



## 23.0 ALTERNATIVES

CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(f) states that an EIR shall describe a reasonable range of alternatives to a project or location of the project that would feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. An EIR's discussion of alternatives does not need to consider every possible Alternative but must foster informed decision-making and public participation. CEQA intends for the alternatives discussion to focus on alternatives that are capable of avoiding or substantially reducing any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives. Section 3.1.2 of the PWP (Volume 1) lists the following objectives for the PWP:

- Obtain and manage for Coastal Act Compliance within the Oceano Dunes District.
- Manage the Park consistent with state and federal resource protection goals and mandates and other applicable plans
- Improve public access to the Park.
- Optimize Recreation.
- Enhance Visitor Experiences.
- Improve District Operational Efficiency and Mission Implementation Consistent with the General Plan, Park Classifications, and Statutory Mandates.

An EIR is not required to consider infeasible alternatives (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6(f)). A lead agency is responsible for selecting the range of project alternatives for examination and publicly disclosing its reasoning for choosing those alternatives. Factors that may be taken into account when considering feasibility include site suitability, economic viability, infrastructure availability, general plan consistency, other plans or regulatory limitations, jurisdictional boundaries, and whether the proponent can reasonably acquire, control, or otherwise have access to the alternative site(s).

### 23.1 Considered and Rejected Alternatives

An EIR should identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were not carried forward but instead were eliminated from further analysis in the EIR and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. Among the factors that may be used to eliminate alternatives from detailed consideration in the EIR are 1) failure to meet most of the basic project objectives (see above), 2) infeasibility, and 3) inability to avoid significant impacts. A discussion of the Alternative considered and rejected by State Parks based upon one or more of these factors is provided below.

#### 23.1.1 Offsite Alternative

Oceano Dunes SVRA is unique because it is one of only two California State Parks units that provide OHV recreation within the Central Coast Region. The other Park is the Hollister Hills SVRA located 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. Oceano Dunes SVRA is the only state-



managed public land in California where motorized recreation and camping are allowed on the beach, so no offsite alternative is available. This alternative was eliminated from further analysis because it was deemed infeasible.

## **23.2 Alternatives Considered**

Under CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6, the rationale for selecting the alternatives presented in this EIR is to attempt to feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening the project's significant effects. As summarized in Table S-1 in the Executive Summary of this EIR, and described in the corresponding EIR resource sections, the proposed PWP and its Development Projects, applicable Park management programs and activities would have potentially significant impacts on a variety of resources and several of these impacts require mitigation.

The alternatives presented below include the no project (no PWP alternative) and generally focus on substantially reducing or eliminating the impacts resulting from PWP implementation. Also, an alternative to phase out OHV recreation is added. This Alternative does not meet the project objectives or lessen any PWP specific impacts but was added upon request of the State Coastal Commission staff and some stakeholders, and is not a typical CEQA Alternative. It is included here to specifically address this request.

### **23.2.1 Alternative 1: No Project (No PWP) Alternative**

#### **23.2.1.1 Alternative Description**

CEQA Guidelines (§ 15126.6(e)) require evaluation of a “no project” alternative along with its impact. The purpose of describing and analyzing a no project alternative is to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the proposed project with the impacts of not approving the proposed project. When the project is revising an existing land use or regulatory plan, policy, or ongoing operation, the “no project” Alternative is the continuation of the existing plan, policy, or operation into the future. In this situation, the projected impacts of the proposed plan or alternative plans are compared to the impacts that would occur under the existing plan (§ 15126.6(e)(3)(A)). The no project alternative's impact is analyzed by projecting what would reasonably be expected to occur in the foreseeable future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services.

Under this Alternative, the PWP would not be approved and implemented. State Parks would maintain its current park operations, visitor use numbers, visitor programs and continue implementing its current management programs. State Parks would continue to rely on the approved General Plan and existing Coastal Development Plan (CDP) for guidance. Other plans, such as the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), once approved, the dust control plan, Bio-Diversity Management Plan, and others, would continue to be implemented.

Future projects such as the PWP Development Projects and Small Development Projects would still be planned and implemented as funding allows, but each project would require a new CDP or Amendment to the existing CDP. State Parks would continue to submit applications for individual projects.



### **23.2.1.2 Environmental Analysis**

Environmental impacts associated with implementing the no PWP analysis would generally be the same as those resulting from PWP implementation, assuming the Development Projects and small projects would move forward as envisioned in the PWP. However, timing of impacts could be different as projects could be spread out over a longer timeframe, and the PWP Development Projects would each require their own Coastal Development Permits, or amendments to the current CDP.

### **23.2.1.3 State Parks Consideration of Alternative**

The No Project Alternative does not resolve the longstanding issue of consistent and streamlined compliance with the Coastal Act and a consistent approach to design, permitting, and implementation of individual projects. The No Project Alternative does not solve issues requested to be resolved by the Coastal Commission. This Alternative would not meet the objective to improve operational efficiency and mission implementation. Time and resources would be repeatedly spent on permit applications and unprecedented, burdensome CDP requirements of annual reviews of Park operations.

## **23.2.2 Alternative 2: No OHV Use Alternative**

### **23.2.2.1 Alternative Description**

Under the No OHV Use Alternative, use of any vehicle identified in CVC § 38010 and 38012 as an OHV would be phased out and eliminated from the Park over five years as suggested by California Coastal Commission staff. For clarification, some vehicles, like sport utility vehicles, trucks, and dual-sport motorcycles used for OHV recreation are also classified as street-legal. By eliminating OHVs, street-legal vehicles would still be allowed to operate in the Park; thus, only removing a small subset of vehicles from the beach and dunes. See California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section (§) 38010 and § 38012 for the definition of off-highway vehicles. Street-legal vehicles would be allowed to access both unit's beach areas from Grand Avenue south to the current SVRA boundary; it would not meet the statutory purpose of the OHV park unit as described below.

It should be noted that the No OHV Alternative conflicts with State Park's responsibility of managing state parkland in a manner consistent with governing laws (PRC § 5008, § 5090.2(b), § 5090.35(a)) while promoting accessible recreation. In Oceano Dunes SVRA, this Alternative would not meet the statutory mandate of managing the unit under its current classification (PRC § 5090.14.1). This Alternative would ultimately require a reclassification of the SVRA to a State Recreation Area, State Beach, or State Park. As outlined in greater detail below, State Parks does not have the authority to phase out OHV activity in the SVRA on its own, the OHMVR Commission and the State Parks and Recreation Commission, or the Legislature would need to approve a change in the Park's use and classification (§ 5019.50 and 5090.24).

Also, State Parks rarely undertakes reclassifications of existing, successful State Park units. When a reclassification occurs, it is generally in response to a situation such as a natural disaster or other change that permanently alters the resources base of a park unit or if a new acquisition adds or alters significant natural or cultural resources or recreational opportunities at a unit such that its current classification is no longer appropriate. Oceano Dunes SVRA has not undergone such an event or physical change, and is the most popular SVRA in the State Park system, serving nearly 1.4 million visitors a year, as shown in Table 23-1.

These numbers also make it the top 6 most popular units in the entire state park



system. Without vehicular access for both OHV and street-legal access for other day-users, the Park would not be able to meet such visitation numbers. Table 23-1 shows that a vast majority of day-use visitors utilize the beach for access to other recreational activities such as fishing, water sports, and picnicking. The Park does not have off-beach parking capable of accommodating these visitors. Such changes could have impacts on local streets, businesses, and residential areas if vehicles are banned from beach or riding areas.

**Table 23-1. Attendance Figures for Oceano Dunes SVRA, 2019**

<b>Attendance People</b>	<b>Free Day Use Vehicles at Pier Ave</b>	<b>Camping Street legal</b>	<b>Camping OHV</b>	<b>Day Use Street Legal</b>	<b>Day Use OHV</b>
1,368,719	19,384	83,376	46,120	212,262	17,868

Source: State Parks 2019

With regards to the PWP Development Projects, the non-OHV Alternative would result in the following:

PWP Proposed Development Projects like the Oso Flaco Improvement Project (Future) and Southern Access Project would not occur, at least without OHV Trust Funds; therefore, impacts associated with implementing these projects would not happen. Also, non-motorized recreation opportunities in these projects would not be implemented.

Proposed Development projects with existing (non-OHV related) funding allocations would be completed, such as the Oceano Campground Infrastructure Improvement Project, Pier, and Grand Avenue Entrances and Lifeguard Towers Project, and the North Beach Campground Facility Improvements. Therefore, impacts associated with these projects would still occur.

Proposed Development Projects with non-motorized components like the Butterfly Grove Public Access Project, Pismo State Beach Boardwalk Project, the Park Corporation Yard Improvement Project, and the Oso Flaco Improvement Project (Initial) would be implemented. However, without potential access to reliable OHV fund sources, these projects would compete with the over 271 other State Park units for possible funding and would likely be delayed.

Under this Alternative, State Parks would not implement Small Development Projects with motorized recreation elements, such as the 40-acre Riding Trail Installation and the Replacement of the Safety and Education Center.

Small Development Projects with non-motorized recreation elements, such as the Pismo Creek Estuary Seasonal (Floating) Bridge Installation, Oceano Campground Campfire Center Replacement Project, and the Oso Flaco Boardwalk Replacement Project could occur under this Alternative, as long as non-OHV funding could be obtained. Therefore, impacts associated with building these projects would still happen.

Oceano Dunes SVRA receives an annual operation budget of approximately 12 million dollars, and Pismo SB is allocated 2.5 million. A No-OHV Alternative would significantly reduce funding to maintain existing recreation infrastructure, maintain existing facilities, build new facilities, and develop new recreation opportunities on Oceano Dunes SVRA property.



Under this Alternative, State Parks would be required to fund all District activities from another source instead of the currently available and dedicated OHV Trust Fund. Without OHV Trust Fund support, the now robust Resource Management Program efforts, would likely be severely curtailed. Current spending for these programs (at approximately 2 million dollars annually estimated in 2017 dollars for the shorebird program alone) would be reduced and result in significant impacts to sensitive and endangered species and habitats currently funded through OHV Trust Funds to meet the state and federal management requirements. g.

### **23.2.2.2 Environmental Analysis**

The No-OHV Alternative would conflict with policy and mandates in PRC §5090.35 and would cause an unauthorized change in recreational land use of the park property. It would also have a significant adverse impact on recreation, removing visitors and campers from having recreational access to the coast and this popular park.

Under the No-OHV Alternative, no Proposed Development and Small Development projects with OHV or motorized recreation components would be implemented. These include the Oso Flaco Improvement Project (Future), Philipps 66/Southern Access Project, 40-acre Riding Trail Installation, and the Safety and Education Center's Replacement. Impacts associated with these projects would not occur, but the recreational benefits would also not be realized.

Development Projects on Pismo State Beach property that have no motorized recreation components could be implemented. These projects include the Butterfly Grove Public Access Project, Park Corporation Yard Improvement Project (much-reduced project), Pier and Grand Avenue Entrances and Lifeguard Towers Project, and North Beach Campground Facility Improvements. Projects located on Oceano Dunes SVRA property with non-motorized recreation components like the Oso Flaco Improvement Project (Initial) and the Oso Flaco Boardwalk Replacement Project could be implemented if non-OHV funding were available. Impacts associated with these projects would still occur.

Some Phillips 66/Southern Entrance Project components could be implemented as part of the No-OHV Alternative, such as facilities related to park operations, maintenance, resource management, visitor services, and education. Visitor amenities like non-motorized trails, the developed campground (developed with non-OHV funding), a non-motorized staging area, and non-motorized access into the Park could also be implemented. Impacts associated with these components would remain; however, the project's overall footprint would be reduced, and the project would have to be re-designed. Funding for any improvements at this site would be far less secure, and no OHV Trust Fund monies could be used to support site acquisition or lease or site improvements.

The ability to camp on the beach and dunes at Oceano Dunes SVRA is a significant recreational attraction. Oceano Dunes is currently the largest camping opportunity within the system, representing roughly 6% of all campsites in the system and 16% of all coastal campsites. This primitive beach and dune camping also represents a very low-cost camping and recreation opportunity. Nearly 1.4 million people visit Oceano Dunes SVRA for day use and camping. Visitors also use OHV-vehicles to access non-motorized activities on the beach to unload equipment, such as surf fishing, kiteboarding, and kayaking. Anecdotally, the planning team has received many comments from stakeholders who depend on motorized vehicles to access the coast because of mobility issues. A No-OHV recreation would have a **significant and negative impact** on existing recreation opportunities at the SVRA.



This Alternative would also fail to meet project objectives of providing public use and enjoyment and preserving, managing, and expanding recreational opportunities as appropriate and conserving park resources.

The No OHV Use alternative would not preclude street-legal vehicles currently allowed to operate in Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. By eliminating OHVs, street-legal vehicles would still be allowed to operate; thus, only removing a small subset of vehicles from the beach and dunes.

This alternative is not truly feasible. Oceano Dunes SVRA receives an annual operation budget of approximately 12 million dollars, and Pismo SB is allocated 2.5 million. If the SVRA were reclassified as a State Beach or State Park, it would be reasonable to assume that the operating budget would be reduced accordingly.

Significant funding for natural and cultural resource management currently flows to the Park from OHV Trust Fund monies. These funds are used for resource management such as the snowy plover and the least-term management project and other projects such as dune restoration and habitat enhancement. Funding for these programs would be eliminated until an alternative funding source can be identified and appropriated by the Legislature.

Thus, compared to current conditions, negative impacts on resources could occur, as the management's current level could not be kept up.

### **23.2.2.3 State Park Consideration of Alternative**

The OHV Act (PRC 5090.02) requires State Parks to manage and operate SVRAs to the fullest appropriate public use of vehicular recreational opportunities present, and consistent with the OHV Act while providing conservation and improvement of cultural and natural resource values over time. The OHV program, management of SVRAs, and use of OHV Trust funds are found in Public Resources Code SS 5090.01-5090.65. A No-OHV Alternative does not meet the statutory mandate of an SVRA and providing vehicular recreation opportunities.

This Alternative would require the reclassification of the SVRA to a State Beach, State Recreation Area, or State Park and requires the approval of the OHMVR Commission, the State Park and Recreation Commission, and the California State Legislature. It would also need identification and appropriation of funds to manage the Park. Long term operation would also require a General Plan Update, as the current General Plan mandates use as an SVRA.

As described above, a no-OHV alternative would cause a significant loss of recreation opportunity on the coast and low-cost accommodations in the form of camping on the beach.

OHV Trust funds may not be available under this Alternative, including monies for existing resource protection levels and resource staff. Staff levels would be reduced pro-rata. Funds would need to be appropriated from the SPRF and the General Fund to the resource protection program.

Furthermore, while not a CEQA impacted the physical environment, local businesses and governments could also experience a significant loss in revenue since the SVRA averages 1.4 million visitors a year. A majority of visitors go to the SVRA because of OHV recreation and beach camping. OHV users would be denied an opportunity to ride where vehicle-based riding has been available for more than a century.



This Alternative would fail to meet the project objectives of improving public access to the Park, optimizing recreation, enhancing the visitor experience, and improving operational efficiencies and mission implementation. Therefore, this alternative is rejected.

### **23.2.3 Alternative 3: No General Plan Amendment Alternative**

#### **23.2.3.1 Description**

The Oso Flaco Improvement Project (Future) and the Southern Access Project require an amendment to the existing Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA General Plan. Under the No General Plan Amendment Alternative, no Oso Flaco Future and no Phillips 66/Southern Entrance Development Projects would be constructed and any resolution of planning issues would have to occur within the existing Park footprint. Every other element of the PWP could be implemented as proposed.

#### **23.2.3.2 Environmental Analysis**

This Alternative would eliminate any impacts associated with Oso Future and Southern Entrance/Phillips 66, resulting in less conversion of habitat and fewer emissions. In the long term, fewer visitor-serving facilities and improvements and fewer management options for enhancing recreation and addressing other park management issues would be available.

The PWP Development Project impacts associated with the no General Plan Amendment Alternative would be similar to the Proposed project. However, it would not include the Oso Flaco Improvement Project (Future) and the Southern Access Project. There would be no impacts to existing land use (such as the interim agricultural uses at Oso Flaco), fewer emissions due to visitor vehicular traffic to the sites, less utility and water use, and less conversion of coastal habitat.

There would be fewer improvements to visitor services, such as significant new coastal camping opportunities, pedestrian and bicycle trails, restrooms, and educational facilities in both projects. Also, there would be only small improvements in park operations, maintenance, and resource program facilities from the limited facilities that could be constructed at Oso Flaco without a General Plan Amendment.

#### **23.2.3.3 State Park Consideration of Alternative**

This Alternative would be feasible. It would use a smaller project footprint at Oso Flaco, but would provide additional primitive camping, and therefore be consistent with the Coastal Act's low-cost accommodations and recreation mandate. Oceano Dunes District would continue to provide existing services and implement all other improvement projects. Operational efficiency would only be minimally improved, because of limited additional operational space at Oso Flaco in the Initial Phase.

This Alternative would be acceptable because it meets project objectives of providing public use and enjoyment and preserving, managing, and expanding recreational opportunities as appropriate and conserving park resources. However, the additional campgrounds offered in these projects would partially mitigate the loss of camping on the beach through the interim day use, camping, and OHV day use limits proposed by this PWP and the reduction of 48 acres of camping area in the foredunes from the Annual Monitoring and Reporting Plan for 2019.

Without additional camping to offset these losses, the objectives of optimizing recreation and enhancing visitor experiences would only be partially met.



### 23.3 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to identify project alternatives that “would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project[.]” (CEQA Guidelines § 15126.6(a)). The discussion above presents alternatives to the proposed PWP based on the identified potentially significant impacts.

The no General Plan Amendment would be the environmentally superior Alternative. It would not result in the project impacts associated with the larger Development Project footprints such as the Oso Flaco Future Improvement Project or the Phillips66/Southern Entrance Project. However, it would not mitigate the loss of camping on the beach imposed by the interim reduced use limits.

