

#### In the spirit of truth and reconciliation,

Friends of the Desert Mountains acknowledges that we occupy the traditional territory of the Cahuilla people of the Coachella Valley. This land continues to be home to the Cahuilla people whom we recognize as stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society. We acknowledge the Cahuilla peoples' connection to this land and appreciate the opportunity to live, learn, and recreate on their traditional homelands. We honor the Cahuilla caretakers of these lands and waters before us, the Cahuilla people today, and the generations to come.





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#### Friends of the Desert Mountains

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All content verified as of 12/31/2022 Cover Photo by Robert Forgreaves Inteiror Photos by NJ Bradeen, Rebecca Driscoll, Tom Forgrave, Mark Glassman, Bill Havert, Karin Jaffie, Oscar Ortiz, and Bob Taylor.

#### Our stewardship mission never wavers whether carving new pathways or following in the steps walked for time immemorial.

As Board Chair and Executive Director, we are both honored to present our Annual Report celebrating Friends of the Desert Mountains' 35th anniversary. It is gratifying to see that the vision our Founders had for a beautiful, sustainable, and natural Coachella Valley has been carried out consistent with their challenging goals and in some cases moving beyond their initial dreams.

Our accomplishments include over 63,000 acres of critical natural habitat permanently preserved, almost 30 unique plants and animals protected and over 300 miles of trails that we helped build, restore or improve access. Who knew in 1987 that hiking would become the #1 draw for visitors to the Coachella Valley? Or that it would become a favorite pastime for families and people of all ages?

As with our Founders, we are energized also as we look forward to the next 35 years and the continued impact we can have on future generations during times of increasing environmental challenges. We have evolved from a quiet non-profit that handled land transactions to a visible partner helping everyone connect to the land.

Thank you for supporting our work. And YOU are part of all of this, Friends!

Rebecca Driscoll Board Chair



Tammy Martin
Executive Director





## **OUR MISSION**

Friends of the Desert Mountains connects people to the land through conservation, education, and research. We also support the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument.



#### **OUR VISION**

The Friends' vision is a thriving and productive community integrated with a healthy and sustainable natural environment throughout the Coachella Valley region.



## OUR VALUES How we Connect People to the Land

**Stewardship** We are dedicated to permanently protecting the critical natural resources in the Coachella Valley.

**Collaboration** From our inception, our success relies on important partnerships that include tribal nations, government agencies at all levels as well as other nonprofit groups.

**Education** We engage all ages to reveal the wonders of the fragile desert and mountains we call home and instill an environmental awareness that we hope lasts a lifetime.

**Inclusion** We strive to connect everyone to the land, so that all residents and visitors feel welcomed, respected, and supported in the outdoors.

**Accountability** The key to successfully protecting our natural environment for future generations is to act ethically and honestly in all our work. We are responsible for our actions and understand that the decisions we make today will impact our region's future.

**Diversity** Just as natural systems thrive on diversity, so too does our organization. Diversity is a core principle and overarching goal of the Friends of the Desert Mountains.





#### **OUR PROGRAMS**

We must protect our biodiversity, scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, and our community's sense of place or we risk losing these resources forever.

Beyond land acquisition, Friends of the Desert Mountains' conservation programs ensure the sustainable existence, use, and enjoyment of our natural and cultural heritage for current generations and those to come. With only eight staff, these programs would not exist without our wonderful volunteers.

You can help too! Contact us at friends@DesertMountains.org or call 760-568-9918.



#### **Land Acquisition & Monitoring**

Acquire critical habitat and visit parcels to monitor and report any issues.



Preserve the biodiversity of the desert by removing invasive plant species.



#### **Trail Stewardship & Ambassadors**

Build new trails and maintain old ones throughout the Coachella Valley. Promote positive trail use and monitor trails for maintenance and cleanup needs.



#### **Youth Education**

Inspire new generations to get outdoors and appreciate nature.



Help visitors discover the desert on guided hikes as a leader or a "sweep".



Go outdoors and gather data to help answer questions about the natural world.



Support the Santa Rosa & San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Visitor Center/Gift Shop.



Introduce new people to Friends by communicating with the community.



Raise awareness and financial support at our annual Coachella Valley Wildflower Festival, Desert KIDS Fun Fest, and Friends & Champions events. PROGRAMS Land Acquisition & Monitoring



Since 1987, Friends of the Desert Mountains has preserved more than 63,000 acres of valuable habitat, viewshed and open space in and around the Coachella Valley. In particular, Friends played a crucial partnership role in the acquisition of the magnificent 8,880 acre Fan Hill area, which connects the Thousand Palms Preserve to Joshua Tree National Park.



Connect to the land

In 2004 the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) was in preparation and had identified the Fan Hill area as a key Conservation Area to link the adjacent Park and the Preserve, as well as maintain the essential sand transport process needed to resupply and sustain dune habitat for the endangered Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard and other sensitive sand dependent species.

The MSHCP is a renowned regional conservation plan balancing conservation and development over 1.1 million acres by establishing a system of interconnected Conservation Areas to ensure the biological integrity of the Valley in perpetuity, and by identifying specific areas where infrastructure and development can proceed without violating endangered species laws.

With the nascent MSHCP in the advanced planning stages, a landowner in the Fan Hill area, the Cathton Corporation, proposed a massive urban development with hotel, golf course, and thousands of homes on the pristine Fan Hill alluvial fan. This proposed development would have doomed the MSHCP and would have made the Thousand Palms Preserve an island surrounded by a sea of development and placed urban development on the border of the National Park.

A coalition of agencies including the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, and the Resources Legacy Fund required one more partner to supply the missing piece. Enter Friends to seal the deal. Partnering is one of the best conservation acquisition strategies, and Friends has a long history of such partnerships. So, if you drive out to Keys View in Joshua Tree National Park, you can still see Thousand Palms Preserve, cradled in in an unbroken connective fabric of protected lands thanks to the Cathton property acquisition.

Another controversial development, and one which nearly thwarted finalization of the Coachella Valley MSHCP, was a golf course, 2000+ unit project called Palmwood proposed for the mouth of Big Morongo Canyon near Hwy 62. In 2006, all the Valley cities had conceptually agreed this area, which hosts a major stream and endangered flora, would be a designated Conservation Area. But a developer had other thoughts, and the MSHCP ground to a halt with the nearby city supporting Palmwood. Fortunately, the developer turned out to be a scam artist, the original landowner took the property back, and the MSHCP went forward.

Immediately, Friends stepped in, secured a grant, and acquired the property from the landowner. The site is now a trailhead into gorgeous year-round Big Morongo creek and Preserve, and the MSHCP is fully functional -- providing certainty for orderly development within the urbanized core of the (acco Valley, while preserving essential open space areas for man and beast alike to roam.

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Friends' Snow
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Stubbe Canyon
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Last but not least, Friends' various Snow Creek and Stubbe Canyon area acquisitions were pivotal, because (according to renowned conservation biologists) this is "the place where Southern

California and Northern California meet." Here the Sonoran desert of the Peninsular Ranges starts its trend into the Transverse Ranges and the great Mojave region, strengthening a crucial ecosystem.





Fan Hill, a key Conservation Area to link the adjacent Joshua Tree National Park and the Thousand Palms Preserve, was slated for development. Thanks to the work of multiple concerned agencies, this pristine land is conserved in perpetuity

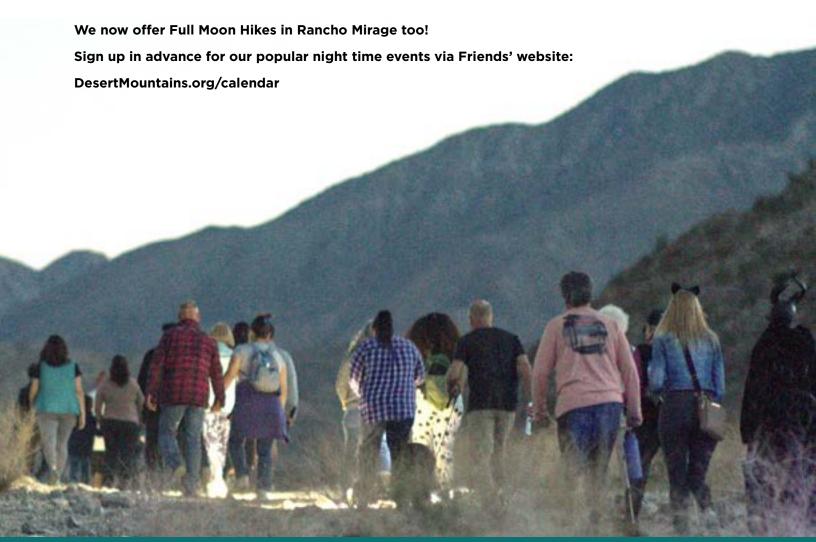
# PROGRAMS Guided Hikes Light The Way

As the sun sets and many towns' sidewalks "roll up" – things are just starting to get interesting when you hang out with Friends of the Desert Mountains (Friends) in the La Quinta Cove trails complex. Home to Friends' original "Full Moon Hike," it turns out night time is the right time to hike La Quinta Cove.



Preserved thanks to the foresight of La Quinta locals, this trail complex of wide, well-maintained paths gently sloping up means a variety of people with different abilities have relatively easy access to nature and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. Friends' volunteer "Trailheads" and "Weed Warrior" groups play a significant part in maintaining the trails, removing invasive plant species, and fighting unwelcome graffiti with our specialized "reverse artwork" rock cleaning and repair.

While temperatures soar in the summer, and dip only mildly during our "winter" months, evening experiences along these great La Quinta paths can be surprisingly rewarding. Friends' guided hike offerings vary throughout the year, and we love to help others connect to the land. Join our adventures exploring the desert after dark and experience the magic of nocturnal flora and fauna in a safe and supportive environment.





# 2022 Annual Report PROGRAMS Building Educational Capacity

In 2022, we had the opportunity to grow our staff in youth education, enhancing our reach throughout the Coachella Valley. Our Environmental Educator, Venessa Becerra, was joined by our new Translation Specialist, Edeli Reyes-Gonzalez, our new Director of Education, Oscar Ortiz, and our new Indigenous Community Liaison, Alyssa Johnson.



This past year, our education program expanded our life-changing work with our partners at Coachella Valley Unifed School District (CVUSD) to deliver environmental education programs to all 14 of their elementary schools for their 3rd grade afterschool ASES programs. These programs are one afternoon of in-classroom learning about our local watershed and one field trip hiking at a local trail.

With our new
staff, we hope to
... expand learning
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In the summertime, we partnered with the Desert Recreation District (DRD), the Family YMCA of the Desert (YMCA), and the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC) to deliver classes on owls and local bird species along with classes about our local desert tortoise and bat species.

We helped local families make memories and connect to the land with 5 bus trips to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway (Tram) for Latino Conservation Week in partnership with researchers at University of California Riverside/Palm Desert (UCR/PD).

Our monthly LGBTQ+ youth hikes with The Center Coachella and DRD continue to provide a safe space outdoors for these vulnerable folks with field trips to several locations including the Tram, The Living Desert, the Palm Springs Art Museum, and La Quinta Cove.

We partnered with the Desert Mirage Green Academy, providing two field days: one day in Mecca Hills helping UCR/PD study carbon capture in the desert; and one day studying the microorganisms and insects living in the Salton Sea shores.

We also continued our instrumental relationship with the residents of several CVHC communities by providing seasonal programs throughout the year and trips to the Tram in the summer and winter months, as well as youth programs for their summer kids clubs.

Committed to getting even more kids enjoying time outside, we began working with the Riverside County Migrant Education Program, Edward Wenzloff Alternative Education Center, Desert Hot Springs High School Kings Circle, Torres Martinez Youth Environmental Ambassadors, and the Cathedral City Digital Arts and Technology Academy.

We also are looking forward to our community educational lectures focused on local issues, such as our Water in the Coachella Valley lecture, and our Desert Lake Shore (DLS) project. DLS will be an outdoor education project in collaboration with the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians. DLS will help teach the history of the Cahuilla people in the region and their strong connection with our natural resources.

With our new staff, we hope to further incorporate cultural education into our educational programs, provide more translation services for our local communities, and expand learning opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities throughout our Coachella Valley and surrounding communities.





Friends of the Desert Mountains' (Friends) "Pop Up" Information Kiosk for outreach blossomed for a second season in the Coachella Valley. An up and coming program developed by Friends volunteer NJ Bradeen, the Kiosks are a pleasant result of trying to reach people in the midst of the Pandemic.

Hundreds of contacts have been made to residents and visitors by our presence as a Community Organization. Our Kiosks are staffed by volunteers Bradeen, Harry Domicone, Lori Green, and Carla McNamara; with additional help from Fatimah Steff, Cindi Whitehead, Wendy Sanders and Joanie Rafidi. The Program has been most fortunate in the generosity of Christiana Greene Certified Farmers Markets and the Palm Springs Cultural Center Farmers Markets - both of whom provide market booths without fees for our Community Outreach.

Two Friends Outreach Kiosks rotate from October-May once a month to area farmers markets, including La Quinta, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, Rancho Mirage, and Palm Springs. New in 2022 was further East Valley outreach with the addition of Indio Farmers Market.

"This program
is only as good as
the informative
energetic hosts
that I am pleased
to work with."

Statistics show that 80% of people who pick up a brochure consider visiting the business or company being advertised. The Kiosk Program distributes brochures and the VERY popular detailed Friends Monthly Calendars (English & Spanish) to visitors at our kiosks. Bradeen also has been delivering both the Monthly Calendars, Friends Brochure and Bureau of Land Management's Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Brochure to Palm Desert Chamber Office, Rancho Mirage Chamber Office and the Greater Palm Springs Visitor Center during the tourism season October-May.

"This program is only as good as the informative energetic hosts that I am pleased to work with," said Bradeen. "The group rolls with changes well and has been receptive along with extremely reliable." Bradeen noted that Monzerrat Loza, Volunteer Coordinator has been "amazing to work with and is always prompt and helpful whatever the need." Friends' Executive Director Tammy Martin applauds Bradeen's drive to make the Outreach program work. Martin supports Bradeen's stewarding of the program, and values Bradeen's input and advice.

Indeed all members of Friends' board and staff could not be more grateful for the work NJ Bradeen and the outreach team is doing, and are delighted at the outcomes of this endeavor the grew out of necessity and continues to flourish.

YOU ARE THE BEST ADVOCATE FOR CONSERVATION IN COACHELLA VALLEY

## **VOLUNTEER WITH FRIENDS**

Share your enthusiasm and love for the desert!

CALL 760-568-9918

EMAIL volunteers@desertmountains.org







**ABOVE** Outreach Volunteers tabling at the Trails & Greenways Conference in Palm Springs; **LEFT** NJ Bradeen sets up shop at Indian Wells Farmers Market; and **RIGHT** Volunteer Bob Berriman connects with the next generation at Agua Caliente's Jr. Ranger Days.





Friends come and Friends go. We are excited by the new growth our organization is experiencing, and are grateful to those who help found and shepherd us from inception to present.

#### **WELCOMING STEPHEN**

Stephen D. Hockett. Principal (retired), Fairfax County Public Schools Virginia, moved to the Coachella Valley seven years ago. Stephen joined the Friends Board in May 2022, and is working with our Marketing and Development Committee and Outreach programs.

#### **HONORING RUTH**

The members of the Friends of the Desert Mountains (Friends) Board of Directors acknowledge and express our heartfelt love, appreciation, and gratitude to Ruth Watling upon her retirement as a Director, and for her unique contributions to Friends.

Ruth's 35 years of exceptional service as a founder and director spanned 1987 to 2022, including tenure as Friends' President in 2012. Ruth is reknown for her deep knowledge of both plant life and the unique landscape in the Coachella Valley, and her willingness to share that knowledge with others. Ruth's essential contribution to the establishment of Friends' Donor Garden, and her commitment to our mission over the years, is a warm reflection of her belief in the character of the Friends organization.

The Friends' legacy of preserving land and supporting education, as well as conservation and research in the Coachella Valley has been made possible by Ruth in so many ways. Thank you, Ruth for your gifts of time, wisdom and commitment to our mission, and to the natural treasure that is the Coachella Valley.





## OUR FINANCIALS 2022 in Review

#### When reviewing our report you may notice negative numbers. Let us tell you why they are postive.

When the board adopted the budget for 2022, it made a commitment to invest in our staff and build capacity to provide programs to a wider audience. This investment will ensure that we continue to serve as the Coachella Valley's leader in land conservation and stewardship.

#### **OUR FINANCIALS**

**TOTAL EXPENSES** 

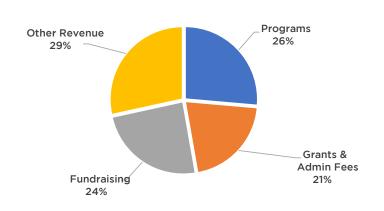
#### 2022 Revenue

Programs	\$170,004
Grants & Admin Fees	\$134,374
Fundraising	\$156,885
Other Revenue	\$183,155
TOTAL REVENUE	\$644 418

#### 2022 Expenses

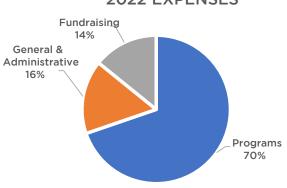
Programs	\$585,364
General & Administrative	\$134,992
Fundraising	\$118,989

#### 2022 REVENUE



#### **2022 EXPENSES**

\$839,345



TOTAL ASSETS \$24,813,348

**TOTAL LIABILITIES \$25,549** 

NET CHANGE 2021/2022 (\$194,927)

#### There are many ways to quantify the impressive work Friends' Volunteers complete every year.

Hours recorded, miles repaired, visitors served, hikes led, pounds of weeds pulled, birds counted, events produced, photos taken, dollars raised, questions answered, youth inspired – yes, those are the basic stats we track. But did you know that many of our Programs are headed up by Volunteers – and Volunteers participate in defining and executing those programs as well? Or that the nearly 20,000 acres of lands Friends hold in conservation are monitored and maintained by Volunteers? Our public face aka Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Visitror Center and Outreach Programs are managed, curated and staffed by Volunteers. Even our Board of Directors who guide many aspects of our organization are 100% Volunteers.

#### All we know is our cup is full.





Upper left: "Trailheads" Maintaining Trails;
Above: Weed Warriors removing invasive plants;
Below: National Public Lands Day 2022

## OUR SUPPORTERS Friends & Champions

Can you think of a more fitting way to celebrate 35 years of stewardship than by honoring one of Friends' founders at our annual fundraising event? Many of the 240 guests that early November 2022 evening knew Buford Crites as former Mayor of Palm Desert and as an avid conservationist that fought for open space and thoughtful development in our beautiful Coachella Valley for over four decades.











**Top:** Our legendary location Villa De Martini; **Mid-Left:** Wonderful guests including Friends co-founder Kay Hazen; **Mid-Right:** our Volunteer Auctioneer Lenny Broberg; **Lower Left:** Villa De Martini host Darin Martini and his daughter and dog; **Lower Right:** Palm Desert Mayor Jan Harnik and guests.

In addition to helping create Friends of the Desert Mountains, the crowning feat of Buford's tireless efforts was the establishment of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. Unfortunately, Buford health prevented him from attending the party and he passed away just three days later. We are quite certain he was aware of and appreciated all the accolades that were included in the program and the good wishes sent his way.

Since the 2021 Friends and Champions event held at the Villa de Martini was such a hit, we decided to host our annual fundraising event there again in 2022. The venue proved to be just as big an attraction but unfortunately, rain clouds decided to soak our venue the day prior to the celebration. As always, Friends' staff and volunteers were creative and nimble, reconfiguring the reception location, stage and dinner table set up for our sell-out crowd and avoided the soggy lawns.

Our business sponsors for the evening included Westmount Asset Management; Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians; City of Rancho Mirage; Granite Construction and Mechanics Bank. Tables were also sponsored by BB & K Law Firm; Cosgrove, Humphry & Weisman; Desert Riders; Leon's Landscaping; SoCal Gas and eight generous individuals.

The live auction featured something for everyone – covered wagon rides, vintage warbird flights, beach and island escapes and a private dinner at an exclusive estate. Our In-Kind donors RD RNNR and Desert Island helped make the evening unforgettable! The generosity of our attendees and sponsors resulted in over \$82,000 of net income to support our mission.

Thank you to all that helped make Friends & Champions 2022 such a success. In addition to this bountiful gathering celebrating our work, as our biggest source of flexible income it also plants the seeds for our future!

Our mission is too big and too important to work alone. We partner with government agencies, private businesses, and other nonprofits to accomplish our goals.

Friends of the Desert Mountains is proud to recognize the support and assistance of the following organizations and entities. We work together with these partners and many others to conserve the desert for the benefit of the plants, animals, and people who live here.

1st Bank

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians

Anderson Children's Foundation

Benevity Fund

Best Best & Krieger LLP

**Bright Party Rentals** 

Chandler's Sand and Gravel LLC

City of Desert Hot Springs

City of Indian Wells

City of Indio

City of Palm Desert

City of Rancho Mirage

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission

Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

Conservation Lands Foundation

Cosgrove, Humphrey, & Weisman

CV Strategies

Department of Navy

Desert Equestrian Holdings

Desert Recreation District

Desert Riders Trail Funds Inc.

First Foundation Inc.

Gonda Company

Granite Construction Company

Greater Palm Springs CVB

Hispanic Access Foundation

Impact Through Golf Foundation

Inland Empire Community Foundation

James Stuart III Family Foundation

Keith Driscoll Farms Inc.

Leon's Landscaping & Tree Service Inc.

Mahan-Nelson Charitable Fund

Mechanics Bank

Neff Charitable Fund

Palm Springs Subaru

**Proof of Pudding** 

Pups at Chapel Hill

RD RNNR

Red River Land Company

Regional Access Project Foundation

Renova Energy Corp

Resources Legacy Fund Foundation

Schnitzer Properties, LLC

SoCal Gas

Southern California Edison

Terra Nova Planning & Research, Inc.

The Blackbaud Giving Fund

The Gardens on El Paseo LLC

Twenty-Nin Palms Bank of Mission Indians

Vanguard University

Villa De Martini

Wealth Vision Advisors LLC





# FRIENDS By The Numbers

## Since 1987

#### **63,000 ACRES PROTECTED**

Since 1987, we have acquired tens of thousands of acres of desert mountains, canyon and woodlands. These lands are conserved now and for future generations.



## 27+THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Our work protects dozens of unique plants and animals found nowhere else on Earth and the habitat where they live and thrive.



#### 310+ MILES OF TRAILS

We build, restore, and improve access throughout the Coachella Valley to ensure the safety and enjoyment of hundreds of miles of recreational trails.



## In 2022

#### 160+ HIKES IN 6 MONTHS

Adding a second night of Full Moon Hikes in Rancho Mirage, and savoring the bounty of a superbloom spring, we helped a whole lot of visitors and locals CONNECT TO THE LAND



#### **500+ YOUTH ON FIELDTRIPS**

With our planned increase in program capacity,
we are on track to double this number and
GET MORE KIDS OUTSIDE



#### 11,450+ EVENT ATTENDEES

Between our wildly popular Coachella Valley
Wildflower Festival, our new Desert KIDS Fun Fest,
plus our annual Friends and Champions fundraiser, we
HAVE A LOT OF FRIENDS



## WE ARE FRIENDS with the entire valley!

									U			
Friends of the Desert Mount provides our FREE program throughout Coachella Valley All-ages educational progra guided hikes, full mooon hik and birdwatching; lectures; maintenance and weed abat We also host the Coachella Wildflower Festival and the KIDS Fun Fest, and attend no community events.	s  /: ms; es trail tement. Valley Desert	PALM SPRINGS	CATHEDRAL CITY	RANCHO MIRAGE	PALM DESERT	INDIAN WELLS	LA QUINTA	INDIO	COACHELLA	MECCA / THERMAL SALTON CITY / NORTH SHORE	DESERT HOT SPRINGS	
Hikes		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	
Youth Education		<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>		<b>√</b>		<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	$\checkmark$	
Outreach		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	
Trail Stewardship & Ambassadors	M	$\checkmark$	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	<b>√</b>			$\checkmark$	
Weed Warriors	*	$\checkmark$	<b>✓</b>	$\checkmark$	<b>✓</b>	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	
Land Acquisition & Monitoring	D	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>		<b>√</b>	$\checkmark$	
Community Science	010	$\checkmark$	<b>✓</b>	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		<b>√</b>	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	
Visitor Services & Gift Shop	<u>~</u>				$\checkmark$							
Events		$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$		$\checkmark$			$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	

Friends of the Desert Mountains
2020 Annual Report

Connect to the Land