



AGENDA – JOINT MEETING

Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Core Group & Executive Committee

Visit SLO CAL Advisory Committee Core Group & Executive Committee Agenda

Thursday, April 15, 2021

4:00pm-5:00pm

The Kinney SLO, 1800 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Video Conference Option - URL: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82350395905>

Meeting ID: 823 5039 5905

Call-In Phone Number: (669) 900-6833

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

BUSINESS ITEMS	C. Davison
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3. **COVID-19 Impact & Response Update (15 min)**

Staff will provide an update on the Visit SLO CAL's recent initiatives, as well as its planned efforts moving forward, and request feedback from the Advisory Committee Core Group.

4. **FY2021/22 Items of Focus (30 min)**

Staff will review Visit SLO CAL's key items of focus for FY2021/22 and request feedback from the Advisory Committee Core Group.

5. **Oceano Dunes SVRA Economic Impact Report (10 min)**

Staff will provide an update on its Oceano Dunes SVRA advocacy efforts, including the development of an Economic Impact Report focused on future mitigation opportunities, and request feedback from the Advisory Committee Core Group.

ADJOURN.

Brown Act Notice: Each speaker is limited to two minutes of public comment for items not on the agenda. Public comment for each agenda item will be called for separately and is also limited to 2 minutes per speaker. State law does not allow the Executive Committee to discuss or take action on issues not on the agenda, except that members of the Committee may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by the person giving public comment. Staff may be directed by the Committee to follow-up on such items and/or place them on the next Committee agenda. The order of agenda items is listed for reference and items may be taken in any order deemed appropriate by the Executive Committee.

ADA Notice: Meeting facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. If you require special assistance to participate in the meeting, notify Brendan Pringle at (805) 541-8000 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.



Oceano Dunes Economic Impact Assessment

03.01.2021

Annie Frew
Visit SLO CAL
1334 Marsh Street



San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Overview

The purpose of this study is to assess the financial effects and employment impacts of the Oceano Dunes District on the San Luis Obispo County economy.

Goals

1. A robust and comprehensive assessment of the direct, indirect and induced economic benefits the Oceano Dunes District brings to the surrounding communities, San Luis Obispo County, and the California State Parks system.
2. To provide subsequent mitigation measures in the event of partial or full closure of the Oceano Dunes District, and identify potential opportunities for a repurposing of the State Park, as well as identify areas of opportunity in the surrounding area.

Background

The Oceano Dunes is a large, naturally occurring coastal dunes system located between Pismo Beach and the unincorporated Oceano in San Luis Obispo County. Originally occupied by the Chumash, the dunes are a rich and unique cultural and environmental asset.


Aside from the environmental attractions, the most popular component is the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA), a part of the larger Pismo Beach State Park, and operated under the California State Parks system. Off-highway vehicles (OHV) and off-roading enthusiasts travel from all over the world to ride along the scenic coastline.

In addition to the OHV area, street legal vehicles are allowed to drive on the Pismo State Beach along with spaces designated for beach camping. Other recreation activities include, but are not limited to: fishing, surfing, paragliding, horseback riding, and hiking.

Purpose

A previous economic impact report was finalized in 2017 however, the study was deemed incomplete and did not provide a full understanding or segmentation of the potential economic impacts. This study will ensure a robust and comprehensive assessment of the data, analysis and provide subsequent mitigation measures and areas for opportunity.

Upcoming regulatory decisions will affect how the State Park operates and the current scope of recreational assets. Over the next five years, State Parks may be required to phase-out its off-highway vehicle riding area (OHV). The OHV component to the State Park is unique within California and a huge



tourist attraction. People travel from all over the world to ride on the State Park all while recreating and staying in the neighboring towns.

This unique piece of coastline not only attracts travelers and residents alike, but also the film industry. The biodiversity and distinctive environmental makeup are particularly enticing to filmmakers, musicians, adventure photographers, and other artists. When filming occurs, the artists and their crews increase revenue for State Parks and the community in which they stay.

However, the rare environmental features are protected under state and federal laws. For example, The Endangered Species Act is federal legislation that protects listed species, such as the Snowy Plover, to ensure the habitat, breeding ground and survival of the species can persist. Several environmental laws protect the Oceano Dunes' uniqueness but also comes with several regulatory agencies that maintain jurisdiction over the State Parks and subsequent permitting that allow for recreational activity.

The dissonance between cultural and environmental preservation with the access to recreational activities has caused tension between State Parks and other regulatory agencies. It is our hope this economic assessment can provide the necessary data and analysis to help guide our communities in preparing for possible future regulatory decisions and begin to plan for outlined areas of opportunity.

Need for Economic Impact Assessment

As previously referenced, State Parks commissioned an economic impact assessment in 2017 to measure the impact of recreational activities in the Oceano Dunes District on the San Luis Obispo County economy. The report concluded that an estimated \$243 million is generated annually to the county's economy and has produced over 3,000 local jobs based on data collected between 2016-2017. The 2017 report was quickly peer reviewed by researchers from Cal Poly State University and San Francisco State University, respectively. Researchers critiqued the report with serious regard to the report's methodology and conclusions, ultimately calling into question the accuracy of the estimated \$243 million generated to the local economy. As a result, the California Coastal Commission, other relevant agencies and the local community have largely discredited the 2017 analysis and its conclusions.

In February of 2021, one of the professors who peer reviewed the 2017 State Parks assessment, Dr. Pratish Patel who is an associate professor of finance at Cal Poly, released a report assessing the six-month period when camping and off-roading were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic impacts during the closure. Dr. Patel concluded the closure had "no significant impact" on the county's local economy. However, Dr. Patel's study was also severely flawed in its methodology and conclusions. The methodology was contingent on assessing the unincorporated Oceano bed-tax generated where the number of hotel rooms and vacation rentals is limited and does not provide an accurate representation of the lodging accommodations travelers utilize when accessing the park. Additionally, the data for this analysis was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and is not reflective of typical travel seasons or circumstances. These factors, among others, compromised the data analysis and conclusions, and the report has recently been discredited by peer researchers and community members as well.

Because previous studies do not provide definitive or unbiased data analysis and conclusions about the real economic impacts of the Oceano Dunes District, it is challenging for decision-makers to utilize research to make informed decisions in the best interest of the community. The purpose of this study, as conducted by a third-party, will ensure an impartial, accurate and comprehensive assessment to provide the necessary information for regulatory agencies, local elected officials and other decision-making bodies.

Milestones

I. Gain purpose, understanding and financial buy-in from surrounding cities and county in partnership with South County Chambers of Commerce

Meet with the cities of Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach in addition to the County of San Luis Obispo.

Completion date: Friday March 12, 2021

II. Meet with potential agencies (Tourism Economics, Destinations Analysts, etc.)

Initial meetings to discuss data collection and analysis and expected outcomes of the economic impact assessment.

Completion date: Friday March 26, 2021

III. Proposal submission final deadline

Visit SLO CAL will accept proposals until EOD on the final deadline and will review as proposals are submitted.


Completion date: Friday, April 16, 2021

IV. Review of proposals

Visit SLO CAL and South County Chambers of Commerce will start reviewing proposals submitted and will notify the agencies of initial questions or concerns. Follow up meetings will be scheduled during this timeframe to determine finalists.

Completion date: Friday, April 30, 2021

V. Present to Executive Committee



Present to Executive Committee on progress and recommend an agency. Executive Committee will make a recommendation to Board of Directors for approval.

Completion date: Thursday May 13, 2021

VI. Submit agency recommendation to VSC Board of Directors

Staff will present recommended agency proposal for discussion and final consideration.

Completion date: Wednesday, May 19, 2021

VII. Notify agency of choice

Notify agency of selection. Review and finalize contract agreement and determine formal data collection, analysis and presentation of results timeframe.

Completion date: Friday, June 25, 2021

VIII. Begin data collection and analysis

Agency will work with community stakeholders and partners to collect data and perform analysis based on identified inputs.

Completion date: July 1, 2021

IX. Draft findings presented for review

Agency will present initial conclusions to VSC team and co-op stakeholders for feedback.

Estimated completion date: Friday September 3, 2021

X. Final finding presented

Based on feedback from initial data analysis and results presentation, Agency will update report and findings. Final findings and conclusions to be presented back to VSC and co-op stakeholders.

Estimated completion date: September 24, 2021

XI. Final report completed and presented to the Board

Completion date: Wednesday TBD, 2021

XII. Final report presented to Board of Supervisors and/or relevant city officials

Completion date: TBD, 2021

Recommended Inputs

Type of Input	Input	Reasoning
Direct	OVH/SVRA Closure	Pending Coastal Commission to phase-out over five years
Direct	Overnight camping	Assess the dollars spent from camping patrons
Direct	Day use visitors without vehicles	Determine number of visitors without vehicles from both locals and out of town visitors
Direct	Day use permits/users without OHV	Value of those using the park in a limited capacity
Direct	Day use permit permits/users with OHV	Value of those using the park in a limited capacity
Direct	Day use permits/users with street legal vehicles	Value of those using the park in a limited capacity
Direct	Day use permits/users renting from OHV concessionaires	Value of those using the park in a limited capacity
Direct	Employment and income of State Parks	Determining the residential income generated directly by ODD
Direct	Other identified activities (hiking, surfing, paragliding)	Value of those using the park in an isolated capacity
Direct	International Visitors	Value of travelers from outside of the U.S.
Direct	Out-of-State Visitors	Value of travelers from within the U.S.
Direct	In-State Visitors	Value of travelers from

		California
Direct	Full State Parks Closure	Understanding the value the entire park brings to the County
Direct/Indirect	Events	Assessing State Parks events and the dollars spent by those attending the events
Direct/indirect	Film	Understanding the dollars spent in our local communities from film/entertainment productions
Indirect	Impacts in neighboring communities	Gauge the financial impacts to surrounding local businesses and communities
Indirect	Domestic and International Press Recognition	Understand the value of press recognition
Indirect	Employment dollars	Employee dollars spent in our local communities
Mitigation measure	Events	Identify potential events for State Parks
Mitigation measure	Boardwalk	Understand the potential to generate income from a boardwalk
Mitigation measure	Other activities	Identify other activities to help generate income