration, assisting visitors, community outreach, and presenting safety education programs.

Oceano Dunes District operates a canine (K-9) program. Peace officers and their K-9 partners perform the duties described above.

Peace officers patrol the SVRA in four-wheel-drive vehicles and other OHVs and respond to vehicle accidents, crimes in progress, and other emergencies within the dunes. Operating equipment in the dunes requires specific training and emphasizes OHV enforcement, as described in Division 16.5 of the California Vehicle Code.

State Park Peace Officer Lifeguards are open-water lifesaving professionals and trained peace officers with statewide authority. They help operate and manage state park units, including coastal beaches, inland lakes, reservoirs, and rivers. Their Duties include peace officer duties, aquatic rescues, medical aid, scuba diving, swift water rescue, and leading the junior lifeguard program.

Visitor services seasonal staff consist of Park Aides and Senior Park Aides. These classifications perform routine public contact work, staff park entrance stations, collect park entrance fees, keep facilities clean, and support campground and Day Use operations. Seasonal staff also schedule and present the ATV Safety Institute ATV Rider Safety Course at the Oceano Dunes SVRA ATV Safety Training Facility.

The public safety and visitor services program also employs support staff. Duties include staffing the information desk at the Ranger station, responding to general inquiries, assistance with tracking and reporting collections and budgets, assisting with special event permits and the concession program. Employees also handle other responsibilities, including managing public safety and court records.

2.19.2.4 Facility Management and Maintenance

The district maintenance chief and maintenance staff are responsible for the facility's operation and maintenance functions throughout Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo State Beach and campgrounds. Responsibilities include maintaining buildings, trails, boardwalks,



park roadways, signage, and landscaping, water treatment, waste management, and assisting other disciplines with their work. Maintenance staff also support the resource management team with the shorebird nesting program and vegetation management programs by installing and maintaining fences and barriers, seeding, signing sensitive habitat areas, and retaining vehicle control zones. Other duties include general housekeeping, grounds maintenance, and vegetation trimming.

2.19.3 Cultural Resources Management

Oceano Dunes SVRA and Pismo State Beach have a long history of human habitation and land use. Cultural resources include prehistoric, historical, and contemporary sites and artifacts. Staff from several different classifications work as a team to protect cultural resources and educate the public, including archaeologists, historians, curators, environmental scientists, maintenance workers, interpreters, and public safety staff. Archaeological duties include investigating cultural sites, monitoring projects, research, writing technical studies, environmental compliance, and acting as the tribal liaison for the District with Native American groups and individuals, among others. Visitor services, resources, and maintenance staff help by monitoring sites and erecting barriers to protect them. The interpretation staff collaborates with local Native American groups and the archaeologist to prepare educational materials for the public and schools.

Department cultural resource specialists (State Archaeologists, State Historians) are also key Oceano Dunes District resource management and environmental compliance programs. Both specialists are required to be consulted with, and provide as necessary, formal environmental review of department projects and actions to ensure that no adverse changes or impacts occur to significant cultural or tribal resources. They are key to providing compliance with professional Departmental cultural resource management procedures and practices to ensure compliance with the CEQA and Public Resources Code 5024.5. These are the State laws that require state agencies to implement all prudent and feasible measures to protect and avoid impacts to cultural resources.

2.19.4 Natural Resource Management

The Oceano Dunes District natural resource management program employs many permanent and seasonal scientific staff who monitor and protect wildlife, plants, and coastal habitat. Duties consist of implementing natural resource inventories, evaluating biological systems' conditions, and mapping vegetation and wildlife habitat. Environmental science staff also assess impacts from public recreational activity and prepare detailed annual reports supporting the district's regulatory and environmental compliance programs. Employees in this program have experience monitoring and protecting a wide variety of taxa, such as the California red-legged frog, tidewater goby, western snowy plover, California least tern, and numerous rare and threatened plant species.

Several programs operate within the umbrella of resource management in the Oceano Dunes District. These programs include monitoring and protecting shorebirds; wildlife management and surveys; monarch butterfly habitat management; marine and inland fisheries surveys and management; coastal habitat restoration; vegetation management; invasive-exotic weed control; air quality monitoring; and water quality management. The



resource management program also includes a vigorous vegetation management program— Park staff and contractors plant native plants to rehabilitate and repair dune and other coastal habitats. Along with wind fencing, vegetation is used to stabilize dunes and is an essential component of the air quality management program.

Oceano Dunes SVRA is an important breeding site for two special-status ground-nesting birds—the California least tern (state and federally listed as endangered) and the western snowy plover (federally listed as threatened). Some employees hold a specific permit with the USFWS to monitor and manage these birds. Responsibilities include conducting population surveys, locating and monitoring nests, erecting and monitoring seasonal fence and nest closures, and monitoring nests and chicks. This program also prepares annual reports to the USFWS and CDFW.

2.19.4.1 Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan

Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 5090.35 requires SVRAs to periodically review and update an inventory of wildlife populations and prepare a Wildlife Habitat Protection Plan (WHPP) that conserves and improves wildlife habitats. Special-status species and focal resources are identified in the WHPP and monitored to ensure their protection. Inventories of native plant communities are also compiled.

Using the best available science, the WHPP has been developed to standardize a broad range of protocols appropriate for monitoring the health of the unique habitats found within the park. Monitoring incorporates “control” sites (where OHV recreation is not allowed) and compares conditions in these control sites to treatment sites (where OHV riding occurs). Monitoring and data collection involves standardized surveys repeated over time to detect changes or document trends, especially related to recreation impacts. Annual and quarterly surveys are completed for small mammals, terrestrial birds, shorebirds, and vegetation. Data analysis is conducted to help achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the WHPP and inform adaptive management.

The WHPP monitoring program also includes targeted surveys for listed plant and animal species including Marsh sandwort, La Graciosa thistle, Surf thistle, Beach spectacle pod, Nipomo Mesa lupine, Gambel’s watercress, tidewater goby, South-Central California Coast steelhead, California red-legged frog, California least tern, and Western snowy plover. Annual surveys are completed to assess these species’ status, measure trends and changes in population size, identify new or emerging threats, and manage their respective habitats to reduce impacts from invasive species and recreational effects.

2.19.5 Dust Control Management and Maintenance

The Oceano Dunes District implements a program to control and minimize indirect emissions of dust and particulate matter (PM) generated at Oceano Dunes SVRA during periods of intense, persistent winds and subsequently blown downwind of the SVRA and onto the Nipomo Mesa. To address windblown dust, State Parks has already implemented a series of dust control and monitoring measures in the Park, which include:



- **Native vegetation planting** – between 2014 and 2018, State Parks planted almost 50 acres of locally collected native vegetation for dust control purposes. Staff planted approximately 36 additional acres in the open riding area in winter 2018/2019.
- **Wind fencing and straw bale array deployment** – in 2018, State Parks installed three wind fencing arrays totaling approximately 49 acres and two straw bale arrays totaling about 36 acres.
- **Dust and meteorological monitoring** – Since 2010, the OHMVR Division has operated and maintained a meteorological tower in the Oceano Dunes SVRA open riding area, referred to as the “S1” tower. The OHMVR Division installed an air quality monitoring station, the Oso Flaco station, in the southeast corner of Oceano Dunes SVRA in 2015. Also, the District maintains up to 20 seasonal monitoring stations with weather and particulate matter monitoring equipment.
- **48-acre area for foredune vegetation planting** – this 48-acre foredune area was fenced and closed to motorized recreation and camping in 2019. It was planted in February 2020 and included vehicle travel pathways through the foredune area between the shoreline and the open riding area to the east. However, these “alleys” are closed to camping to maintain vehicle circulation.

2.19.5.1 Particulate Matter Reduction Plan (PMRP)

The above dust control and monitoring measures are currently in place and are expected to continue, subject to modification consistent with legal obligations described here. In May 2018, State Parks entered into a SOA (Abatement Order; filed May 4, 2018) with the San Luis Obispo County APCD. Under the SOA, State Parks agreed to implement numerous dust control measures. These include:

- permanently closing off sections of open riding area to motorized recreation and camping;
- installing track-out devices at the West Grand Avenue and Pier Avenue entrances to prevent track-out of sand onto paved, public roadways, and
- preparing a PMRP

The SOA was amended on November 18, 2019, and expires on December 1, 2023. As noted above, State Parks already closed off and planted approximately 40 acres of open riding area in winter 2018/2019. State Parks released a draft PMRP in June 2019, including an implementation plan specifying that staff will undertake through December 2023.





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APPENDIX A. OCEANO DUNES TIMELINE OF HISTORIC EVENTS

- 10000 YBP Indigenous peoples occupy the area now known as the Oceano Dunes/Nipomo mesa.
- 1769 Spain moves to occupy and settle Alta California with a plan for Catholic missions and military outposts (presidios). Portola-Crespi expedition traverses present-day Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties in search of Monterey Bay and maps San Francisco Bay; expedition camped at present-day Oso Flaco lake on September 2.
- 1772 Mission San Luis Obispo was established.
- 1782 El Presidio de Santa Barbara was established.
- 1787 Mission La Purisima was established.
- 1821 Mexico receives independence from Spain. The Mexican Republic was established, and Alta California becomes a territory of a new nation. Power shifted from crown and church toward private citizens, including private property grants (ranchos and pueblo lots).
- 1833 Mexican Californio government formally secularizes Catholic missions and begins extensive distribution of mission lands and property.
- 1837 Rancho Bolsa de Chamisal, 14,335 acres is granted to Francisco Quijada.
- 1840 Rancho Guadalupe, 43,682 acres, is granted to Diego Olivera and Teodoro Arrellanes.
- 1840 Rancho Pismo, 8,839 acres granted to Jose Ortega, sells it to Isaac Sparks in 1846.
- 1846 U.S. War with Mexico begins. Bear Flag Revolt in northern California starts hostilities. U.S. Military occupies Alta California, including Monterey and southern California.
- 1847 U.S. and Mexican Californio troops fight several battles in southern California, resulting in the Treaty of Cahuenga ending military hostilities in Alta California.
- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hildalgo ends U.S. War with Mexico, resulting in the transfer of northwestern Mexico, including Alta California, to the United States.
- 1848 Gold Discovery in northern California starts a rush that brings nearly 100,000 gold seekers to the new U.S. territory.
- 1850 Isaac Sparks sells the southern half of Rancho Pismo to Francis Ziba Branch.
- 1850 February 18: San Luis Obispo County was established.
- 1850 September 9: California is admitted as the 31st state in the Union.



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- 1850 Population of San Luis Obispo County per 1850 Census totals 336 non-Native Americans.
- 1856 Rancho Bolsa de Chamisal is sold to Francis Ziba Branch; in 1866, Branch sells part of the rancho to the Steele Brothers.
- 1860 San Luis Obispo county population 1,782 per U.S. Census.
- 1866 Rancho Guadalupe passed into the hands of the family of José Joaquín Estudillo.
- 1870 San Luis Obispo county population 4,772 per U.S. Census.
- 1880 San Luis Obispo county population 9,182 per U.S. Census.
- 1881 Pismo wharf construction completed in September.
- 1890 San Luis Obispo county population 16,072 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande Township population 3,334).
- 1894 Southern Pacific Railroad reaches San Luis Obispo from San Francisco.
- 1895 Southern Pacific Railroad reaches Oceano in January and Guadalupe in May.
- 1900 San Luis Obispo county population 16,637 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande Township, 3,319).
- 1901 “The Gap” between Surf (west of Lompoc, south of Point Sal) and Ellwood (near Goleta) is closed; the Coast Line of the SPRR is completed. With the rail line completed, visitors from both northern and southern California begin to venture to the area for vacation, seasonal and permanent residence.
- 1903 The Theosophical Society acquires farmland and the Coffee Rice house, east of the Dunes.
- 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt visited Santa Barbara, stopped at Surf, passed through Oceano, and visited San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles on May 9, 1903, midway through a 14,000-mile, 25-state rail tour of the American West. At Surf, he said, in part, *“I cannot say how much I enjoyed these three days in California. It is the first time I was ever in your great and beautiful State, and but a few hours ago, I saw the greatest of all the oceans for the first time. I have enjoyed it to the full. I have enjoyed the climate, seeing the fruits of the soil, seeing all that has been done agriculturally and industrially. I have enjoyed noting the marvelous material progress and prosperity; but what I have enjoyed most has been seeing the men and women of California....I am glad to have met you. I believe in you with all my heart and soul, and I believe that your future will be even greater than your past.”*
- 1905 La Grande tract is subdivided.
- 1906 June. First motor vehicle “meet” held at Pismo Beach. Over three dozen automobiles have speed trials on the beach, initiating organized motor vehicle recreation.



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- 1907 La Grande Beach Pavilion is built; it closed in 1915. Slowly, some of the lumber and various architectural components (windows, doors) are collected and used by transients who begin to make the dunes their seasonal (and, in some instances, permanent) residences.
 - 1910 Beginning in 1910-1911, approximately 6,000 acres of eucalyptus, mostly of the blue gum variety, were planted on the Nipomo Mesa's western portion by various individuals and companies. According to W.W. Robinson, in The Story of San Luis Obispo County (1957), "Keep to Highway No. 1, out of the Arroyo Grande lowlands. On it you drive up the mesa and through a eucalyptus forest that are miles long—more eucalyptus trees than can be seen this side of Australia." (p. 50)
 - 1910 San Luis Obispo county population 19,383 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande Township population 3,645).
 - 1911 July 10. City of Arroyo Grande incorporated.
 - 1919 Work begins on the Carmel to San Simeon Highway; the road opened to traffic in 1937.
 - 1920 San Luis Obispo county population 21,893 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande Township population 3,423).

The F. P. Guiton Improvement Company tears down 1921 La Grande Beach Pavilion.

- 1923 Hollywood Director Cecil B. DeMille's epic motion picture *The Ten Commandments* is filmed at the Nipomo Dunes west of Guadalupe; a U.S. Naval Destroyer squadron wrecks off Honda Point (Point Pedernales), south of the Nipomo Dunes; nine ships run aground, and only two are salvageable.
- 1925 Fremont Rider publishes his book Rider's California. A Guide-Book for Travelers (New York: The Macmillan Company). In it, he cites the size of San Luis Obispo County as 3334 square miles and with a population of 21,893. He gives the estimated population of the City of San Luis Obispo as 8000; Nipomo's population as 515; Pismo as 167; and Guadalupe as 919. He writes on page 321 that "*Pismo Beach, a hard, level boulevard of clean white sand, 500 ft. wide, extends for 17 mi. along San Luis Obispo Bay and makes a favorite automobile course....For some 14 mi., or all the way from Pismo to Guadalupe, the train passes through a region of shifting sand. On the R. a prominent ridge of dunes have advanced inland across the tracks, and the railway company has had an expensive task in keeping the roadway open.*"
- 1927 400 feet of the one thousand--foot long Oceano pier is destroyed in a storm.
- 1928 California Division of Beaches and Parks is established.
- 1929 The Great Depression begins, with October's stock market crash.
- 1930 San Luis Obispo county population 29,613 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande Township population 5,004).



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- 1931 Drought devastates the Plains states, turning once fertile farmland into a “dust bowl.” Thousands migrate to California.
- 1931 Oceano Pier, built-in 1906, is removed, due to its deteriorated nature, and in preparation for an automobile speed trial races held for the first time on the beach, August 30, 1931. More lumber is appropriated by the local Dunites, as well as other Oceano residents and businesses.
- 1931 Gavin Arthur begins his utopian colony in the Dunes in earnest.
- 1933 Almost 25% of the U.S. workforce is unemployed. In his inauguration speech, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt promises a “New Deal” for the American people.
- 1933 The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) are established; from 1933 until 1942, the SCS oversees 500 CCC camps throughout the United States, primarily for erosion control. Camps are established in Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach (and Lompoc).
- 1934 Pismo Beach State Park was established (140 acres in Oceano); Morro Bay State Park was also established.
- 1934 Photographer Edward Weston visits the Oceano Dunes for the first time, at the invitation of “Dunite” Gavin Arthur. Later, his wife Charis Wilson wrote, *“The fine sand never stopped moving. From the top of the dunes you could watch it blowing off the crests and—crouched in a windless hollow—you could hear it rustling as it flowed down the steep banks...Edward...assured me he would never run out [of photographic opportunities] where he was, because the dunes were constantly changing right before our eyes. He was right—if you examine his dune pictures carefully, you can almost always find a soft spot of moving sand somewhere in the landscape.”*
- 1935 The Works Progress Administration (WPA) is enacted.
- 1938 Oil companies begin to acquire large tracts of land in the Guadalupe dunes.
- 1939 War breaks out in Europe.
- 1940 San Luis Obispo county population 33,246 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande City 1,090; Arroyo Grande Township 6,250 total).
- 1941 December 7: Japanese forces attack Pearl Harbor; December 21, Japanese submarine I-21 sinks the Union Oil tanker Montebello off San Simeon Point.
- 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, mandating the removal of American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast of the United States for the war’s duration. This includes many Japanese-American citizens in San Luis Obispo County and members of the south county agricultural community.



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- 1945 World War II ends.
 - 1946 April 25. City of Pismo Beach incorporated.
 - 1947 Oceano Campground, established on the original 140 acres of Pismo State Beach, is completed and opened.
 - 1948 Oil production in the dunes begins in earnest.
 - 1949 Pismo Beach Pier is acquired from San Luis Obispo County; negotiation begins to acquire land adjacent to the pier.
 - 1950 Population of San Luis Obispo County is 51,115 per U.S. Census. (City of Arroyo Grande 1,716 and City of Pismo Beach 1,425).
 - 1951 PG& E builds its power plant at Morro Bay.
 - 1951 Beach area immediately north and south of the Pismo pier is acquired for non-vehicular day-use access to the coast (72 acres).
 - 1955 Union Oil Company builds a refinery on the Nipomo Mesa.
 - 1955 PG&E consider the use of atomic energy for peacetime domestic application.
 - 1957 PG & E proposes Humboldt Bay for its first nuclear power plant.
 - 1958 Twitchell Dam is built in the lower Cuyama Valley, reducing the sand load reaching the coast by 67%.
 - 1959 December 21. City of Grover City incorporated.
 - 1951-1964 – State acquires a narrow strip of beach above the mean high tide from Grand Avenue south and the dunes south of Pier Avenue, which now constitutes the Dune Preserve (approx. 900 acres total).
 - 1960 Salinas River State Beach acquired, constituting a portion of the Monterey Bay coastal dune system extending from the Salinas River’s mouth to Moss Landing.
 - 1960 San Luis Obispo county population 81,044 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande City 3,291; Grover City 5,210; Oceano Community 1,317; Pismo Beach City 1,762).
 - 1962 The California State Park and Recreation Commission classifies the 1,050 acres of state-owned coastline in southern San Luis Obispo County as Pismo State Beach.
 - 1962 Congress passes, and President Kennedy signs into law a bill creating the Point Reyes National Seashore.
 - 1962 PG&E purchases 1,100 acres of coastal dunes in southern San Luis Obispo County to build a nuclear energy power plant; San Luis Obispo County designates the area as “M2,” a land-use zoning ordinance for heavy industry.



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- 1963 Sierra Club Board of Directors passes a unanimous resolution, recommending to the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, that *“the shoreline and upland area south of Oceano, bounded by Los Berros Creek and the contour of the Santa Maria Dunes, including the Dune Lakes, bordered on the east in the vicinity of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, including the region between Black and Oso Flaco lakes and the dune territory down to and including Point Sal, [be preserved] for scenic recreation purposes under the management of the California Division of Beaches and Parks.”*
- 1964 June 25; Collier Carbon and Chemical Corporation propose a coking conveyor across the Oceano Dunes and a commercial wharf for ocean-going ships. The plan is dropped in July 1967, due in large part to Southern Pacific Railroad’s opposition to the plan, as they were the main conveyor of coke to a processing facility in Stockton. The railroad refused to permit the chemical company to construct a conveyor over the railroad tracks.
- 1964 November 1: Proposition 1, a California State Park bond, is approved by voters, providing \$85 million for parkland acquisition.
- 1964 Congress passes, and President Johnson signs into law the Wilderness Act.
- 1964 PG&E abandons its plans for a power plant at Bodega Head in Sonoma County.
- 1965 January 15: Sierra Club President Dr. William Siri tours Nipomo Dunes with PG&E officials, State Park representatives, and the Dune Riders, Inc.
- 1965 January 16-17: A minus-two feet tide results in approximately 143,000 people digging for clams on Pismo/Oceano area beaches; in two days, an estimated one million clams are harvested.
- 1965 Montana de Oro State Park is opened to the public.
- 1965 The Carmel to San Simeon Highway (SR 1) is dedicated as the state’s first state scenic highway.
- 1965 The California State Park’s “Baxter Report” makes Pismo dunes acquisition #7 on its priority list of all proposed acquisition projects in the state; the dunes are eliminated from a list of proposed state park sites, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors.
- 1965 Big Sur resident and conservationist Margaret Wentworth Owings is appointed to the California State Park Commission by Governor Pat Brown.
- 1966 The Le Sage family begins developing a par three golf course on 29 acres north of Grand Avenue and east of the beach.
- 1966 In a February 26, 1966 article in the San Luis Obispo County [Telegram-Tribune](#), Col. John Dillard with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told a legislative hearing on ocean resources being held in Santa Barbara that the use of radioactive sand could



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- help in tracking the littoral movement of sand along California’s coastline. The information gained could be used to “...widen some California beaches by several hundred feet. Assemblyman Burt Hensen (D-Ventura) thought the Assembly should petition Congress to give the Army power to restore and create new beaches in California. The colonel thought there might be objections—say from the Sierra Club. And projects such as this would, he added, ‘cost a lot of money.’ But it would add to public areas, he said.”
- 1966 At its May meeting, the Sierra Club Executive Committee reaffirms its support of the Nipomo Dunes as a state park. It approves of Diablo canyon as an alternate site for PG&E’s proposed nuclear power plant. PG&E proceeds with its siting of the power plant at Diablo Canyon.
- 1966 At a California State Park Commission meeting in Santa Barbara, Commissioner Margaret Wentworth Owings argues for the southern San Luis Obispo County dunes to be acquired for a state park, and that the park should extend south into Santa Barbara County as far as the existing Point Sal State Beach; she was joined in her support for the proposal by other commissioners who were given airplane flights over the dunes by Martin Litton.
- 1966 Gubernatorial Candidate Ronald Reagan, while at the San Luis Obispo airport, called for scaling back proposed land purchases for state parks and instead favored the development of existing state parklands.
- 1968 Apollo 8 completes its orbit of the moon; their iconic photograph, “Earthrise,” feeds the growing environmental movement.
- 1969 January 1: President Nixon signs the National Environmental Policy Act into law.
- 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill.
- 1969 Shandon resident Ian McMillan is appointed to the California State Park Commission, replacing the outgoing Margaret Wentworth Owings.
- 1970 San Luis Obispo county population 105,690 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande 7,454; Grover City 5,939; Oceano Community 2,584; Pismo Beach 4,043).
- 1970 April 22 is the first Earth Day celebration.
- 1970 Governor Ronald Reagan signs the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) into law.
- 1970 April: The Morro Bay State Park sand spit is closed to off-highway vehicles; in November, the City of Morro Bay bans vehicles from its coastal beaches north of Morro Rock.
- 1971 The State of California purchases the Pismo Beach Golf Course from the Le Sage family.



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- 1971 Emily Polk and the Small Wilderness Area Preservation group of Los Osos successfully helped California State Parks in acquiring Los Osos Oaks State Reserve.
 - 1972 Congress passes, and President Nixon signs into law a bill creating the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
 - 1972 Federal Coastal Zone Management Act signed into law.
 - 1972 Californians pass Proposition 20, the Coastal Initiative, creating a state commission tasked with overseeing the development and conservation of California’s 1,072-mile-long coastline.
 - 1973 Endangered Species Act is signed into law by President Richard Nixon.
 - 1973 1973-74 OPEC Oil embargo against the United States strains the U.S. economy.
 - 1974 The Nipomo Dune complex is listed as a National Natural Landmark; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gives the dune complex a top priority in ranking 49 important California habitats worthy of preservation.
 - 1974 1,100 acres of PG&E land on the Oceano Dunes is sold to the California Department of Parks and Recreation for one million dollars.
 - 1974 The State Park Commission classified the 1974 Pismo Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area on July 12, 1974. It is opened to the public as an extension of Pismo State Beach; Garlan Salzgeber, Superintendent. It is the first off-highway motor vehicle recreation park in the California State Park System. There is no charge for day use and a \$1.50 charge per night for primitive camping on the beach.
 - 1974 Two comfort stations are built at Pismo State Beach vehicular entrance locations: one at the foot of Grand Avenue, and the other, one mile south, at Pier Avenue’s foot.
 - 1974 Bert Schievink, the last of the Dunites, dies.
 - 1974 Labor Day: “Sand Nationals” are held at Pismo SB.
 - 1975 April. State Park Commission approves Pismo State Beach and Pismo Dunes SVRA General Development Plan and Resource Management Plan.
 - 1977 State acquires 366 acres, including Oso Flaco Lake.
 - 1977 Biology teacher Bill Denneen founds a volunteer equestrian patrol to assist State Park Rangers.
 - 1978 The “El Nino” winter weather results in \$50 million damage to California’s oceanfront property.



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- 1978 On June 6th, 1978, nearly two-thirds of California’s voters passed Proposition 13, reducing property tax rates on homes, businesses, and farms by about 57%.
 - 1978 Congress passes, and President Carter signs into law a bill creating the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.
 - 1978 A second oil shock, this one attributed to the Iranian revolution, rattles the U.S. economy.
 - 1980 Congress passes, and President Carter signs into law a bill creating the Channel Islands National Park.
 - 1980 San Luis Obispo county population 155,435 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande City 11,290; Grover City 8,827; Oceano Community 4,478; Pismo Beach City 5,364).
 - 1982 The California Park and Recreation Commission establish a new park district, and the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division takes over the park’s active management. After that, the Pismo Dunes SVRA is renamed Oceano Dunes SVRA. The first General Plan amendment is approved.
 - 1982 California Coastal Commission approves Coastal Development Permit 4-82-300 with conditions for compliance and consistency with Coastal Act for Pismo SB and Pismo SVRA.
 - 1982 Oso Flaco Lake area is closed to vehicles. Vehicles access also closed north of Grand Avenue in Pismo State Beach.
 - 1982 ORV enthusiast and future OHV Recreation Commissioner Mike Bishop found the non-profit Dune Patrol, a volunteer organization dedicated to assisting State Park Rangers on busy weekends at the park.
 - 1983 The “El Nino” winter weather results in \$184 million damage to California’s oceanfront property.
 - 1983 Beach access ramp at Pismo SB is destroyed by weather-related high storm surge.
 - 1984 People for a Nipomo Dunes National Seashore is founded; Elizabeth Scott-Graham, President.
 - 1984 Santa Maria area businessman George Smith proposes a Ventura-like harbor to be built north of the Santa Maria River mouth, partly to service offshore oil platforms proposed by Interior Secretary James Watt of the Reagan administration.
 - 1988 State Park Bond Act passes.
 - 1989 Mobil tract of land acquired by CA Coastal Conservancy; currently managed by The Nature Conservancy.
 - 1990 Congress passes, and President George H. W. Bush signs into law the Americans with Disabilities Act.



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- 1990 San Luis Obispo county population 217,162 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande City 14,378; Grover Beach City 11,656; Oceano Community 6,169; Pismo Beach City 7,669).
 - 1992 South County Historical Society publishes Norm Hammond’s book, The Dunites.
 - 1992 Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is created.
 - 1992 Citizens vote to rename the City of Grover Beach.
 - 1994 February. Off-Highway Vehicle Commission approves Oceano Dunes SVRA general plan amendment.
 - 1997-98 A major “El Nino” winter event hits California.
 - 1998 The Woodlands Specific Plan was adopted by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors on December 15, 1998.
 - 1999 Unocal begins its cleanup of the Guadalupe Oil field spill.
 - 2000 January 11: President Bill Clinton signs into law a bill creating the California Coastal National Monument, consisting of more than 20,000 small islands, rocks, exposed reefs, and pinnacles that provide a haven for plants and animals along the 1,100 mile-long coastline.
 - 2000 December: Guadalupe-Nipomo Dune center opens.
 - 2000 Population of San Luis Obispo County is 247,878 per U.S. Census; Fresno County, 801,444; Kern County, 663,484; Kings County, 129,774; Los Angeles County, 9,543,000; Santa Barbara County, 399,784. (Arroyo Grande City 15,851; Grover Beach City 13,067; Oceano Community 7,260; Pismo Beach City 8,551).
 - 2007 On April 17, 2007, the San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors voted 4-0 to sell the 584 acres (2.36 km²) of La Grande Tract land to the State.
 - 2010 San Luis Obispo county population 269,637 per U.S. Census. (Arroyo Grande City 17,252; Grover Beach City 13,156; Oceano Community 7,635; Pismo Beach City 7,635)
 - 2018 March 6: The SLO County Board of Supervisors approved the final phase of the Monarch Dunes development in Nipomo, paving the way for 163 new single-family homes on 143 acres.



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