



Public Works Plan

Visitor's Survey Summary for the Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area Public Works Plan and Environmental Impact Report

January 2019



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Visitor's Survey Summary

*for the Pismo State Beach and
Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area
Public Works Plan and Environmental Impact Report*

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATVs	all-terrain vehicles
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
PWP	Public Works Plan
RV	recreational vehicle
SLO	San Luis Obispo
SUVs	sport-utility vehicles
SVRA	State Vehicular Recreation Area



1.0 INTRODUCTION

As part of the Public and Stakeholder Participation Plan for the Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) Public Works Plan (PWP) and Environmental Impact Report, members of the planning team 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 the ways they use the park and their suggestions and ideas for long-term management and possible future improvements.

1.1 Survey Methodology

From August 16–20, 2018, the survey team conducted the Visitor's Survey at Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA and other locations within the vicinity of the project area. The site visit was part of the implementation of the outreach strategy for the web-based survey, which was aimed at obtaining input from a broad range of stakeholders and park users. The primary tool for engaging visitors and providing them with the information on how to take the survey online was through distribution of a postcard (see Figure 1).

At the start of the site visit, the survey team met with State Parks staff from the Oceano Dunes District. The staff advised the survey team on developing a list of various locations for postcard distribution, including local businesses, government offices (such as City Halls), recreational vehicle (RV) parks, and Visitor's Centers/Chambers of Commerce. These sites were generally located in Oceano, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, and Arroyo Grande, as well as other surrounding cities such as San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria, Paso Robles, Atascadero, and Templeton. The team also worked in coordination with State Parks staff to confirm the specific sites within the parks and schedule for postcard distribution during the course of the survey site visit.

The survey team interacted directly with visitors and staff at the selected postcard distribution sites to explain the purpose of the survey and obtain input.



Figure 1. Survey Card




**Join us to plan for the future of
Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes
State Vehicular Recreation Area!**

Take the visitor's survey at www.OceanoDunesPWP.com.
The survey is open from August 16-September 16, 2018.


Tell us what you think!





Public Works Plan


The California Department of Parks and Recreation is currently developing a Public Works Plan (PWP) for Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. A PWP is a long-range land use management plan for compliance with the California Coastal Act that is reviewed and certified by the California Coastal Commission.

Learn more about the project and sign up for the mailing list at:
www.OceanoDunesPWP.com




Public Works Plan

1.2 Survey Timeframe and Promotion

The online survey was available through a link on the Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA PWP website at www.OceanoDunesPWP.com. It was available for a one-month period, from August 16 through September 16, 2018. In addition to the on-site postcard distribution conducted by the survey team, the survey was promoted through an email blast to project stakeholders, distributed on August 16, 2018. A subsequent email blast to remind stakeholders about the survey was distributed on September 10, 2018.

1.3 Report Structure

This survey summary report includes the following key sections:

- **Survey Goals** lists the motivating factors for conducting the survey.
- **Survey Questions** presents the specific questions included in the survey.
- **Survey Summary** provides an overview of the key findings of the survey.
- **Survey Results** summarizes the analysis completed for each topic addressed in the survey. The intent of this section is to broadly depict survey responses. The detailed answers provided by each survey participant are stored in a database and not included in this report.
- **Next Steps** offers details on future opportunities for public involvement and how the survey results will be used in PWP development.



2.0 SURVEY GOALS

The goals of the survey were as follows:

- Enable current and future visitors to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA to provide feedback to the planning team on specific topics related to the planning effort.
- Provide the planning team with a greater understanding of visitor demographics, their primary activities, and possible improvements that they would like to see in the future.
- Solicit input into the planning process from park users and stakeholders who may not be interested in providing individual comments, attending a meeting, or otherwise getting involved, but who are willing to provide insight into their opinions and preferences briefly, on a one-time basis.



3.0 SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey was comprised of 20 questions. The questions fell into three categories:

- Demographics of the respondents and their companions
- Visitor experience
- Possible improvements to the visitor experience at Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA

The questions that were asked in each category are listed below.

3.1 Demographics

1. Please enter your zip code. If you live outside of the U.S., please enter your country of residence.
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your age range?

3.2 Visitor Experience

1. How many times in last 12 months have you visited Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA?
2. What day(s) of the week do you typically visit?
3. What are your primary activities when you visit Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA?
4. If you selected “Attend Special Events” or “Participate in educational/interpretive activities” in the previous question, please list the special events or educational/interpretive activities you attend.
5. If you selected “Motorized Recreation” in the previous question, what type of Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) do you operate?
6. Where else do you go to visit the beach or participate in other non-motorized beach activities?
7. What are your favorite places to visit at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA?
8. Are you aware of the special-status biological or cultural resources that are present at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA? If so, please list them.



3.3 Possible Improvements

1. What type of additional camping facilities would you like to see?
2. What changes to Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) facilities and operations would you like to see?
3. What changes to restroom or trash facilities would you like to see?
4. What additional recreational activities or amenities would you like to see?
5. What other additions or modifications would you like to see?
6. If you selected “Additional concessions” or “Additional/different/less special events” in the previous question, please provide your suggestions for concessions or special events.
7. What types of educational or interpretive opportunities would you be interested in at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA?
8. What else would improve your recreational experience at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA?
9. Do you have other comments, ideas, or suggestions we should consider as we develop a long-range use management plan for Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA?



4.0 SURVEY SUMMARY

A total of 4,075 people participated in the survey. The majority of participants were frequent visitors to Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. About half of survey participants (49.9 percent) fell within the 26–45 age range.

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 of survey participants, with 94 percent of responses. Beach areas, the Monarch Butterfly Grove, campgrounds, and trails and boardwalks were also chosen as favorite places.

In terms of possible future changes, more than 60 percent of survey participants would like to see improvements to the restroom and trash facilities. In addition, 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 included the ecology and history of the dunes; community beach clean-up events; and OHV-relation 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.



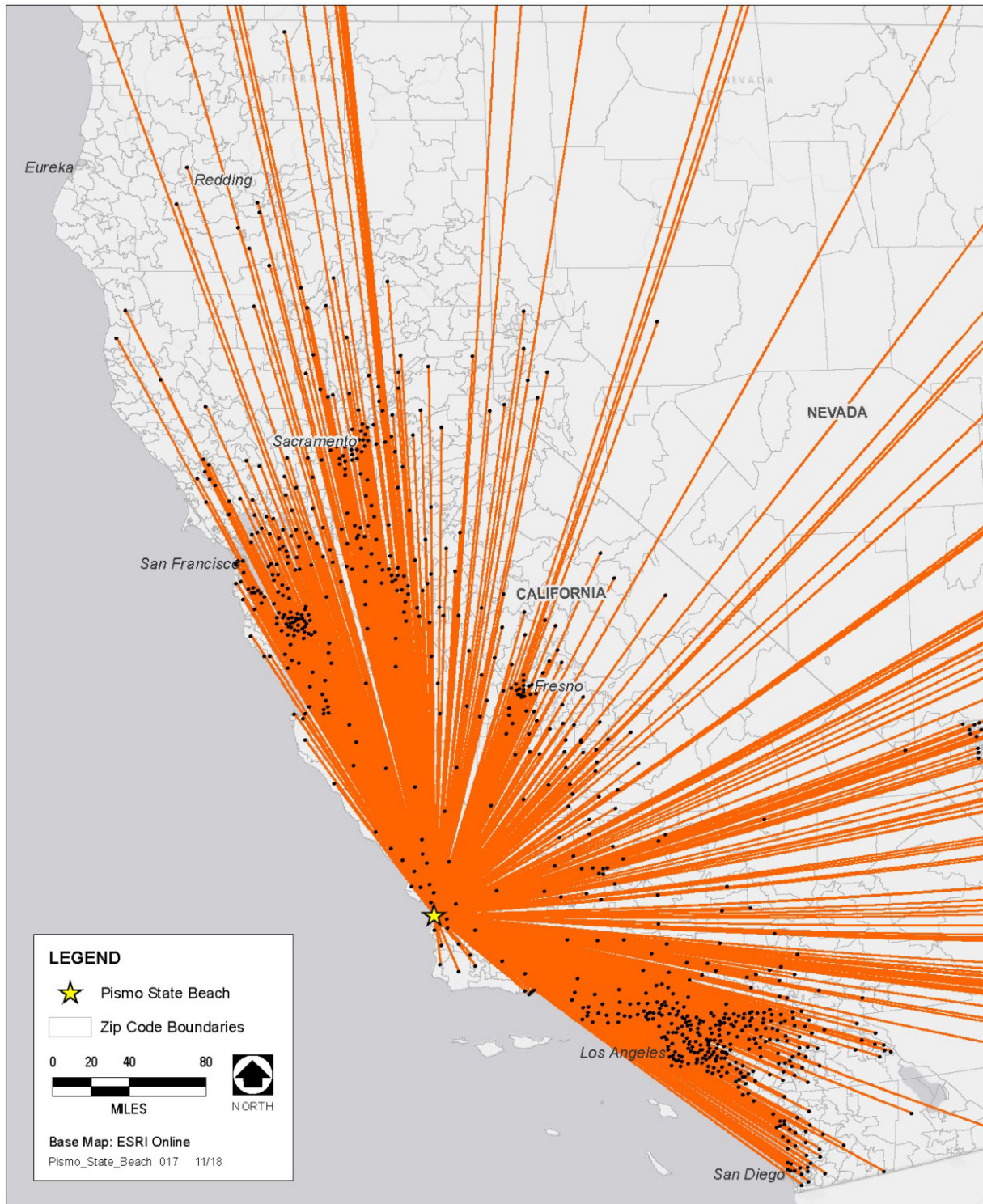
5.0 SURVEY RESULTS

1. Distance Lived from Pismo State Beach/Oceano Dunes SVRA

Survey respondents were asked to provide their zip codes to determine the distance traveled to visit Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. Figure 2 shows the zip codes throughout California and beyond. The dots indicate the zip codes in which respondents reside and the orange lines show the distance from these locations to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. As shown in Figure 3, more than 46 percent of respondents reside between 101-200 miles from the project area. About 23 percent of survey respondents reside between 201-300 miles from Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA.



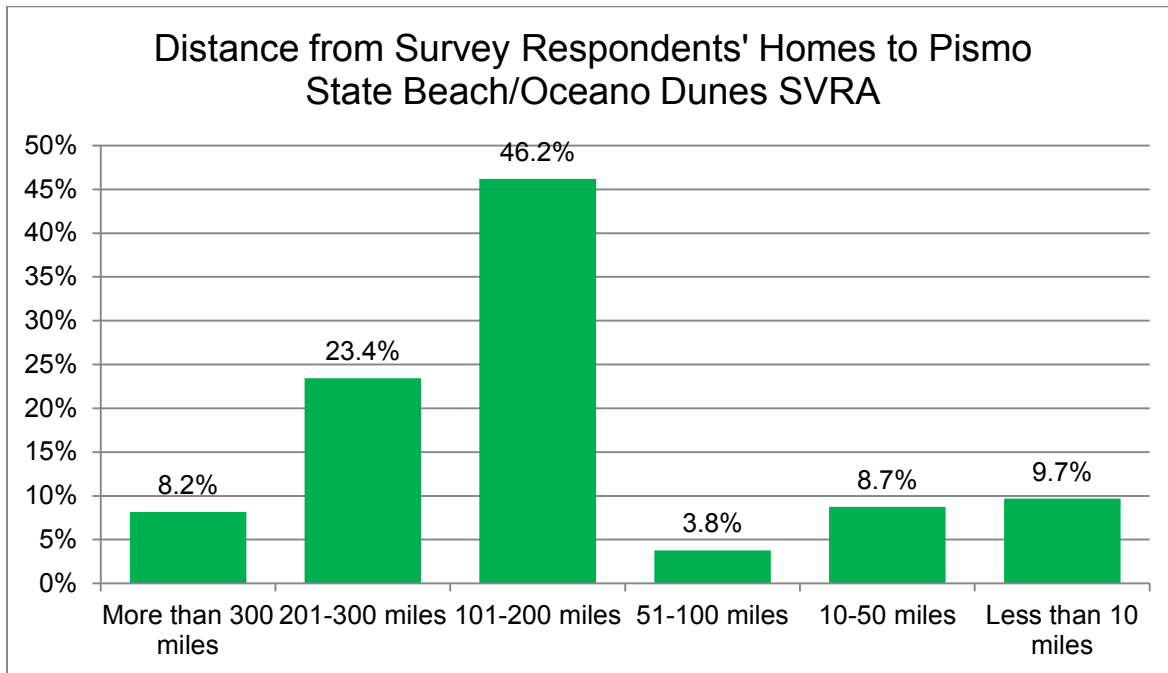
Figure 2. Distance Lived from Pismo State Beach/Oceano Dunes SVRA Based on ZIP Code



Source: AECOM 2018



Figure 3. Distance from Survey Respondents' Homes to Pismo State Beach/Oceano Dunes SVRA

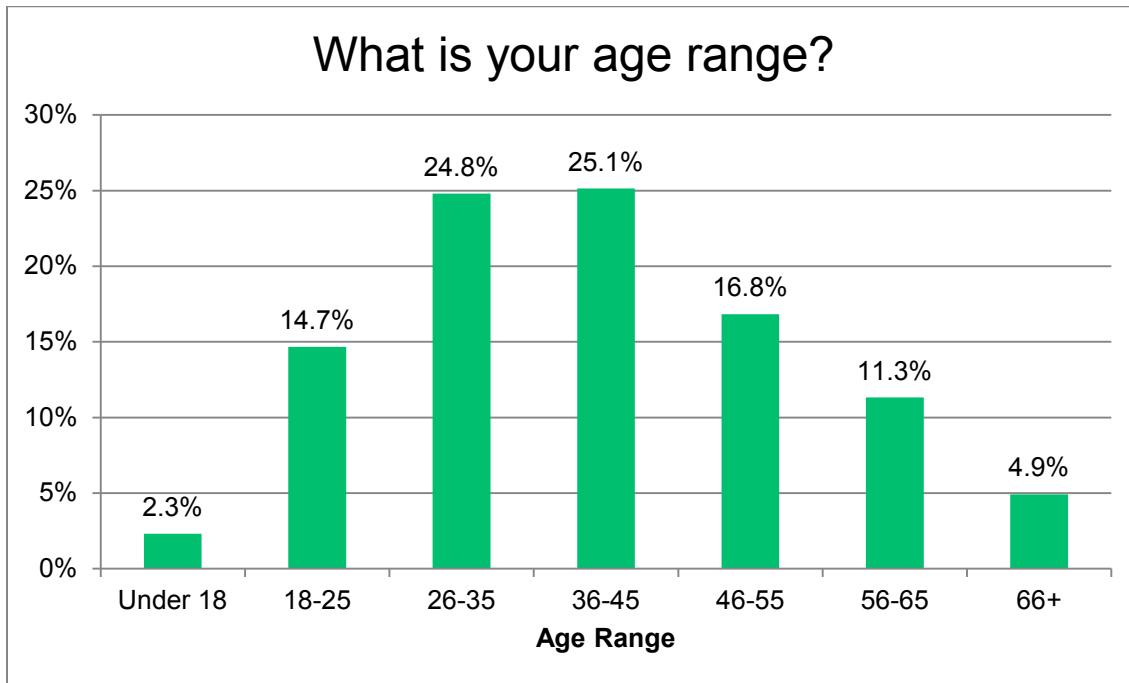


2. Age Range

Survey respondents were comprised of a well-distributed variety of age ranges. The largest age groups were 26–35 and 36–45 years old, with each age group comprising about 25 percent of respondents. Approximately 15 percent of survey respondents fell into each of the 18–25 and 46–55 categories, and 11 percent fell into the 56+ age range. Less than 3 percent of respondents were under 18 years old.



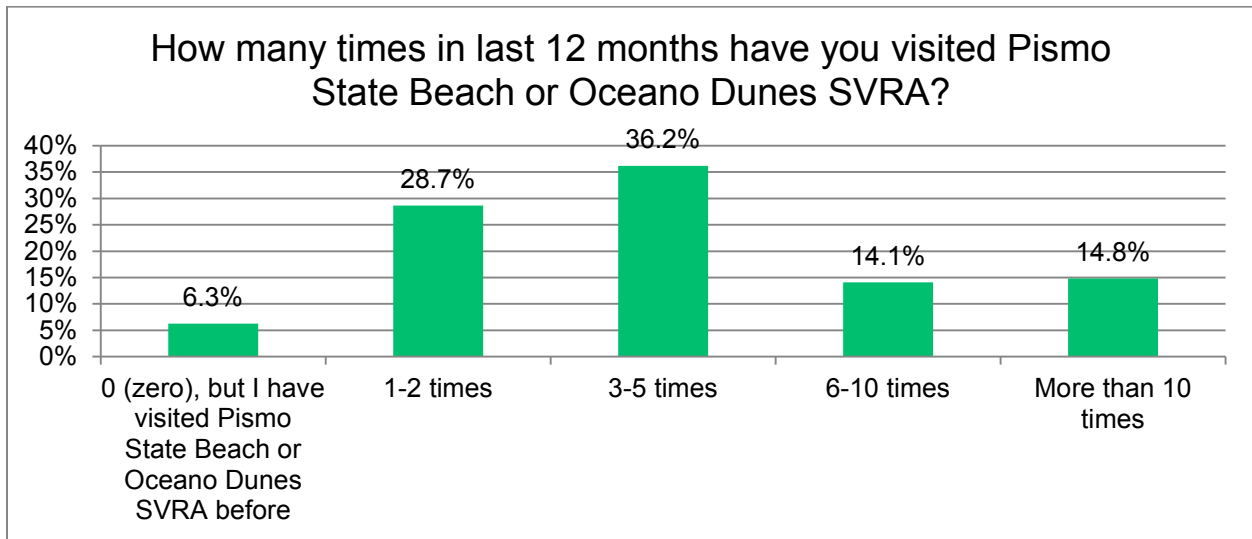
Figure 4. Age Range



3. Number of Visits to Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA in the Past 12 Months

Most respondents are frequent visitors of Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. More than 60 percent of those who have visited Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA in the past twelve months have done so more than three times. Less than seven percent of respondents had not visited in the past twelve months, but had visited sometime previously.

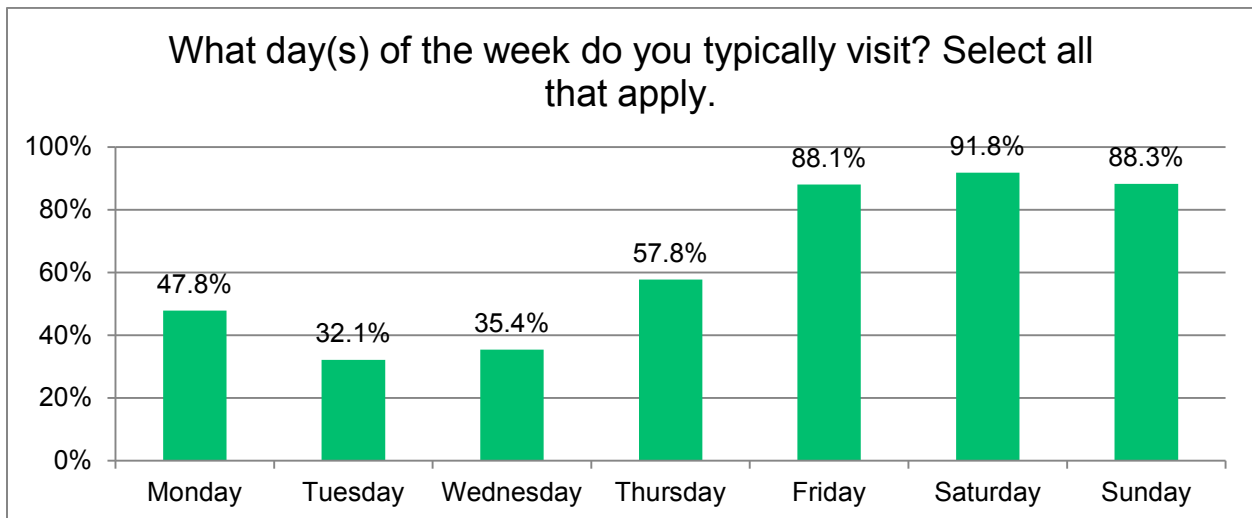
Figure 5. Number of Visits in the Past 12 Months



4. Typical Visit Days of the Week

The weekend days Friday through Sunday were selected by respondents as the most popular days to visit Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. More than 88 percent of respondents selected Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Tuesday and Wednesday received the lowest response rate, at 32 and 35 percent of respondents, respectively.

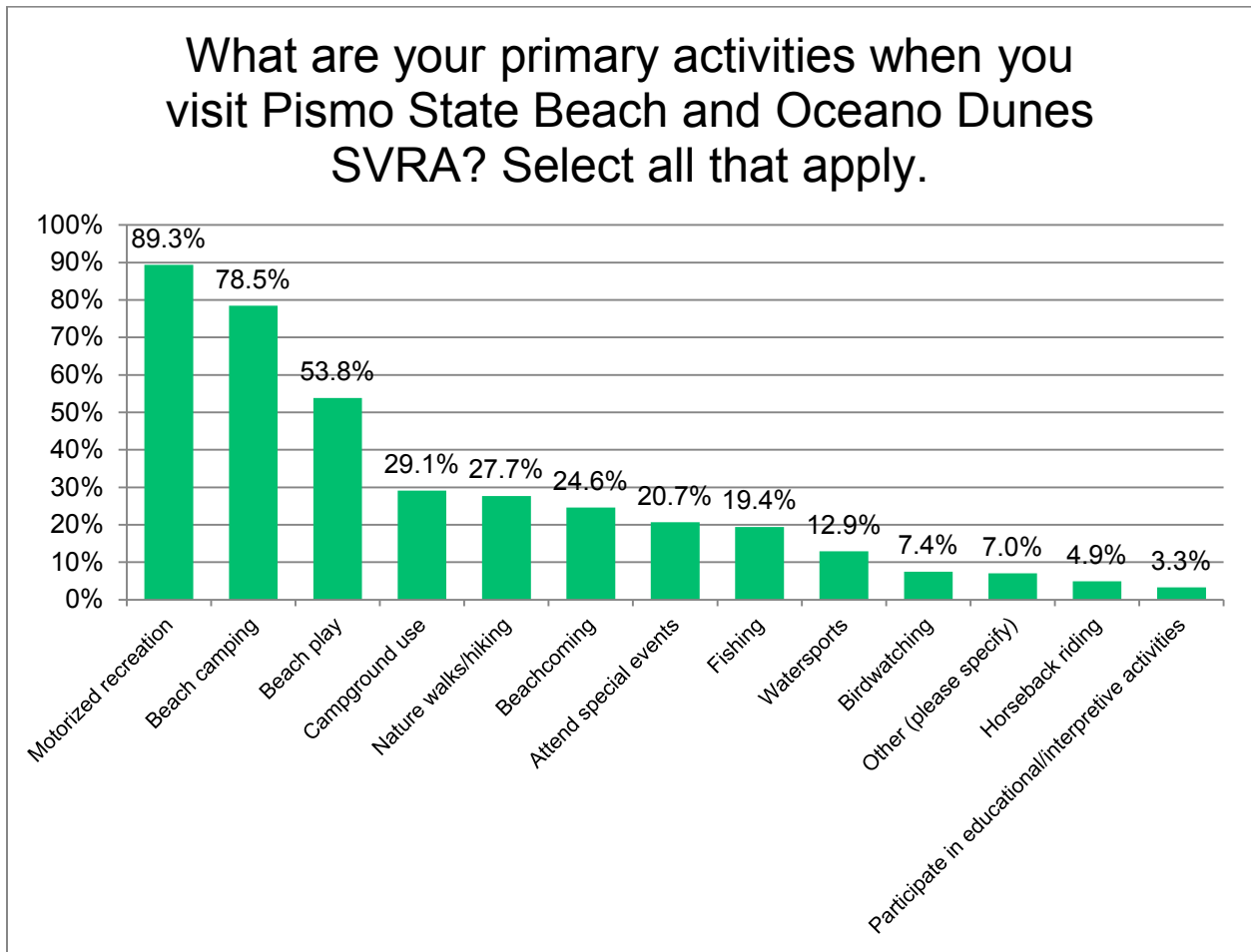
Figure 6. Days of the Week Visited



5. Primary Activities

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.

Figure 7. Primary Activities at Pismo State Beach/Oceano Dunes SVRA



6. Special Events or Educational/Interpretive Activities

The survey asked those who selected “Attend special events” or “Participate in educational/interpretive activities” in the previous question to list the special events they attend in a free-response text box. This question received 1,169 responses. The most prevalent responses were the dune buggy show/parade and Huckfest, with 243 and 162 responses, respectively. Other popular events with more than 50 responses included car shows, Jeep events, beach clean-ups, community events (such as church and council events), and educational and interpretive activities.

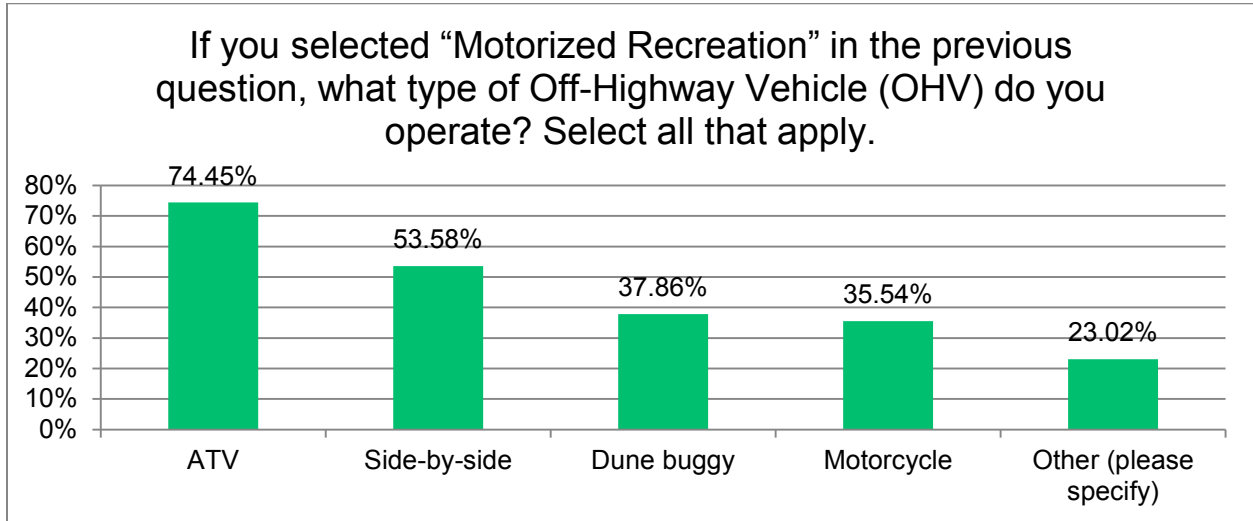
Figure 8. Special Events and Educational/Interpretive Activities



7. Motorized Recreation

Nearly 75 percent of respondents operate all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and 53 percent operate side-by-sides. Fewer respondents reported they operate a dune buggy or a motorcycle, at 37 and 35 percent, respectively.

Figure 9. Off-Highway Vehicle Types



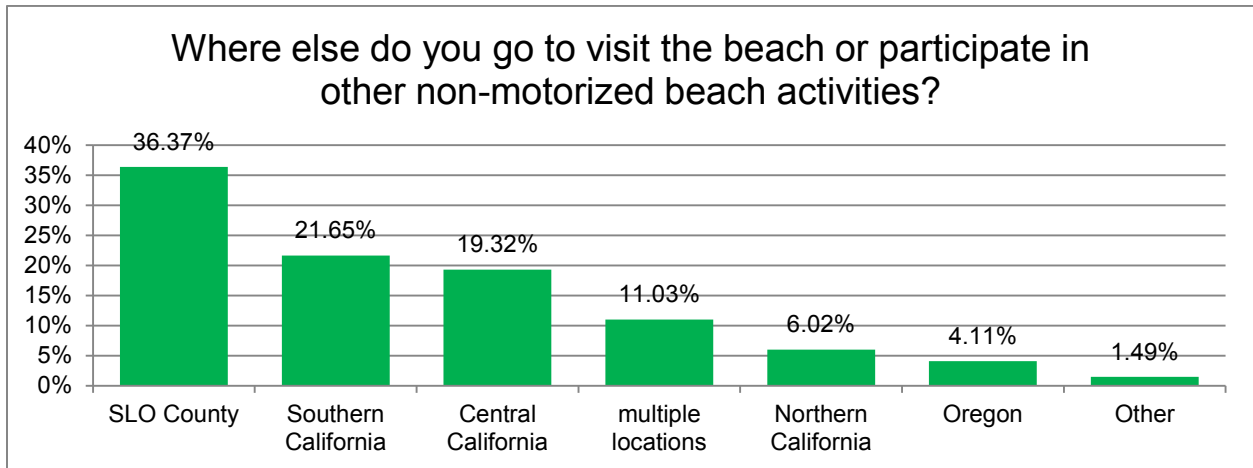
Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they operate other types of vehicles, which included trucks, Jeeps, sport-utility vehicles (SUVs), pre-runners, dirtbikes, and sandrails.



8. Other Beaches

The survey asked respondents to identify other beach locations they visit or at which they participate in non-motorized beach activities. The 3,110 free-response answers were categorized broadly by geographic region. The area that received the highest level of responses is San Luis Obispo (SLO) County with 610 responses. Respondents also reported that they visit beaches in Southern California and Central California at high rates, with 363 and 324 responses respectively. Northern California beaches received 101 responses, and beaches in Oregon received 69 responses. Among other lesser received responses were beaches in other countries and other states beyond California and Oregon.

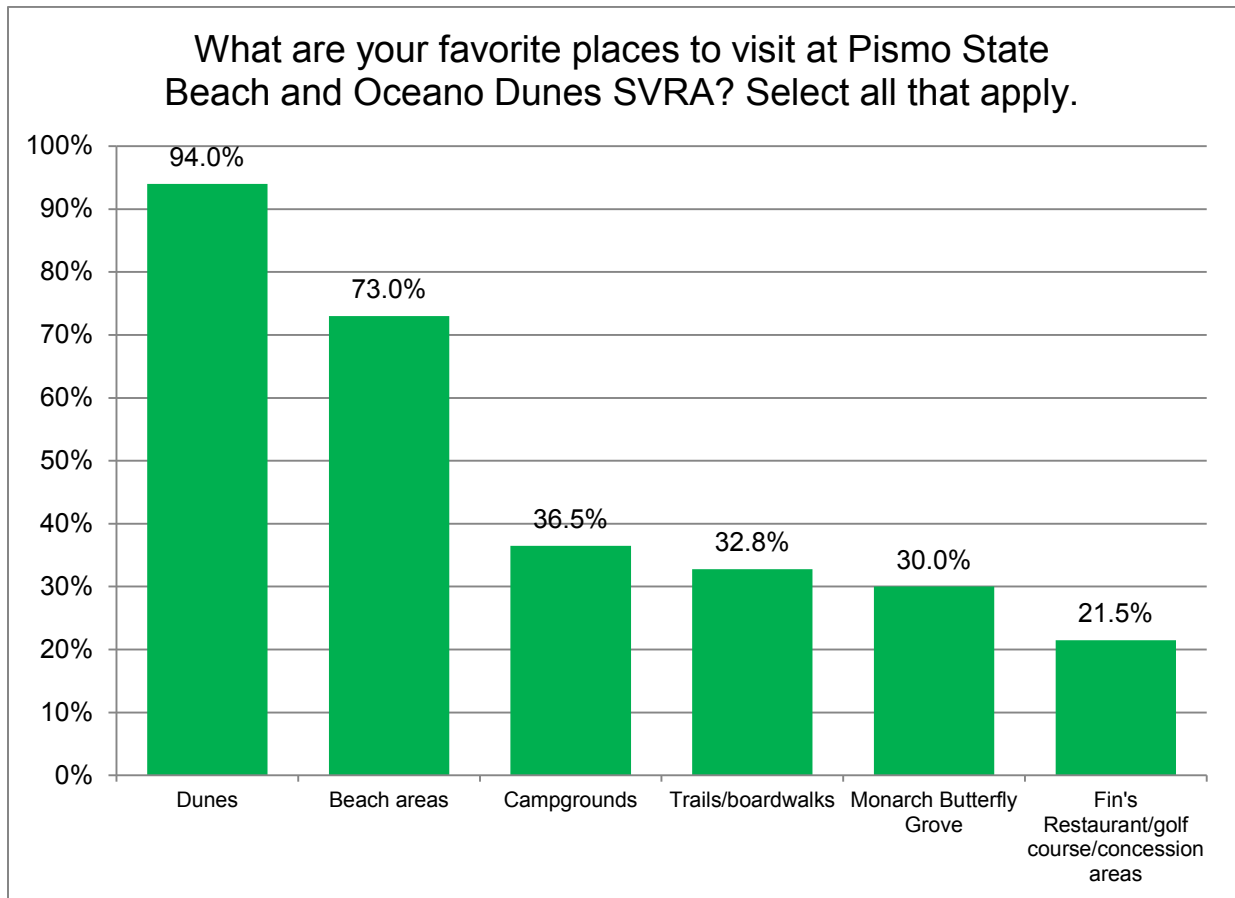
Figure 10. Other Beaches Visited



9. Favorite Places to Visit at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA

The majority of respondents selected the dunes as their favorite place to visit, with a 94 percent response rate. Beach areas in general were the second most popular response at 73 percent. Other places to visit, including the Monarch Butterfly Grove, campgrounds, Oso Flaco Lake, the Visitor Center, trails and boardwalks, and Fin's Restaurant and other concessions were favorites among approximately 36 percent or less of respondents.

Figure 11. Favorite Places to Visit at Pismo State Beach/Oceano Dunes SVRA



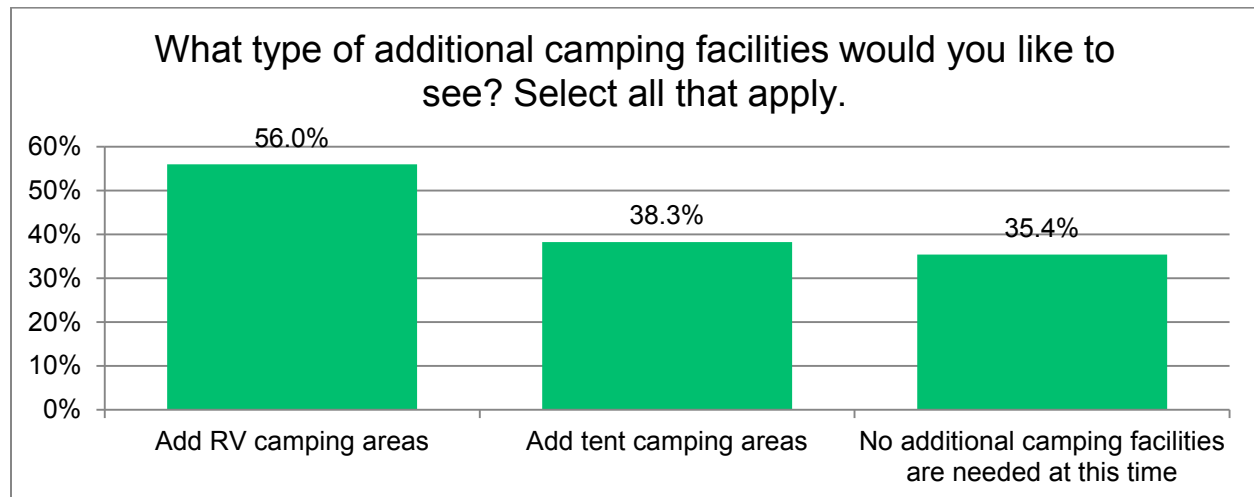
10. Special-Status Biological and Cultural Resources

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the special-status biological or cultural resources that are present at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA, and if so, to list them. 1,704 people responded to the question, with 848 respondents stating that they were aware of the special-status biological or cultural resources. Of these 848 respondents, 402 listed the specific species or cultural resources they were aware of, the most popular among them being the snowy plover and California least tern; and 265 provided a general answer such as “endangered plants and animals” or “Native American resources.”

11. Additional Camping Facilities

More than half of respondents would like to see additional RV camping areas. Nearly 40 percent of respondents would like to see more tent camping areas, and 35 percent of respondents stated that no additional camping facilities are needed at this time.

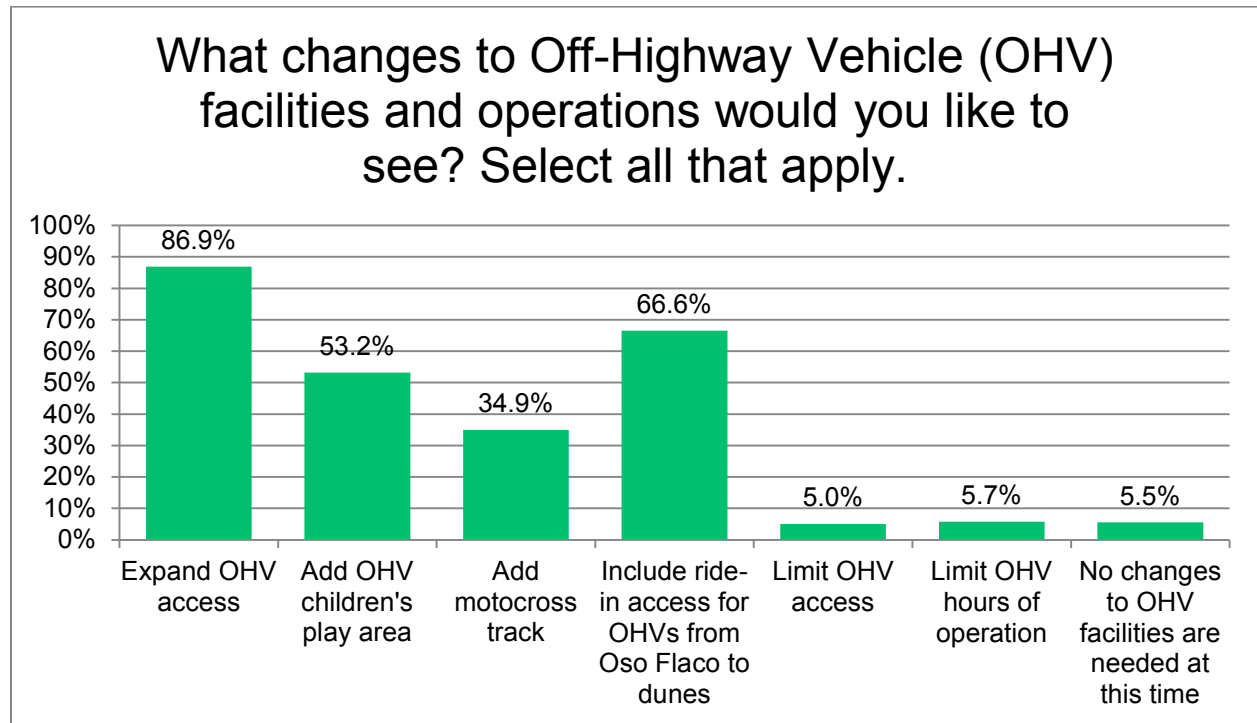
Figure 12. Additional Camping Facilities



12. Change to Off-Highway Vehicle Facilities and Operations

Most respondents were in favor of increased OHV access and riding opportunities. Nearly 87 percent of respondents would like to see expanded OHV access, and 66 percent would like to have the ability to ride-in on OHVs from Oso Flaco directly to the dunes. Fifty-three percent were in favor of an OHV area for children, and 34 percent would be in favor of adding a motocross track. Approximately five percent of visitor survey respondents indicated a preference for limited OHV access and limited OHV hours of operation. Five percent of respondents stated that no changes to OHV operations and facilities are needed.

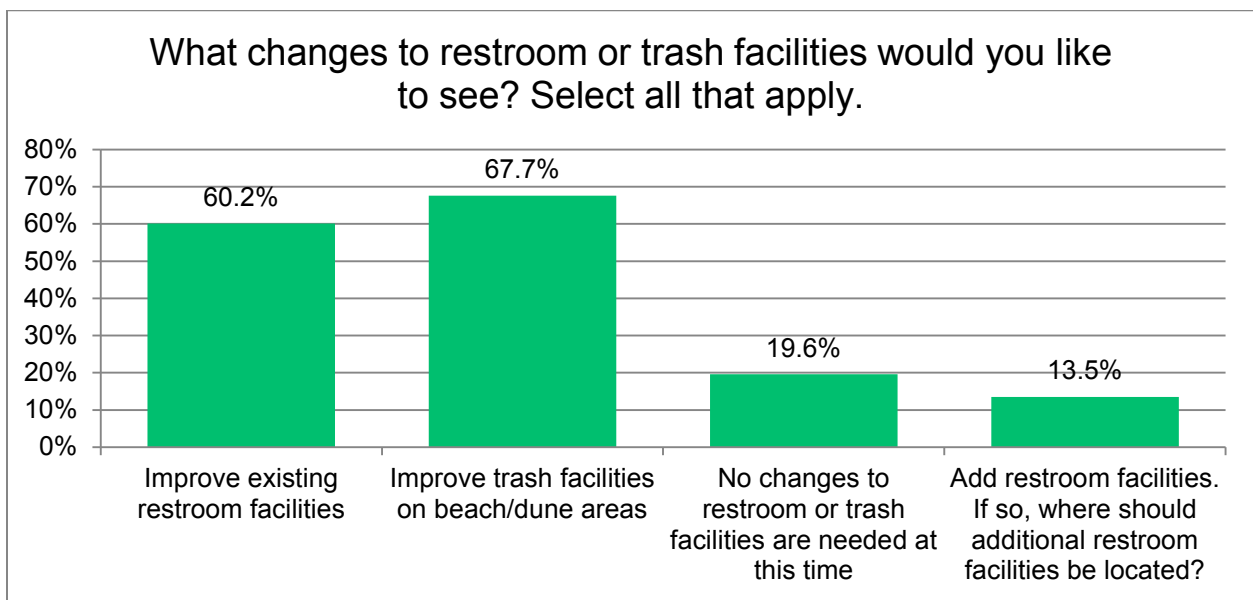
Figure 13. Changes to OHV Facilities and Operations



13. Changes to Restroom and Trash Facilities

The survey sought feedback on what changes to restroom and trash facilities visitors would like to see at Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. A majority of visitor survey respondents, more than 60 percent, would like to see both restroom and trash facility improvements. Conversely, less than 20 percent of respondents believed that no changes to restroom or trash facilities were needed. Thirteen percent of respondents are also in favor of additional restrooms, and were given the opportunity to specify where these facilities should be located. Suggestions included more restrooms generally in the dunes or on the beach, in or near camping areas, between park entrances, at or between specific mile markers, or at all mile markers. Specific mile marker suggestions included at Beach Post Marker 2, 5, and 6.

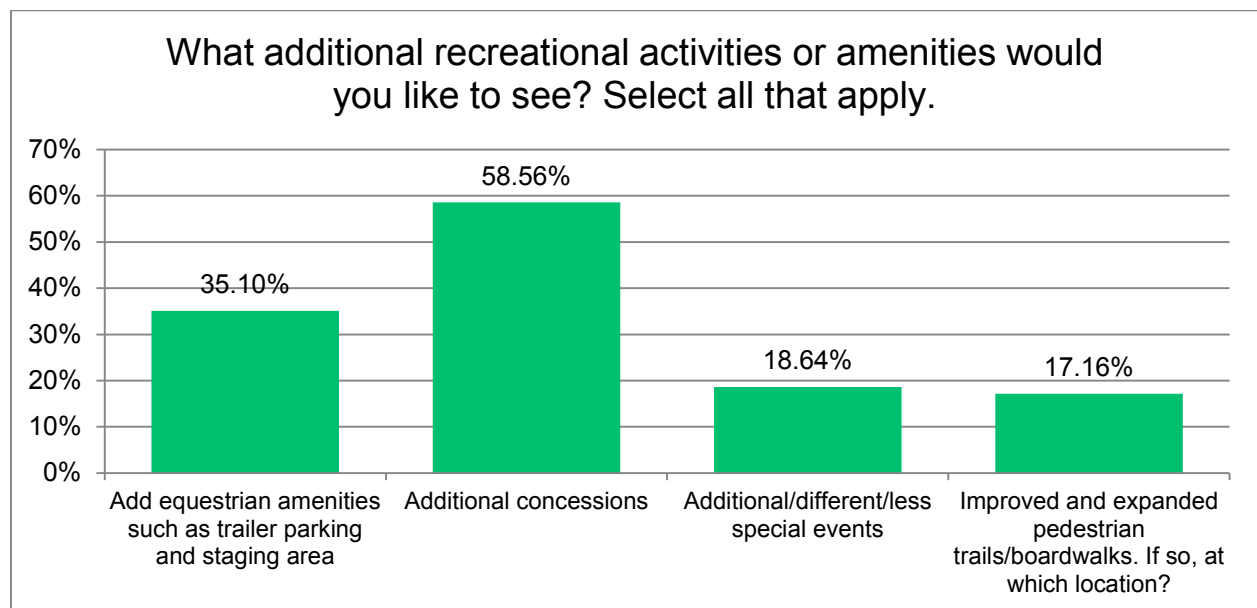
Figure 14. Changes to Restroom or Trash Facilities



14. Additional Recreational Activities or Amenities

In this question, respondents were asked if they would like to see additional equestrian amenities, concessions, special events, and improved or expanded trails and boardwalks. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated an interest in additional concessions, and 35 percent of respondents requested adding equestrian amenities such as trailer parking and staging areas. Less than 20 percent of respondents requested improved or expanded pedestrian trails and boardwalks, or changes to the special events held at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. Those who selected improved or expanded pedestrian trails and boardwalks were also given the opportunity to specify where these improvements should occur, and popular responses included between park entrances, near Grand avenue, near the Monarch Butterfly Grove, and on Pismo State Beach.

Figure 15. Additional Recreational Activities or Amenities



15. Other Additions and Modifications

This question was an open-ended text box opportunity for respondents to request other additions or modifications to Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. Respondents provided 1,939 requests for additions and modifications, and recurring themes are summarized below in order of more common to less common:

- Expand OHV access
 - Reopen Devil's Slide
- Limit/eliminate OHV access, or implement stricter time limits for OHV riding
- Increase camping areas
- Concerns regarding speed on the beach, trash (some also suggested more beach cleaning or raising fines for littering), noise volumes (suggested increased police and ranger presence)
- Adding showers
- Adding lanes at the front gate for those who have already paid or have passes
- More/easier trash dumps
- Adding food stands, food trucks or additional food options
- People park too close to the water on the beach/better management of size of camps on beach
- Playgrounds and designated areas for children
- Vehicle wash area
- More events like Huckfest
- Take the dust fences and/or hay bales down

Many respondents also stated that they like Pismo just the way it is.

16. Additional Concessions and Additional/Different/Less Special Events

This question provided an opportunity for visitor survey respondents to expand and provide more detail if they selected “additional concessions” or “additional/different/less special events” in the earlier question regarding additional recreational activities or amenities. This question received 1,320 responses. Popular requests from this question are summarized below:

- More concessions options
 - Create competition for Yo Banana Boy (complaints about monopoly)
 - More food in general; many requests for food trucks
- Drag racing events or other sanctioned racing events
- Bring back Huckfest
- Camping and OHV supplies concessions – fuel, parts, ice, firewood
- No additional concessions – already too crowded on the beach, don't want to draw extra people
- Concerts on the beach



17. Educational and Interpretive Opportunities

This question provided a free-response opportunity for survey respondents to provide their ideas for types of educational and interpretive opportunities at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA. This question received 1,315 responses. Themes included:

- Native American history
- Ecology of dunes (wildlife identification and viewing, birds and bird habitats, endangered species awareness and protection programs, marine life education, bird watching tours, environmental impacts of dune usage)
- Natural history of the dunes (history of Oceano Dunes and surrounding area, education on dune formation and movement)
- OHV related education and events
 - History of OHV riding
 - Educational and training programs for OHV riding
 - OHV safety classes for children, teens and other beginners
 - OHV safety for rental users
 - Beginner OHV training area
 - Promotion of off-roading and camping
- Sustainability programs
- Campfire programs
- Community beach clean-up events
- Balancing protection of wildlife with preservation of OHV recreation
- More Junior Ranger activities
- Enhanced educational opportunities for children
- Family-focused educational events
- Increased educational/interpretive signage
- Education on local economic impact of the dunes
- Education on rules/etiquette of the dunes and beach camping
- Increased education on tides/tide charts
- Museum that describes history of dunes, local area, wildlife, OHV riding
- Programs to promote stewardship
- Air quality and dust education
- Guided walks/tours/talks
- Education on keeping the dunes clean and safe
- Improve methods for reporting crimes/concerns
- More interaction opportunities with rangers, such as meet-and-greets
- Education on how to keep the dunes open or expanding access to them
- Bring school groups to the dunes for educational opportunities
- Trash disposal and recycling education



18. What else would improve your recreational experience at Pismo State Beach or Oceano Dunes SVRA?

This open-ended free-response text box question received 1,939 responses. Survey response themes to question included:

- OHV
 - Maintain or increase OHV riding area
 - Decrease or eliminate OHV riding
 - Re-open closed dune areas
 - Designate area for beginner OHV riders
 - OHV safety education
- Facilities
 - More souvenir or food vendors
 - Add showers to restroom facilities
 - More trash dumpsters and beach cleaning, trash pickup
 - Cleaner & additional restrooms
 - Remove fencing
 - Better signage
 - Safe area for children/play area
 - Improve online reservation system
 - Remove hay bales
 - More off-beach parking
 - Keep access for horseback riding
- Camping
 - Increase number of camping permits
 - More campgrounds or beach camping areas
 - Limit space allowed for each beach campsite
 - Restrict beach parking too close to the shoreline
 - More space for RVs with hookups
 - Limit RVs
- Entry
 - Separate entry lane for those who already have passes
 - Additional park entrance to reduce congestion
 - Additional park entrance at Oso Flaco Lake (southern access)
- Policy
 - Noise restrictions during evening hours
 - Enforce fines for littering
 - Protection/preservation of the dunes and environment
 - More patrols and enforcement by rangers (speed limits, drinking, littering, noise)
 - Prevent re-sale of passes
 - Increase fees for passes
 - Post information about high and low tide times at park entrances



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- Improved safety for walking on the beach
 - Dust reduction
 - More rangers
 - Keep Oceano Dunes SVRA open
 - Trash
 - Beach users ensuring they dispose of trash/clean up when they depart
 - Beach clean-up events
 - Clean beach with tractor or heavy equipment

19. Do you have other comments, ideas, or suggestions we should consider as we develop a long-range use management plan for Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA?

This open-ended question provided a final opportunity for survey respondents to provide comments on what should be considered during the long-range use management planning process for Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA. There were 1,612 responses to this question. Themes from the responses included:

- Reduce or eliminate OHV use
- Maintain or increase OHV area
- Improve online reservation system
- Expand OHV area to decrease overcrowding in current limited space
- More trash dumpsters and beach cleaning, trash pickup
- Better dust management/air quality improvements
- Re-open closed dune areas
- Remove hay bales
- Add a motocross track
- Add showers to restroom facilities
- More area for walking safely on the beach
- Separate entry lane for those who already have passes
- Designate area for beginner OHV riders
- Limit space allowed for each beach campsite
- Signs advocating pack-in/pack-out policy
- Dune history and wildlife education
- Protection/preservation of the dunes and environment
- Southern access/entrance to the park
- Increase fees for passes
- More patrols and enforcement by rangers (speed limits, drinking, littering, noise)
- More concessions
- Safe area for children/play area
- Maintain family traditions of visiting the SVRA
- Do not allow access to the dunes at Oso Flaco
- More Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access
- Enhanced dune safety



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- Hold public meetings to get input from local residents and non-locals
 - Opening more space for OHVs will increase safety
 - Noise restrictions during evening hours
 - Blowing sand not caused by OHVs
 - Beach clean-up events
 - Limit number of rentals allowed or designate separate area for rentals
 - Consider impact on local economy that any park closure would have
 - Keep Oceano Dunes SVRA open
 - Enforce fines for littering
 - More campgrounds or beach camping areas
 - Plant more trees/vegetation as a barrier to blowing sand
 - OHV safety education



6.0 NEXT STEPS

The information obtained from the Visitor's Survey will be used to inform the PWP planning process. This report will be posted on the Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA PWP website at www.OceanoDunesPWP.com.

Further opportunities for public input into the PWP planning process for Pismo State Beach and Oceano Dunes SVRA will be available in early 2019. Stay up-to-date by subscribing to our email list at www.OceanoDunesPWP.com.

