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Mojave Desert



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California's Natural Wildlands Legacy

Mojave Desert

Often called the "high desert," the Mojave Desert lies between the Colorado Desert to the south, the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the northwest and the Great Basin to the east. While the word "desert" usually brings to mind images of vast, contiguous expanses of sand and barren terrain, a wide variety of wildlife and vegetation flourish throughout this region.

The Mojave Desert is a rich tapestry of vast landscapes, significant historic and prehistoric cultural resources, unique wildlife and plant assemblages, and majestic wilderness. Railroads and transmission lines stretching from the Colorado River to the Los Angeles basin are seen throughout the Desert. Cattle, wells, corrals, and fences built to facilitate ranching also dot the landscape. Ancient petroglyphs left by early inhabitants appear on rocks and canyon walls. Trails of early Spanish explorers and migrating settlers, remains of mining camps, and traces of General George Patton's WWII desert warfare training area are more of the historic sites providing an important legacy of more than 10,000 years of human occupation in North America.

Encompassing portions of both the Mojave and the Colorado deserts, Congress created the 25-million acre California Desert Conservation Area in 1976. To meet the challenges of managing such a diversity of resources in a region of intense population pressures, BLM has prepared four major ecosystem management plans to update and amend the CDCA Plan.

Watchable Wildlife

Established by BLM with the assistance of the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee, Inc., the Desert Tortoise Natural Area



Bureau of Land Management
California

(DTNA) and Watchable Wildlife Area encompasses more than 25,500 acres of federal, private and state lands. The DTNA protects desert tortoise habitat in its natural state, free from conflicting land uses. Scientists from throughout the United States conduct extensive research on tortoises within the natural area to learn more about the diseases that have decimated tortoise populations. Spring (mid-March to late May) is the best time of the year to visit the area.

River of Life

The sound of a stream rippling over rocks beneath the rustling leaves of a tall cottonwood tree at Sand Canyon or the presence of permanent flowing water at Amargosa Canyon are not the usual image people associate with the Mojave Desert. The steep, rugged walls of Afton Canyon were carved by the forces of nature thousands of years ago, and the process slowly continues as the Mojave River gently flows through the canyon. Afton Canyon is one of the few places in the desert where the river flows on the surface. These areas provide important sanctuary from the searing heat for plants, animals and humans.

Shifting Sands

A virtual geological display, the many natural Mojave Desert features draw thousands of visitors each year. Created over 20,000 years ago, the Fossil Falls is a remnant of a waterfall created when lava poured into the Owens River channel. Erosion carved the lava into a series of smooth, rounded features visible today. More than 500 calcium carbonate spires rising from the Searles Dry Lake basin form the the Trona Pinnacles. Formed underwater nearly 10,000 years ago, some of the pinnacles rise as high as 240 feet. Visible from historic Route 66, Amboy Crater stands alone in an ancient lavabed. The 250-foot high crater is a near perfect example of a volcanic cinder cone.

Riding the Sand

There are several popular off-highway vehicle recreation areas in the Desert to accommodate motorcycles, ATVs, sand rails, and four wheel-drive vehicles. The spectacular 400-foot high sand dunes at Dumont Dunes or the open desert riding at Spangler Hills, Jawbone and Dove Springs, Stoddard Valley, Johnson Valley, El Mirage and Rasor all provide excellent opportunities for superior OHV recreation.

Surfing the Wind

Some of the most popular recreation sites in the high desert are El Mirage Dry Lake Recreation Area and Ivanpah Dry Lake. The frequent windy conditions and the flat, hard surfaces provide excellent opportunities for wind-dependent recreation. The uniqueness of the area also attracts many commercial photography, film and television endeavors.

Preserving America's Freedom

From 1942 to 1944, the deserts of southern California and Arizona became a training ground for the largest military training exercise of its time. Under the command of Major General George S. Patton, Jr., a million American soldiers trained at the 12 base camps - collectively known as the Patton Camps - from which they conducted large-scale maneuvers. Remnants of the camps can still be seen throughout portions of the Desert.

Your lands.... Your legacy!



*"To the north
I looked out
over the
Mojave
Desert...from
this point a
wilderness of
mountains,
arid, aerial,
almost
phantasmal.
'Come,' they
seemed to say,
'we are
waiting for
you, have
waited since
eternity
began.'"*

*J. Smeaton Chase,
California Desert
Trails,
1919*



*The Desert Tortoise
Natural Area
protects desert
tortoise habitat in
its natural state*



*The steep rugged
walls of Afton
Canyon were carved
by nature more
than 15,000 years
ago*



*The flat, smooth
unobstructed playa
at Ivanpah Dry
Lake attracts
thousands of wind-
dependent recre-
ationists every year*

Goals for the Mojave Desert

Provide protection, development and use of public lands and preserve the natural and cultural resources without destroying the sense of freedom and solitude cherished by most desert users.



Partnerships

- California Conservation Corps
- Friends of El Mirage
- Friends of Ivanpah
- Ridgecrest Steering Committee
- Friends of Jawbone
- Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program
- Resource Conservation District
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- Lone Pine Interagency Visitor Center
- Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee
- Interagency Shooting Range
- Riparian Restoration Projects
- Desert Discovery Center
- Together for the Desert
- Desert Survivors
- Indian Wells Valley
- Sand Canyon Environmental Ed Program
- E Clampus Vitas
- State of CA - Wildlife Conservation Board
- Inyo School District
- Honda
- Public Lands Information Association
- California Off-Road Vehicle Association
- Smitty's Desert Riders
- County of San Bernardino



Key Assets of the Mojave Desert

- Wilderness Areas
- Patton Camps
- Desert Tortoise Natural Area
- Amargosa Canyon Country
- El Mirage and Ivanpah Dry Lakes
- Harper Dry Lake Marsh
- Afton Canyon