

October 13, 2015

Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

The California desert is some of the most pristine and unique land in the country. From painted mountains to archaeological treasures, world-famous wildflowers to herds of bighorn sheep, Americans have long been drawn to its stark beauty. That is why we support the designation of the Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, and Castle Mountains National Monuments and urge you to act now to permanently protect these special areas in the California desert—one of the richest and most intact landscapes in North America.

We are business owners and community leaders from the communities of Tecopa and Shoshone in the north Mojave Desert. Our communities possess outstanding natural beauty and healing waters, and we are a gateway to Death Valley National Park. As a result, our economy is almost entirely dependent on eco-tourism. Many of these tourists are coming through not just to see our area, but also to visit Joshua Tree and Mojave National Preserve. The designation of these National Monuments would add further draw for visitors to the vast protected areas of the California Desert. This would benefit our businesses by increasing tourism across the Mojave Desert, solidifying its status as a protected eco-tourism corridor. Such corridors have caused dramatic economic growth in places like southern Utah and the bustling towns and small cities surrounding the Greater Yellowstone Region.

The Mojave Desert is one desert. The Death Valley Region in the north is connected to the Eastern Mojave in Mojave National Preserve which is connected to the central Mojave along Route 66 which is connected to Joshua Tree. This is part of what makes this desert so remarkable- that it is largely intact and has a high degree of biological connectivity. This is important for many species, such as our iconic bighorn sheep, who freely migrate from mountain range to mountain range across our protected spaces. Large-scale protection will also help species adapt their geographic range as climate change takes its toll. Designation of these Monuments will preserve the ecological integrity of our desert- the protection of a part is to the benefit of the whole.

Each of the proposed National Monuments contains exceptional characteristics that deserve to be protected. Mojave Trails is the connective tissue linking Mojave National Preserve to Joshua Tree National Park and existing Wilderness Areas, providing vital habitat for sensitive wildlife,

and unspoiled desert vistas. It contains irreplaceable archeological and cultural sites including sacred Native American trails and trade routes. Sand to Snow protects some of the most diverse habitat in the country, linking the San Geronimo Wilderness to Joshua Tree National Park and the San Bernardino National Forest. Castle Mountain protects some of the finest Joshua tree, pinon pine, and juniper forests in the entire California Desert Conservation Area. It encompasses native desert grassland, features stunning vistas of California and Nevada desert mountain ranges, including Nevada's Spirit Mountain.

Establishment of these National Monuments will enhance recreation and tourism across the Mojave Desert, bringing economic benefits and jobs to our communities. They will benefit public health by enhancing opportunities for outdoor access and recreation. They will preserve the vibrant but fragile desert ecosystem. They will provide peace and respite for our honored veterans, who have sacrificed so much for this land that we love. They will protect our culture and history from Native Americans to Homesteaders, General Patton's World War II training sites to western migration along Route 66, America's storied Mother Road.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to protect some of the most spectacular and diverse stretches of intact desert in California, and we must not wait. The local community has worked for nearly a decade to preserve these iconic landscapes. It is time for this region to gain the protection it deserves. I urge you to designate Mojave Trails, Castle Mountains, and Sand to Snow National Monuments.

Sincerely,

Susan Sorrells
Shoshone Village, Inc.
Crowbar Café and Saloon
Shoshone, CA

Amy Noel
Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
Tecopa, CA

Mary King
Shoshone Museum Association
Shoshone, CA

Suzi Dennett
Death Valley Chamber of Commerce
Tecopa, CA

Phyllis Nefsky
Xanterra Death Valley
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Ryan Thomas, Lara Murray, Nancy Good,
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Tecopa Hot Springs Campground and Pools
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Shoshone Inn
Elaine Warner
Shoshone, CA

Justin Blake
Second Wind Hot Water Retreat and
Campground
Tecopa, CA

Nancy Good
New Light Foto Design
Tecopa, CA & Las Vegas, NV

Patrick Donnelly
Amargosa Conservancy
Shoshone, CA

Alan Jablonski
Desert Mesquite Products
Tecopa, CA

CC: Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Barbara Boxer
Representative Paul Cook
Representative Raul Ruiz
Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior
Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
Christy Goldfuss, Managing Director, White House Council on Environmental Quality