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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 24, 2017

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Mojave Desert Land Trust Response to Department of the Interior Withholding Recommendations for California Desert National Monuments

Joshua Tree, CA – Today was the deadline for Secretary of Interior Zinke to release his recommendations on the national monuments under review. During the review process, 2.7 million people submitted public comment. Despite the public support for national monuments, and the public's interest in this review process, Secretary Zinke had not released his recommendations to the public, and only privately submitted them to the White House. According to a Department of the Interior (DOI) press release, Secretary Zinke will not eliminate any national monuments, but he plans to reduce an undisclosed number of them. The public is left to guess which of the national monuments under review will be reduced.

“The Department of the Interior claimed they wanted to involve the public in the review process, and yet they are cutting the public out of the final recommendations,” commented ***Danielle Segura, Executive Director, MDLT.*** “The 2.7 million people who submitted comments to Secretary Zinke deserve to know the recommendations. And the Mojave Desert community deserves to know whether Secretary Zinke listened to us when we said: Our desert monuments deserve full protection.”

The public overwhelmingly supports the continued protection of the national monuments. A [new report from Key-Log Economics](#) shows that 99.2% of the comments sent to DOI opposed the possible elimination of the national monument designations or a reduction in their size and protected status.

In response to April's executive order threatening the national monuments' designations, MDLT launched its Desert Defenders campaign to rally community members in support of the California desert national monuments. The organization held 5 rallies in locations across the desert, including Barstow, Indio, and Redlands. In total, MDLT gathered and submitted 1,259 public comments in support of the two California desert national monuments under review.

Previously, Sand to Snow National Monument was taken off the Department of the Interior's chopping block. Mojave Trails National Monument is still under review. Castle Mountains National Monument was not included in the review process, but Rep. Paul Cook has repeatedly asked Secretary Zinke to diminish the size of Castle Mountains.

Secretary Zinke's recommendation for Mojave Trails National Monument is tied to the controversial Cadiz Inc. water project, which aims to pump groundwater from an aquifer surrounded by the national monument. David Bernhardt, former lobbyist and lawyer for Cadiz Inc., was confirmed on July 24 as Deputy Interior Secretary, the second ranking position in the Department of the Interior. In a letter to Secretary Zinke, Rep. Paul Cook expressed his position that the Mojave Trails National Monument be reduced in size to accommodate extractive industries in the area. Removing the southern portion of Mojave Trails would threaten important wilderness areas like the Cadiz Dunes and Sheephole Valley, and historic World War II training camps Iron Mountain and Granite. ([Map of the proposed changes to Mojave Trails can be found here.](#))

The Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to protect and care for lands with natural, scenic, and cultural value within the Mojave Desert. For more information, visit www.mdlt.org

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