ABOUT MDLT

MISSION: The Mojave Desert Land Trust protects the Mojave and Colorado Desert ecosystems and their natural, scenic, and cultural resource values.

VISION: Dark night skies, clean air and water, broad views and vistas, and an abundance of native plants and animals.
The Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) protects the unique living landscapes of the California desert. Our service area spans nearly 26 million acres - the Colorado Desert and the entire California portion of the Mojave Desert. Since 2006 we have secured permanent and lasting protection for over 100,000 acres.

We envisage the California desert as 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. Residents, visitors, land managers, and political leaders value the unique environment in which they live and work, and recognize that climate change is impacting the desert ecosystem.

We share our mission of protecting wildlife corridors, land conservation education, habitat management and restoration, and research with the public so they can become passionate stewards of our desert resources.

Only through acquisition, stewardship, public awareness, and advocacy can we preserve these uniquely biodiverse landscapes for future generations to visit and enjoy.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Simpson
President
Founding member of MDLT, real estate executive

Geary Hund
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Former California Desert and Monuments Program Director for The Wilderness Society, retired senior wildlife biologist for US Fish and Wildlife, and former MDLT Executive Director

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Dearest supporter,

2021 was a landmark year for the Mojave Desert Land Trust. We reached a new milestone in our conservation work, with over 100,000 acres of ecologically significant lands protected across the California desert. From parcels within national park borders to wilderness mountain tops and crucial wildlife corridors, these acquisitions reflect the incredible biodiversity of this region.

As Joint Executive Directors, we took over the helm of the Mojave Desert Land Trust in the fall. We are grateful for the dedication of our predecessor Geary Hund and our passionate staff. We recognize the increasing urgency of this conservation work in light of the myriad threats facing the California desert, and climate change in particular. The California desert ecosystem stores 10% of the state’s carbon and land conservation has an important role to play in that process. MDLT acquires intact natural habitats that will sequester carbon into the future.

Together with your support we are ensuring the California desert becomes a vital ecosystem of interconnected, permanently protected scenic and natural areas that host a diversity of native plants and wildlife. In the year ahead we will be putting extra focus on protecting wildlife corridors that connect the desert’s conservation lands and help to ensure its long-term ecological stability. By leveraging our state’s great national parks and wilderness areas and protecting the crucial corridors that link them, we can ensure the long-term prosperity of the deserts and the plants, animals, and people that rely on them. In 2021, we welcomed volunteers back after the pandemic to assist with this essential work. Volunteers are integral to our mission. We are very grateful for their services, from monitoring MDLT preserves and cleaning up trash to sowing seeds for restoration projects.

We are excited for more opportunities in the year ahead to connect communities with the Mojave and Colorado Deserts. Among them, a new crop of pupils from the Coachella Valley is now following our Desert Discovery Field Studies curriculum and interns have begun important research in the Women In Science Discovering Our Mojave program.

Will you help us do this work? Sign up via our website to receive our news, become a member, or volunteer. We look forward to serving alongside you.

Cody Hanford and Kelly Herbinson
Joint Executive Directors
MDLT STAFF

(Current at the time of publication)

Madena Asbell, Director of Plant Conservation
Ross Beazell, Natural Resources Tech Trainee
Alexander Boice, Natural Resources Tech II
Susy Boyd, Public Policy Coordinator
Lani Brown, Director of Operations and Human Resources
Mary Cook-Rhyne, Education Coordinator II
Jessica Dacey, Director of Communications
Stuart Davis, Natural Resources Tech II
Kellie Flint, Development Coordinator I
Ernesto Frias, Director of Administration
Eddie Garcia, Acquisitions Coordinator
Corina Godoy, Production Assistant II
Jessica Graybill, Social Media Manager
Cody Hanford, Joint Executive Director
Joelle Hazher, Natural Resources Tech II
Kelly Herbinson, Joint Executive Director
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Dustin Scott, Acquisitions Manager
Emmalyn Snead, Natural Resources Department Manager
Dayanna Watts, Accounting Technician I

Staff and contractors gather at MDLT in 2021 to welcome new Joint Executive Directors Cody Hanford and Kelly Herbinson.
OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

LAND ACQUIRED IN 2021
4,156 TOTAL ACRES
1,288 ACRES IN NATIONAL PARKS
1,564 ACRES IN WILDERNESS AREAS
129 ACRES IN MORONGO BASIN WILDLIFE CORRIDORS
1,175 ACRES IN NATIONAL MONUMENTS

PLANT CONSERVATION IN 2021
21 NEW SEED COLLECTIONS
8,953 PLANTS GROWN

VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2021
292 HOURS STEWARDSHIP
354 HOURS NURSERY
12 HOURS OUTREACH & EDUCATION

LAND CONVEYED IN 2021
66 PARCELS IN NATIONAL PARKS
2,622 ACRES
SAVING LAND

2021 LAND ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

800 acres in the Trilobite Wilderness
This stunning acquisition spans peaks and bajadas in the Marble Mountains volcanic range within Mojave Trails National Monument. Alternating brown striations give the mountains their marbled appearance. The wilderness is home to a stable population of around 150 bighorn sheep and is critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise.

Saving a mountain top
Before and after! MDLT acquired one of the last privately owned parcels in the Avawatz Mountains Wilderness, south of Death Valley National Park. Archaeological sites in the area indicate a historical presence of Native Americans, and members of the Shoshone Nation continue to visit these lands for spiritual and cultural purposes. The wilderness also has nine natural springs, helping make this an important link for regional habitat connectivity. A former cell tower at the very top of this 117-acre parcel was successfully removed to return this peak back to its pristine state.

A NEW CONSERVATION MILESTONE
Midway through 2021 the Mojave Desert Land Trust celebrated conserving over 100,000 acres across the California desert since 2006. An interactive storymap explores these special lands and why they were protected. Take a trip through the 100,000 acres by visiting mdlt.org or by scanning this QR code.
Priority acquisitions for Mojave National Preserve
We help piece together public lands by acquiring privately-owned parcels from willing sellers, restoring the land to its natural state, and maintaining buildings that are cultural assets. Within the boundary of Mojave National Preserve, MDLT transferred ownership of 66 parcels totaling 2,622 acres over to the National Park Service in 2021. During the year, MDLT also conserved another 710 acres. Several of the properties were priorities for the National Park Service due to land management concerns. One 80-acre parcel was in an area known for its cattle ranching. The property contains a historical corral constructed from railroad ties. Another 85-acre parcel has an open mine shaft with a resident hoot owl. The shaft will now be fenced by the California Department of Conservation to preserve the owl’s habitat.

Expanding a wildlife corridor
One 80-acre acquisition was right in our backyard! The land borders our headquarters and shares a boundary with Bureau of Land Management and other MDLT properties. These properties preserve a key part of an important habitat linkage leading from Joshua Tree National Park to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in 29 Palms. In the future, MDLT will work with the California Department of Transportation to establish safe and enhanced ways for wildlife to cross Highway 62. Habitat linkages help maintain genetic variation in wildlife populations, and provide a means for plants and animals to migrate in response to climate change or disperse following a catastrophic event.

Linkage for bighorn sheep
MDLT acquired 480 acres in the Pisgah Area of Critical Environmental Concern, near Barstow. This acquisition secures a section of the Cady Mountains to the west of Mojave Trails National Monument. The rocky hills and washes surrounding the property are home to bighorn sheep and desert tortoise. ACECs exist where special management attention is needed to protect unique natural and cultural resources. Pisgah creates important linkage for wildlife populations to the north and south. Numerous rare and sensitive plants have major populations here including the Crucifixion Thorn.
RESTORING THE DESERT ECOSYSTEM

STEWARDING THE LAND

Restoring the land to its natural state is demanding but rewarding work. MDLT Natural Resources staff and volunteers make a difference by clearing away trash, removing graffiti, maintaining trails, and repairing damage of the fragile desert landscape. In 2021, we restored 40 acres of protected desert and 200 feet of trail. Over 31.5 tons of trash were removed from MDLT lands. Volunteers made this possible, including teams from the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in 29 Palms and Cima Overland Bound Group!

Thanks to the NEEF 2021 Restoration and Resilience Recovery Fund and hard-working volunteers, we were able to tackle a major cleanup and restoration project at our Long Canyon Peak property in the Morongo Basin. At least 60 55-gallon bags full of debris and yard waste were removed, signage installed, and vertical mulching put in place.

Before...  

...and after!

Removing trash from MDLT lands
Thank you volunteers!
While we were limited due to COVID protocol requirements this year, we are thankful to those of you who were able to help with the essential activities we were able to safely organize. As well as providing land restoration support, volunteers made a major contribution in MDLT’s nursery assisting with contract plant propagation, seed cleaning for a restoration project, expanding the shade growing area, and serving at native plant sales. In a special partnership with The Society for Conservation of Bighorn Sheep and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, volunteers helped ensure more than 5,000 gallons of water were hauled five miles into Fargo Canyon in Joshua Tree National Park to reach a bighorn sheep guzzler.

Thank you to MDLT volunteers Eric, Ken, Dana, Bruce G., Tim, Carol, Tom, Donna, Alan, William, Kalani, Andrew, Maryana, Paul, Nikol, Susie, Jean, Kurt, Colleen, Jerry, Jeremy, Ryan, Bruce K., Yvonne, Chris, Arch, Carol, Justin, Conrad, Michael, Kara, Hana, Kristen, Bettina, Kenna, Chris, Lauren, Jacilee, David, Leah, Odelia, Caitlin, Mike, Christopher, Daniel, Matt, Frank, Kaeliegh, Mary Ann, and Campbell Hall 10th Grade Class.

RESTORATION WITH NATIVE PLANTS
A majority of the 8,953 plants grown in MDLT’s nursery in 2021 were destined for special desert restoration. As part of a project along the Colorado River watershed, MDLT staff and volunteers collected and grew natives including over 500 blue palo verde (*Parkinsonia florida*, pictured). Plants were also grown for restoration projects for the Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District, Pioneertown Mountains Preserve, Transcon Environmental, Arcadis, and Wind Wolves Preserve.

Filling the bighorn sheep guzzler

Before...

...and after!

Photo by Madena Asbell
Conservation seed bank at work
Thanks to the summer bloom in the Morongo Basin, we made 12 new collections and added 10 new species to the Mojave Desert Seed Bank in September 2021. Utah vine milkweed (Funastrum utahense, pictured, top right) seed was one of the collections made on MDLT’s Quail Wash property near the west entrance of Joshua Tree National Park where much of the summer precipitation was concentrated. These seeds are an insurance policy for the Mojave Desert.

The seed bank also serves as an ex-situ conservation tool for use in restoration, education, and research in the Mojave Desert region. After the Water Fire in Whitewater Preserve, MDLT provided seeds for interior goldenbush (Ericameria linearifolia), bladderpod (Peritoma arborea), and East Mojave buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum var. polifolium) to help restore a burned meadow and wetlands (pictured, below right). This special landscape is nesting area for the federally endangered least Bell’s vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher.

Boosting seed production for the Bureau of Land Management
The Plant Conservation team made a big leap forward in a 3-year pilot project growing seed for the Bureau of Land Management. MDLT is developing methods for increasing seed yields of native forbs (pictured) for desert tortoise habitat restoration. The desert tortoise is federally listed as a threatened species. New staff hires and improvements to herbivore exclusion fencing and harvesting methods meant we were able to collect 700% more seed for the project in 2021.
Protecting the prairie falcon

Prairie falcons (*Falco mexicanus*) nest high up in rocky outcrops throughout the arid plains and desert wilderness of the western United States. Human recreational activities in the California desert are encroaching upon their habitat and causing some historic nest sites used by generations of falcons to become abandoned.

Thanks to a generous donation by Prairie Falcon Supporters, MDLT has now established a Prairie Falcon Conservation Program. This work involves setting up a database of active nesting sites ("eyries") within the California Desert Conservation Area and evaluating threats impacting these majestic birds of prey.

MDLT has also established a Prairie Falcon Working Group in collaboration with local non-profits, wildlife experts, and state and federal agencies.

Tracking desert tortoise

Every year MDLT staff and volunteers head out to the Cady Mountains in the Mojave Desert and the Chuckwalla Bench in the Colorado Desert in search of *Gopherus agassizii* (Agassiz’s desert tortoise). MDLT manages thousands of acres in these locations as conservation easements so special status species like the desert tortoise can prosper. Due to habitat deterioration from increased development and raven predation, the desert tortoise population has decreased by 90% in some areas. While sightings of live tortoises are rare, MDLT’s surveys are valuable even when tortoises themselves are not found; presence of scat, burrows, and sightings of shell fragments all get reported. Determining the presence—or absence—of desert tortoise helps MDLT and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife understand the conditions and health of tortoise populations and habitat.
Women interns gather new dark sky data
Interns with the Women In Science Discovering Our Mojave (WISDOM) program spent a year studying night sky quality at 16 locations in Mojave Trails National Monument. Their findings provide a new baseline of data about the Mojave Desert. This study was intended to help the Bureau of Land Management in its efforts to seek International Dark Sky Sanctuary recognition for the monument. The findings show the monument can be placed in consideration as a Dark Sky Sanctuary in almost all locations. WISDOM is a program in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management and funded by the Conservation Lands Foundation. It aims to help engage women in STEM and increase their understanding of environmental science and land management issues.

Thank you to the 2021 WISDOM interns: Lauren Alba, Analisa Brown, Stacey Yoon, Leah Thomas, Giselle Sandoval, and Alison Kalinowski.

A first state conservancy for the desert region
MDLT was one of four co-sponsors of the California Desert Conservation Program, successful legislation that will bring much-needed funding to the region. The bill went into effect on January 1, 2022 and will provide new grant funding to local governments, tribes, non-profit organizations and other entities for biodiversity conservation, cultural and historical preservation, recreation projects, restoration of damaged lands, and climate resiliency projects in the California desert.

MDLT thanks Assembly Member James C. Ramos for authoring and championing the bill and our supporters for urging Governor Gavin Newsom to sign the bill into law.
Educating the next generation
MDLT’s Desert Discovery Field Studies program provides hands-on learning experiences in the classroom for 5th through 12th graders. Nearly 140 students from Yucca Valley Elementary School participated in MDLT’s Desert Discovery Field Studies programming in 2021. These interactive lessons highlight the unique ecological and cultural values of the Mojave Desert.

This year, children learned about California desert animals through exercises like the dissection of owl pellets, citizen science, and the use of native flora and fauna by local Native American tribes. During the pandemic, MDLT led eight weeks of virtual science classes, provided all the materials needed to participate and offered fun digital field trips and hikes using Google Earth. In an in-person DDFS Saturday Academy, 63 students in grades 4-6 learned about the difference between rocks and minerals. Funding comes from Anderson Children's Foundation, Society for Science, and Southern California Edison.

Wildlife spotting in the community and dissecting owl pellets. Photos by Mary Cook-Rhyne
Celebrating Latino Conservation Week
This year we celebrated Latino Conservation Week at Whitewater Preserve with our friends from Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas Valle de Coachella, Hispanic Access Foundation, Wildlands Conservancy, and Cactus to Cloud. The interpretive hike was attended by 23 people, and was a chance to enjoy majestic views and unique flora and fauna found in the preserve and learn about the geology of the area.

Miles For MDLT support raises over $19,000
The Mojave Desert Land Trust’s safe, virtual fundraising campaign Miles For MDLT was held during the month of March. Thirty-five people set fundraising and distance goals and reached out to their network to donate money in exchange for them hiking, walking, or running.

Chris Clarke, respected writer and National Parks Conservation Association California Desert Program Director, topped our list of fundraisers with 87 people donating $3,503 towards his $3,000 fundraising goal. Local third grade teacher, Celia Stanley, hiked more than 150 miles and raised $2,040. Aubrey Diehl hiked 185 miles and raised $1,330. Also noteworthy was Jeremy Joo, who ran 67 miles through Joshua Tree National Park over four days.
Marking Native American Heritage Month
The Native American Land Conservancy’s celebrations of Native American Heritage Month included a Campfire Talk at MDLT headquarters. NALC Executive Director Robert Przeklasa and Sarah Bliss, Cultural Resources Manager for the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, talked about the history of Indigenous people in the Morongo Basin, the past and present threats to traditional ways of life, and the work of the NALC in land conservation and stewardship today. We were honored to also have members of the Payniktum Singers (pictured) sing bird songs about the migration story of the Payniktum clan of the Cahuilla people. The songs are traditionally sung by the clan from sunrise to sunset for three nights.

Each of these fundraisers received gift cards from Teva as well as hiking apparel from Patagonia. Collectively, participants raised $19,360. Participants included:

- Alexander Boice
- Susy Boyd
- Dick & Lani Brown
- Miranda Buckley
- Alison Grace Cliath
- Matt Case
- Louise Chicoine
- Chris Clarke
- Aubrey Diehl
- Anna Dining
- Liz Gonzalez Negrete
- Jessica Graybill & Patrick Dale
- Cody Hanford
- Cindy Holland
- Geary Hund
- Jeremy Joo
- Maria Lopez
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- Jamie Pricer
- Jacob Robinson
- Ross Rogers
- Andria Sanchez
- Diana Shay Diegl
- Celia Stanley
- Jessica Thorpe
- Kaeliegh Watson

Miles for MDLT participant Celia Stanley.
The following foundations and agencies supported the programs and services of the Mojave Desert Land Trust with generous contributions in 2021:

- Anderson Children's Foundation
- Bureau of Land Management
- California Department of Fish & Wildlife
- California Plant Rescue
- California State Parks
- California Wildlife Conservation Board
- Conservation Lands Foundation
- Roy + Patricia Disney Family Foundation
- Extreme Terrain Clean Trail Program
- Mojave Water Agency
- National Environmental Education Foundation
- Pew Charitable Trust
- Resources Legacy Fund
- San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
- Society for Science
- Southern California Edison
- The Fund for People in Parks
- Tides Foundation
**Budget Report**

**Operating Revenue 2021**

- **$1,819,444** Foundation Support & Grants (33%)
- **$1,912,693** Membership & Donations (35%)
- **$284,769** Consulting & Contract Service (5%)
- **$344,382** Investment Income (6%)
- **$812,780** Endowments Income (15%)
- **$144,249** Net Sales of Land (3%)
- **$113,194** Other Income (2%)

Total Revenue & Support: **$5,431,511**

**Operating Expenses 2021**

- **$541,595** Management, General & Fundraising (20%)
- **$366,332** Plant Conservation (14%)
- **$312,260** Education & Public Engagement (12%)
- **$1,444,129** Land Management (54%)

Total Expenses: **$2,664,316**

**Change in Net Assets**
- From Operations: **$2,767,195**
- Land Held-for-Conservation: **$1,749,462**

Net Asset Change: **$4,516,657**
Sunrise over an MDLT property in Mojave National Preserve. Photo by Emmalyn Sneed
DONORS

We are grateful for the many people and organizations that supported the Mojave Desert Land Trust through donations from January 1 – December 31, 2021.

$1.5M +
In 2021, an anonymous donor gave two extraordinary gifts to the Mojave Desert Land Trust: one in the amount of $750,000 for general operating support and a second in the amount of $750,000 in support of the seed bank.

$30,000+
Malcolm McCann
Prairie Falcon Supporters
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Elizabeth Szabo
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California Turtle & Tortoise Club

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The Joshua Tree House
Wildlands

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In-kind
Patagonia Pasadena
WE APPRECIATE ALL THE WAYS YOU GIVE!

Thanks to our sponsors:

These entities donate a percentage of their sales to Mojave Desert Land Trust:

- **Stasher Bags** donates 1% of sales from its Mojave Collection of silicone storage bags to MDLT. Bags are available at stasherbag.com
- **Wonder Valley**, a natural olive oil company donated over $2,000 from their Love Your Mother campaign during Earth Week.

Local artists often donate a percentage of sales from their exhibits or works to MDLT.

Thanks to:

- Dianne Bennett
- Vince Calanoc, Paperscaper
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Susan Seelig
William Schinsky
Steven Schindler
Jenny Savage
Dottie Rutledge
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Patricia Barnett
Jonathan Barratt
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Bianna Batsel
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James Bear
Kimberly Beard
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Zach Behrens
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The Desert Stars is Mojave Desert Land Trust's planned giving program. You can help protect the Mojave Desert for future generations by making a planned gift to MDLT and joining the Desert Stars!

Planned giving is any gift that is not a current cash gift. Many planned gifts are simple bequests. Other types of gifts include real estate, stocks, IRA distributions, life-insurance proceeds and charitable lead and remainder trusts.

Thank you to the following ‘stars’ who have indicated they have included MDLT in their estate plans:

- **Ken Corey**
- **Patty Domay**
- **Skot Jonz**
- **Margo Paolucci**
- **Sohan and Marcella Youngelson**

Please let us know if you are interested in leaving a legacy to protect the desert we love.

Email donations@mdlt.org for more information.

*We remember*
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