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PRESIDENT OBAMA TO USE ANTIQUITIES ACT TO CREATE THREE NATIONAL MONUMENTS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA’S DESERT AND MOUNTAINS.

The designation will conclude a fifteen-year effort led by Senator Dianne Feinstein and The Wildlands Conservancy

PALM SPRINGS, CA - Today, Californian’s celebrate an announcement made by the White House of President Obama’s intent to designate Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow, and Castle Mountains National Monuments. “This is the pinnacle of a fifteen-year effort to preserve the physical heart of the Mojave Desert for conservation, recreation, and unparalleled inspiration, a milestone in our fifteen-year quest to preserve the heart of the Mojave Desert,” said David Myers, Executive Director of The Wildlands
Conservancy (TWC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving important landscapes with private funding and opening them to the public free of charge.

Fifteen years ago, The Wildlands Conservancy made the largest conservation land gift in American history when it funded the acquisition of some 560,000 acres in the Mojave Desert to the U.S. Department of the Interior. Most of these gifted lands were inholdings in Mojave National Preserve, Joshua Tree National Park, and twenty federally-designated Wilderness Areas, which provided them immediate protection. The remaining 200,000-plus acres of donated lands will now be protected in perpetuity by the Mojave Trails National Monument, which creates a landscape linkage that connects Mojave National Preserve, Joshua Tree National Park, and fourteen Wilderness Areas and protects the heart of the Mojave Desert along California’s historic Route 66, internationally known as the Mother Road.

“Mojave Trails National Monument safeguards the largest stretch of public land along the Mother Road, protecting one of the world’s best-known cultural icons,” said Jim Conkle, longtime Route 66 advocate and publisher of the Route 66 Pulse. Mr. Conkle has long lobbied for this national monument designation, which now protects a 103-mile stretch of Route 66; the entire length of the Route made the World Monuments Fund 2008 Watch List of endangered sites.

Beyond Route 66, Mojave Trails National Monument encompasses many national treasures including the painted walls of water-blessed Afton Canyon; California’s largest cactus garden; lava flows frozen in time; Amboy Crater—a National Natural Landmark; spectacular rock formations in the Clipper, Sheephole and Piute Wilderness Areas; and fossil beds in the Trilobite Wilderness.
Sand to Snow National Monument carries its own significance. According to Dr. Tim Krantz, Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Redlands, “Sand to Snow National Monument will be recognized as our most botanically diverse national monument, rising from the Sonoran Desert to the peak of Mount San Gorgonio, southern California’s highest peak.” Dr. Krantz has cataloged some 1,600 plant species in the San Bernardino Mountains—more species than any mountain range of comparable size in the lower 48 states.

Three of The Wildlands Conservancy’s Sand to Snow Preserves (Whitewater, Mission Creek, and Pioneertown Mountains Preserves) are principal access points for desert-floor hikes into the expansive San Gorgonio Wilderness. These preserves offer camping, trailheads, picnic areas, and restroom facilities, all free of charge, that welcome visitors into the adjacent public lands comprising Sand to Snow National Monument. The Wildlands Conservancy privately funded the acquisition of more than 60,000 acres as part of its 20-year Sand to Snow Wilderness Interface Project, which connects the San Bernardino Mountains to Joshua Tree National Park and the Bighorn Mountains Wilderness through the 20,000-acre Pipes Canyon Wildnerness, which is part of the Conservancy’s Pioneertown Mountains Preserve.

Last year, Senator Dianne Feinstein courageously called upon President Obama to designate these three National Monuments, a request backed by vast support from all corners of California and the West. A recent poll conducted by Republican polling firm Public Opinion Strategies demonstrated overwhelming support for the establishment of the monuments, with more than 75% of California voters in favor of President Obama designating the Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow, and Castle Mountains National Monuments.
The Wildlands Conservancy applauds the far-reaching efforts of Sen. Feinstein, unwavering champion of the California desert, and the designation of the monuments by the President. “President Obama has continued the great American tradition of protecting our natural treasures for all Americans to enjoy.” said Mr. Myers. With these monument designations, President Obama follows in the footsteps of eight Republican and eight Democratic Presidents who have all used the Antiquities Act over 140 times for the purpose of protecting magnificent landscapes like Joshua Tree, the Grand Tetons, and Death Valley.

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