


Protect California Deserts


Introducing a New Effort to Protect California Deserts

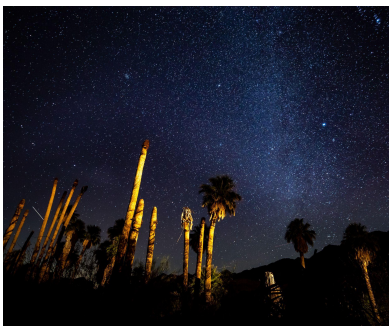
Local organizations are working together to preserve public lands in Riverside and Imperial Counties between Palm Springs and the Colorado River for future generations. These protections will honor and recognize the Indigenous cultural histories of the Cahuilla, Quechan, Serrano, Chemeheuvi, and Mojave peoples, increase access to world-class nature for local residents and visitors, protect fragile desert wildlife and facilitate connectivity, and help boost local economies. This effort proposes to:




 **Designate a new national monument** that would border the southern edge of Joshua Tree National Park and permanently protect recreation access to popular places like the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains. The new monument would safeguard World War II historical sites, the Bradshaw Trail, cultural landscapes, and vital habitats for chuckwalla, desert bighorn sheep, and desert tortoise. This effort also proposes that the Bureau of Land Management conduct a study to assess recreation needs in the area. *Enjoying the view in Mecca Hills. Credit: Bob Wick.*




 **Expand Joshua Tree National Park** to the east, which will connect the Park with the proposed national monument and other existing protected areas. This would help ensure connectivity for desert bighorn sheep, burro deer, and other wildlife in the face of climate change. The park expansion would also increase access to nature for east Coachella Valley residents and preserve places of cultural and historical importance. The National Parks Service has identified the lands proposed in the expansion as a suitable addition to the park. *Desert bighorn sheep. Credit: Larry Heronema.*




 **Honor the homelands of the Iviatim, Kwatsáan, Maarrenga'yam, Nüwü, Pipa Aha Macav (the Cahuilla, Quechan, Serrano, Chemeheuvi, and Mojave) peoples.** Local organizations are working closely with the Tribes of these nations to ensure that these lands, their sacred places and landscapes, and plant and animal relatives are preserved and stewarded into the future in a proper and respectful manner in full cooperation with the tribes. *California fan palms at Corn Springs, Chuckwalla Mountains. Palms are considered ancestors by local Tribal people. Credit: Bob Wick.*




 **Honor César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and Larry Itliong who formed the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.** Pay homage to all hardworking farmworkers who have nourished communities in Riverside and Imperial Counties and beyond. *Agricultural fields near Mecca Hills Wilderness and the Little San Bernardino Mountains. Credit: Sedy Hernández Orellana Barrows.*



 **Expand existing and create wilderness areas** in Riverside County to preserve cultural heritage and wildlife corridors between Joshua Tree National Park, the new national monument, and other protected areas in the region. Expanding or creating new wilderness would help increase opportunities for locals and visitors to experience the stunning, remote beauty of these lands. *Posing for a photo in the proposed addition to the San Jacinto Wilderness in western Riverside County. Credit: Colin Barrows.*



 **Designate a portion of Mission Creek as a Wild & Scenic river** near Joshua Tree National Park. The designation would help protect a precious year-round desert water source for hikers along a portion of the awe-inspiring Pacific Crest Trail. Safeguarding Mission Creek in the face of worsening drought would help increase the region's resilience to climate change. It would also preserve important habitat for the least Bell's vireo, an endangered bird, and other animals and plants. *Mission Creek. Credit: Steve Evans.*

California's Deserts: Unparalleled and Beloved Public Lands

California's deserts span over 26 million acres and are like nowhere else on earth. The deserts of Riverside and Imperial Counties include palm oases, rocky mountain ranges, and lush desert woodlands with unique plants such as the Chuckwalla Cholla cactus and threatened animals such as the desert tortoise and flat-tailed horned lizard. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service selected the lands in the proposed national monument as a re-introduction site for the iconic and critically endangered Sonoran pronghorn.

These public lands offer world-renowned recreation opportunities and are essential to enhancing equitable outdoor access for local communities. They are the ancestral homelands of many Tribes since time immemorial. The region also contains important historical values, and tourism in the area helps contribute to a sustainable economic engine for nearby communities.

► **Questions?** Email info@protectcadeserts.org or call Chris Clarke, National Parks Conservation Association: 760-600-0038.