A large, gnarled Joshua tree stands prominently in the center of a desert landscape. The tree has a thick, textured trunk and several spiky, green-tipped branches. The ground is sandy and dotted with small, dry desert plants. In the background, there are low, rounded hills under a clear, bright blue sky.

# CALIFORNIA DESERT PROTECTION ACT:

*Preserving  
Our Nation's  
Natural  
Resources*



**A**s a native Californian, I am very proud of our state's natural heritage. The protection of the California desert is extremely important to me and the people of California. This area of the country contains some of the most extraordinary resources in the nation.

The scenic, recreational, cultural and scientific value of the California desert must be preserved. I am pleased these resources are now protected as part of the national parks and national wilderness system.

*Jennie Christa*

# CALIFORNIA DESERT PROTECTION ACT: THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY

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The California Desert Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein, was signed into law on October 31, 1994, eight years after former California Senator Alan Cranston introduced the effort. This landmark legislation designates two national parks -- Death Valley and Joshua Tree -- and one national preserve -- the Mojave. Celebrating its tenth anniversary, the measure has been a wonderful success. Recently, Senator Feinstein was successful in protecting even more of this magnificent natural resource.

For the year 2000 budget, Senator Feinstein requested that Congress provide funding to purchase environmentally sensitive private properties now owned by the Catellus Development Corporation in the desert.

To encourage our nation's westward expansion, in 1864 Congress gave the railroad industry every other section of land in a 50 mile swath in what is now the Mojave National Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park. Most of this was owned by Catellus.

Because of an agreement by the Wildlands Conservancy to provide \$26.1 million toward this goal, Catellus agreed to sell these lands at well below market value. Catellus provided a significant in-kind contribution to allow the purchase of 437,000 acres of California desert in and around the Mojave National Preserve.



The agreement will protect 200,000 acres of habitat critical for the endangered desert tortoise, 150,000 acres for bighorn sheep and the largest cactus gardens in the world at Bigelow Cholla Gardens. The land also includes access to 165 jeep trails and dirt access roads leading to 3.7 million acres of land used for hunting, hiking and camping.

The appropriations bill included \$15 million for this purchase. The transaction is already one of the biggest land acquisitions in California history and one of the most substantial gifts ever to the American people.

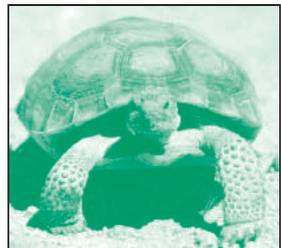
# THE CALIFORNIA DESERT

The California desert contains some of the most outstanding scenic, cultural, ecological, scientific and recreational resources in the nation. Comprised of 25 million acres, the California desert is incredibly diverse. There are sand dunes, extinct volcanoes, 90 mountain ranges, the world's largest Joshua tree forest and over 100,000 archeological sites, including the only-known dinosaur tracks in California. These varied land forms provide habitats for more than 760 different wildlife species.

## WHAT THE ACT PROTECTS

The California Desert Protection Act protects 7.7 million acres now managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service. The legislation:

- Designated nearly 3.5 million acres of BLM land in the California desert as wilderness;
- Added 1.2 million acres of land to Death Valley National Monument and redesignated the monument a National Park;
- Added 234,000 acres of land to Joshua Tree National Monument and redesignated the area a National Park;
- Established a new 1.6 million-acre Mojave National Preserve;
- Created the Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks and the Mojave National Preserve;
- Transferred 20,500 acres of Bureau of Land Management land to the State of California to expand the Red Rock Canyon State Park.



## MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE

**M**ojave National Preserve has been called the “crown jewel” of the California Desert Protection Act. This 1.6 million acre area lies at the confluence of three great deserts: the Mojave, Sonoran and Great Basin deserts. Because it is at the junction of three major desert ecosystems its biological resources are extremely varied. The area contains 11 mountain ranges, four dry lakes, cindercones, badlands, innumerable washes, mesas, buttes, lava beds, caves, alluvial fans, and one of California’s most complex sand dune systems. The geographic diversity is rivaled by the diversity in the park’s plant life which ranges from creosote bush to pinyon pines and juniper woodlands in the higher elevations.



## DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

**D**eath Valley National Park has more than 3.3 million acres of spectacular desert scenery, interesting and rare desert wildlife, complex geology, undisturbed wilderness, and sites of historical and cultural interest. Bounded on the west by 11,049 foot Telescope Peak and on the east by 5,475 foot Dante’s View, Death Valley’s Badwater is the lowest point (-282 feet) in the Western Hemisphere.



# JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

**J**oshua Tree National Park is comprised of two deserts and two large ecosystems primarily determined by differences in elevation. Few areas in the world more vividly illustrate the contrast between high and low desert. Below 3000 feet (910 meters), the Colorado Desert, occupying the eastern half of the park, is dominated by the abundant creosote bush.

Adding interest to this arid land are small stands of spidery ocotillo and cholla cactus. The higher, slightly cooler, and wetter Mojave Desert is the special habitat of the undisciplined Joshua tree, extensive stands of which occur throughout the western half of the park. The park also contains some of the most interesting geologic terrain found in California's deserts.



## ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The desert parks have attracted record numbers of tourists from across the globe to the California desert in recent years. The positive effect of the increase in tourism cannot be understated. Tourism not only increases the visibility of California's natural resources, it also creates jobs for desert residents and brings additional income to the area.

In 2003, 2.1 million people visited Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks. Another 615,000 visited Mojave National Preserve.

Since the California Desert Protection Act passed, 11.2 million people have visited Joshua Tree National Park, 9.8 million have visited Death Valley National Park and almost 3.5 million have visited Mojave National Preserve.

In 2001, the three parks created a combined total of:

- more than \$112 million in sales;
- more than \$40 million in personal income in the region; and
- more than 2,400 jobs.

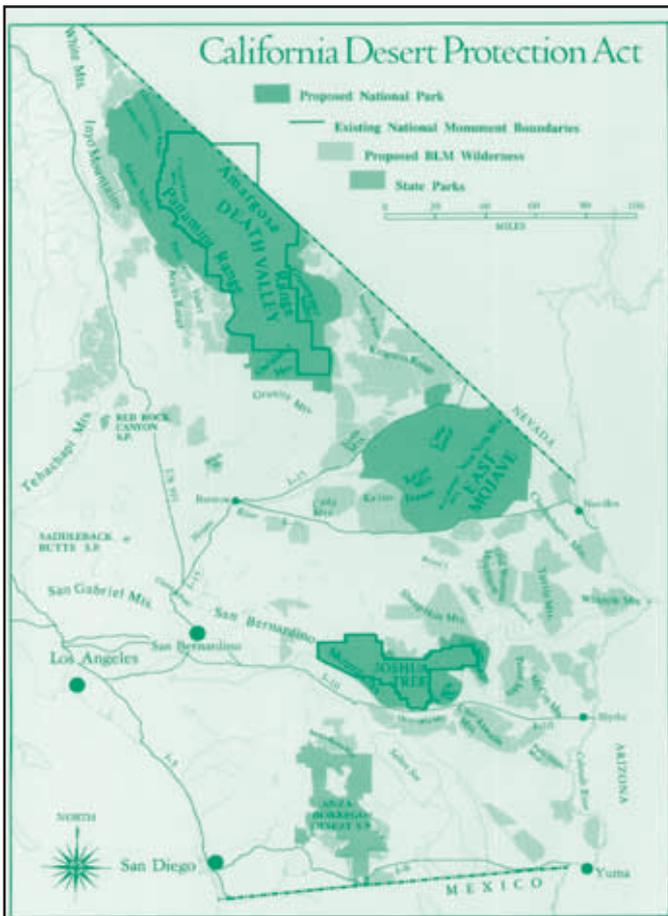
## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Further information about Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Monument, visit the National Park Service web site:

[www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva) (Death Valley)

[www.nps.gov/jotr](http://www.nps.gov/jotr) (Joshua Tree)

[www.nps.gov/moja](http://www.nps.gov/moja) (Mojave)







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