



## MOJAVE DESERT LAND TRUST CONNECT WITH THE DESERT YOU LOVE

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### **Rep. Paul Cook Redoubles Efforts to Remove Protections for California Desert National Monuments**

**Joshua Tree, CA** – Rep. Paul Cook has [redoubled his efforts to adjust the boundaries of Mojave Trails National Monument](#) while adding proposed changes to Castle Mountains National Monument. ([Map of the proposed changes to Mojave Trails can be found here.](#))

Rep. Paul Cook has suggested removing the southern portion of Mojave Trails National Monument, including important wilderness areas like the Cadiz Dunes and Sheephole Valley, and historic World War II training camps Iron Mountain and Granite. The proposed changes remove about 500,000 acres from the current boundaries. Castle Mountains National Monument, which was not originally included in the review, was nevertheless mentioned in a letter from Rep. Paul Cook to Secretary Zinke for the mining interests in the area. ([Copy of the letter can be found here.](#))

“The proposed changes to Mojave Trails and Castle Mountains National Monuments are a direct affront to the will of our community,” commented **Danielle Segura, Executive Director, MDLT**. “These recommendations from Rep. Cook are not in the best interest of the diverse desert communities who have fought for, and benefit from, these public lands.”

Secretary Zinke’s upcoming recommendation for Mojave Trails National Monument is tied to the controversial Cadiz Inc. water project, which looks to pump groundwater from an aquifer surrounded by the monument. The Cadiz Inc. project would impact the rare surface water that supports endemic and migrating species in the ecosystem. As part of his proposed cuts to the Mojave Trails National Monument, Rep. Cook has suggested to remove about half a million acres of the Cadiz Valley from 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.

On Wednesday, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke delivered a recommendation that no changes be made to Sand to Snow National Monument. Mojave Trails National Monument is still included in the official Department of the Interior review, for which Secretary Zinke will deliver his final recommendations by August 24.

Following an executive order in April 2017, the Department of the Interior opened a public comment process to hear from local communities about the national monuments under review. [Over 2.5 million public comments](#) were submitted nationally. The Mojave Desert Land Trust collected over 1,250 comments focused specifically on the importance of the monuments in the Mojave. Of the comments collected nationally, [analysis has found 98 percent of submitted comments to be in support of the national monuments](#).

As a long-time voice for veterans, Rep. Cook's stance on Mojave Trails is in direct conflict with the interests of the local veterans community. His proposed cuts remove from protection important World War II training centers and cultural sites.

Californians – veterans especially – have stood in favor of the protection of Mojave Trails since its conception. In November of 2015, [Vet Voice Foundation commissioned the Republican polling firm Public Opinion Strategies](#) to gauge the public's support for creating the Mojave Trails National Monument versus public support for Rep. Cook's legislation alternative legislation that proposed a special management area be designated, rather than Mojave Trails being designated as a national monument.

When asked their opinion on Rep. Cook's legislation, 66 percent of Californians – and 65 percent of desert residents – said they opposed it. Support for Mojave Trails to be designed as a national monument was reflected in 70 percent of desert residents surveyed. 73 percent of households that include veterans or active-duty servicepeople supported the monuments.

*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](http://www.mdlt.org)*

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