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To: info@slocleanair.org
Subject: Oceano Dunes (Please Read and Consider)
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Hi, my name is Austin. I just turned 18 early March. I never thought I would ever see the day the wonderful Oceano dunes would be threatened. I know I will probably be ignored because of my age but I am more than just a teenager. Just like the dunes are more than just sand to me. I grew up in Bakersfield, California, where the air quality is terrible compared to the coast. I now live in Nipomo On Dawn Rd. just outside of Trilogy. To cut to the chase, I'd like to show how these dunes are a livelihood for a lot of people. For starters, local businesses would not be in operation without the dunes, to list some: Steve's ATV, Sunbuggy, BJ's ATV, Arnie's ATV Rentals, The Banana Cabana, Grover Beach Motorsports, Coastal Fab Werx, Dirt Designs, and so many other companies who are here for the Offroad community in this area that utilize the dunes. Now these companies who have deep roots in this area are being uprooted by retired people who love to complain. Without the dunes, nobody would rent ATVs, nobody would need paddle tires from GBMS, and nobody would travel to Atascadero, or Oceano for Dirt Designs and Coastal Fab Werx to have prerunners built for them. I also planned to open my own fabrication shop where I could build trucks for customers in this area but I would not be able to stay afloat without the attraction that is the dunes. Another point, a lot of locals have toys that are not street intended, I, for one, have a dirt bike, several quads, and a truck I have been building just for the dunes. We do not have any parks where I can enjoy my truck in this area. As a High School Student, I know that the Oceano Dunes is a great place to hang out with friends on the weekend and get together with clubs. For example, the rugby club I play for hosted a bonfire attended by several other rugby clubs we had played earlier that day. My final point will be a story that I hope touches your heart and helps my case in keeping the dunes open for us to enjoy. On July 1, 2006, my family and I were camping on the beach with lots of friends and having a great time as we always have camping on the beach. I was only 6 years old and a bundle of energy when we were at the beach. That day, I saw an opportunity to go to the dunes with my father and his two friends in his friend's new (at that time) Kawasaki Mule. As we cruised into the dunes, I laid my head back and before I knew it, I was unconscious. We had been landed on by a lifted Ford pickup which was driven by a guy who was not following the laws of the park, having a spotter, having a flag, etc.. I was ejected from the vehicle, even though I was wearing my seatbelt. Long story short, my skull was cracked, my father suffered back injuries as well as a tooth through the lip, the driver of the vehicle we were in had his bicep ripped off and his jaw broken, and the gentleman in the passenger seat, Jerry "Porkchop" Carter, father of two as well as a husband and very loved son and friend of many, lost his life that day. As I've grown older, the incident has caught up to me. Last year, I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which has an impact on my life everyday. Some teenagers deal with typical depression, mine is different. I live with survivor's guilt for something I couldn't have changed easily. While I attended counseling for help, the counselor supported a method I use for coping heavily. Any time I get down, I drive out to that dune and sit on top of it and enjoy the view of the beautiful ocean from the dune where my life was changed forever. I have a connection with that dune that would cause havoc in my life if I lost it. I do hope you do not think the dunes are an unsafe place because of this story, they do not cause harm, it is the misusers of the wonderful paradise. The man who killed Jerry was intoxicated, had the accident not happened on the sand, who knows what would've happened on his way home on the streets. I believe Porkchop saved a family that day by keeping a drunk driver off the roads. Please do not take my home away from home away. Thank you for your time and consideration, Austin Gladden.