

## **JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK EAGLE MOUNTAIN BOUNDARY STUDY AND EAGLE CREST TALKING POINTS**

### **Important Meetings and Dates**

**05/04/2016 - 6:00 PM -8:00 PM, Joshua Tree Community Center , 6171**

Sunburst Street

Joshua Tree, CA

At this meeting, stakeholders will be given approximately 2 minutes for public comment.

### **Deadline for Written Comments: May 27, 2016**

Addressed to Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent Dave Smith

E-mail: [JOTR\\_Study@nps.gov](mailto:JOTR_Study@nps.gov)

### **Joshua Tree National Park**

Joshua Tree National Park is a biodiverse gem, has a rich history and culture and provides outstanding recreational opportunities for millions of visitors from around the nation and around the globe.

The transition zone between the Mojave and Colorado Desert ecosystems create the perfect conditions for a unique assemblage of plants and animals that call the park home including a herd of approximately 250 bighorn sheep, 250 species of migratory and resident birds and numerous insects and reptiles. The park is also botanically diverse and has a rich history and culture.

Joshua Tree National Park is a powerful economic engine. In 2015, Joshua Tree National Park had over two million visitors who spent over \$96 million dollars in communities surrounding the national park and supported over 1300 full and part time jobs.

The return of the Eagle Mountain lands to Joshua Tree National Park will enhance recreational opportunities for residents living in the Coachella Valley; protect iconic species like desert bighorn, golden eagle and desert tortoise and preserves important prehistoric and historic resources from Native American cultures to General Patton's training camps to the Kaiser Mine.

### **Boundary Study**

The Eagle Mountain lands have significant resources. These include prehistoric and historic resources such as the Kaiser Mine, General Patton's training camps and Native American cultures. The Eagle Mountain lands also contain important habitat for bighorn sheep, golden eagle and desert tortoise, as well as critical wildlife corridors. Finally, these lands, once returned to Joshua Tree National Park, would enhance recreational opportunities for Coachella Valley residents.

The Eagle Mountain lands were removed from Joshua Tree National Monument during the 1950s for mineral exploration. This year, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service, provides an excellent opportunity for reuniting these lands with the park.

Biological resources for the Eagle Mountain lands- Over 30 golden eagle nests within a 10 mile radius; critical habitat and wildlife corridor for one of the park's most diverse herds of bighorn sheep traveling between the Coxcomb and Eagle Mountains; excellent desert tortoise habitat and migration corridor between populations living in JTNP and those living south of the park and south of the I-10.

Historical resources on Eagle Mountain lands- opportunity to tell about the rich history of mining via the Kaiser mine; General Patton's desert training camps (Camp Desert Center); health care history- origins of Kaiser Permanente; prehistoric and historic Native American cultures.

NPCA requests that stakeholders urge the National Park Service to adopt a mixture of the Boundary Study's Alternative C and Alternative D. Urge NPS to reconfigure Joshua Tree National Park's boundary to include the maximum amount of BLM, state and private lands through administrative action as soon as possible, but also urge NPS to adopt the broad and sweeping vision of land protection in alternative D that includes the Eagle Mountain Mine and the Eagle Crest Pumped Storage Project in the future when and if those lands become available through whatever means is necessary.

The transfer of Eagle Mountain lands preserve private property rights, mineral rights, Metropolitan Water District lands and lands withdrawn by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for the Eagle Crest Pumped Storage Project.

### **Eagle Crest Pumped Storage Project**

Would be located less than 2 miles from the national park border.

The National Park Service (NPS) has stated that, "Eagle Crest's Project threatens to adversely impact Park resources, resulting in both immediate and long term negative consequences for the preservation and management of the Park."

The Eagle Crest Project would use 9 billion gallons of groundwater over 4 years pumped from the aquifer beneath the Chuckwalla Valley just to fill the project's two reservoirs. Evaporative losses alone from the project are greater than 1500 acre feet/year (1 acre foot is 325,000 gallons!)

The aquifer beneath the Chuckwalla Valley is hydraulically connected to some of those that lie beneath Joshua Tree National Park and the impacts of the aggressive pumping from the Eagle Crest Project and other numerous renewable energy projects in the area, are a gamble with one of our national treasures.

### **Eagle Crest Project Transmission Line Right of Way**

The Eagle Crest Energy Company has obtained a license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to operate, but still needs and has applied for a right-of-way (ROW) grant to construct, operate, maintain and decommission a 500 kilovolt [kV] generation interconnect [gen-tie] line and a water pipeline. The gen-tie line would transmit electricity generated by Eagle Crest's pumped storage facility to the Southern California Edison's Red Bluff sub-station located on BLM lands in Riverside County, California.

The proposed transmission line EA should be changed to a full, comprehensive EIS that evaluates the cumulative impacts of the proposed Eagle Crest Project and current, foreseeable and future projects within the area in regard to groundwater use; impact on sensitive, threatened and endangered species; impacts to wilderness, DRECP National Conservation Lands and the lands identified as the project study area for the Joshua Tree National Park Eagle Mountain Boundary Study.

### **SAMPLE LETTER**

Dear Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent Dave Smith:

My name is XXXXX and I've lived XXXX in XXXXXX. ***In these next one or two sentences personalize the letter. please mention whether you own a business, your relationship to Joshua Tree National Park and why you care about this issue.***

I respectfully request that the National Park Service (NPS) to adopt a mixture of the Boundary Study's Alternative C and Alternative D. I Urge NPS to reconfigure Joshua Tree National Park's boundary to include the maximum amount of BLM, state and private lands through administrative action as soon as possible, but also urge NPS to adopt the broad and sweeping vision of land protection in alternative D that includes the Eagle Mountain Mine and the Eagle Crest Pumped Storage Project in the future when and if those lands become available through whatever action is necessary. The return of the maximum amount of lands to Joshua Tree National Park during the year of the National Park Service's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary would be a fitting birthday present.

Although I understand that the transfer of BLM lands in the boundary study does not include mineral rights, private lands or the lands withdrawn by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the Eagle Crest Pumped Storage

Project, I would like to voice deep opposition to the Eagle Crest's project because of its harm to Joshua Tree National Park by depleting groundwater resources, inflating the population of ravens that prey on desert tortoise and disrupting a critical wildlife migration corridor for bighorn sheep. Therefore I respectfully request that National Park Service Director Jarvis request that the Bureau of Land Management conduct a full and comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement, and not merely an Environmental Assessment, for Eagle Crest's transmission line in order to reveal the true impacts of this project on Joshua Tree National Park and sensitive resources.

Respectfully,  
Your name  
Your Address  
Your e-mail  
Your phone