



## DESCRIPTION OF MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE

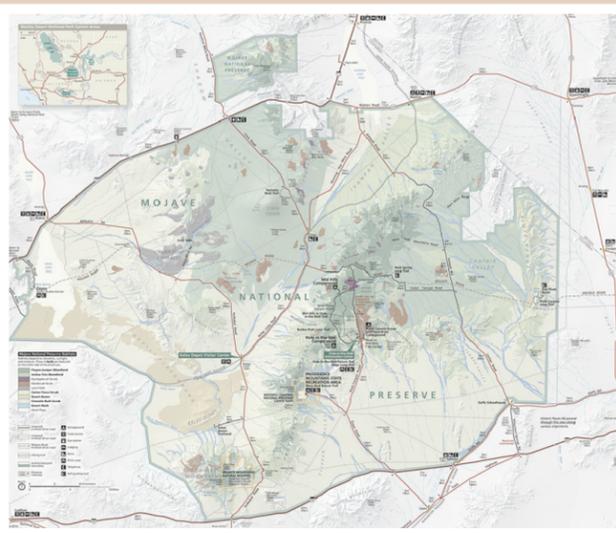
At a vast 1.6 million acres, Mojave National Preserve is the third-largest unit of the national park system in the contiguous United States, with just under 50% of the preserve (695,200 acres) designated as wilderness. The preserve is an expanse of desert lands that represents a mosaic of three of the four major North American deserts: the Great Basin, Sonoran, and Mojave. The remoteness, the vast open spaces, and lack of development instill a sense of discovery in visitors to the preserve and allow them to experience a wide variety of historical and natural features that exist nowhere else in the United States in such proximity to one another.



Mojave National Preserve is a land of mountain ranges, sand dunes, creosote flats, great mesas, extinct volcanoes, and other unusual desert landforms. The preserve protects an extensive variety of habitats and resilient and well-adapted plant and animal species. Cactus gardens, relict plant communities of white fir and chaparral, and one of the most significant Joshua tree populations in the world are all found here. However, continued warming trends and increased variability in precipitation will continue to add stress to this ecosystem where many species already live near the extremes of physiological tolerance.



The Mojave Desert also has a vibrant cultural history; among the Joshua trees and rocky outcrops lie evidence of early human uses including archeological sites possibly dating back 10,000 years. Arrow points, pestles, pottery sherds, and rock art sites relay stories of the Mojaves, Chemehuevis, and Paiutes and provide evidence of these early inhabitants of the Mojave Desert. These lands also served as an important American Indian transportation corridor and trade route in years past, connecting the coastal tribes with tribes along the Colorado River and beyond. Numerous historic sites from early mining, ranching, homesteading, and railroading ventures serve as reminders of the courageous and resilient people that opened the western frontier.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mojave National Preserve  
California



**DRAFT**



# Foundation Document

## Mojave National Preserve

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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## Purpose



*Mojave National Preserve protects a diverse mosaic of desert ecological communities and functions, and encompasses a 10,000-year history of human connection with the desert. By offering extensive opportunities to experience a wide variety of desert landscapes, the preserve promotes understanding and appreciation for the increasingly threatened resources of the Mojave Desert, and encourages a sense of discovery and connection to wild places.*



## Significance

Significance statements are directly linked to the purpose of Mojave National Preserve and express why the preserve's resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation.

- Mojave National Preserve protects a large, relatively intact ecosystem of the eastern Mojave Desert from continuing threats associated with expanding development and provides connectivity between other protected natural areas within the larger Mojave Desert ecoregion.
- Mojave National Preserve offers exceptional access to remote, wild places and provides a unique uninhibited sense of discovery for visitors throughout its 1.6 million acres.
- The preserve encompasses a wide variety of classic desert landforms, including mesas, bajadas, dry lakes, sand dunes, and cinder cones. These exposed geologic features exemplify the rugged beauty of the West.
- Mojave National Preserve provides opportunities for solitude, exemplified by natural sounds and dark night skies, functioning as an increasingly rare refuge from nearby urban areas.
- Mojave National Preserve has a long, robust history as a well-traveled corridor across a harsh and foreboding desert, linking the Southwest with the coast of California from ancient times to the present.
- Mojave National Preserve protects a continuous record and remnant sites of the resilient people who have adapted to and manipulated the desert through evolving relationships with the landscape—shaped by cultural values that are both ancient and contemporary.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are closely related to Mojave National Preserve's designated purpose and warrant primary consideration in planning and management because they are critical to maintaining the preserve's purpose and significance. If these resources are allowed to deteriorate, the purpose and/or significance of the preserve could be jeopardized.

The fundamental resources and values of Mojave National Preserve are

- full range of biological diversity of native species representative of the eastern Mojave Desert ecosystem, minimally disturbed by humans
- exposed geologic features and landforms, including sand dunes, cinder cones, mesas, and dry lakes
- natural desert scenery (geology, landscape, vegetation, big sky, etc.)



- unique opportunities for education and research in a minimally disturbed ecosystem—the Mojave Desert
- natural soundscapes and dark night skies
- vast expanse of undeveloped open space, including (but not limited to) wilderness
- uninhibited sense of discovery
- exemplary relics, sites, stories, and other resources associated with both ancient inhabitants and Mojave and Chemehuevi tribal cultures
- exemplary relics, sites, stories, and other resources associated with mining, ranching, homesteading, and the railroad industry over the past 250 years
- exemplary sites and stories associated with early trade, exploration, and transportation routes such as the Mojave Road and the Spanish Trail

