

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: PROPOSED CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT AND JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK EXPANSION

► WHAT IS A NATIONAL MONUMENT?

National monuments are designated by the President or Congress to safeguard federal lands and waters with cultural, historic, ecological, and scientific values. The proposed Chuckwalla National Monument will help preserve cultural landscapes, lands with World War II significance, the historic Bradshaw Trail, and vital habitats for the chuckwalla lizard, desert bighorn sheep, and desert tortoise. The new monument will also help ensure more equitable access to nature for local communities and protect recreation access to popular places like the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains for generations to come.

► WHO MANAGES NATIONAL MONUMENTS?

National monuments can be managed by one or more federal agencies, and can also be co-stewarded by Tribes. When a national monument is designated, the agency (or agencies) responsible for the monument is usually directed to collect public input and consult with Tribes to develop a plan for how these lands should be managed. We propose that the Bureau of Land Management continue as the lead federal agency overseeing the lands within the Chuckwalla National Monument.

► WHAT LANDS WOULD BE PROTECTED UNDER THIS EFFORT AND WHERE ARE THEY LOCATED?

Local organizations, with the support of regional and national organizations, are working together to preserve public lands in Riverside and Imperial Counties between the Palm Springs area and the Colorado River for future generations. These protections will honor and recognize the Indigenous cultural histories and tribal heritage values of the Cahuilla, Quechan, Serrano, Chemehuevi, and Mojave peoples, increase access to nature for local residents and visitors, protect imperiled desert wildlife and their habitat, and help benefit local economies. Monument designations do not apply to private, state, or county lands.

► HOW WILL THE CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT DESIGNATION PROTECT PLACES THAT ARE ENJOYED FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION?

The lands included in the proposed monument offer excellent recreation opportunities and are essential to enhancing equitable access to nature for local communities. The proposed monument includes places like the Mecca Hills, the Orocopia Mountains, and the historic Bradshaw Trail National Back Country Byway. Already, these lands are beloved for hiking, picnicking, stargazing, and recreational off-highway vehicle (OHV) touring on legally authorized routes.

Permanently protecting these lands with a monument designation is an opportunity to ensure that these places are here for current and future generations to experience and enjoy. As part of our effort, we're proposing that the Bureau of Land Management assess opportunities to improve recreation and access within the monument boundaries.

CONTINUED ►

► WHY DOES THIS EFFORT PROPOSE TO EXPAND JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK?

Expanding Joshua Tree National Park to the east will help connect the park with the proposed national monument and other existing protected areas. The National Park Service (NPS) has studied this proposed expansion and has indicated that it would be feasible to incorporate the area into the park. These protections will help ensure habitat connectivity for desert bighorn sheep, burro deer, and other wildlife in the face of climate change. The park expansion could also offer new opportunities for public enjoyment and preserve places of cultural and historical importance.

► DO NATIONAL MONUMENT DESIGNATIONS BENEFIT THE ECONOMY?

National monuments and other protected public lands attract visitors and help contribute to the economy of nearby communities. For example, monument designations can help increase private property values for nearby lands. This 2020 study from Resources for the Future provides more information on the economic benefits of national monuments: bit.ly/RFFMonuments. In general, outdoor recreation is a significant contributor to California's economy, adding over \$54.7 billion to the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supporting over 517,000 jobs in the state (source: bit.ly/CARecreation2021).

► WILL THE NEW PROTECTIONS AFFECT TRIBAL USES OF THESE LANDS?

Local organizations are working to engage Tribal nations whose homelands are within the proposed monument so that future management plans implement Tribal input and stewardship practices. This will help ensure that their traditions, sacred sites, trails, and plant and animal relatives in this cultural landscape are preserved in a manner which respects Tribal priorities and sovereignty.

► WILL THIS AFFECT RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS?

The proposed Chuckwalla National Monument does not conflict with the development of renewable energy in the desert. The proposed monument is complementary to the goals of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) which identified areas suitable for renewable energy development as well as lands that should be protected for their biological, cultural, recreation, and other values. The boundaries of the proposed monument were specifically drawn to avoid areas identified in the DRECP as suitable for development. In fact, the DRECP identified many of the lands in the proposed monument as being important to conserve for their biological values. Permanently protecting these lands will help to fulfill the DRECP's goal of balanced development and conservation.



PROTECTCADESERTS.ORG

@PROTECTCADESERT



► EMAIL US:

INFO@PROTECTCADESERTS.ORG