



**OCOTILLO WELLS**  
STATE VEHICULAR RECREATION AREA  
[www.PlanOcotilloWells.org](http://www.PlanOcotilloWells.org)



# DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE / PROPOSED ACTION

## Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan

Including General Plan Update (GP), Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP),  
and California Desert Conservation Act (CDCA) Land Use Plan Amendment

MARCH 2015



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# 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report presents a Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action as part of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan process.

- 1a** Introduction to the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action
- 1b** Bureau of Land Management Draft Proposed Action
- 1c** Overview of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan
- 1d** Applicability of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan

## INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE/PROPOSED ACTION

The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action outlines a comprehensive management approach for Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) and includes specific discussion on off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation, camping, concessions, special events, and facility development. It also reflects the need to protect natural, cultural, and physical resources at Ocotillo Wells SVRA and seeks to balance resource management with recreation opportunities. The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action will serve as the foundation for the Preliminary General Plan (GP), Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP), and California Desert Conservation Act (CDCA) Land Use Plan Amendment (Plan Amendment).

The California Department of Parks and Recreation Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is preparing a General Plan/Recreation Area Management Plan/California Desert Conservation Area Land Use Plan Amendment (General Plan/RAMP/Plan Amendment) and associated Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA).

The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action builds upon the Draft Planning Alternatives presented to the public in December 2013 and January 2014. The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action was developed based on an evaluation of the Draft Planning Alternatives by Ocotillo Wells SVRA and OHMVR Division staff, and consideration of the public input received on the Draft Planning Alternatives.

### PURPOSE OF THE OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA PLAN

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan will establish a benchmark for land managers, staff, and the public to evaluate decisions about Ocotillo Wells SVRA over the long term. The Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan will guide future and day-to-day decision-making, and will serve as the basis for developing

feasibility and management plans, planning and implementing projects, and conducting other management actions.

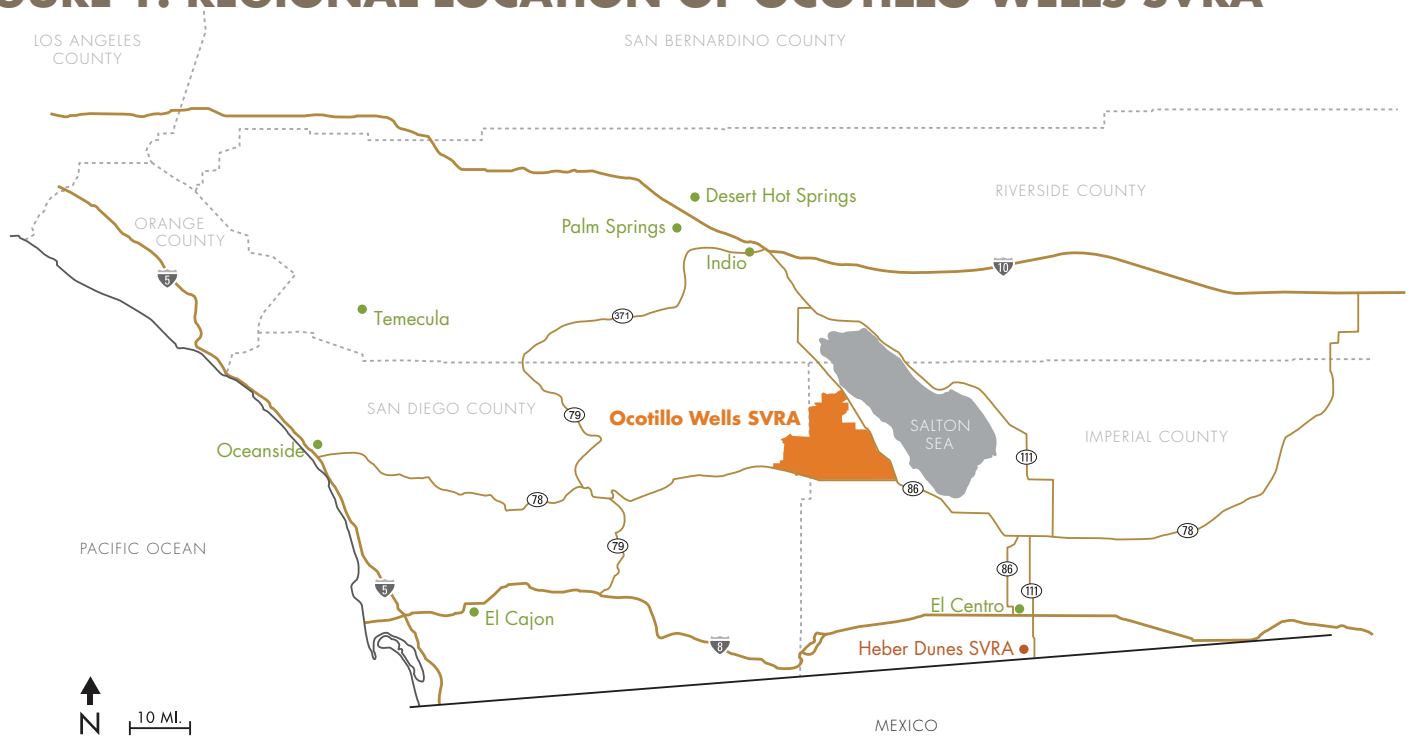
The current Ocotillo Wells SVRA General Plan was developed by California State Parks, OHMVR Division, Ocotillo Wells District in 1982 following the designation of Ocotillo Wells as an SVRA in 1976. The General Plan update will reflect changing conditions and issues, and will incorporate lands acquired by Ocotillo Wells SVRA after 1982 and lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the boundary of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

### PURPOSE OF THE RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN AND CDCA LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

Currently, the BLM El Centro Field Office manages resources within Ocotillo Wells SVRA under portions of two different land use plans: California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan (1980) and the Western Colorado (WECO) Desert Routes of Travel (2003). As part of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan, the BLM will be preparing a Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) and an amendment to the CDCA Plan that will be prepared collaboratively by California State Parks and the BLM. The RAMP/Plan Amendment will combine the relevant portions of the CDCA Plan and WECO



## FIGURE 1: REGIONAL LOCATION OF OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA



Desert Routes of Travel and provide direction that will guide future management actions.

The RAMP/Plan Amendment will outline BLM goals, objectives, allowable uses, land use allocations, and management actions for BLM managed lands within Ocotillo Wells SVRA. It will provide direction for managing public lands administered by the El Centro Field Office and jointly managed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with California State Parks.

The RAMP/Plan Amendment is being coordinated as part of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan and will improve efficiency and effectiveness of resource and recreation management in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Additionally, in response to a California State Parks Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act application, the BLM will also identify lands within Ocotillo Wells SVRA that would be available for leasing or patent to the State of California through the R&PP Act or other land transfer processes. (See section 1d Bureau of Land Management Actions for more information.)

### ABOUT OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is the largest SVRA in the California State Parks System, with more than 85,000 acres of expansive desert. Ocotillo Wells SVRA is a popular place for residents of Southern California and beyond to engage in a variety of recreational activities, including OHV recreation, camping, hiking, and geocaching. Visitors of all ages come to Ocotillo Wells SVRA to enjoy the opportunities for OHV recreation, experience the scenic beauty of the desert, discover its diverse natural resources, and learn about the rich history of those who used the land in the past.

### LOCATION OF OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is located just west of the Salton Sea, in the Colorado Desert in Southern California. It is approximately 90 miles northeast of the city of San Diego near the intersection of State Route (SR) 78 and SR-86. The community of Ocotillo Wells is adjacent to Ocotillo Wells SVRA on the south, and the community of Salton City is adjacent to the east. Figure 1 shows the regional location of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

1b

## Bureau of Land Management Draft Proposed Action

The BLM El Centro Field Office is proposing to amend the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan and prepare a Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) that will be a joint document prepared concurrently with the Ocotillo Wells General Plan update.

The BLM has published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to announce the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues.

The BLM decisions include whether or not to amend the CDCA plan to change land use designation of some BLM parcels in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. This may include making changes in OHV area designations of some BLM parcels in Ocotillo Wells SVRA in accordance with 43 CFR 8342. The CDCA Plan Amendment/EIS will consider a proposal to designate Ocotillo Wells SVRA as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). SRMA designations recognize public lands where recreation is the predominant land use. The BLM will also identify lands within the planning area that would be available for leasing or patent to the State of California through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP Act) or other land transfer or disposal processes.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), as Lead Agency, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is preparing a General Plan/Recreation Area Management Plan/California Desert Conservation Area Land Use Plan Amendment (General Plan/RAMP/LUPA) and associated Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

### BLM PROPOSED ACTION

CDCA PLAN AMENDMENT	RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Land use allocations and allowable uses</li><li>• Designation as Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)</li><li>• Updates to the travel management area designations</li><li>• Identify BLM lands for transfer or disposal</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recreation and resources management goals and objectives</li></ul>

### OHMVR DIVISION DECISIONS

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recreation and resource management goals and objectives</li><li>• Facility development, concessions, and special events</li><li>• Park operations, interpretation and education</li><li>• Land acquisition</li></ul>

## Overview of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan

### STEP 1: PROJECT START-UP AND INFORMATION GATHERING

**www.PlanOcotilloWells.org:** The project website (www.PlanOcotilloWells.org) is a central resource for information about the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan and provides opportunities for public input online. The website also makes available all of the reports published as part of the planning process and other documents that have been published. An electronic message is sent to a list of subscribers when there are upcoming opportunities for public involvement, new working papers are published, or other information is made available. The list includes members of the public who opt-in online or during a public workshop. Interested members of the public can sign up on the project website.

#### **Working Paper #1 – Major Themes from Initial Public Outreach (January 2012):**

Working Paper #1 presents a synopsis of public input received during initial public outreach efforts conducted for the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan. Initial public outreach activities were undertaken on various dates between January 2010 and July 2010. Additional outreach was conducted between January 2011 and May 2011, following the approval of Senate Bill 855, which established property north of S-22 as part of Ocotillo Wells SVRA (the southeast portion of the area previously known as the Freeman Property). The public outreach included on-site visitor interviews, online questionnaires, public workshops, and stakeholder interviews. Working Paper #1 identifies 13 major themes that emerged from these initial public outreach activities.

### VIDEO #1: INTRODUCTION TO THE OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA GENERAL PLAN UPDATE



### STEP 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RESOURCE EVALUATION

#### **Working Paper #2 – Existing Conditions**

**(September 2013):** Working Paper #2 describes the existing conditions for a set of topics relevant to the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan. The overall purpose of Working Paper #2 is to present data and information regarding the existing character of Ocotillo Wells SVRA and provide a baseline inventory of the physical, environmental, and social resources present. Information presented in this working paper also serves as background for the development of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

The content of Working Paper #2 will ultimately serve as the basis for the “Existing Conditions” chapter of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan. The technical information included in this document will continue to be refined until the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan is published. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIR/EIS documents will assess the potential environmental impacts of implementing the General Plan/RAMP/Plan Amendment.

### **Working Paper #3: Issues and Analysis**

**(December 2013):** The planning assumptions and key planning issues influencing the planning effort for the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan are captured within Working Paper #3. These issues were identified through extensive existing conditions research, public outreach efforts, and discussions with OHMVR Division and Ocotillo Wells SVRA managers and staff. While many issues have been identified during the process of preparing the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan, Working Paper #3 focuses on the issues of primary importance that will drive the planning efforts exercise.

### **STEP 3: VISION AND GOALS DIALOGUE**

#### **Summary of Public Input on Preliminary Goals (August 2012):**

The Summary of Public Input on Preliminary Goals summarizes input received during public outreach activities conducted by California State Parks as part of the preparing the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan. Public outreach activities consisted of workshops held at different locations at Ocotillo Wells SVRA (February 18, 2012 and February 19, 2012) and an online commenting exercise (February 22, 2012 through March 21, 2012). These public outreach activities were conducted to provide an update on work completed to date and to collect feedback on preliminary goals to be included in the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

### **STEP 4: DRAFT PLANNING ALTERNATIVES**

#### **Working Paper #4: Draft Planning**

**Alternatives (December 2013):** Working Paper #4: Draft Planning Alternatives presented a “Parkwide Planning Framework” and “Area-Specific Planning Alternatives” as a starting point for a dialogue on the future of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Public meetings were also held to get input from the public on the Draft Planning Alternatives.

The Draft Planning Alternatives highlight a range of potential management policies that were considered for specific areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The Draft Planning Alternatives allow

different management options to be considered before developing and adopting the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

### **Summary of Input on Draft Planning**

**Alternatives (June 2014):** The Summary of Public Input on Draft Planning Alternatives presents a summary of public input received during public outreach activities conducted by California State Parks as part of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan. Public outreach activities consisted of in-person workshops (December 28, 2013 and January 9, 2014) and an online commenting exercise (January 13, 2014 through March 10, 2014). These public outreach activities were conducted to get public input on the Draft Planning Alternatives to be included in the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

### **STEP 5: DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE/ PROPOSED ACTION**

#### **Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed**

**Action (March 2015):** The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action outlines a comprehensive management approach for Ocotillo Wells SVRA and includes specific discussion on OHV recreation, camping, concessions, special events, and facility development. It also reflects the need to protect natural, cultural, and physical resources at Ocotillo Wells SVRA and seeks to balance resource protection with recreation opportunities.

This is the first opportunity for the public to respond specifically to the BLM’s Notice of Intent to amend the CDCA Plan and develop a RAMP specifically for lands within Ocotillo Wells SVRA that are managed by BLM. The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action described throughout this document serves as the BLM’s Draft Proposed Action for the purposes of NEPA. After further analysis and consideration and incorporation of public comments, the BLM will identify a Final Preferred Alternative.

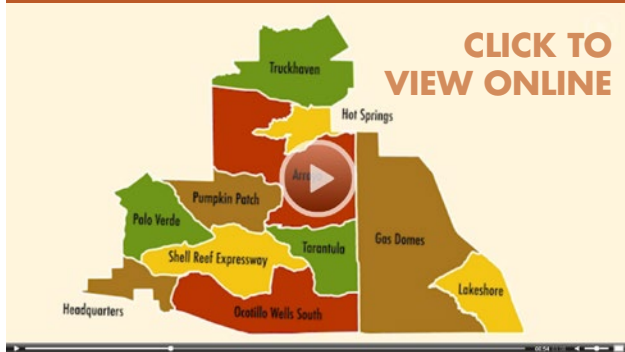


FIGURE 2: STEP-BY-STEP OVERVIEW OF OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA PLAN



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## VIDEO #2: DRAFT PLANNING ALTERNATIVES



State Parks and BLM that provide a long-range policy framework and specific policies to guide management actions and implementation of the Draft Preferred Alternative.

### **Final General Plan/RAMP/Plan**

**Amendment and Final EIR/EIS:** A revised version of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan and Final EIR/EIS will be prepared before being adopted and certified by the OHMVR Commission and BLM.

### **Public Involvement and Scoping:**

Opportunities for public involvement will occur in conjunction with the publication of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. Public input will be used to refine the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action and the development of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan and to meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### **NEXT STEPS**

#### **Preliminary General Plan/RAMP/Plan**

#### **Amendment, Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):**

An EIR/EIS will be prepared to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the project and meet the requirements of CEQA and NEPA. An EIR/EIS also identifies actions to avoid or mitigate those effects, where possible. An EIR/EIS will be completed to evaluate the potential effects of the adoption of the updated Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

Due to the current Memorandum of Understanding that Ocotillo Wells SVRA currently has with the BLM, for management of lands within the Ocotillo Wells SVRA, the Ocotillo Wells District Office is coordinating with the BLM El Centro Field Office. The Ocotillo Wells SVRA General Plan/RAMP/Plan Amendment and the EIR/EIS will be joint documents prepared collaboratively by California

## **1d** Applicability of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan

A “Study Area” has been defined as part of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan. The Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area is identified to provide a comprehensive management perspective for the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan and is larger than the current boundary of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Land within the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area has been identified to be within the sphere of influence for Ocotillo Wells SVRA and includes land that functions as part of, is within, or is adjacent to, Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

### **LAND OWNERSHIP**

The pattern of land ownership in Ocotillo Wells SVRA, as with much of the desert land in California, is complex. While California State Parks owns most of the land within the boundary of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, other inholdings are owned by the BLM and various private owners. Management parameters and the extent of land ownership by entities other than California State Parks are described below.

#### **California State Parks**

Approximately 55,200 acres of land within Ocotillo Wells SVRA are owned by California State Parks, which has direct authority and management responsibility over these lands. Lands acquired by California State Parks in the future will also be subject to the requirements of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

#### **Bureau of Land Management Lands**

Approximately 21,600 acres of BLM lands are located within Ocotillo Wells SVRA. California State Parks and BLM have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), most recently updated in 2008, that sets forth conditions concerning responsibility for managing OHV use on BLM lands within Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The MOU does not preclude using public lands owned by BLM for purposes other than OHV recreation.

### **Private Lands**

Ocotillo Wells SVRA contains approximately 8,600 acres of privately held land owned by multiple land owners. Inholdings within the central area are generally smaller than those in the eastern and northern areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The extensive inholdings in the southeast corner of Ocotillo Wells SVRA are generally smaller rectangular or square lots that have been subdivided and are unimproved. In the northern areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA, many of the properties have been subdivided into residential lots and sold to individual owners. The status of actual development intentions for these lots is uncertain. Private lands are subject to the land development regulations established by the County of Imperial, (see Working Paper #2 – Existing Conditions for a further discussion of land development regulations).

#### **Salton City Landfill**

The Salton City Landfill is located on Imperial County property within the boundaries of Ocotillo Wells SVRA; its operations preclude recreational opportunities. The Salton City Landfill obtained necessary approvals to expand operations within its existing site in 2012 and will import regional trash and recycling materials.



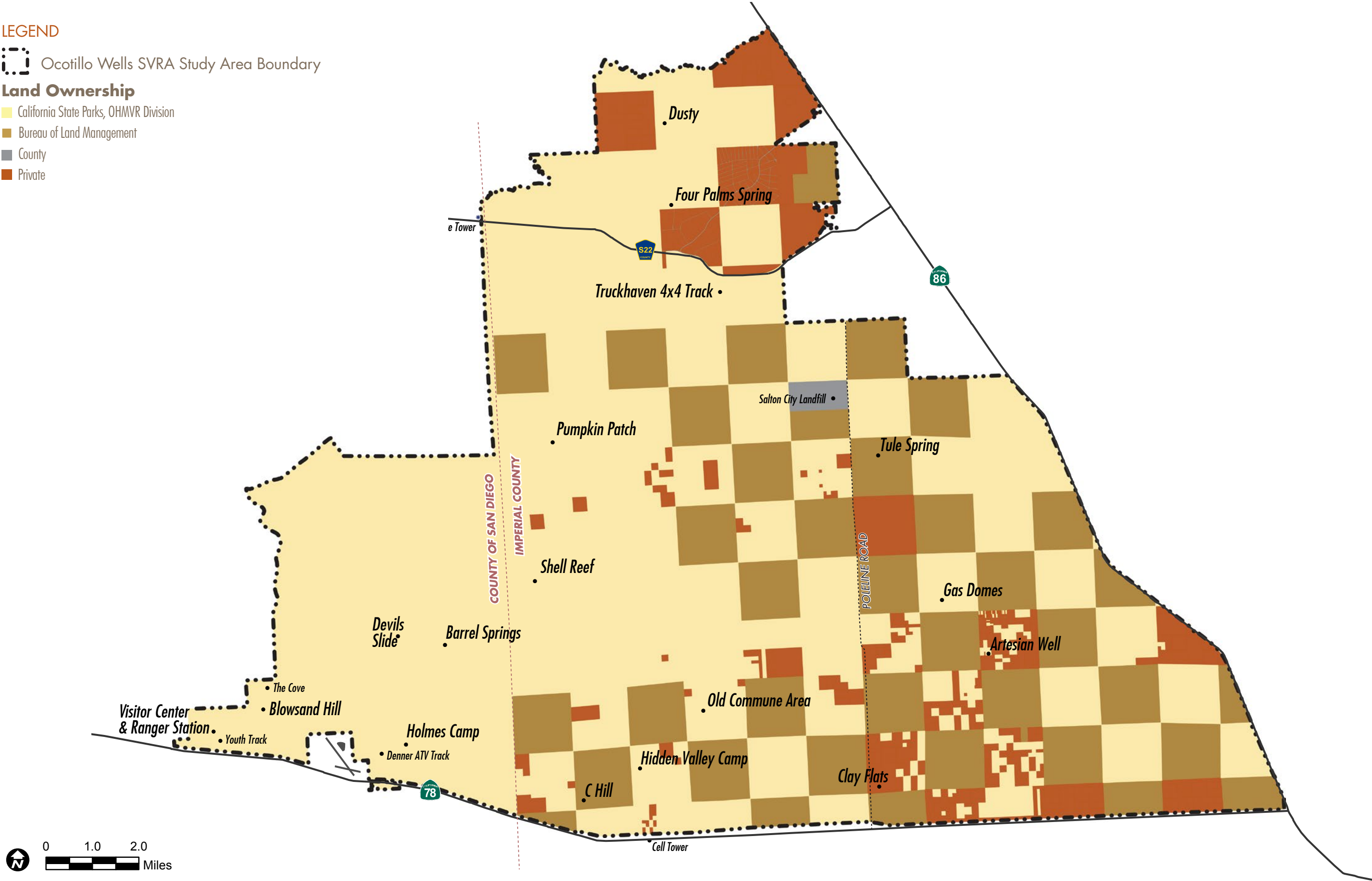
FIGURE 3: LAND OWNERSHIP WITHIN OCOTILLO WELLS SVRA STUDY AREA

LEGEND

Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary

Land Ownership

- California State Parks, OHMVR Division
- Bureau of Land Management
- County
- Private



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# 2

## PARKWIDE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This section provides a comprehensive approach to evaluate decisions by proposing a policy framework that applies to all of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

- 2a Role of Parkwide Planning Framework
- 2b Purpose of Ocotillo Wells SVRA
- 2c A Vision for the Future of Ocotillo Wells SVRA
- 2d Parkwide Goals

2a

## Role of Parkwide Planning Framework

The Parkwide Planning Framework provides a comprehensive approach to evaluate management decisions that affect visitor experience and recreation opportunities; interpretation and education offerings; park use and operations; and natural, cultural, and physical resource management for all of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The Parkwide Planning Framework establishes the purpose of Ocotillo Wells SVRA and provides a long-term, forward-looking vision for the future of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Parkwide goals are also included as part of the Parkwide Planning Framework, and will serve as a benchmark for future decision-making and day-to-day operations that apply to all of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Specific guidelines will be developed as part of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan to identify policies that will be used to implement the General Plan/RAMP/Plan Amendment.

The Parkwide Planning Framework builds a foundation that highlights the potential management policies being considered for specific areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

2b

## Purpose of Ocotillo Wells SVRA

The purpose of Ocotillo Wells SVRA is to make available OHV recreation and other day and overnight recreational opportunities; to manage and protect fragile, rare, and irreplaceable natural and cultural resources; and to interpret for visitors the recreational, physical, natural, and cultural values of the SVRA and surrounding desert.

General plans are policy documents intended to be used for 20 years or more. General plans establish a decision-making framework for decisions related to visitor use and recreation; interpretation and education; park use and operations; and natural, cultural, and physical resources.

**Vision**

**Goals**

**Guidelines**

**Management Actions**



A land of extremes, the rugged and vast desert landscape of Ocotillo Wells SVRA offers a wide variety of adventures in riding, exploring, learning, and camping. With many returning visitors, the park encourages reconnecting with multi-generational groups of friends and family while escaping from urban life. Ocotillo Wells SVRA's vision focuses on adapting to changing uses and conditions by providing a sustainable environment for the future.

A sense of freedom and fun is the heart of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA experience. Tread Lightly!® principles encourage responsible OHV use and provide protection for Ocotillo Wells SVRA's wildlife, natural habitats, and remnants of prehistoric and historic cultures and activities. Visitor support services such as enhanced OHV opportunities, interpretation of the varied features and resources, youth training programs, visitor facilities, and ranger assistance are important reasons why many people return.



## Visitor Experience and Opportunities (VEO)

*Goals for visitor experience and opportunities provide recommendations for new and improved visitor facilities and recreation opportunities, or respond to current issues and emerging trends.*

**VEO Goal 1:** Provide a balance of distributed and trails-only OHV recreation suited for the varied landscapes, diverse visitor interests, and environmental conditions of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**VEO Goal 2:** Provide a variety of OHV recreational opportunities that support diverse visitor interests, multiple skill levels, and the improvements in OHV technology.

**VEO Goal 3:** Provide high-quality recreational opportunities and facilities that are tailored to the unique features of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**VEO Goal 4:** Facilitate special events and group activities to increase interpretive and recreational opportunities at Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**VEO Goal 5:** Pursue public/private partnerships to better serve the visitor experience.

## Resource Management (RM)

*Goals for resource management address the natural, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational resources and opportunities of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.*

**RM Goal 1:** Through research and monitoring, maintain the balance of resource protection with quality OHV recreation.

**RM Goal 2:** Establish parkwide baselines and appropriate adaptive management response in managing Ocotillo Wells SVRA's flora, fauna, and habitat to reach no net loss of native vegetation.

**RM Goal 3:** Implement rotating, temporary, and/or permanent protection and conservation measures to achieve habitat sustainability and enhancement.

**RM Goal 4:** Preserve and protect parkwide cultural resources through appropriate surveying, monitoring, collection, and mitigation measures.

**RM Goal 5:** Conserve Ocotillo Wells SVRA's unique physical resources, including air, water, geologic, paleontological, soil, auditory, and visual, to enhance the recreational experience and preserve environmental values.

## **Interpretation and Education (IE)**

*Goals for interpretation and education give broad guidance on how to increase the public's understanding and appreciation of Ocotillo Wells SVRA's natural, cultural, aesthetic, and recreational resources and opportunities, and how to make education/interpretation available to everyone.*

**IE Goal 1:** Increase visitors' knowledge of, enjoyment of, and appreciation for the history of OHV use and current recreational opportunities that are unique to Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**IE Goal 2:** Provide educational, informational, and interpretive materials about Ocotillo Wells SVRA's history, resources, and recreational opportunities that meet the diverse needs and abilities of visitors.

**IE Goal 3:** Promote responsible OHV use in educational and interpretive programs.

**IE Goal 4:** Increase visitors' knowledge of Ocotillo Well's ecological relationships and the effects of human activity over time.

**IE Goal 5:** Promote outreach efforts and partnerships that develop and implement interpretive programming and education.

## **Park Operations (PO)**

*Goals for park operations address public safety, visitor services, and concessions in Ocotillo Wells SVRA.*

**PO Goal 1:** Plan, manage, and maintain essential visitor and management facilities to enhance the operation of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**PO Goal 2:** Acquire properties within or adjacent to Ocotillo Wells SVRA to perfect state ownership of lands in study area and enhance recreation and resource management.

**PO Goal 3:** Coordinate effective public safety services for park visitors.

**PO Goal 4:** Provide guidance to ensure that special events are well managed and that appropriate visitor services are available.

**PO Goal 5:** Proactively coordinate with internal and nearby landowners and project proponents to promote Ocotillo Wells SVRA goals and protect SVRA resources.

# 3

## DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE/PROPOSED ACTION

OHV recreation and camping are at the heart of the visitor experience of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The location, type, and concentration of facilities also play a large role in shaping visitors' experiences. Managing concessions and special events is also a core component of Ocotillo Wells SVRA. These experiences and facilities must be compatible with the future sustainability of Ocotillo Wells SVRA's physical, natural, and cultural resources.

A summary of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action is followed by discussion on individual components.<sup>1</sup>

**3a** Summary of Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action

**3b** OHV Recreation

**3c** Camping

**3d** Visitor Services and Operations Facilities Areas

**3e** Concessions

**3f** Special Event Staging Areas and Special Events

**3g** Resource Management

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<sup>1</sup> Proposed uses would not occur on private land until such land was acquired by California State Parks from a willing seller.



SUMMARY OF DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE/PROPOSED ACTION

The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action for the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan defines three zones for OHV recreation and three zones for camping. Focused development areas are also identified to indicate locations where facilities could be located in the future. Concessions and special events are discussed as separate components.

OHV RECREATION ZONES

ZONE 1
<b>Distributed OHV Recreation</b> OHV recreation that is not limited to specific trails. Riding on trails is encouraged but not required.
<b>Concentrated OHV Recreation</b> OHV recreation that is not limited to specific trails within a designated part of a planning zone. Additional locations will be identified in the future.
ZONE 2
<b>Trails-Only OHV Recreation</b> OHV recreation is allowed on specific trails only, except if a concentrated OHV recreation area is designated.
<b>Concentrated OHV Recreation</b> OHV recreation that is not limited to specific trails within a designated part of a planning zone. Specific locations will be identified in the future.
ZONE 3
<b>Trails-Only OHV Recreation</b> OHV recreation is allowed on specific trails only, except if a concentrated OHV recreation area is designated.
<b>No Concentrated OHV Recreation</b> Does not allow concentrated OHV recreation areas to be established in the future.

CAMPING ZONES

ZONE 1
<b>Primitive Camping</b> An area where camping with few or no facilities or site improvements is allowed anywhere, except in specific locations where it may be restricted.
ZONE 2
<b>Limited Camping</b> An area where primitive camping is allowed only in designated locations within trails-only zones. Specific locations will be identified in the future.
ZONE 3
<b>No Camping</b> An area where camping is not allowed.

FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

**Basic Facilities:** Vault toilets, interpretive and regulatory signage, and other basic facilities may be developed throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

DEVELOPED CAMPING AREAS

Developed camping areas allow for development of basic facilities; restrooms and showers; RV hookups (electric and water); trash/recycling; other gathering areas; amphitheaters; and permanent concessions. Semi-developed camping areas and primitive camping are also allowed.

SEMI-DEVELOPED CAMPING AREAS

Semi-developed camping areas allow development of basic facilities, picnic tables, shade ramadas, and other gathering areas. Primitive camping is also allowed.

VISITOR-SERVICES AND OPERATIONS FACILITIES AREAS


Allows development of visitor-services facilities including visitor centers and amphitheaters. Maintenance and operations facilities are also allowed, including a ranger station, staff offices, and maintenance and storage facilities.

OTHER FACILITIES

WELCOME AREAS

- 
- Welcome areas include facilities and improvements to key access points.

WAY STATION

- 
- Way stations provide shade structures and interpretive signage.




CONCESSIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

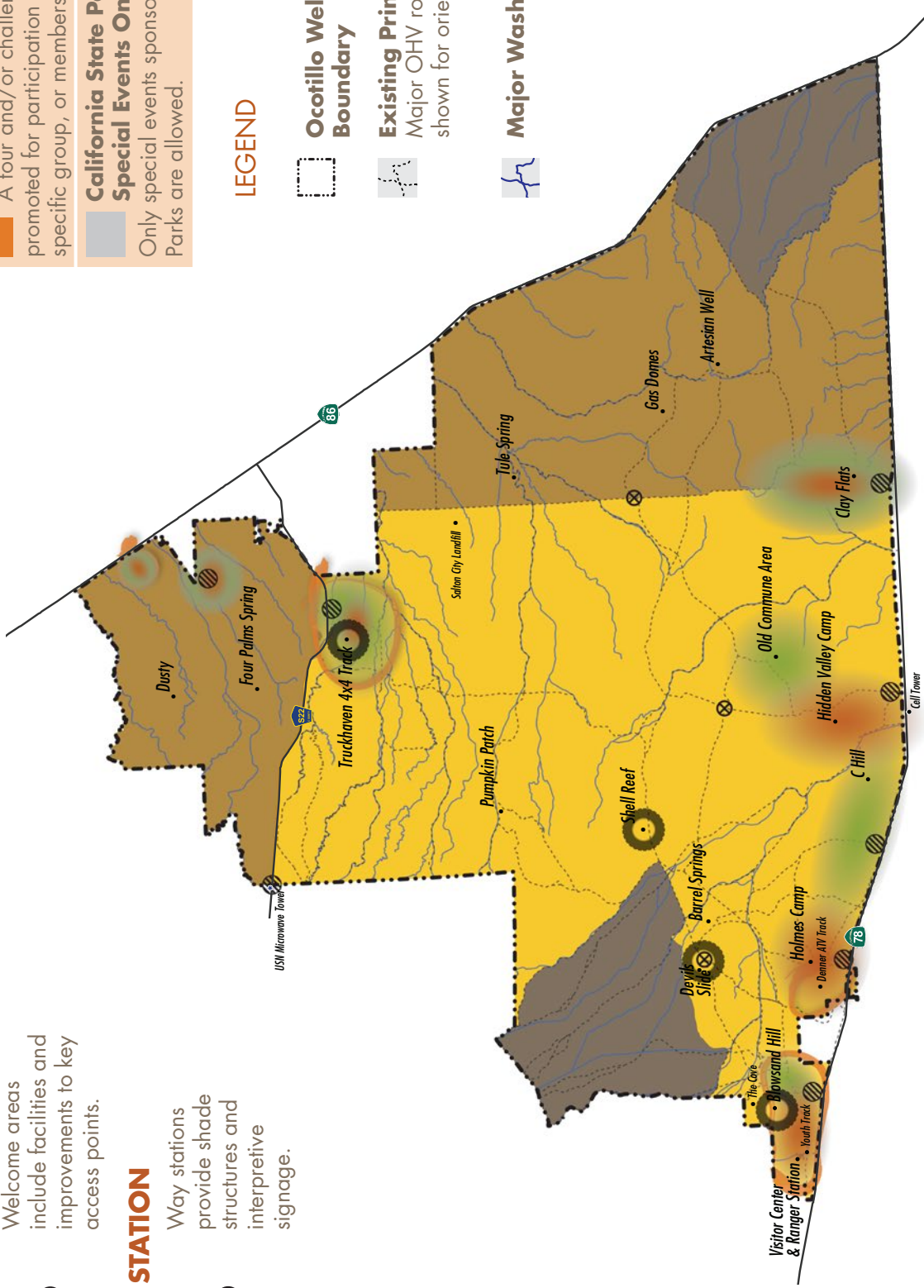
CONCESSIONS
 <p><b>Permanent Concessions Areas</b> Locations where concessions may operate under contract or license from California State Parks from a building, structure, or shelter that is in a fixed location and requires site preparation and/or grading. Includes Mobile and Temporary Concessions.</p> <p><b>Mobile and Temporary Concessions Zone</b> Areas where concessions may operate under contract or license from California State Parks from a mobile or temporary location, including but not limited to a vehicle, trailer, tent, or in any other means that is capable of moving from one location to another.</p>

SPECIAL EVENTS

 <p><b>Special Event Staging Areas</b> Staging Areas are locations where visitors assemble as part of an OHV ride or another activity or event. Staging areas are intended to provide a standard location for camping and staging activities that occur as a part of special events to streamline the review process for special events.</p> <p><b>OHV Events</b> A tour and/or challenge track organized and promoted for participation by the general public, specific group, or members of an organization.</p> <p><b>California State Parks Sponsored Special Events Only</b> Only special events sponsored by California State Parks are allowed.</p>
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LEGEND

- **Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary**
- **Existing Primary Trails**  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
- **Major Washes**



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## SUMMARY OF DRAFT PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE/PROPOSED ACTION

The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action describes a proposed management approach for Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The Draft Preferred Alternative/Action includes the following components, which are discussed individually in subsequent pages.

### OHV RECREATION

The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action identifies three OHV recreation zones. Zone 1 allows *distributed OHV recreation* and would allow *concentrated OHV recreation*. Zone 2 and Zone 3 both allow *trails-only OHV recreation*; however, Zone 2 would allow *concentrated OHV recreation* and Zone 3 would not. *Primary concentrated OHV recreation areas* are also identified to show locations where *concentrated OHV recreation* is identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. *Specialty and training tracks* for OHV recreation are allowed in Zones 1 and 2.

### CAMPING

Different parts of Ocotillo Wells SVRA are designated as one of three types of zones that identify whether and how *primitive camping* would be allowed as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. Zone 1 allows *primitive camping*; Zone 2 allows *primitive camping* in limited areas (*limited camping*); and Zone 3 does not allow camping.

Focused development areas also show the locations of *developed camping areas* and *semi-developed camping areas*. These are areas where development of facilities could occur in focused areas identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. Basic facilities (including vault toilets, interpretive and regulatory signage, and other basic facilities) may be developed throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

### VISITOR-SERVICES AND OPERATIONS FACILITIES AREAS

*Visitor-services and operations facilities areas* would allow the development of interpretation and education, and maintenance and operations facilities in focused areas.

### OTHER FACILITIES

The locations of *welcome areas* and *way stations* are identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action.

### CONCESSIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Concessions and special events are independent components of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. Concessions show the zones where *mobile and temporary concessions* are allowed and areas where *permanent concessions* can be developed. Special events show zones where *OHV events* are allowed and locations for *special event staging areas*.

### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource management will occur throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA to promote a sustained natural environment and protect cultural resources. Unique or high-quality habitats and areas with potentially higher sensitivity have been identified within a Resource Overlay Zone. Not all areas within this zone are necessarily in need of greater protection; however, additional resource protection may need to be incorporated. Areas outside the zone, such as mesquite dunes, may also be identified for protective measures.

The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action identifies three OHV recreation zones. Zone 1 allows *distributed OHV recreation* and would allow *concentrated OHV recreation*. Zone 2 and Zone 3 both allow *trails-only OHV recreation*; however, Zone 2 would allow *concentrated OHV recreation* and Zone 3 would not. *Primary concentrated OHV recreation areas* are also identified to show locations where *concentrated OHV recreation* is identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. *Specialty and training tracks* for OHV recreation are allowed within OHV recreation Zone 1 and Zone 2.

These designations may be established, closed, or rotated in and out of use in response to adaptive management strategies, recreational needs, public safety, and resource management goals.

## OHV RECREATION ZONES

### ZONE 1

#### Distributed OHV Recreation

OHV recreation that is not limited to specific trails. Riding on trails is encouraged but not required.

#### Concentrated OHV Recreation

OHV recreation that is not limited to specific trails within a designated part of a planning zone. Additional locations will be identified in the future.

### ZONE 2

#### Trails-Only OHV Recreation

OHV recreation is allowed on specific trails only, except if a concentrated OHV recreation area is designated.

#### Concentrated OHV Recreation

OHV recreation that is not limited to specific trails within a designated part of a planning zone. Specific locations will be identified in the future.

### ZONE 3

#### Trails-Only OHV Recreation

OHV recreation is allowed on specific trails only, except if a concentrated OHV recreation area is designated.

#### No Concentrated OHV Recreation

Does not allow concentrated OHV recreation areas to be established in the future.

## OTHER SPECIAL USES AND FACILITIES

### PRIMARY CONCENTRATED OHV AREAS

Areas identified as Concentrated OHV Recreation Areas include:

- Blowsand Hill Concentrated OHV Recreation Area
- Devil's Slide Concentrated OHV Recreation Area
- Shell Reef Concentrated OHV Recreation Area
- Truckhaven 4x4 Track / Crossover Concentrated OHV Recreation Area

## STRATEGIES

### STRATEGIES

#### STRATEGY 1

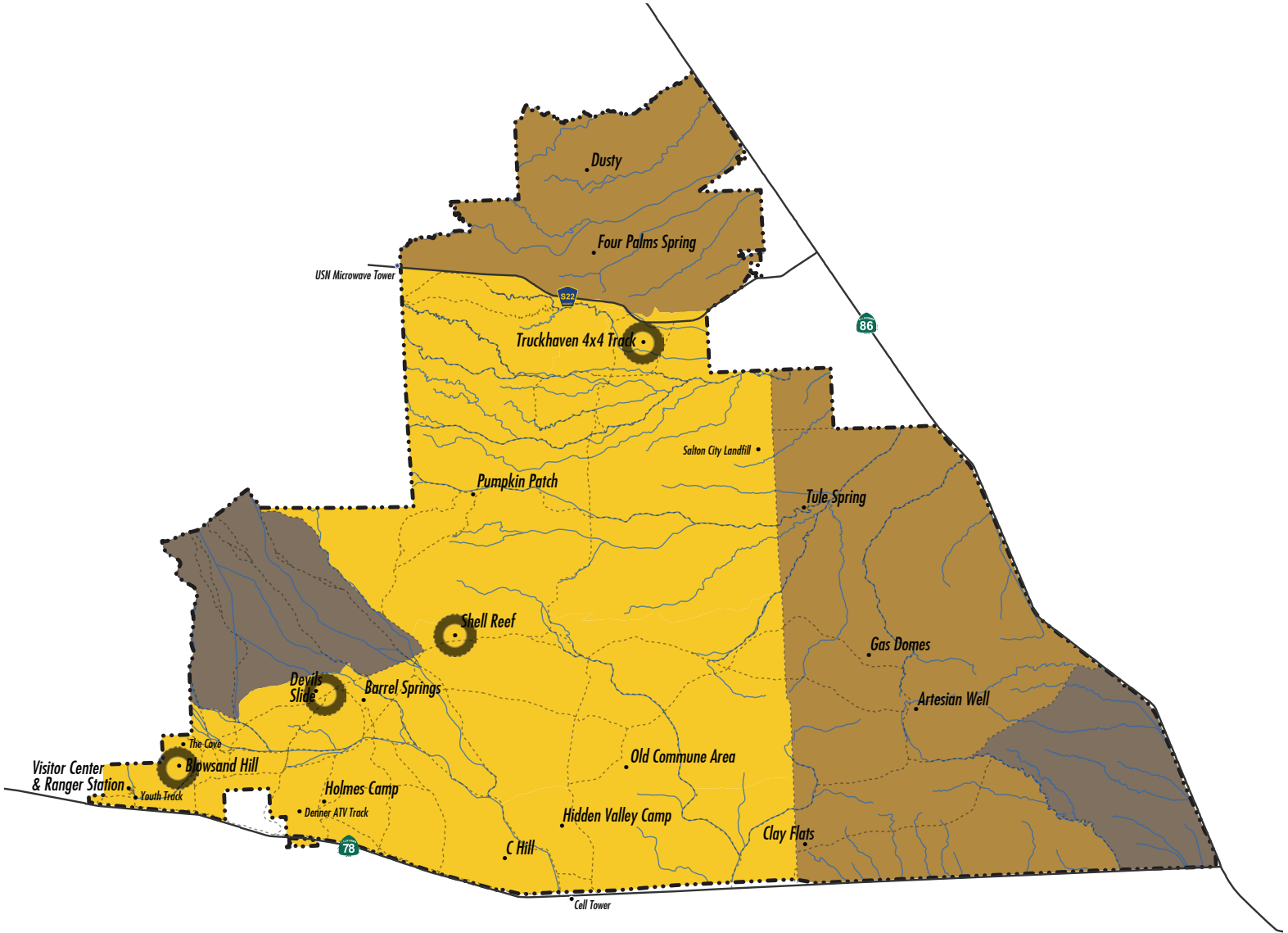
Trails management plans will be prepared for all areas within Zone 2 or Zone 3.

#### STRATEGY 2

Evaluate areas within Zone 2 to assess their suitability as Concentrated OHV Recreation Areas.



FIGURE 3B: OHV RECREATION



LEGEND

- Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary
- Existing Primary Trails  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
- Major Washes
- Zone 1: Distributed OHV Recreation Area  
(Concentrated OHV Recreation Areas Allowed)
- Zone 2: Trails-Only OHV Recreation  
(Concentrated OHV Recreation Areas Allowed)
- Zone 3: Trails-Only OHV Recreation  
(No Concentrated OHV Recreation Areas Allowed)
- Primary Concentrated OHV Recreation Areas

## 3c CAMPING

Different parts of Ocotillo Wells SVRA are designated as one of three zones that identify whether and how *primitive camping* would be allowed as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. Zone 1 allows *primitive camping*; Zone 2 allows *primitive camping* in limited areas (*limited camping*); and Zone 3 does not allow camping.

Focused development areas also show the locations of *developed camping areas* and *semi-developed camping areas*. These are areas where development of facilities could occur in focused areas identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action.

These designations may be established, closed, or rotated in and out of use in response to adaptive management strategies, recreational needs, public safety, and resource management goals.

### CAMPING ZONES


ZONE 1
<b>Primitive Camping</b> An area where camping with few or no facilities or site improvements is allowed anywhere, except in specific locations where it may be restricted.
ZONE 2
<b>Limited Camping</b> An area where primitive camping is allowed only in designated areas within trails-only zones. Specific locations will be identified in the future.
ZONE 3
<b>No Camping</b> An area where camping is not allowed.

### FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Focused development areas are locations where new and improved facilities will be prioritized in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The focused development areas range in types of facilities that are included, but are intended to provide focused areas of recreational and operational activity and will help shape where and how people engage in OHV recreation and camping. Focused development areas will help maintain the rugged natural quality in other areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**Basic Facilities:** Vault toilets, interpretive and regulatory signage, and other basic facilities may be developed throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

### DEVELOPED CAMPING AREAS

 Developed camping areas allow for development of basic facilities; restrooms and showers; RV hookups (electric and water); trash/recycling; other gathering areas; amphitheaters; and permanent concessions. Semi-developed camping areas and primitive camping are also allowed.

### SEMI-DEVELOPED CAMPING AREAS


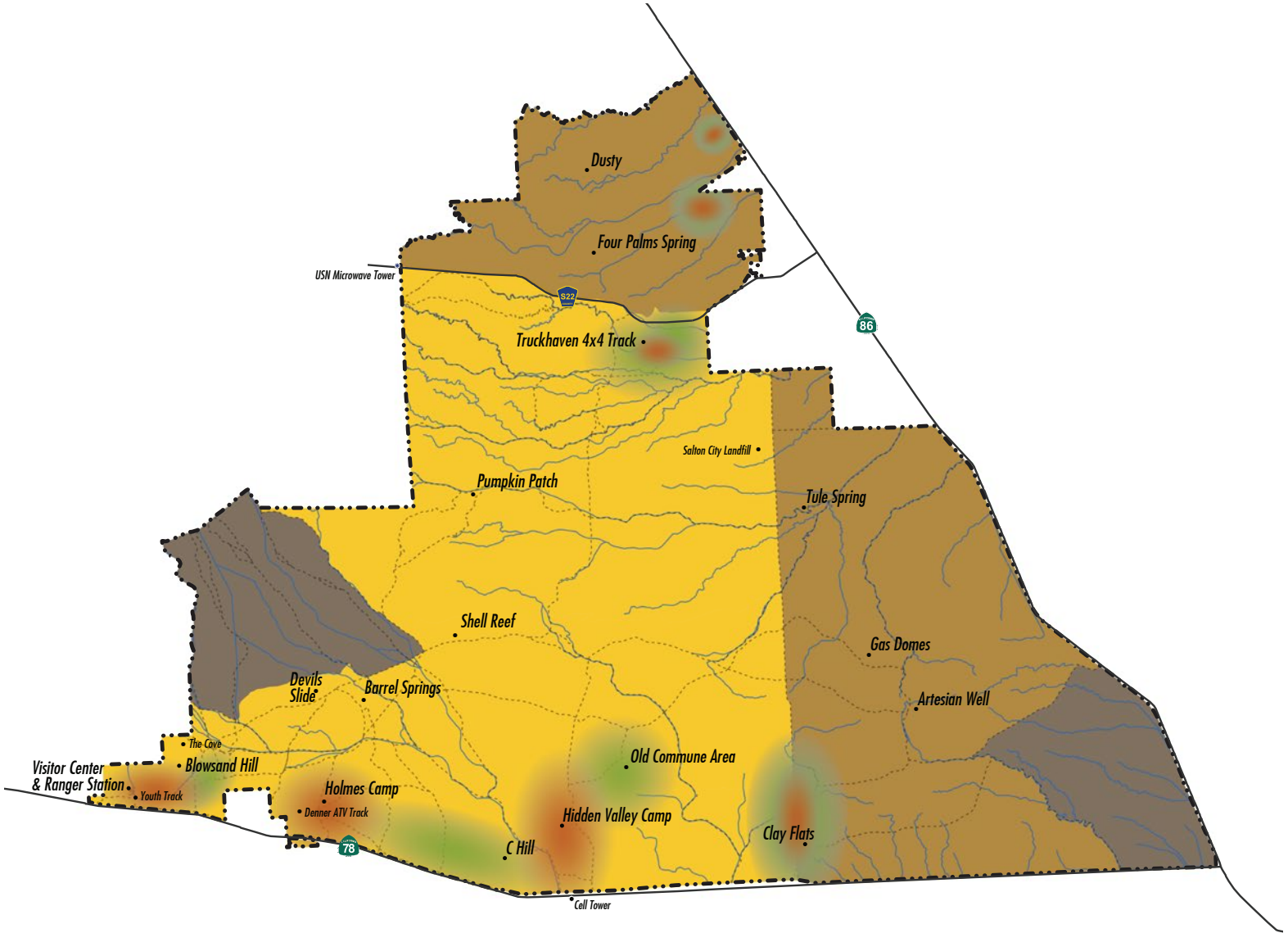
 Semi-developed camping areas allow development of basic facilities; picnic tables; shade ramadas; and other gathering areas. Primitive camping is also allowed.

FIGURE 3C: CAMPING



LEGEND

- Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary
- Existing Primary Trails  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
- Major Washes
- Zone 1: Primitive Camping Allowed
- Zone 2: Limited Camping Allowed
- Zone 3: No Camping Allowed
- Developed Camping
- Semi-Developed Camping

## 3d VISITOR SERVICES AND OPERATIONS FACILITIES AREAS

*Visitor services and operations facilities areas* are focused development areas that would allow the development of interpretation and education and operations and maintenance. These facilities would provide enhanced opportunities for visitor services and allow for efficient operation of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

Other facilities, including *way stations* and *welcome areas*, are also identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action.

### FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

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Focused development areas are locations where new and improved facilities will be prioritized in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The focused development areas range in types of facilities that are included, but are intended to provide focused areas of recreational and operational activity and will help shape where and how people engage in OHV recreation and camping. Focused development areas will help maintain the rugged natural quality in other areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**Basic Facilities:** Vault toilets, interpretive and regulatory signage, and other basic facilities may be developed throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

### VISITOR-SERVICES AND OPERATIONS FACILITIES AREAS



Allows development of visitor-services facilities including visitor centers and amphitheaters. Maintenance and operations facilities are also allowed, including a ranger station, staff offices, and maintenance and storage facilities.

### OTHER FACILITIES

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#### WELCOME AREAS



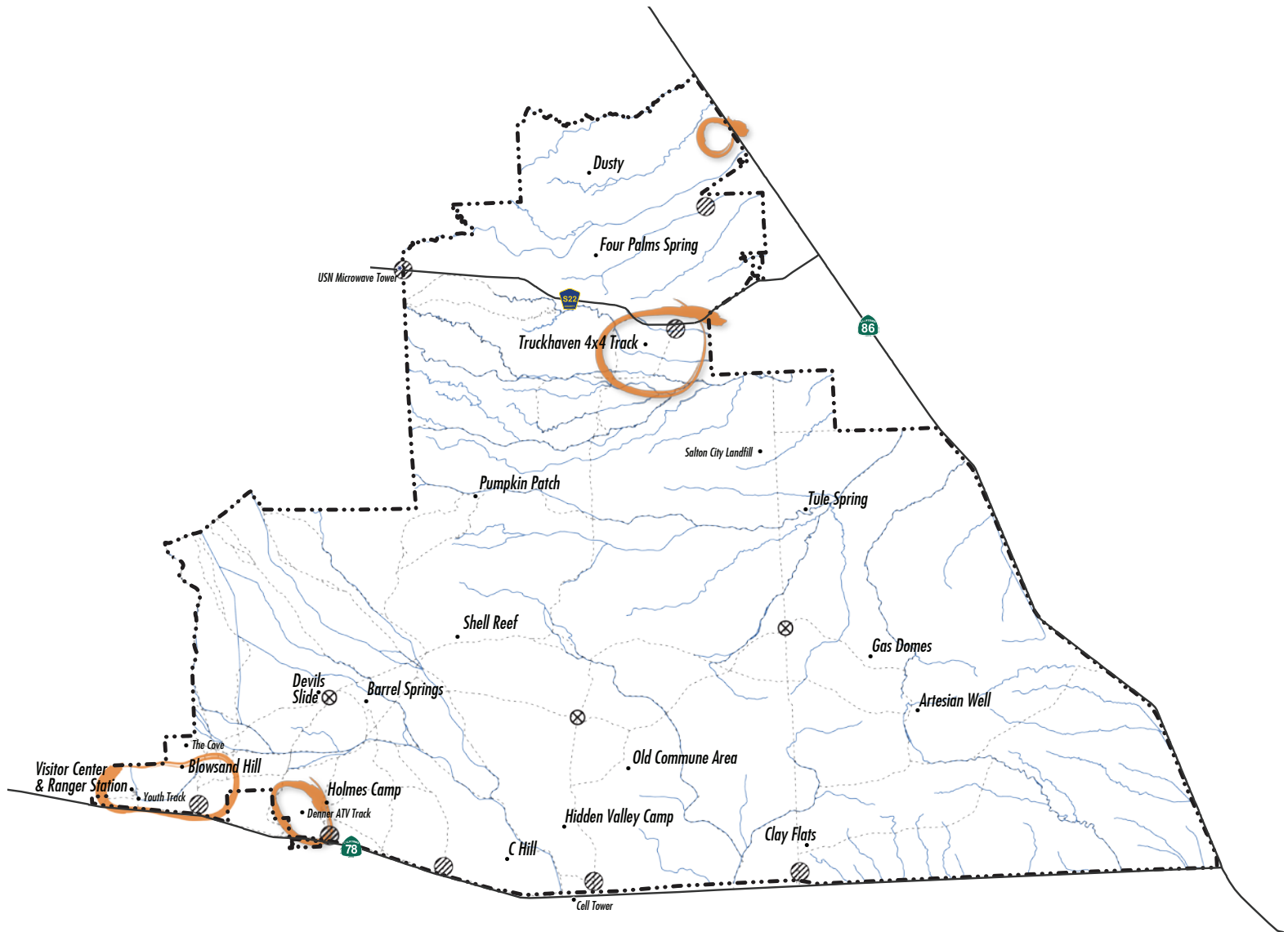
Welcome areas include facilities and improvements to key access points.

#### WAY STATION









Way stations provide shade structures and interpretive signage.

# FIGURE 3D: VISITOR SERVICES AND OPERATIONS FACILITIES AREAS



## LEGEND

-  Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary
-  Existing Primary Trails  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
-  Major Washes
-  Visitor Services and Operations Facilities Area
-  Welcome Area
-  Way Station



Concessions provide products, services, programs, management, and/or visitor services that can enhance visitor experience and recreational opportunities and can generate revenues for Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Generally, services and products provided through concession contracts cannot be provided by park staff or park volunteers and are not available nearby (PRC Section 5080).

Concessions are private businesses operating under contract to provide products and services designed to enhance or facilitate the visitors' experience, typically not provided by State Parks employees. Two types of concessions are identified as part of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action: permanent concessions, and mobile and temporary concessions. Tour concessions may be allowed on approved routes throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

## MOBILE CONCESSIONS ZONE

### MOBILE AND TEMPORARY CONCESSIONS ZONE

Mobile and Temporary Concessions Zones are locations where concessions may operate under contract or license from California State Parks from a mobile or temporary location, including but not limited to a vehicle, trailer, tent, or in any other means that is capable of moving from one location to another.

## FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

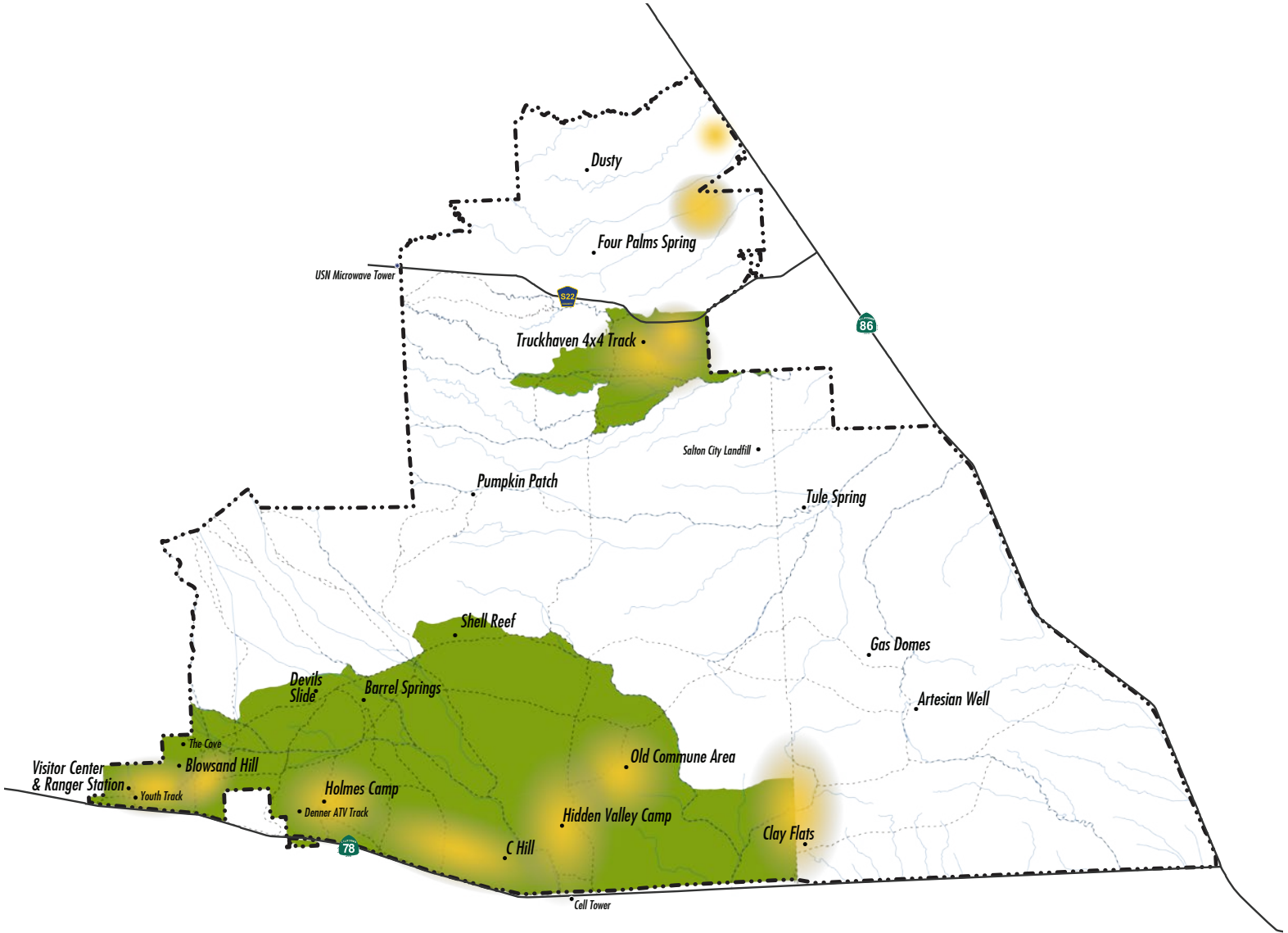
Focused development areas are locations where new and improved facilities will be prioritized in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The focused development areas range in types of facilities that are included but are intended to provide focused areas of recreational and operational activity and will help shape where and how people engage in OHV recreation and camping. Focused development areas will help maintain the rugged natural quality in other areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**Basic Facilities:** Vault toilets, interpretive and regulatory signage, and other basic facilities may be developed throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.






### PERMANENT CONCESSION AREAS

Permanent Concession Areas are locations where concessions may operate under contract or license from California State Parks from a building, structure, or shelter that is in a fixed location and requires site preparation and/or grading. Includes Mobile and Temporary Concessions.

FIGURE 3E: CONCESSIONS



LEGEND

-  Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary
-  Existing Primary Trails  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
-  Major Washes
-  Mobile and Temporary Concessions Zone
-  Permanent Concession Area

## 3f SPECIAL EVENT STAGING AREAS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is a popular destination for off-road enthusiasts, many of whom are members of clubs or groups that periodically have events of varied sizes. The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action identifies locations of Staging Areas for special events. OHV rides are also allowed in Planning Zones identified in Figure 3F.

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan will identify specific policies and additional requirements for the approval of special events and OHV rides.

### CAMPING ZONES

#### OHV RIDES AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

##### OHV Rides Allowed

OHV events are a tour and/or challenge track organized and promoted for participation by the general public, specific group, or members of an organization. The Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action identifies where OHV events may be allowed in the future.

##### CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS SPONSORED SPECIAL EVENTS ONLY

Only special events sponsored by California State Parks are allowed.

### STRATEGIES

#### STRATEGIES

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan will include specific guidelines for how OHV events will be permitted in the future to ensure that they are consistent with the intent of the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan.

### OTHER SPECIAL USES AND FACILITIES

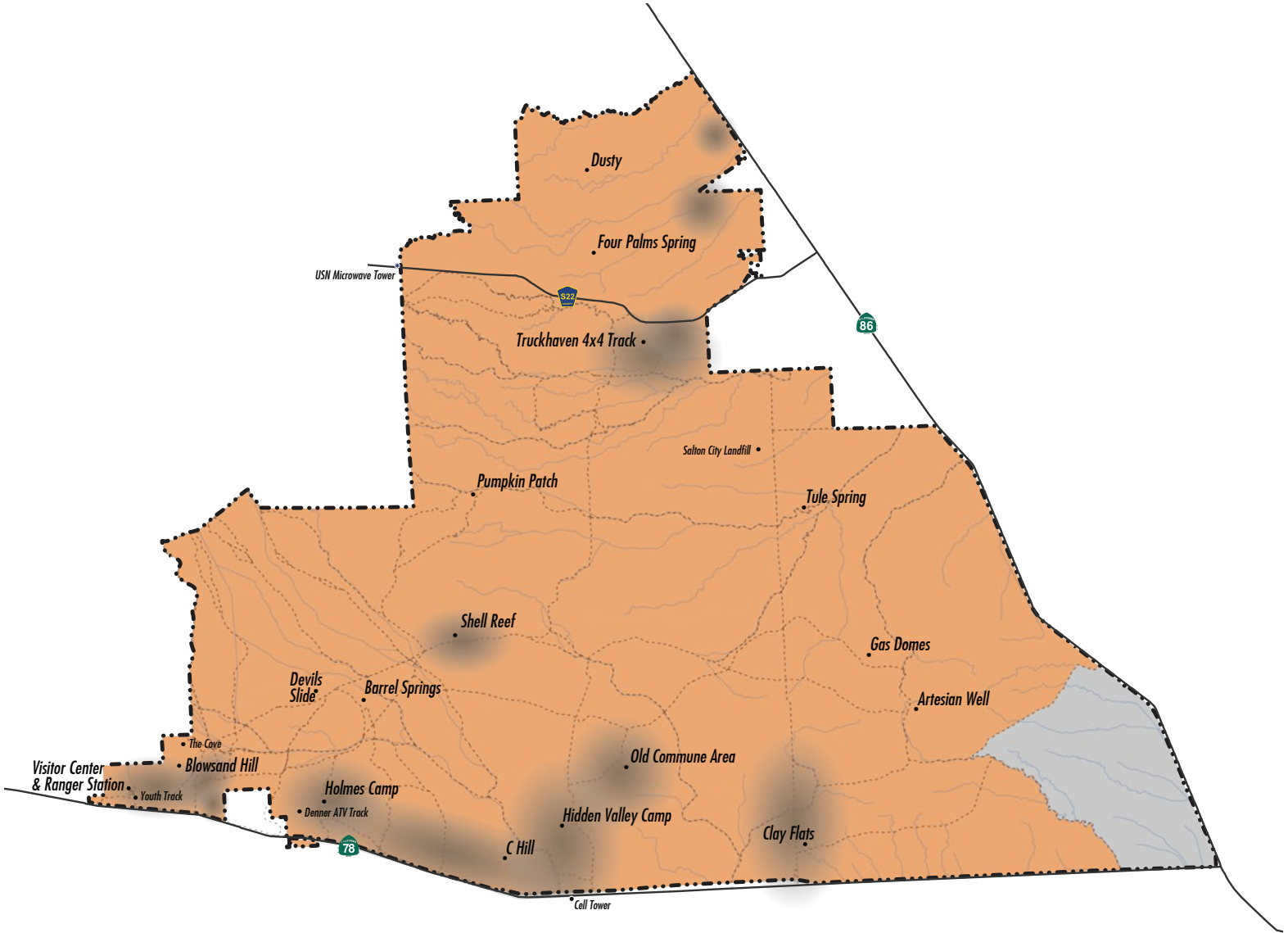
Focused development areas are locations where new and improved facilities will be prioritized in Ocotillo Wells SVRA. The focused development areas range in types of facilities included, but are intended to provide focused areas of recreational and operational activity and will help shape where and how people engage in OHV recreation and camping. Focused development areas will help maintain the rugged natural quality in other areas of Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

**Basic Facilities:** Vault toilets, interpretive and regulatory signage, and other basic facilities may be developed throughout Ocotillo Wells SVRA.

#### SPECIAL EVENT STAGING AREAS

Staging Areas are locations where visitors assemble as part of an OHV ride or another activity or event. Staging Areas are identified in the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action as a way to streamline the review process for events and provide a standard location for camping and staging activities that occur as a part of special events. Staging Areas were identified based on past usage; accessibility; and a preliminary review of natural, cultural, and physical resources.

FIGURE 3F: SPECIAL EVENT STAGING AREAS AND SPECIAL EVENTS



LEGEND

- Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary
- Existing Primary Trails  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
- Major Washes
- Special Event Staging Area
- OHV Rides and Other Special Events
- California State Parks Sponsored Events Only

With more than 85,000 acres open to exploration, Ocotillo Wells SVRA seeks to balance recreation opportunities with protection of unique natural and cultural resources. Ocotillo Wells SVRA administers programs and policies to maintain physical resources such as air quality, protect natural habitats, preserve cultural and paleontological resources, prevent erosion, and maintain water quality. Ocotillo Wells SVRA is committed to protecting these resources, while maximizing opportunities for OHV recreation, so that Ocotillo Wells SVRA remains a unique place that future generations can enjoy as much as visitors today.

The Preliminary Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan (General Plan Update and RAMP/Plan Amendment) and EIR/EIS will identify additional general resource guidelines and area-specific guidelines to ensure that management is responding to applicable OHMVR Division, state, and federal policies and regulations. Figure 3G identifies existing and planned resource protection and restoration areas and a Resource Overlay Zone.

### RESOURCE OVERLAY ZONE

The Resource Overlay Zone is a planning tool that has been used to inform the development of the Draft Preferred Alternative/Proposed Action. Areas included in the Resource Overlay Zone will be a priority for focused studies in the future. Although not all areas included in the Resource Overlay Zone are necessarily sensitive and in need of protection, some areas will be subject to additional resource protection measures. Specific resource management policies and programs will be developed as part of the Preliminary Ocotillo Wells SVRA Plan to ensure the sustainability of Ocotillo Wells SVRA and to ensure that recreation opportunities and visitor facilities are compatible with resource management.

The Resource Overlay Zone includes Sensitive Vegetation Areas, including mesquite dunes and ironwoods, and areas once covered by the Ancient

Shoreline of Lake Cahuilla. Other areas were also identified based on existing or planned resource management activities in Ocotillo Wells SVRA and are intended to reinforce those ongoing efforts.

### PREVENTING EROSION AND MAINTAINING WATER QUALITY

Maintaining water quality and preventing soil erosion are important for sustaining the unique desert landscape found at Ocotillo Wells SVRA and the surrounding environment. Measures to protect water quality and soils include the following:

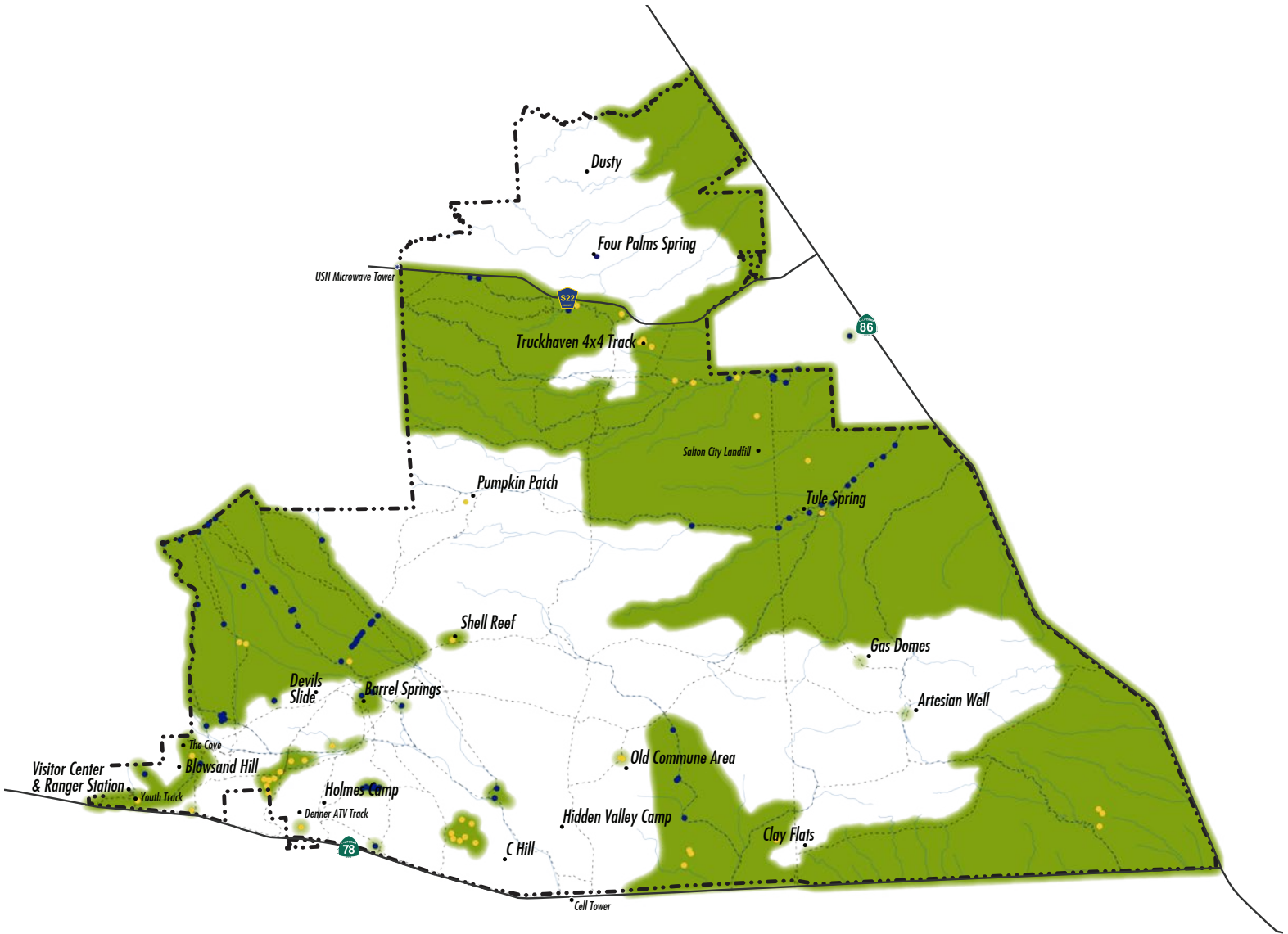
Conservation management: Adhering to the Soil Conservation Standard Guidelines for Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Management limits soil erosion and water runoff.

Enclosures and signage: Regulatory signage and fencing the fragile soil structures of the Gas Domes and other sensitive areas provide protection for natural resources. Additional areas have restrictions posted on signs or fenced closures.

Trail riding: For protection of resources, including reducing erosion and improving water quality, certain areas allow OHV recreation only on specific trails. Trail riding is encouraged in all parts of Ocotillo Wells SVRA through wayfinding signage and trail maintenance.



FIGURE 3G: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



LEGEND

- Ocotillo Wells SVRA Study Area Boundary
- Existing Primary Trails  
Major OHV routes of travel that are shown for orientation purposes only.
- Major Washes
- Existing Fenced Resource Areas
- Existing & Planned Restoration Areas
- Resource Overlay Zone

Not all areas within the Resource Overlay Zone are necessarily sensitive and in need of protection, but are included as a priority for more study, and in some cases will be subject to additional resource protection measures. Areas outside the Resource Overlay Zone, such as mesquite dunes may also be identified for protective measures.



## MAINTAINING AIR QUALITY

Air quality is a regional concern, and Ocotillo Wells SVRA is committed to reducing vehicle pollution and controlling dust through best available control measures (BACMs). Air quality is maintained through the following:

Red sticker/green sticker program: A vehicle that does not comply with the emissions standards set by the California Air Resources Board receives a red sticker, which restricts the operation of these vehicles to the winter season when air quality is better.

Dust control measures: Ocotillo Wells District has a Dust Control Plan on file with the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District. The Dust Control Plan requires monitoring and implementation of best available control measures (BACMs). These BACMs include a speed limit of 15 miles per hour and/or installation of gravel road base on primary access roads to facilities and camping areas, watering, special event conditions, and soil wet-downs for emergency helicopter landings. The Dust Control Plan must be updated biannually.

## PRESERVING CULTURAL RESOURCES

Ocotillo Wells District cultural resources specialists evaluate Ocotillo Wells SVRA's pre-historic and historic resources through an existing database, new surveys and studies, and coordination with tribal representatives. New discoveries of cultural resources are evaluated by archaeologists to determine their condition and historical significance. Evaluation of these resources helps determine the course of action to protect them. Active stewardship ensures that these resources are preserved, protected, and made available for public understanding and appreciation today and for future generations.

## PRESERVING GEOLOGICAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Ocotillo Wells SVRA contains unique and rare geological and paleontological resources that include the concentrations at Pumpkin Patch, Gas Domes, Gas Domes petrified wood, mammal fossils, shell fossils, ventifacts, and yardangs. Several of these sites are fenced for protection and interpretation while others remain undiscovered and freely accessible. Interpretation of these resources is key to protecting them.

## PROTECTING NATURAL HABITATS

Natural habitats are monitored and protected by evaluating changes in habitat areas, such as differences in soil erosion and wildlife populations. Conservation projects such as the following help protect wildlife and restore habitat:

Regulating riding: State law prohibits OHV riding over vegetation.

Enclosures and signage: Regulatory signs, interpretive panels, barricades, and fencing areas, such as those with mesquite dune habitat, help repair and restore sensitive native habitat or special natural features.

Trail construction and restoration: OHV trails are constructed or selected to avoid restoration project areas and sensitive resource habitats. Additionally, existing or new trails may be redirected or closed and restored through sensitive areas or areas that have redundant trails.

Natural resources studies: State Parks staff conducts annual surveys in compliance with the OHMVR Division Habitat Monitoring System to evaluate Ocotillo Wells SVRA's natural habitats and wildlife. These surveys are analyzed to address trends and natural resources management goals within Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Additionally, Ocotillo Wells

District was a founding member of the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Interagency Coordinating Committee / Management Oversight Group, which was established to guide the stabilization and increase of this species of special concern and through the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Rangewide Management Strategy. This conservation agreement established a coordinated study and habitat preservation program to proactively monitor and evaluate the status of the species.