VOUCHER SYSTEM

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) introduced a voucher system during the 2000 use season as a tool to manage the long lines of Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) users waiting to enter Silver Lake State Park on Saturdays, Sundays, and Holidays.

There are two types of vouchers: Dune Ready Vouchers and Parking Lot Vouchers. Dune Ready Vehicles are those that enter the Silver Lake State Park Off-Road Vehicle Area from public highways and go straight into the sand dune off-road area without the need for the parking lot/staging area. Parking Lot Vouchers are for those who require a staging or parking area for their tow vehicle and/or trailer. Both types of vouchers are free to park visitors and are distributed from the Off-Road Vehicle Voucher Center located at the corner of Fox and Ridge Roads, to the east of the ORV Area entrance gate. The purpose of the voucher is, simply, to “hold the ORV users place in line”, while staggering arrival times to avoid excessive lines.

The Most Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q: When will the Voucher System go into effect this year?

A: Vouchers will be handed out starting mid-May, at 12 noon on Friday, two weeks prior to the Memorial Day weekend and will be continuously distributed through the summer on weekends/holidays until the Sunday following Labor Day.

Q: Where will I get my voucher?

A: They are obtained at the Off-Road Vehicle Voucher Center on Fox Road located about ¼ mile east of the ORV Area entrance. You may also purchase your State Park and ORV permits at the same location, which will continue to help speed up entry into the ORV Area.

Q: How soon on Friday can I get my voucher?

A: The voucher distribution point on Fox Road will open at 12 noon on Fridays for Dune Ready Vouchers and at 9:00 p.m. for Parking Lot Vouchers. The Voucher Center will remain open until at least 11 p.m. and re-open at 7 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday and Holidays. To reduce traffic congestion as much as possible, traffic should follow the ORV Voucher Center directional signage, posted throughout the community.
Q: What are the various voucher time periods.

Parking Lot Vouchers will be for two periods: **7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.** Stand-by Parking Lot Vouchers will be distributed once parking spaces for those periods are exhausted. There will be five Dune Ready Voucher periods: 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Arrivals after 7:00 p.m. may not require a voucher.

Q: What if I arrive after the time my voucher says, am I allowed to enter?

A: No, late arrivals with Dune Ready Vouchers will need to secure a new voucher for a later time period during the day. Parking Lot Vouchers will guarantee entry for either the 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. or the 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. period, but not both. **If you arrive after your voucher time period, you will need to secure a Stand-by Voucher for later in the day.** No parking lot spaces will be guaranteed after 9:00 a.m.

Q. What happens if I want to leave the park after entering?

A: Once you have entered the park, you can stay as long as you like until the normal closing time. The vouchers only specify the arrival time. Dune Ready vehicles that leave the sand dunes and the State Park will be required to go to the end of the line when re-entering. Vehicles leaving the parking lot will not be guaranteed space when returning. Those attempting to “cut” in ahead of other visitors waiting in line, will be turned away. **Be sure your voucher slip is validated (HOLE-TYPE PUNCHED) when you arrive at the ORV Area Entrance Gate for the first time, on any particular day.**

Q: How many Parking Lot and Dune Ready Vouchers will be given out daily?

A: Over two thousand Dune Ready Vouchers are distributed each day or between 300 and 500 per two-hour time period. **This may change in the future because of the stricter enforcement and monitoring requirements associated with the sound level testing or other inspection requirements.** The number of available spaces in the lot controls the number of Parking Lot Vouchers. Inclement weather, no-shows, early or unplanned departures, space-sharing, and similar actions allow for additional room on occasion. **Stand-by Vouchers are used for these unexpected events.**

Q: Can I obtain a voucher for someone else?

A: Yes. **Two Dune Ready or one Parking Lot Voucher can be obtained by an individual adult park visitor.** These voucher slips will require the addition of the user’s name and main vehicle license number, in ink, prior to validation. Due to the limited number of parking spaces, only one Parking Lot voucher will be given per customer. **Two Dune Ready Vouchers can be obtained by one person at the Voucher Center Office, but you will need to know the names and license plate numbers and the intended time period wanted.** **The voucher forms must be completed, in ink, prior to embossed validation at the time of application at the Voucher Center Office.** Voucher slips will again be validated with a distinctive hole-type punch upon arrival at the ORV Area Entrance Gate. **This hole-type punch will be required if re-entry is requested later during the day.** Commercial ORV ride vendors will need to register rental vehicles in advance.
Q: Can I obtain vouchers for the whole weekend at once?

A: You can get Dune Ready Vouchers for both Saturday and Sunday and/or the Holiday at the same time. They will become available at noon on the day prior to the voucher period. **In order to give people the opportunity for the limited parking spaces, Parking Lot Vouchers will be available at 9 p.m. the day before they are to be used.** Saturday Parking Lot Vouchers will be distributed at 9 p.m. each Friday; Sunday’s will be distributed at 9 p.m. Saturday and Holiday periods will begin at 9 p.m. the day prior. **Once the day’s Parking Lot Vouchers are all given out, visitors may choose to be placed on the Stand-by List for the following day.**

Q: When all of the vouchers have been given out for the day, is a user just out of luck?

A: If space opens up in the parking lot, more vehicles will be allowed to enter. Vehicles requiring the use of the parking lot, that do not have a valid voucher for that day will not be allowed to wait in line outside the park, as in years past. The Voucher Center Parking Lot will be used for these Stand-by stacking or cueing line purposes during regular business hours. There will still be a wait with a Stand-by Voucher of course, since there is no guarantee when parking spaces may occur, but the visitor will be better able to make the best use of their time. Dune Ready Vehicles will need to check back during the day for the possibility of entry prior to 7 p.m.

Q: Is the DNR increasing the number of parking spaces?

A: No. Strict sand dune regulations will not allow the parking lot to be expanded “on-site” and the State of Michigan does not own adjacent land where additional spaces could be located. Parking Lot spaces are 12 feet x 60 feet. The use of awnings takes up space that others may be waiting for. Please make efficient use of the limited space. **No side awnings are allowed on voucher days.**

Q: What about trailers with watercraft and ORVs that get stuck on the entrance ramp?

A: Trailers are not allowed into the ORV Area beyond the Safety Check Station. Check with Park Rangers regarding use of trailers to remove disabled vehicles or emergency situations. Also, continuing this year, equipment over 60 feet in length will need to unhook trailers on busy days to use the parking lot.

**EXHAUST SYSTEM RULES AND TESTING**

Vehicle muffler noise and the use of spark arresters has been a matter of concern regarding the operation of Off-Road Vehicles (ORV) for many years. The State of Michigan’s ORV Law has required them since 1975. At Silver Lake State Park a static or stationary test for this equipment is used on all types of vehicles. Noise levels will be checked at a twenty-inch distance from the exhaust pipe at half the vehicle’s rated revolutions per minute (RPM) or as detailed in the automotive specifications SAE J1169, March 92 or SAE J1287, June 86. The maximum noise level permitted under these testing conditions will be 94 dBA which is the current limit set by the Off-Road Recreation Vehicles Act of Part 811 of 1994 PA 451 (MCL 324.811). All vehicles are required to have a muffler and spark arrester containing baffles meeting established United States Forest Service (USFS) specifications.
Generally speaking, the guidelines for testing at “half the rate RPM” will be based on some vehicle similarities. In most cases, full-sized vehicles with “V” configured engines will be tested at 2,500 RPM and all others at 2,000 RPM, which was a method developed and used while testing these vehicles at Silver Lake in 1997. Diesel powered, full-sized vehicles are tested at 1,500 RPM. Most reverse flow mufflers will meet the spark arrester requirements, as will most turbochargers. However, straight-through mufflers, such as glass-pack designs without baffles and mechanically driven superchargers, do not qualify as adequate spark arresters.

Motorcycles and ATVs will be tested like the full-sized vehicles by placing a sound meter at a twenty inches distance from the muffler exhaust pipe. In most cases, 80 cc engines will be tested at 6,000 RPM, 125 cc at 5,000 RPM, 250 cc at 4,000 RPM and 500 + cc at 3,000 - 3,500 RPM. Annually, the Motorcycle Industry Council produces a manual detailing the standards ATVs and motorcycles must meet. A muffler that meets the Environmental Acoustic Reduction (E.A.R.) standards may be considered as a viable solution for motorcycles. Many ATV and motorcycle mufflers are stamped as being USFS approved and will meet Silver Lake State Park standards, if they have not been altered. Those vehicles that have been manufactured for “closed track” use only, such as many motocross or “dirt-bike” motorcycles and competition style ATVs, will most likely not meet the requirements. This is also often true where after market installations have altered the original exhaust system in attempts to gain additional horsepower.

Testing for compliance with these regulations will be done in a random fashion either within the ORV Area Parking Lot, at the base of the ORV Area entrance ramp roadway by the Safety Check Station, or within the ORV Area sand dune complex itself. Park Rangers or other Law Enforcement Officials may insert a plastic rod into the vehicle’s exhaust pipe to determine whether there is a spark arrester or baffle present. Most often home-made baffling devices, such as steel wool or metal door screen material, do not meet the USFS requirements.

If you have specific questions or concerns or would like to volunteer to help, please contact personnel at Silver Lake State Park by telephoning 1-231-873-3083. Additional information can also be found at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website: www.michigan.gov/dnr

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PLEASE DRIVE SAFELY