



# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL MONUMENTS IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY:

Sand to Snow, Castle Mountains and Mojave Trails  
National Monuments

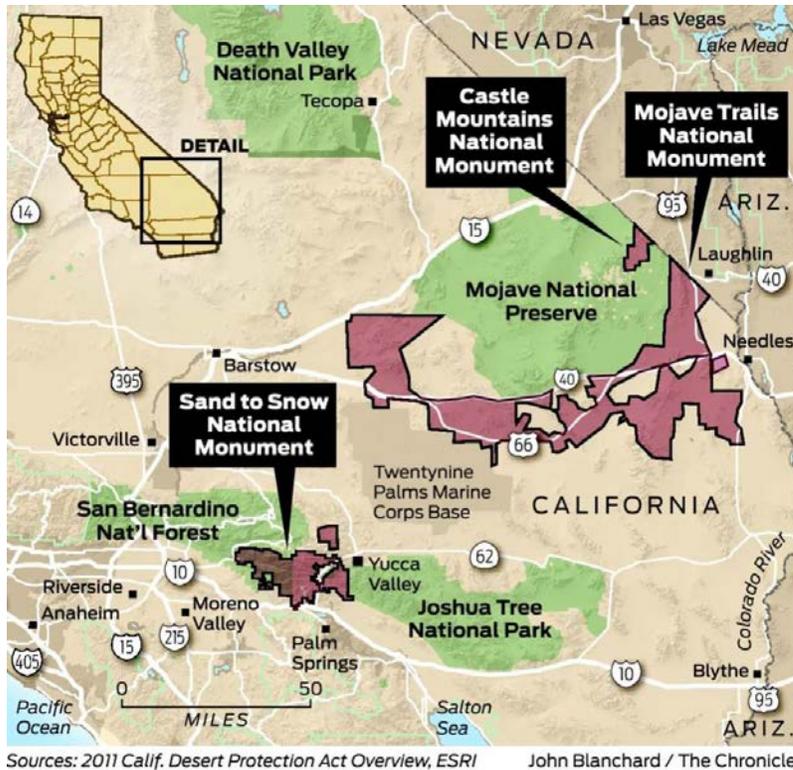
## ABSTRACT

How does the designation of the Sand to Snow, Castle Mountains and Mojave Trails National Monuments stand to increase economies in the areas surrounding the monuments?

AM Development Group on behalf of  
Mojave Desert Land Trust  
July 2018

## OVERVIEW

On February 12, 2016, three new national monuments were designated in the Southern California desert. Sand to Snow, Castle Mountains and Mojave Trails national monuments are located in San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Together they protect approximately 1.8 million acres of rich and diverse California desert public lands. The designations also connect those areas to federally protected public lands, including Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve and 15 Wilderness Areas.



Although relatively recent, the impact of these designations is being widely felt. Visitation is increasing. Businesses report greater turnover and growing public interest. Significantly, there is great community pride in the recognition of the importance of these public lands.

This report examines those factors.

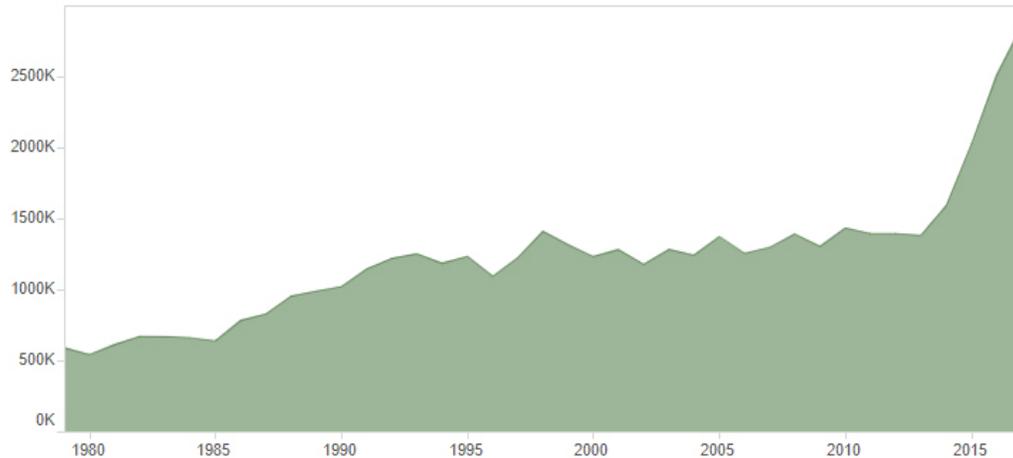
## PUBLIC LANDS VISITATION ON THE RISE

With their proximity to two national parks, Sand to Snow, Castle Mountains and Mojave Trails national monuments help piece together federally protected public lands and widen the conservation potential of each park. Likewise, there is the potential for additional economic benefits as a result of that interconnectivity.

In 2016, 77 parks nationally set new records for annual recreation visits. In 2017, Joshua Tree National Park set new attendance records, attracting nearly 340,000 more visitors than 2016's record 2.5 million. Visitation increased for four consecutive years – part of the long-term trend.

### Joshua Tree NP

Total 2017 Recreation Visits: 2,853,619

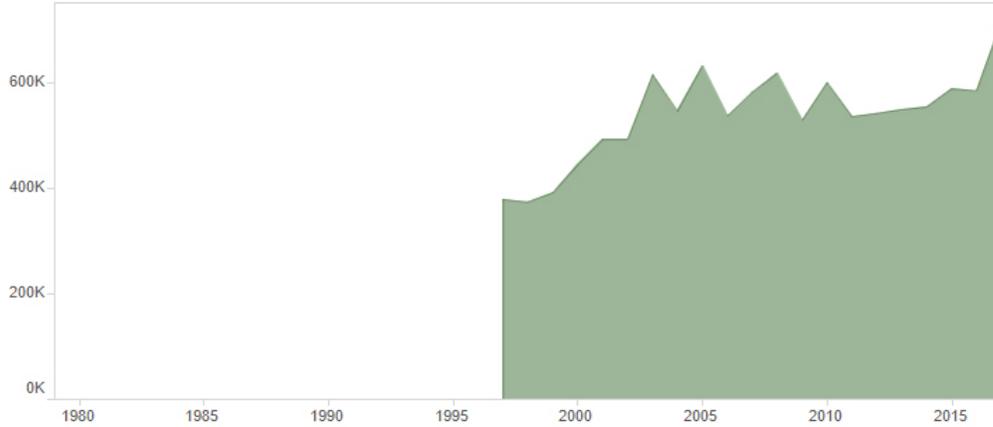


(Source: Headwaters Economics, National Parks Economic Impacts May 2018)

Mojave National Preserve has also experienced increasing visitation since it was created in 1994.

## Mojave NPRES

Total 2017 Recreation Visits: 716,604



(Source: Headwaters Economics, National Parks Economic Impacts May 2018)

## ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF PROTECTED PUBLIC LANDS

A Headwaters Economics report into the economic impact of national parks states that visitation and spending directly related to nearby public lands such as national parks annually contribute billions to regional economies while creating hundreds of thousands of private sector jobs. It notes: “National Park Service units positively impact gateway communities in a variety of ways such as visitor spending, quality of life, and attracting workers and businesses.”

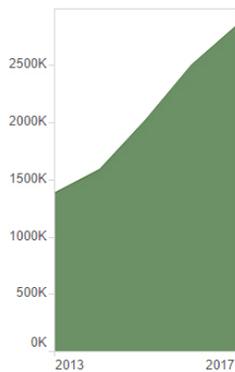
In Joshua Tree National Park, those figures speak volumes.

### Joshua Tree National Park

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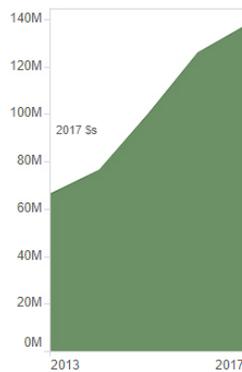
#### Visits

Total 2017 Park Visits:  
2,853,619



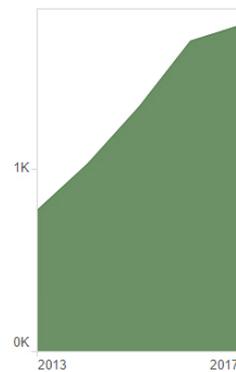
#### Spending

Total 2017 Visitor Spending:  
\$137,625,000



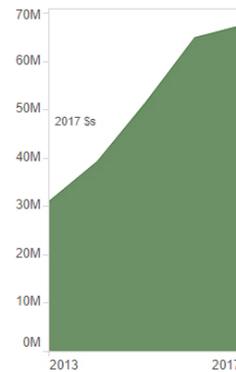
#### Jobs

Jobs created by 2017 Visitor  
Spending: 1,789



#### Income

Income from 2017 Visitor  
Spending: \$67,603,000



(Source: Headwaters Economics, National Parks Economic Impacts May 2018)

Last year, Joshua Tree National Park issued a press release talking about the challenges of the Park being “loved to death”, and encouraged the public to “take advantage of lesser visited parks and public lands such as Mojave National Preserve or regional Bureau of Land Management areas”. Superintendent David Smith recently commented that Joshua Tree National Park was “a way to introduce our visitors to this part of the country and all that it offers. National park tourism is a significant driver in the national economy ... and it’s a big factor in our local economy as well.”

A 2016 study conducted by the U.S. Department of the Interior reported \$18.4 billion of direct spending through 330,971,689 recreation visits to national parks, monuments and other sites within the National Park System. The survey found that spending occurred in communities within 60 miles of a national park system unit and supported 318,000 jobs, most of which are in communities near National Park Service sites. Communities within 60 miles of Joshua Tree National Park include 29 Palms, Joshua Tree, Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley, Desert Hot Springs, Coachella, Indio, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, and Beaumont. Visitor spending had a \$66.8 billion economic output.

According to the 2016 study, most visitor spending supports jobs in the lodging industry (31.2%), followed by restaurant and bars (20.3%), gas and oil (11.7%), admission and fees (10.2%), souvenirs and other expenses (9.7%), local transportation (7.4%) groceries and takeout food (6.9%) and camping fees (2.5%).

## **NATIONAL MONUMENTS AS ECONOMIC DRIVERS**

To understand the impact of monument designations on Castle Mountains, Sand to Snow and Mojave Trails, we first need to look at how effective established monuments have proven to be as economic drivers.

A 2017 report by Headwaters Economics, National Monuments: Economic Performance Before and After Designation, examined the 2008-designated Santa Rosa-San Jacinto Mountains National Monument – another desert monument, also in Riverside County. County figures show increases in population, employment, personal income and per-capita income (<https://headwaterseconomics.org/dataviz/national-monuments/>). From 2001 to 2015, in Riverside County<sup>1</sup>:

Population grew by 46%

Real personal income grew by 54%

Jobs grew by 45%

Real per capita income grew modestly from \$34,208 to \$36,051, a 5% increase

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<sup>1</sup> All economic data come from U.S. Department of Commerce. 2016. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Accounts, Washington, DC; U.S. Department of Commerce. 2017. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, Washington, DC.

Services grew from 421,859 to 698,782 jobs, a 66% increase<sup>2</sup>  
Non-Services shrank from 146,207 to 141,667 jobs, a 3% decrease

The economic growth near the Santa Rosa–San Jacinto Mountains National Monument was not an outlier. Headwaters Economics researched the 2011, 2014 and 2017 local economies adjacent to all 17 national monuments in the West following each monument’s creation. Economic indicators such as population, employment, personal income and per-capita income growth in each of the regions surrounding the national monuments grew following a new monuments creation.

According to Headwaters Economics, “...economic benefits of national parks extend beyond tourism. In today’s economy, the greatest value of natural amenities and



recreation opportunities often lies in the ability of protected lands to attract and retain people, entrepreneurs, their businesses, and the growing number of retirees who locate for quality of life reasons.”

In 2017, Chris Scolari,  
Western lands Program  
Director of Western Resource

Advocates stated, “Regions surrounding national monuments have seen continued growth in employment and personal income. Rural western counties with more federal lands had healthier economies, on average, than their peers without an equal amount of conserved acreage.”

## **ANALYSIS: MOJAVE TRAILS, SAND TO SNOW, CASTLE MOUNTAINS**

Castle Mountains, Sand to Snow and Mojave Trails are among the 12 most recently designated national monuments. As such, there is no formal county or federal economic data collected into the financial impact of their national monument status. However, there are various indicators of what those developments could be.

### **County and regional factors**

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<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of Commerce changed the way it classifies industries between 2000 and 2001. To show a continuous timeline for services and non-services employment, Headwaters Economics subtracted non-services jobs from total private employment to derive services jobs.

San Bernardino is home to the three monuments, along with Riverside County. According to *The State of San Bernardino County Economy, 2017 Report* by CHMURA Economics & Analytics (2018), “The employment outlook for San Bernardino County is bright... The region is forecast to outperform the state and the nation over the next two years. The San Bernardino County economy is supported by a strong mix of businesses poised to expand over the next ten years, and employment is expected to expand by 73,097 jobs over this period. By sub-region, most of the projected job growth is in the East & West Valleys (+60,080 jobs), followed by the High Desert Cities (+7,618) and Morongo Basin (+1,397).” The latter two directly relate to Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow.

In April 2018, the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) released congressional-level Outdoor Recreation Economy reports for all 435 congressional districts. These reports are the first of their kind to capture the power of a vast, multi-billion-dollar economic engine in local communities. The report for California’s 8<sup>th</sup> congressional district – home to Mojave Trails, Castle Mountains and part of Sand to Snow National Monument – found that residents spend \$1.52 billion on outdoor recreation each year. At least 32 outdoor companies are based in the district. In the 36<sup>th</sup> district, which includes the majority of Joshua Tree National Park and part of Sand to Snow National Monument, residents spend \$1.5 billion on outdoor recreation each year and the district is home to seven outdoor companies.

In the Coachella Valley, one of the major regional economies near the Sand to Snow National Monument, tourism continues to grow. “Overall room revenues were the highest we’ve seen due to the combination of high occupancy at our hotels and resorts, and their rates,” said Rick Blackburn, vice-president of convention sales and services with the Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau. According to Blackburn in 2016, “Hotels generated some \$519 million from room sales alone, another record.” According to the Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2016 reflected increases of 11.8% in definite room nights, a 50.9% increase in estimated TOT generated by bookings, 12.2% of estimated local taxes and an increase of 19.8% resulting in \$206 million in economic impact from room nights and/or meetings booked (Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2016 Annual Report).

### **Mojave Trails**

Measuring precise visitation and putting a value on the three monuments is a difficult task. Mojave Trails, in particular, is the largest national monument in the lower 48 states. It has three gateway cities: Barstow to the west, Needles to the east and 29 Palms to the south.

Kelly Crawford served honorably in the U.S. Army National Guard and the US Marine Corps for twenty-three years. He founded Joshua Tree Excursions (TA 29 Trail Tours), an outdoor ECO adventure tour company, and has seen a significant increase in business. He states, “Since their designation, our three new national monuments and other

protected lands have created, and will continue to create, countless new opportunities and jobs for the tourism, outdoor recreation, and education industries. My business has steadily increased since the designation of the desert monuments. I have seen a 200% increase in business in from 2016 - 2017 alone.”

Northeast of the monument, at the Nipton General Store, Rebecca Shearin, said, “We



have seen an increase in people coming into the General Store. There are a lot of people who come into the General Store looking for information on the Monument. They often ask about what there is to do in the Monument and where to go. We have a hard time

keeping star maps in stock now as people know that the Monument is a great place to look at the stars.”

Roy's Motel and Café is at the heart of Mojave Trails in the town of Amboy. Owner, Albert Okura, a philanthropist active in the revitalization of Route 66, said, “I do know that visitation has increased every year, especially with the tour buses. These buses are filled with Europeans. More and more retired ‘boomers’ are traveling the entire Route 66. Ten years ago, this was rare except for hardcore 66ers. We have been trying to hire a few more employees but it has been difficult to recruit qualified help.”

Rakesh Mehta, General Manager of the Ramada Inn in Barstow has noted, “The creation of Mojave Trails is an opportunity to bolster Barstow’s tourism sector. Visitors already use Barstow as a jumping off point for exploring the desert. With the added attraction of a national monument that highlights Route 66, we can bring more tourists here to explore our historic section of the ‘Mother Road’”.

Breanne Dusastre, of the 29 Palms Inn, states, “Throughout the year, the 29 Palms Inn welcomes guests from around the world, including Europe, Australia, and Canada, and across the United States. And for those of us who live here, these monuments also preserve our region’s heritage and quality of life.”

Sandwiched between Mojave Trails and Joshua Tree National Park is the town of Yuca Valley. Diana Wickler, owner of Desert Cities Realtors in Yucca Valley and Desert Hot Spring, observed, “For 25 years, I’ve worked in the building and real estate industries throughout the desert and it’s clear to me – a primary reason people decide to rent, buy or build here is the desire to live close to nature. Access to protected public lands, whether national parks or monuments, is a key selling point – attracting tourists, new

residents and businesses. These new monuments are a good investment in our local economy.”

### **Sand to Snow**

More easily measurable in terms of visitation is Big Morongo Canyon Preserve in Sand to Snow National Monument, an area significant for its birding population. Audubon notes that its breeding bird community is “unique and exceptionally rich ... one of the densest concentrations in North America.”

Meg Foley, Executive Director of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, states, “January 2018 was the busiest month in history for the Preserve. Nearly 11,000 vehicles entered the preserve road in that month alone. The current standard of visitor measurement is 2.5 people per vehicle; however, I am not certain that is still the case. I do think the average is now three to four people per vehicle, which will result in a much higher number of visitors. We will be releasing final numbers very soon.”

She notes that February 2018 saw a more than 100% increase in vehicle entries to the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve with 5,060 as compared with 2,398 in February 2017. March and April 2018 saw increases; but, not as great as February. Foley states, “The vehicle traffic counter counts all vehicles as an entry regardless of size. We hosted more school tours and self-guided tours this spring but those numbers are not accounted for in the vehicle entries.”

Foley believes that the national monument designation has increased traffic. She states, “The national monument designation did seem to bring a new audience. We judge this from questions and requests for Sand to Snow passport stamps. We see many, many visitors pose for pictures in front of the Sand to Snow signage, but it is hard to say if those are visitors who came specifically for Sand to Snow. There has been an increase in guided tours led by commercial companies.... noted from regular stops by various tour companies in marked vehicles. I see an increase in tours offered on social media, by individuals, for a fee.”

Foley also noted a change in the ethnicity of visitors. She stated, “There has been an increase in Hispanic groups and individuals. We've had an uptick in young ‘hipsters’ from Los Angeles area. Some drove here specifically for a visit to Sand to Snow. Most stopped on their way to Joshua Tree or local festivals.”

### **Castle Mountains**

Castle Mountains, the remotest and least accessible monument, is surrounded on three sides by Mojave National Preserve. For visitation we need to refer back to general visitation figures for the Preserve (see page 4).

## A SOURCE OF PRIDE

In late 2017, the 29 Palms Inn and desert business organizations, including Joshua Gateway Communities and the Morongo Valley Chamber of Commerce, launched three billboards and a series of banners showing desert businesses' support for San Bernardino County's national monuments and to raise awareness and encourage pride that the large majority of the monuments' public lands are within San Bernardino County.

According to a joint opinion piece penned by Breanne Dusastre of the 29 Palms Inn, Jerry Mottos of Joshua Tree Gateway Communities and Meg Foley, a board member for the Morongo Valley Chamber of Commerce, the three new national monuments are, "becoming significant engines for our county's tourism economy, providing opportunities for exploration and recreation that inspire people from across the country and around the world to come visit."

Local support for the monuments is widespread. Hundreds of desert businesses, chambers of commerce, and tourism organizations called for their designation. Desert business owners also submitted public comments to the Department of the Interior in opposition to a federal review of national monuments; agreeing with the 99 percent of the 2.8 million comments submitted that strongly favored no reductions to national monuments.

Over 200 Businesses and Chambers of Commerce have supported the Campaign for the California Desert including:

Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce	Buck Buckley, Solar Contractor, Joshua Tree
Morongo Valley Chamber of Commerce	Buenowill International, Barstow
Route 66 Chamber of Commerce	Cactus Flower, Yucca Valley
A Stylish Affair, Yucca Valley	The Cactus Wren Book Exchange, Yucca Valley
Aki Sushi, Yucca Valley	Cameo Beauty Center, Victorville
Armando's Furniture, Victorville	Carla's Route 62 Diner, Yucca Valley
Auto Fashion Upholstery and Supplies, Victorville	Casa de Yermo Handmade Soaps, Yermo
Belle's Best Beef Jerky, Hesperia	Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Victorville
Benchmark Studios, Joshua Tree	Computer Zone, Yucca Valley
Best Western Desert Villa Inn, Barstow	Cool Daddy O's Ice Cream and Grill, Yucca Valley
Bird on a Wire Art and Collectibles, Joshua Tree	Country Kitchen, Joshua Tree
BKB Ceramics, Joshua Tree	Country Market and Deli, Morongo Valley
Black Luck Vintage, Yucca Valley	Coyote Corner, Joshua Tree
Blue Prairie Productions, New York and Pioneertown, CA	Crossroads Café, Joshua Tree
Broadview, Twentynine Palms	

Crown and Sword, Victorville  
Dan O'Dowd Productions, Joshua Tree  
Decal Depot, Joshua Tree  
Del's Shoes, Yucca Valley  
Del Taco #236, Barstow  
Desert Cities Realtors, Yucca Valley  
Desert Decorating, Pioneertown  
Desert Inn, Barstow  
Desert Oracle, Joshua Tree  
Doctorhunters.com, Joshua Tree  
Economy Inn, Barstow  
Enterprise, Yucca Valley  
Fins and Fangs, Yucca Valley  
Fun Net, Lenwood  
Furry Friends Dog Grooming & Supplies,  
Barstow  
Grateful Desert, Joshua Tree  
Green Tree Inn, Victorville  
Grow with Lauren Ell, Online Marketing  
Consultant, Joshua Tree  
Hairr's Johnny Barber Shop, Yucca Valley  
Hi Desert Janitorial Supply, Barstow  
Hi Desert Water Transport, Joshua Tree  
Holly's Trading Post, Morongo Valley  
Holmes Health, Joshua Tree  
Holmes Ecological Design and  
Construction, Joshua Tree  
Homestead Modern No. 1, Pioneertown  
Hoodoo (Records), Yucca Valley  
Hoof and Horn, Yucca Valley  
Idle Spurs Steakhouse, Barstow  
Ikon Beauty, Yucca Valley  
Imageville, Palm Springs  
Instant Karma Yoga, Joshua Tree  
Jackie's Gift Shop, Victorville  
Jenny's Grill, Barstow  
Joshua Tree Adventures, Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Bicycle Shop, Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Certified Farmers' Market,  
Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Excursions, Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Family Dentistry, Joshua  
Tree  
Joshua Tree Health Foods, Joshua Tree

Joshua Tree Mini Storage, Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Music Festival, Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Realty, Joshua Tree  
Joshua Tree Saloon, Joshua Tree  
JT Lilypad, LLC, Joshua Tree  
La Quinta Inn, Hesperia  
Le Haute Desert Aerie, Pioneertown  
Lindsay RV Resort, Needles  
Lola's Kitchen, Barstow  
Los Domingos Restaurant, Barstow  
Ma Rouge Café, Yucca Valley  
Mike's Liquor, Joshua Tree  
Moonlight Mesa Retreats and Vacation  
Rentals, Joshua Tree  
Morongo Valley Café, Morongo Valley  
Morongo Valley Hardware, Morongo  
Valley  
Natural Sisters Café, Joshua Tree  
The Olive Adobe, Pioneertown  
Pappy and Harriet's, Pioneertown  
Patricia Knight Photography, Joshua  
Tree  
Pho 85 Restaurant, Yucca Valley  
Pie for the People, Joshua Tree  
Pioneer Crossing Antiques, Yucca Valley  
Pioneertown Properties, Pioneertown  
Pipes Canyon Lodge, Pioneertown  
Quiznos, Yucca Valley  
Radio Free Joshua Tree, Joshua Tree  
Rainbow Stew, Yucca Valley  
Ramada Inn, Barstow  
Ranger Enterprises, Morongo Valley  
Red Roof Inn, Victorville  
Rieman Sculpture, Yucca Valley  
Rock Reach House, Yucca Valley  
Route 62 Vintage Market, Yucca Valley  
Route 66 Motel, Barstow  
The Ruin Venue, Pioneertown  
Rustic Modern Rentals, Joshua Tree  
Ruth's Rabbit Trail Tours, Yucca Valley  
Safari Motor Inn, Joshua Tree  
Sam's Market, Joshua Tree  
Sam's Pizza, Joshua Tree  
Shabby Confections, Victorville

Sky's Beauty Supply, Victorville  
Smoke n' More, Joshua Tree  
Sport Bike USA, Victorville  
Starlite, Joshua Tree  
Starr's Tool Box, Yucca Valley  
Stitch Art Studios, Joshua Tree  
Stoker Construction, Yucca Valley and  
Indio  
Swarat Signs, Morongo Valley  
Sweet Rock Ranch, Yucca Valley  
Sun Runner Magazine, Joshua Tree  
Tamara's at Home Inc., Yucca Valley

Tamma's Magic Mercantile, Yucca  
Valley  
The Tanning Saloon, Victorville  
Top Hat Liquor, Barstow  
Uhaul, Yucca Valley  
Unique Gardens Nursery, Yucca Valley  
Victorville Pawn Shop, Victorville  
Viola's Vision Hair Salon, Barstow  
Yokozuna Japanese Restaurant and  
Night Club, Yucca Valley  
Yucca Valley Tobacco Mart, Yucca Valley  
Zlux Skin Care, Helendale

## **CONCLUSION**

As Castle Mountains, Sand to Snow and Mojave Trails are among the 12 most recently designated national monuments, there is no formal county or federal economic data collected into the financial impact of their national monument status. But evidence of the economic benefits to gateway communities extends far beyond the anecdotal. Protected public lands drive strong economic growth and help western communities thrive. These lands benefit all Americans, whether they call our county home, or travel here for vacation.