



Wednesday, Oct 15, 2008

Posted on Thu, Oct. 09, 2008

## Environmentalists blast off-road race to benefit spinal research

### Bob Cuddy

An annual motorcycle race at the Oceano Dunes to raise money for spinal cord injuries is scheduled next weekend, but opposition has arisen from those who want to keep motorized vehicles off the beach.

The Central Coast Motorcycle Association, an off-road motorcycle club founded in the 1970s, will sponsor the fifth annual Oceano Dunes Endurance Beach Race on Oct. 10-12 at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area.

The event is a fundraiser for SCI Research Advancement and The Clayton Memorial Foundation.

Charles and Sharon Clayton, founders of the weekly motorcycle newspaper Cycle News, set up their nonprofit foundation in 1989 to help riders who have been injured while racing.

SCI Research Advancement, also a nonprofit, has as its slogan "Bridging the Gap — Leading the Way to Human Clinical Trials." According to its Web site ([www.scicure.org](http://www.scicure.org)), its research "focuses on non-embryonic/non-fetal stem cell treatments to repair spinal cord injury." The foundation consists of "paraplegics, quadriplegics, family and friends that have come together to fund a research team to bring spinal cord regeneration to humans as quickly as possible," according to its site.

San Luis Obispo County Assessor Tom Bordonaro Jr. is a foundation member, according to the site.

However, some environmental groups — including a local group called Safe Beach and Dunes, and the 35,000-member Center for Biological Diversity, a nonprofit group based in Missoula, Mont.—have organized a letter-writing campaign against the event.

The center calls it a "highly destructive, three-day motorized racing event."

"The proposed race will include thousands of vehicles and tens of thousands of spectators resulting in habitat degradation, harassment of sensitive species, and air pollution for nearby communities," the center wrote in a release.

The race attracts thousands of visitors for the weekend, according to parks officials.

At last year's Endurance Race, a 17-year-old from Utah died after crashing his vehicle.

Dennis Law, president of the Central Coast Motorcycle Association, says the organization has protections in place for both riders and the environment.

Law stressed the importance of raising money for research that will help find a cure for paralysis caused by spinal cord injuries.

The Oceano Dunes is the most popular off-road park in California and the eighth-most visited park in the state.

The Dunes have regularly been a battleground between those who want them kept pristine by removing motorized vehicles, and those who see them as the last spot on the coast where all-terrain vehicle riders can enjoy their sport of choice.

© 2008 San Luis Obispo Tribune and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.sanluisobispo.com>