

MBCA

morongo basin conservation association

May 20, 2020

David Bernhardt, Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20240

Karen Mouritsen, California State Director
Bureau of Land Management
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623
Sacramento, CA 95825

RE: 2022 LWCF Core Request, Mojave Trails National Monument

Dear Secretary Bernhardt, and State Director Mouritsen,

The Morongo Basin Conservation Association is committed to preserving the California Deserts and their important resource values. Since 2006, one of our partner groups, the Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT), has acquired over 84,000 acres of land to help meet this objective. In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service, they acquire land in the Mojave and Colorado Deserts, including within three National Parks, 38 BLM managed wilderness areas and in the Desert National Monuments. These lands are then conveyed to the agencies when funding becomes available.

We are writing in support of a submission by the BLM for Land and Water Conservation funds to acquire 6,213 acres inside the Mojave Trails National Monument (Monument). These lands contain important wildlife species, such as the threatened desert tortoise and desert big horn sheep, rare plant species, important cultural sites, and habitat linkages that connect the Mojave National Preserve to Joshua Tree National Park and other protected areas. They also provide for public access and contain outstanding recreational opportunities. MDLT has pre-acquired a number of these lands within the Monument for eventual conveyance to BLM. They are adjacent to existing BLM land and their acquisition will allow for coordinated management and help ensure continued public access to areas such as Afton Canyon.

The need to approach conservation and recreation from a landscape level is more relevant than ever, as a component of the ongoing desert-wide land use planning which has been occurring throughout the California Desert Conservation Area. These acquisitions will make a significant contribution to this effort.

Sincerely Yours,



Steve Bardwell, president
Morongo Basin Conservation Association

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