



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**VISIT SLO CAL AND RESONANCE CONSULTANCY RELEASE
OCEANO DUNES DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP STUDY**

Study includes future-use recommendations and economic impact picture

San Luis Obispo County, California, [June 1, 2023]– Today, [Visit SLO CAL](#) (VSC), the countywide destination marketing and management organization for San Luis Obispo County, and [Resonance Consultancy](#), a leading authority and advisor on tourism and economic development for cities, communities and destinations, released the findings of the much anticipated Oceano Dunes Destination Stewardship Study. The independent study of Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) provides 20 stewardship recommendations to plan the future development, management, and promotion of Oceano Dunes and surrounding communities should off-road vehicle use be permanently reduced or completely phased out. The study also includes economic impact analysis provided by Tourism Economics in an effort to provide benchmarking should future mitigation conversations need to occur with the state.

Oceano Dunes SVRA is the second most visited destination in San Luis Obispo County with average visitation reaching more than three million annually. In an effort to plan the future of Oceano Dunes, Visit SLO CAL cooperatively funded an independent study of the Ocean Dunes SVRA, with funding support provided by surrounding municipalities – the City of Pismo Beach, the City of Grover Beach, the City of Arroyo Grande and the County of San Luis Obispo. Resonance Consultancy was engaged in October 2022 to quantify the direct and indirect economic impact of the Ocean Dunes SVRA, identify a range of future use scenarios to ensure the economic, environmental, recreational and cultural stewardship, and develop potential recommendations for usage independent of the final outcome of off-road vehicular use.

“Oceano Dunes is a popular and important destination within the region. While the fate of the park is not ours to decide, the role Oceano Dunes plays in ensuring vibrancy of our community is paramount to its success,” said Chuck Davison, president and CEO of Visit SLO CAL. “To that end, Visit SLO CAL and partners engaged a third-party expert, Resonance, to ensure an independent and transparent process during which Visit SLO CAL supported through stakeholder engagement and coordination.”

Overall, more than 40 stakeholders were invited to participate. Participants included California State Parks, representatives from local government, tourism industry leaders (not including VSC), Northern Chumash tribal leaders, economic development sector leaders, off-roading enthusiasts, local business owners and Oceano residents as well as those whose interests span environmental, equestrian, historical and more.

“Having advised cities and destinations around the world, it was a natural partnership with Visit SLO CAL as they sought help in envisioning the future of Oceano Dunes with partners to support the long-term development of surrounding communities,” said Chris Fair, president and CEO at Resonance Consultancy. “The proposed recommendations were directly informed by stakeholder perspectives when considering the different alternative futures of Oceano Dunes SVRA. Resonance’s approach ensured a balance between environmental sensitivity, recreational access and usage, community connection, culture, and economic viability.”

In March 2021, the California Coastal Commission ordered an [end to off-road vehicle](#) use at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) citing environmental protection of the coastline in San Luis Obispo County and compliance with the Coastal Act. The Commission’s off-road vehicle ‘phase-out’ decision generated

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multiple lawsuits, many of which have been consolidated and are ongoing. The future of off-road vehicle use at Oceano Dunes will ultimately be decided by the courts and final decisions may be years away.

Informed by an assessment of the current situation and secondary research, recommendations are independent of what the courts decide and can be instituted in conjunction with or in lieu of current activities, with governance determined by the jurisdiction of the local municipalities and California State Parks. Recommendations are organized across five main categories: Regional Stewardship, Infrastructure and Investment, Product and Experience Development, Park Management and Operations, and Marketing and Communications. All recommendations will require continued action and coordination amongst partners, as well as public-private partnerships for research, planning and funding.

In the event of a full or partial closure of the park, the economic picture was needed in order to seek mitigation funds from the state and other sources to offset any impact. Resonance partnered with [Tourism Economics](#) to quantify the direct and indirect economic impact of the area in 2019, a reference year for tourism in the county prior to the pandemic. Oceano Dunes welcomed a total of 3.4 million visits in 2019, approximately 2.2 million visits (66.5%) originated from outside of San Luis Obispo County. Spending by visitors to Oceano Dunes originating from outside SLO CAL generated a total economic impact of \$511.2 million in San Luis Obispo County in 2019 – \$336.9 million in direct spending by visitors to Oceano Dunes generated \$174.3 million in indirect and induced business sales. The total economic impact of \$511.2 million included \$128.5 million in total labor income, supporting more than 5,600 total jobs throughout the county in 2019, and generated \$31.8 million in state and local taxes in 2019 based on a detailed tax analysis.

Future economic research, as well as recreational and economic development plans for the park, will be decided by California State Parks and other state agencies, San Luis Obispo County and the three surrounding municipalities with approval by the California Coastal Commission.

To request a copy of the Oceano Dunes Stewardship Study report, please complete and submit the online form [HERE](#) to receive an emailed copy.

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ABOUT VISIT SLO CAL:

Visit SLO CAL is the countywide non-profit destination marketing and management organization (DMMO) for San Luis Obispo County (SLO CAL). Visit SLO CAL is responsible for promoting SLO CAL as an attractive travel destination and enhancing the public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, Visit SLO CAL strengthens the economic position and provides opportunity for all people in the community. Built on research with a strategy of continuous improvement, Visit SLO CAL aims to establish SLO CAL as a favorite West Coast destination known for its signature slower pace of life and unique mix of incredible, immersive guest experiences. For more information, go to SLOCAL.com.

ABOUT RESONANCE CONSULTANCY:

Resonance is a leading global advisor in tourism, economic development, and real estate for the world's best cities, districts, developments and destinations. The team has completed more than 100 research, strategic planning, and stewardship projects in more than 100 cities and 70-plus countries. Resonance helps destinations plan for the future by striving to build community, preserve cultural heritage, protect the environment and generate economic benefits for all those involved. For more information, go to ResonanceCo.com.

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