

CAMPAIGN FOR THE CALIFORNIA DESERT

Protecting Our Legacy, Strengthening Our Future

California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015 (S.414)



Summary

The conservation and recreation portion of the California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015 will improve protection for approximately 1.6 million acres of federal land while ensuring that public access and recreational use of the desert can continue for generations to come.

Specifically, the Act (S.414) will:

- Establish the 941,413-acre Mojave Trails National Monument in eastern San Bernardino County along the longest undeveloped stretch of historic Route 66;
- Designate the 133,524-acre Sand to Snow National Monument that stretches between Joshua Tree National Park on the east and the high country of the San Gorgonio Wilderness in the San Bernardino National Forest to the west;
- Add five areas encompassing 204,6500 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System, including the Avawatz Mountains Wilderness, Great Falls Basin Wilderness and Soda Mountains Wilderness;
- Enlarge existing BLM wilderness by 95,110 acres including Golden Valley Wilderness, Kingston Range Wilderness, and Grass Valley Wilderness; and add 7,141 acres to the San Gorgonio Wilderness (USFS);
- Establish the 81,800-acre Vinagre Wash Special Management Area in Imperial County where many ecologically and culturally sensitive areas would be protected from development and vehicle use;
- Enlarge Death Valley National Park by 97,965 acres, Mojave National Preserve by 21,000 acres and Joshua Tree National Park by 4,518 acres;

Continued



California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act of 2015 (Continued)



- Add over 70 miles (22,400 acres) of stream to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System along the Amargosa River, Deep Creek, Surprise Canyon and the Whitewater River;
 - Designate the Alabama Hills National Scenic Area (18,840 acres)
 - Designate the Black Lava Butte and Flat Top Mesa as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (6,350 acres)
 - Establish the Joshua Tree Visitor Center
 - Provide for revenue sharing with state and counties from renewable energy rents and royalties
- Permanently prohibit the staking of new mining claims on approximately 10,000 acres of land sacred to the Quechan Tribe in Imperial County while preserving established claims;
- Mandate the study and protection of cultural trails and associated features along the Colorado River that is sacred to several tribes;
- Transfer a 994-acre Bureau of Land Management holding in San Diego County to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and require the state to manage the land as wilderness; and
- Require the Department of the Interior to study the future impacts of climate change on the California desert, to mitigate these impacts and to identify and protect important wildlife migration corridors in the region.

In addition to these protective measures, the Act will also:

- Withdraw protection from 33,571 acres of the Soda Mountains Wilderness Study Area;
- Withdraw protection from the 84,400-acre Cady Mountains Wilderness Study Area (5,500 acres of the area will be included in the Mojave Trails National Monument);
- Facilitate the transfer of isolated parcels of state-owned land that are surrounded by desert wilderness areas and parks in exchange for federal assets, potentially including parcels of federal land;
- Turn five existing administratively-designated off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation areas into legislatively-designated OHV areas;
- Require the Secretary of the Interior to study the possibility of expanding these OHV areas; and
- Allow for the expansion of a small airport in Imperial County.

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