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A Win-Win for California as Off-Highway Vehicle Reform Goes to the Governor’s Desk

September 18, 2017, Sacramento – A California Senate bill to reform off-highway vehicle recreation in California unanimously passed through both houses last week, clearing the Senate on Thursday. The Governor now has 30 days to sign SB 249 (Sen Allen-D, Redondo Beach) into law.

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a lead member of [an environmental coalition](#) that supported the bill, which reforms the State Park’s Off-Highway Motor Vehicle (OHV) Recreation Division in response to growing environmental degradation and illegal OHV activity.

“Over time, damage from OHV use has outpaced California’s efforts to repair and regulate it,” says CNPS Conservation Director Greg Suba. “We’re thankful to Senator Allen and his staff for helping us take an important first step to improve conservation standards without penalizing responsible riders.”

SB 249 will put into law a number of important environmental protection measures, including:

- Formally recognizing natural and cultural resources protection as a priority for the OHV Program
- Incorporating best available science into the Program’s planning, monitoring, and management
- Preventing unauthorized OHV trails from being grandfathered into the State Parks trail system
- Requiring a full California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process for new trails
- Increasing repair and restoration opportunities through the OHV Grants Program
- Revisiting the Commission’s leadership through a stakeholder review process and a 5-year sunset

As part of the amendment process, the OHV Program, which was set to sunset at the end of 2017, has been permanently authorized. The Governor’s Administration, the State Parks Department, OHV groups, and environmental groups supported the final bill.

This bill was never intended to penalize the riding community, emphasizes Suba, who believes solutions going forward can come out of OHV and conservation groups working together.

“SB 249 was always about finding a win-win for California,” he says. “Nobody wants to see California’s natural beauty destroyed, so we’ve got to keep working together around our shared values.”



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In addition to CNPS, the coalition in support of SB 249 included a number of community-based, state, national, and international organizations. The environmental groups worked together for more than two years in anticipation of the Program's sunset period to address growing concerns around endangered species protection, air quality, erosion, and ongoing illegal riding into protected areas.

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About the California Native Plant Society:

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide organization working to save and celebrate California's native plants and places via plant science, advocacy, education, and horticulture. CNPS has nearly 10,000 members in 35 chapters throughout California and Baja to promote its mission at the local level. www.cnps.org

Protecting California's native flora since 1965
