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Desert Communities Celebrate Milestone: 20th Anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act

Twentynine Palms, CA – Desert communities in California are celebrating an important milestone this week: the 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act. Signed into law on October 31, 1994, the California Desert Protection Act increased protection for 8.6 million acres of the California desert. To mark this anniversary, communities across the desert including Death Valley, Shoshone, Victorville, Palm Desert, Tecopa, Ridgecrest, Twentynine Palms, Joshua Tree, and Yucca Valley are holding community celebrations this fall.

“The 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act is an opportunity for us to appreciate the great contribution the desert brings to our lives,” said Vickie Waite, Executive Director of the Joshua Tree National Park Council for the Arts. “The protected desert lands around us provide recreation opportunities, invite exploration in the great outdoors, spur tourism, and are an important heritage for our gateway communities.”

As celebration events take place, local communities are also renewing their commitment to protect the California desert for the coming decades. Senator Dianne Feinstein is working on legislation to further conserve and protect the desert. Her efforts would add to Joshua Tree, Death Valley and the Mojave National Preserve; establish two new national monuments and new wilderness areas; and protect existing access for hunting, off-roading and other recreation.

Buford Crites, who served as mayor of Palm Desert and advocated for the passage of the California Desert Protection Act in 1994 added, “As a former mayor, I’ve seen how the California Desert Protection Act has benefited the Coachella Valley over the last two decades. Now, we have the opportunity to look to the future and do more. This anniversary is a moment for us to recommit to our efforts to protect the California desert. Our work will be an important investment in our region’s economy and way of life for future generations.”

The California Desert Protection Act enlarged and re-designated Joshua Tree and Death Valley as national parks, established the Mojave National Preserve, and established 69 wilderness areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the California desert. These millions of acres of protected public lands are an important part of the quality of life in the desert region and contribute to the local outdoor recreation and tourism economy.

“As a member of a family which has owned land and operated businesses in the Amargosa and Death Valley area for over 100 years, I know how important the California Desert Protection Act is,” said Susan Sorrells, owner and operator of Shoshone Village, a desert community and tourism destination. “Our region's economy depends on tourism and outdoor recreational activities that take place in our unique and beautiful desert. That’s why I strongly support further efforts to protect this important resource.”

“The California desert is both our heritage and our responsibility to protect for future generations,” said Brian Brown, owner of China Ranch Date Farm and the fourth generation of his family to live in the California desert region. “The California desert brings visitors to our region, contributing to our local economy. It also adds to our quality of life – making this a great place to live, own a business and raise a family. I’m taking the 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act as an opportunity to call for further efforts that will protect these vital lands.”

The events celebrating the 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act started in September and will continue through November with dinners, community activities for families, art exhibitions, and hikes. An impressive calendar of events is scheduled for the Death Valley region and Mojave National Preserve on the October 31 – November 2 weekend, which is the closest to the actual October 31 anniversary. In total, more than 20 events will take place this fall celebrating the 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act. For a full list of upcoming activities, visit <http://www.caldesert20.org/>.

“The California desert lands offer incredible opportunities for Californians to get outdoors and enjoy hiking, mountain bike riding, camping, star gazing and more,” said Danielle Segura with the Mojave Desert Land Trust. “I invite local residents and visitors alike to join us in getting to know the California desert as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act. In celebrating this anniversary our hope is that we will inspire further action by the community and decision-makers to protect the California desert in the years to come.”

Organizations and community members interested in the anniversary events should contact Vickie Waite, Executive Director of the Joshua Tree National Park Council for the Arts, at (760) 217-8839 or director@caldesert20.org for more information. Members of the media should contact Sarah Hersh, Full

Court Press Communications, at 510-550-8170 or sarah@fcpccommunications.com. Downloadable photos of the California desert are available to media [here](#).

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About the Joshua Tree National Park Council for the Arts

The Joshua Tree National Park Council for the Arts is dedicated to fostering the spirit of artistic expression inspired by the park, celebrating the park's majestic landscape and precious wildlife, preserving the park's cultural history, and supporting the preservation, enhancement, and sustainability of the entire California desert region. Learn more at www.jtnparts.org and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/JTNPArts) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/JTNPArts).