

From: [Jon Patzer](mailto:Jon.Patzer@info@slocleanair.org)
To: info@slocleanair.org
Subject: Oceano SVRA vs. air particulates
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It has come to my attention that there is a proposal to eliminate vehicle travel on the Oceano Dunes SVRA in an effort to improve air quality in areas of Nipomo Mesa. In my long association with sand and sand dunes (I grew up in Playa Del Rey in the 1950s and the family periodically visited my aunt and cousin in Shell Beach), sand dunes are generated by strong winds! It seems to me that eliminating this soil migration “problem” would also eliminate the natural uniqueness of these coastal dunes and also the recreationist that enjoy them. If this is truly the air quality problem, it would seem to be a better idea for people to be warned not to build houses in these areas, rather than kill the sand dunes. This is similar to building or buying a house next to an airport, railroad, or freeway – then griping about them.

Another thing that does not seem to be at all clear is just what is actually creating these “emissions from riding area” that the San Luis County APCD is hoping to eliminate. Are these emissions from the engines of the vehicles using this area, from wind blown dust out of the sand, or other dust from surrounding areas that have been picked up by the same winds that shape the dunes? From what limited data I have seen, there has been high air particulate counts for the entire history that it has been monitored, so possibly this air situation has existed as long as there have been sand dunes here.

Until there is a better understanding of the overall ramifications of this “emissions” issue, it would be better avoid closure of this recreation area.

Jon Patzer