

Mojave Trails National Monument Proposal

Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced legislation on December 21, 2009 to establish the Mojave Trails National Monument.

The Mojave Trails National Monument would preserve 941,000 acres of BLM land in California's most beloved desert and protect a major landscape linkage between Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Preserve. One of North America's most unique landscapes, the Mojave Desert is home to desert tortoises and bighorn sheep. National Monument status would protect the existing uses of these lands for outdoor recreation, a national scenic highway, exploring outstanding geology, and wildlife corridors between national parks and congressionally declared wilderness areas. The existing uses are recognized by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the State of California, San Bernardino County, neighboring cities, and environmental and recreational user groups. These uses are the result of decades of planning and public participation.

The Wildlands Conservancy donated \$45 million to the U.S. Department of the Interior to acquire, connect, and protect these lands. The Mojave Trails National Monument would ratify this protection. A vast array of national treasures would be bundled into the Mojave Trails National Monument. These treasures include:

- A portion of California's largest cactus garden;
- Pisgah Lava Flow – the most researched area in North America for the effects of volcanism on evolution;
- Amboy Crater – a National Natural Landmark;
- Sleeping Beauty Valley – the last intact valley representing the West Mojave plant associations;
- Cady Mountains – best area in the Mojave to see bighorn sheep;
- Afton Canyon – the Mojave River flows year-round amid colorful canyon walls;
- Marble Mountains Fossil Beds – site of 550 million-year-old fossils of trilobites, which were among the first animals on earth with eyes and skeletons;
- Wildlife and recreational corridors that connect two national parks and 13 wilderness areas – a refuge for campers and explorers, bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, and fringe-toed lizards.

The monument would preserve the most pristine, undeveloped remaining stretch of historic Route 66, the Mother Road, which is arguably the most famous highway in America – perhaps in the world. Created in 1926 as part of the nation's first system of federal highways, Route 66 became popular as the shortest, best-weather route across the country. Linking Chicago to Santa Monica, it helped transform America into the automobile-oriented society it is today. Through literature (John Steinbeck), film, television and song, it became an international icon. In 2008, the World Monuments Fund designated Route 66, along with such world heritage sites as Machu Picchu and Shanghai, as a threatened resource on their "Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites." The March 2009 Smithsonian Magazine recognizes Route 66 as one of the "15 Must-See Endangered Cultural Treasures."

All Bureau of Land Management Solar Energy Study Areas and all advanced solar and

wind projects targeting 2010 stimulus funds lie outside the monument.