



DRAFT
CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION VISION

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of the California Desert Conservation Vision is to provide organizations and agencies working in the Mojave and Colorado deserts with a broad picture of the lands that are important to protect and preserve. The Desert Vision includes protection of natural resources and cultural resources as well as community buffers and areas for nature-based recreation.



Each organization can use this information to inform organizational conservation decisions and identify potential opportunities for collaboration with other conservation groups.

This vision represents the opinions of a small group of desert experts - scientists and land managers with years of experience in the conservation and management of desert lands. It is not a comprehensive scientific analysis nor is it a vision that has been adopted by federal, state or local agencies.

PLANNING PROCESS

MOJAVE AND COLORADO DESERT SURVEY

In April 2006, an email survey was sent to individuals involved in desert conservation and/or management to gather input on a desert vision and goals, threats and threatened areas, and potential roles of the Mojave Desert Land Trust. Surveys were sent to 134 people and 59 responses were received. In addition 22 maps were received identifying specific threatened areas. Survey responses were used to develop the California Desert Conservation Vision and Goals. Survey data provided preliminary information on threatened areas and key conservation areas.

DESERT CONSERVATION VISION WORKSHOPS

Two visioning workshops were held in May 2006 – one for the Mojave Desert and one for the Colorado Desert. The purposes of the workshops were:

- To inform workshop participants about the data maps and the results of the survey.

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- To refine an overall conservation vision and goals based upon the knowledge and expertise of the workshop participants.
- To map those areas where land conservation organizations need to focus their conservation efforts. Once the mapping was complete, workshop participants were asked to identify three natural areas, three community buffer areas, and three passive recreation areas they would protect with their hypothetical conservation dollars. Priorities were not established and consensus was not sought.

CALIFORNIA DESERT VISION

It is the year 2030. The California Desert is a vital ecosystem of interconnected, permanently protected scenic and natural areas that host a diversity of native plants and wildlife. Views and vistas are broad. The air is clear, the water clean, and the night skies dark. Cities and military facilities are compact and separated by large natural areas. Local residents, visitors, land managers, and political leaders understand the natural processes and cultural resources of the California Desert. They value the unique environment in which they live and work and collaborate on sensitive land use and management activities that protect the California Desert for future generations.



CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION GOALS

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

- The desert is characterized by large areas of contiguous habitat for native plant and wildlife species.
- Native plant and wildlife species are at historic population levels and are flourishing due to protected landscape linkages/interconnectivity, remediation and reclamation of damaged landscapes, and the reduction of non-native wildlife populations through effective management practices and species recovery plans. In particular, the Amargosa, Mojave, and Colorado Rivers function as zones of biological diversity; the U.S./Mexico border is permeable to wildlife; and the Salton Sea and adjacent working landscapes are enhanced for habitat values.



PROTECTED AREAS

- In recognition of their contribution to the protection of plant and wildlife species, cultural resources, and the scenic character of the California Desert, certain land areas have permanent protection. Of particular importance are 1) in-holdings within national parks and preserves, 2) lands providing habitat interconnectivity, and 3) zones of no development that provide a conservation area buffer around each park, wilderness area, and military base.
- The system of wilderness areas in the desert is completed.

WATER

- Surface and ground water resources are used at a sustainable level to ensure water availability that is adequate to meet habitat and human needs. Water availability is a central consideration in land use and management decisions and groundwater recharge is a priority.

FIRE

- Fire does not pose a threat to the desert ecosystem because fuel loads are at natural levels and the role of the natural fire regime is understood.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

- Local land use plans and policies promote contained growth such that desert communities are spatially compact.
- Local land use plans and policies limit the ecological footprint of communities outside developed areas by 1) limiting the number and size of non-desert dependent facilities, 2) controlling runoff to prevent landscape changes in adjacent natural areas, 3) managing agriculture, ranching, mining and other land uses to conserve ecological values.
- Land use policies and patterns promote high air and water quality and quantity.
- Climate change is considered in land use planning and decision-making.

CIRCULATION

- Road networks serve the needs of desert communities without providing excess capacity that encourages decentralized growth patterns.
- Road networks and off-road vehicle trails provide recreational opportunities. These roads and trails are contained within designated areas in order to prevent damage to desert resources.
- Unnecessary roads are eliminated.
- A designated system of scenic highways, byways and backways encourages understanding and appreciation of the desert.

RECREATION

- Recreation in the desert is ecologically sustainable and is predominantly passive and nature-based.

AESTHETICS

- The aesthetic qualities of the desert remain characterized by broad vistas uninterrupted by development, quiet, clean air, and dark skies at night.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Historic and pre-historic cultural resources are protected as a priority through inventory, management, planning, and educational activities.

EDUCATION

- Education, interpretation, and outreach activities are central elements of the conservation efforts undertaken by those entities with effect on the desert. These strategies are tailored to transform the popular perception of the desert as a wasteland and help both residents and visitors understand and appreciate the desert's unique ecological and cultural values.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Conservation organizations, land management agencies, local communities, and political leaders recognize their mutual interests in desert conservation and form collaborative working relationships.

FUNDING AND ECONOMICS

- Funding is adequate to support land conservation, management, restoration, and education efforts.
- The natural beauty and conservation values of the desert serve as the basis for the local economy (ecotourism).

MOJAVE DESERT – PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

Figure 1: Mojave Desert Natural Resources Areas illustrates those areas that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve for natural resource values. Lands identified include wildlife habitat areas, landscape linkages, riparian areas and inholdings. Table 1 includes the area number, description and rationale for each natural resource conservation area as illustrated on the map.



Lands in the Mojave Desert identified by workshop participants as the places where they would put natural resource conservation dollars first are:

- San Bernardino National Forest/Joshua Tree National Park Landscape Linkage (Area 9)
- Joshua Tree to Twenty Nine Palms Marine Corps Base Landscape Linkage (Area 7)
- Joshua Tree to Mojave Landscape Linkage (Area 2)
- Upper Chuckwalla Basin/Pinto Basin/Eagle Mountain Landscape Linkage (Area 3)
- Mojave River Drainage Wildlife Corridor (Area 11)
- Amargosa River Drainage Landscape Linkage (Area 24)

COMMUNITY BUFFER AREAS

Figure 2: Mojave Desert Community Buffers illustrates those areas that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve as community buffers. Community buffers include lands around cities and towns as well as buffers around parks, preserves and military bases. Table 2 includes the area number, description and rationale for each community buffer area indicated on the map.

Community buffers in the Mojave Desert identified by workshop participants as the places where they would put conservation dollars first are:

- Joshua Tree/Morongo Basin (Area 1)
- Mojave Desert National Preserve Area (Area 4)

CULTURAL RESOURCE AREAS

Figure 3: Mojave Desert Cultural Resources illustrates those areas that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve for their cultural resource values. These areas could be areas of prehistoric or historic value. Table 3 includes the area number, description and rationale for each cultural resource conservation area indicated on the map. Workshop participants were not asked to identify cultural resource priorities.

RECREATION AREAS

Figure 4: Mojave Desert Recreation Areas illustrates those areas with passive recreation values that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve. These include existing passive recreation areas for hiking, camping, and other low-intensity recreational uses as well as wilderness areas where trails could be opened. Table 4 includes the area number, description and rationale for each recreation area indicated on the map.

Recreation areas in the Mojave Desert identified by workshop participants as the places most important to conserve include:

- Amargosa River (Area 13)
- Southern Joshua Tree (Area 4)
- Burns Canyon (Area 3)
- Old Woman Mountains (Area 7)

COLORADO DESERT – PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS

NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

Figure 5: Colorado Desert Natural Resources Areas illustrates those areas that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve for natural resource values. Lands identified include wildlife habitat areas, landscape linkages, riparian areas and inholdings. Table 4 includes the area number, description and rationale for each natural resource conservation area illustrated on the map.



Lands in the Colorado Desert identified by workshop participants as the places where they would put natural resource conservation dollars first are:

- Mission Creek Linkage (Area 28)
- Anza Borrego Desert State Park Inholdings (Area 18)
- Desert Cahuilla (Area 9)
- San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek (Area 8)

COMMUNITY BUFFER AREAS

Figure 6: Colorado Desert Community Buffers illustrates those areas that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve as community buffers. Community buffers include lands around cities and towns as well as buffers around parks, preserves and military bases. Table 6 includes the area number, description and rationale for each community buffer area illustrated on the map.

Community buffers in the Mojave Desert identified by workshop participants as the places where they would put conservation dollars first are:

- Borrego Springs Buffer (Area 3)
- Jacumba Development (Area 5)
- Anza/Coyote Canyon (Area 6)
- Joshua Tree National Park (Area 7)

CULTURAL RESOURCE AREAS

Figure 7: Colorado Desert Cultural Areas illustrates those areas that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve for cultural resource values. These areas could be areas of prehistoric or historic value. Table 7 includes the key number, description and rationale for each cultural resource conservation area indicated on the map. Workshop participants were not asked to identify cultural resource priorities.

RECREATION AREAS

Figure 8: Colorado Desert Recreation Areas illustrates those areas with passive recreation values that workshop participants felt were most important to conserve. These include existing passive recreation areas for hiking, camping, and other low-intensity recreational uses as well as wilderness areas where trails could be opened. Table 8 includes the area number, description and rationale for each recreation area indicated on the map.

Recreation areas in the Mojave Desert identified by workshop participants as the places where they would put conservation dollars first are:

- Upper Coyote Canyon (Area 7)
- Jacumba (Area 5)
- Desert Cahuilla (Area 12)
- Ocotillo Wells SVRA (Area 4)

NEXT STEPS

Workshop participants identified several potential actions that could occur that would enhance the conservation efforts of the agencies and groups working towards desert conservation. These include:

- Initiate regular collaborative meetings of non-profit groups and other stakeholders involved in desert conservation to discuss ongoing projects, data and mapping, funding, and collaboration opportunities. Collaboration can help leverage funding.
- Organize a symposium on global climate change and its potential effects on the California Desert
- Identify the geographic boundaries where land trusts and other conservation organizations are currently working in the Desert. Identify any gaps in desert coverage and seek ways to fill these gaps.
- Seek funding to create more comprehensive data maps of the desert.



CONCLUSION

The California Desert Conservation Vision is the first step in this process. This document is intended to inform conservation activities occurring in the desert but the ultimate goal is for each agency and organization engaged in desert conservation to collaborate on mapping, data and information gathering, conservation projects, and priorities. By working together on a common vision and goals, we can help to achieve our conservation vision of the California Desert.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1: Mojave Desert Natural Resource Conservation Areas

#	Name	Rationale
1	Colorado River Landscape Linkage	Landscape Linkage
2	Joshua Tree to Mojave Landscape Linkage (including Sheep Connector, Cadiz Valley, Cleghorn Connector, and Pinto Mountains DWMA)	Landscape Linkage, Desert Tortoise, Bighorn Sheep, Rare Plants
3	Upper Chuckwalla Basin/Pinto Basin/Eagle Mountain Landscape Linkage	Landscape Linkage
4	Shavers Valley	Wildlife Corridor
5	National Park and Preserve Inholdings	Inholdings, Unpatented mining claims
6	Joshua Tree to Salton Sea Landscape Linkage	Landscape Linkage
7	Joshua Tree to Twenty Nine Palms Marine Corps Base Landscape Linkage	Viewshed and human environment
8	Pioneer Town	
9	San Bernardino National Forest/Joshua Tree National Park Landscape Linkage	Landscape Linkage
10	Ord Rothman Desert Wildlife Management Area (including Daggett Ridge)	Desert Tortoise Natural Area
11	Mojave River Drainage Wildlife Corridor	Endangered Species
12	West Mojave Desert ER Landscape Linkage (including Superior Cornese and Fremont Kersamer DWMA)	Inholdings
13	Harper Lake	
14	Desert Tortoise Preserve to Red Rock Canyon Landscape Linkage (including Red Rock Canyon and Fremont Valley)	Habitat encroachment, Inholdings, Wetlands
15	Poppy Fields	Wind Generation
16	Big Rock Creek Connector	
17	Mojave Ground Squirrel	
18	Owens River	
19	Searles Lake	
20	Western Slope of Panamint Mountains (including Panamint Valley and Surprise Canyon)	Inholdings, Riparian Area
21	Ash Meadows	Water and endangered species
22	Chicago Valley	Development threat
23	Charleston View	
24	Amargosa River Drainage Landscape Linkage (including Chappo Spring)	Riparian Area, Water, Endangered Species, Riparian Areas
25	Santa Valley	
26	Mesquite Wilderness/Limestone Area	Unique Geologic Area, Rare Plants
27	Mojave National Preserve to Death Valley Landscape Linkage	Wildlife Corridor

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Table 2: Mojave Desert Community Buffer Conservation Areas

#	Name	Rationale
1	Joshua Tree/Morongo Basin	Development Pressure; Viewshed; Mining Interests, OHV Development
2	Twenty Nine Palms Marine Corps Base	Desert Tortoise; Development and OHV Pressure
3	Death Valley National Park (including Bowling Alley and Avawatz Mountains)	Energy Development
4	Mojave Desert National Preserve Area (including Iuanapah, Baker, Razer Ranch and Primm Corridor)	
5	MCGACC	
6	Edwards Air Force Base	Base and Rare Plants Buffer
7	Victorville	
8	Ridgecrest Area (including Owens Peak Wilderness)	
9	Cady Wilderness Study Area	
10	Barstow Area	
11	Mojave Area	
12	California City - Desert Tortoise Area	
13	Colorado River	
14	California Valley Area (including Charlston View and Sandy Valley)	Development
15	Needles Area	
16	National Forest Buffer	
17	Soda Mountains	Energy Development
18	Fort Irwin	
19	Vidal Jackson CE	
20	Death Valley Junction	Development

Table 3: Mojave Desert Cultural Resource Conservation Areas

#	Name	Rationale
1	Colorado River Corridor	Native American
2	Old Spanish Trail	Historic
3	Old Woman Mountains	
4	Mojave River (including Helendale and Silverlake)	
5	Mojave Road	Native American
6	Mojave NP Units	Historic
7	Coso Range	Petroglyphs
8	Little Lake	Native American
9	Shoshone and Resting Springs	Ind. and Early Man
10	Red Rock Canyon State Park	Indigenous Artifacts
11	Koehn Lake	Koehn Lake
12	Inscription Canyon	Petroglyphs
13	Coyote Lake	
14	Camp Cady	Historic, Prehistoric, Native American
15	Razor Ranch	
16	Newberry Cave	Prehistoric
17	Marble Mountains	Fossil Beds
18	Old Springs Ranch	Historic
19	Pioneer Town Mountains	Native American
20	Skyline Road	Artifacts and Writings
21	Mission Creek	Prehistoric
22	Panamint Valley	Graveyard
23	Surprise Canyon	
24	Spangler	
25	El Mirage	
26	Stoddard	
27	Johnson Valley	
28	Dove Springs / Jaw Bone	

Table 4: Mojave Desert Recreation Areas

#	Name	Rationale
2	Afton Canyon	Rockhounding, Hiking, Camping
3	Burns Canyon	Hunting, Hiking, Picnicking
4	Southern Joshua Tree	Wilderness Based Recreation
5	Wiley's Well Road	Geodes
6	Colorado River Corridor	
7	Old Woman Mountains	
8	Mojave River	
9	Death Valley NP Units	
10	Mojave NP Units	
11	Owens River / Lake	
12	Searles Lake	
13	Amargosa River	
14	Black Rock Canyon	
15	Harper Lake	
16	Rosamund Lake	
17	Rodman Mountains	
18	Coyote Hole	

DRAFT: CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION VISION**Table 5: Colorado Desert Natural Resource Conservation Areas**

#	Name	Rationale
1	Joshua Tree Inholdings	Consolidate public ownership
2	Eagle Mountain	Tortoise habitat; Rare Plants - Sonoran Vegetation
3	Wilderness Area Inholdings	Consolidate BLM
4	Microphyll Woodland	
5	Walter's Camp Area Landscape Corridor	Riparian/water conservation/wildlife
6	Colorado River Delta Water Rights	Water for delta restoration
7	Salton Sea Agricultural Lands	Critical feeding areas for migratory birds
8	San Sebastian Marsh/San Felipe Creek	Wetlands and endangered species; Cultural and riparian resources
9	Desert Cahuilla	Cultural resources; Bighorn Sheep; OHV Conflicts
10	Mountain Springs/Boulder Creek	Bighorn Sheep; Landscape Linkages
11	Jacumba Valley	Carrizo headwaters; Border linkage
12	Sierra Juarez	Trans-border linkage
13	Canebrake	Bighorn Sheep; riparian area
14	Cronch Ranch	Linkages/scenic
15	Mason Valley/Vallecitos	Add to ABDSP; Consolidate public ownerships; habitat and cultural resources
16	Banner Grade	Scenic/connectivity
17	Volcan Mountain	Key to desert coast connection
18	Anza Borrego Desert State Park Inholdings	Consolidate public ownership; protect habitat and cultural resources; management consolidation
19	Mesquite Basque	Sensitive habitat and cultural sites
20	NM Inholdings	Consolidate management/wildlife
21	North Salton Sea/Whitewater River linkage	Conservation easements for birds
22	Salt Creek/Dos Palmas Area	Wetlands and endangered species
23	Mecca Hills Inholdings/Orocopia Mtn.	Consolidate public ownership and control OHV activity
24	Shavers Valley Area	Landscape linkage between park and BLM wilderness
25	Coachella Valley MSHCP	Habitat conservation; Connectivity; Management consolidation
26	Chino Canyon	Bighorn habitat/riparian/scenic
27	White Water linkage	Wildlife habitat, landscape linkage
28	Mission Creek Linkage	Wildlife habitat and landscape linkage

Table 6: Colorado Desert Community Buffer Conservation Areas

#	Name	Rationale
1	Chocolate Mountain Gunnery Range	
2	Salton City	
3	Borrego Springs Buffer	Water, Habitat
4	El Centro Naval Reservation	
5	Jacumba Development	
6	Anza/Coyote Canyon	
7	Joshua Tree NP	
8	Colorado River	

Table 7: Colorado Desert Cultural Resource Areas

#	Name	Rationale
1	ABDSP Inholdings	Archaeology and TCP's
2	Bradshaw Trail and Historic Indian Route	
3	De Anza Route	
4	Eagle Mountain Historic Mine	
5	Fish Traps Rock Art	
6	Lake Cahuilla	Archaeology Sites (Fishtraps, etc.)
7	Mason/Vallecitos	Archaeology and Ethnography (TCP's)
8	McCain Private Lands	Archaeology and TCP's
9	Palo Verde Mountains and Colorado River Terraces	Prehistoric
10	San Sebastian Marsh	Archaeological and TCP's
11	Wonderstone Wash/Quarry	
12	Colorado River	

Table 8: Colorado Desert Recreation Areas

#	Name	Rationale
1	Chocolate Mountains Gunnery Range	
2	Salton Sea	
3	Dos Palmas	
4	Ocotillo Wells SVRA	
5	Jacumba	
6	Coachella	
7	Upper Coyote Canyon	
8	Borrego Springs	
9	Joshua Tree NP Interface	
10	Coachella Valley Urban	
11	Rails to Trails	
12	Desert Cahuilla	
13	Southern Algodunes Dunes	Closure for recreation – policy change needed
14	Carrizo Impact Area	Clean up and open for trails
15	Fish Traps	
16	Palo Verde Mountains	Prehistoric
17	Whitewater River	
18	New River	
19	Alamo River	
20	Colorado River	