

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1613 (Wilson) – As Amended March 11, 2026

Policy Committee:	Transportation	Vote:	11 - 4
	Water, Parks and Wildlife		9 - 2

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Safety and Stewardship (CA OHV Safety) Program, to consist of California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Safety and Stewardship Course (CA OHV Safety Course) and mandatory off-highway vehicle (OHV) operator card, with associated penalties for noncompliance.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Requires the Division of Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHV Division) within the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) to convene a stakeholder group to develop an OHV safety and stewardship course by June 30, 2027, and specifies the membership of the stakeholder group to include: (a) the deputy director of the OHV Division, (b) an OHV Division representative with peace officer authority, (c) a representative of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and (d) no more than two representatives of each of several specified groups, at the discretion and invitation of the deputy director of the OHV Division and the director of State Parks.
- 2) Directs the stakeholder group to submit, by March 1, 2028, to the deputy director a consensus report that includes (a) recommendations on what to include in the CA OHV Safety Course and (b) a discussion of in which language the course should be available.
- 3) By January 1, 2029, requires the OHV Division to develop and implement the CA OHV Safety Course, based on the consensus report and to include specified content.
- 4) Authorizes the OHV Division to establish fees for the CA OHV Safety Course to cover the costs of carrying out the CA OHV Safety Program and directs the proceeds of any such fee to the OHV Trust Fund.
- 5) Directs the OHV Division to determine whether out-of-state OHV safety programs meet California standards and whether to offer reciprocity to an individual who has completed such a program and who operates an OHV in California.
- 6) Requires the OHV Division to issue a five-year CA OHV operator card to any person who completes the CA OHV Safety Course, authorizes the OHV Division to establish fees for issuance of the operator card sufficient to cover the costs of carrying out the CA OHV Safety Program and directs the proceeds of any such fee to the OHV Trust Fund.

- 7) Effective January 1, 2029, requires an operator of an OHV on public lands and other specified lands, or a person supervising a child 15 years of age or younger who is operating an OHV on those lands, to possess a CA OHV operator card or proof of an approved out-of-state reciprocal program.
- 8) Makes operation of an OHV, or supervision of a child operating an OHV, without an operator card or proof of completion of a reciprocal program an infraction subject to monetary penalties—\$100 for a first violation, which the court may waive; \$250 for a second violation; and \$500 for a third or subsequent violation—and specifies that a violation shall not result in a violation point count.
- 9) Requires the OHV Division to (a) evaluate the efficacy of the CA OHV Safety Course in achieving goals, (b) compile accident and injury rate data prior to implementation of the course to establish a baseline and (c) put the evaluation in a report, to be posted on the OHV Division’s website.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) This bill creates significant one-time work for the OHV Division to (1) convene the OHV stakeholder group, (2) develop and implement the CA OHV Safety Course and establish course fees, (3) determine whether out-of-state OHV safety programs meet California standards and whether to offer reciprocity and (4) compile data, evaluate the program and produce a report. One-time start-up costs are likely to total in the millions of dollars, as are ongoing costs (OHV Trust Fund). State Parks would need to front start-up monies to establish the CA OHV Safety Program. OHV course fees will likely be sufficient to cover those start-up costs and ongoing costs.

State Parks estimates costs of \$3.5 million in the first year of implementation, and ongoing costs of \$1.3 million, based on approximately 670,000 OHVs registered with DMV and 2.5% annual growth. State Parks expects the CA OHV Safety Course fees will be sufficient to cover all start-up and ongoing costs. (OHV Trust Fund.)

Costs to other state entities to participate in the stakeholder group should be minor and absorbable.

- 2) Costs to the courts as a result of the bill’s creation of a new infraction should be minor.

COMMENTS:

California law comprehensively defines an OHV as any one of several types of vehicles.

But it might be easier to say of an OHV that “you know it when you see it,” especially when the OHV is being operated off highway.

State law provides for the selection, development and operation of lands to provide OHV recreation opportunities. The law calls for such lands to be selected for the purpose of providing the fullest appropriate public use of vehicular recreational opportunities, while providing for the conservation of cultural resources and the conservation and improvement of natural resource values over time. The law charges the OHV Division within State Parks with planning for and managing such lands, including by providing for law enforcement and public safety on these lands.

Currently, State Parks includes nine such OHV parks, known as State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs). The SVRAs receive funding from the OHV Trust Fund, which also funds OHV Division grants and other OHV-related activities. The trust fund itself receives proceeds from registration of OHVs with the DMV and a portion of gas tax revenues.

The law also provides rules to help ensure the safe operation of OHVs, but, with certain exceptions, it does not require the operator of an OHV to undergo any sort of safety training. Nonetheless, the OHV Division works to provide safety education to OHV riders, including awarding grants for law enforcement and education. In 2024, the OHV Division hosted its latest OHV Safety Summit. In a 2025 report to the Legislature, the OHV Division characterized the consensus of those attending the summit as “that the typical OHV user changed considerably since COVID, and there was need to emphasize education and training going forward.”

Bill supporters, such as medical associations and groups representing OHV enthusiasts, do not want to just emphasize OHV education and training; they want to require it. The author notes that California recently recorded the greatest number of OHV-related deaths of any state and describes “requiring OHV operators to demonstrate their understanding of current rules and regulations” as a “critical step” to “protect our families and communities.”

There is no opposition registered against this bill.

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