



# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

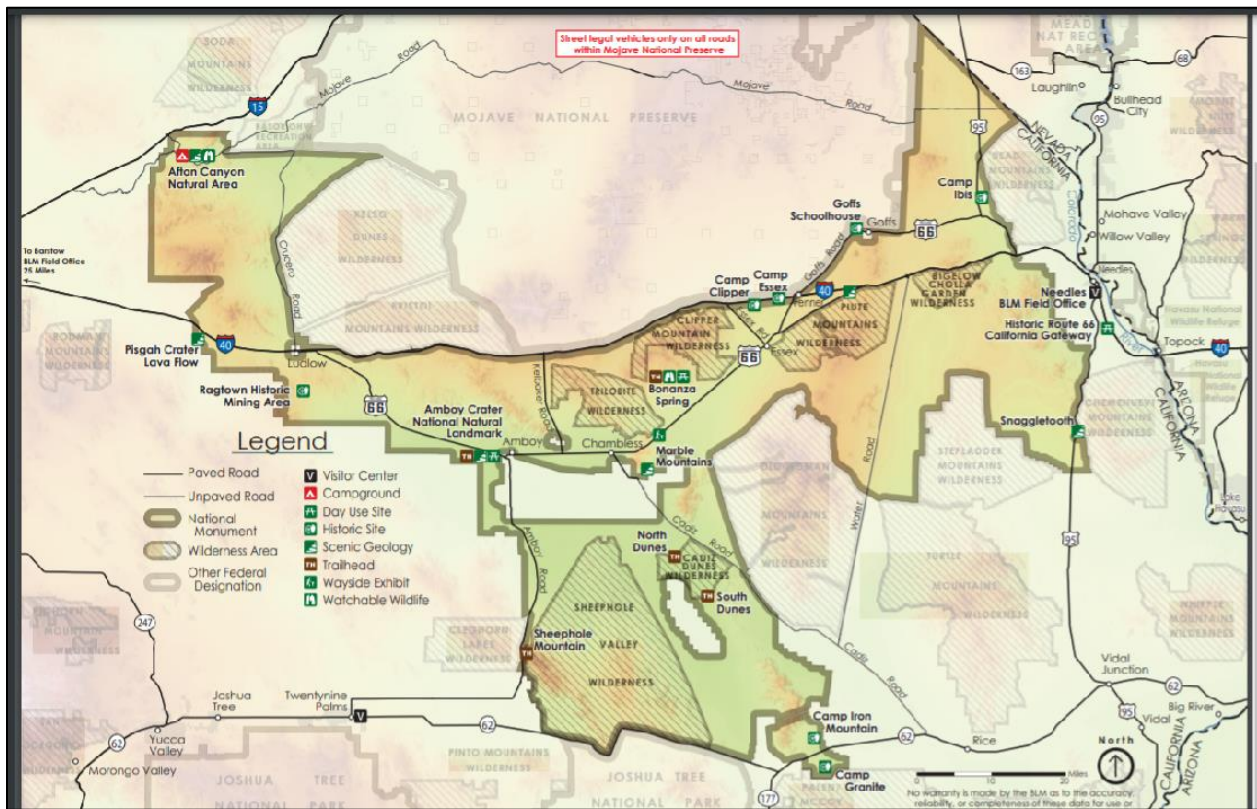
California  
2021: Annual Manager's Report

# Mojave Trails

## National Monument



# Map



# Accomplishments

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Mojave Trails National Monument kicked off 2021 with a social media campaign focused on the Monument's 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. This year's event was promoted by partners with a social distancing campaign and messaging that promotes responsible recreation. Visitation increased because of higher levels of tourism and an expanded social media presence on some of the monument's outstanding objects. Based on visitation at developed recreation sites, Mojave Trails National Monument had an estimated 103,286 visits and 101,000 visitor days in 2021. Visitation has been steadily increasing in recent years. Two new designations in the Monument, Amboy Crater National Recreation Trail, and the National Scenic Byway for Historic Route 66 from Needles to Barstow, additionally resulted in spikes in visitation



# Challenges

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In the Spring of 2021, the BLM Needles Field Office planned a large effort to reroute and restore user-created trail damage on sections of the Amboy Crater National Recreation Trail (NRT).

The BLM Needles Field Office received assistance through the California Conservation Crew to reroute and restore the NRT. The crew that came to work on this project was an all-female crew who worked in some unforgiving hot weather days. They camped on site in some extreme overnight windy conditions as well. The whole time they had an upbeat attitude and did not complain. As seen in the below photo the project was a success!



# Visitors

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Due to in some part to the COVID-19, Mojave Trails National Monument visitation increased in 2021 with an estimated 22,000 more visits than the previous year. Many Mojave Trails visitors hike the newly designated Amboy Crater National Recreation Trail and toured the California Historic Route 66 Needles to Barstow Scenic Byway. Other popular visitation sites had an increase in visits as well. The increased visitation this year was due to higher tourism, the discovery of Mojave Trails National Monument through partnership advertisement and increased public interest in spending time outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mojave Trails National Monument is also a growing destination for Overlanding. Overlanding is a growing well-known activity for recreationists who are considered self-contained. The popularity of self-contained travel increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the virtual working environment. Mojave Trails sees its highest levels of visitation during the winter/ spring. This is due to the mild weather from December through March. The Monument expects that as more visitors come to Mojave Trails, there will be an increase in user days and overnight dispersed camping. Currently there is only one overnight campground located within the National Monument.

Afton Canyon Campground managed by the Barstow Field Office is the one overnight camping opportunity where a fee is required. In the last year the Barstow Field Office reported an average of 1001 Recreational Use Permits (RUPs) where received.



# Partnerships

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Mojave Trails depends heavily on partnerships, volunteers, and external support to assist with service projects. This is due to the limited staff time that is shared between the three managing field offices and the National Monument. The Monument has long-term service agreements with the Boy Scouts of America, great relationships with our National Scenic Byway partner California Historic Route 66 Association, and invaluable research support from Mojave Desert Land Trust. Without these partnerships the Monument would not have the support needed to accomplish management goals.

This year the Needles and Barstow Field Offices worked closely with the Mojave Desert Land Trust to gain a better understanding of big horn sheep critical habitat and to finish up the dark sky light evaluation project. This information will help managers to optimize Big Horn Sheep habitat management and help with future planning.



# Science

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Mojave Trails National Monument has a very active cultural resource program. The cultural resource staff from the Needles Field Office spend a large part of their staff time working on Section 106 and 110 projects within the National Monument boundaries. The ongoing work is led by the Needles Field Office cultural resource staff who receive the assistance from Archeological Site Stewards, volunteers who are trained by the California Archeological Site Stewardship Program.

The following provides highlights of cultural resource work completed in Fiscal Year 2021.

## **Danby Dry Lakebed Project**

This project includes research documentation and search for collection of materials from prehistoric sites, recorded near Danby Dry Lake in 1983. Materials collected from the area are characteristic of the Lake Mojave period that dates from 8,000 to 10,000 years BP. Fossilized bone from a Pleistocene-age horse was also identified. Lake Mojave Period sites are relatively rare, and they have the potential to address numerous research domains. The BLM cultural program intends to return to the site to determine if any other formed tools are present there as well as evaluate the condition and density of the fossilized bone.

## **Camp Iron Mountain Stabilization Project Continued**

Desert Training Center, Iron Mountain Divisional Camp: Needles Field Office FO cultural staff and Alan Ash, Brick and Mortar Restoration Specialist, completed Phase 2 Stabilization and Restoration of Protestant Altar. The project involved rebuilding portions of the altar, installing a foundation, and construction of a subsurface water barrier.

# Climate Impacts

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The Mojave Trails National Monument is the driest landscape found Bureau-wide. However, drought is playing an increasingly influential role on some of the monument resources. Many of the springs located within the monument boundaries have gained scientific interest due to the hydrology and geology of the regional aquifers. The main interest in the hydrology is improved understanding geological connectivity. Information on the hydrological connectivity can lead to a better understanding of the aquifers found in the monument itself. Bureau of Land Management is working to answer many questions about water in the Monument.

In 2021 the Needles Field Office staff received funds for a redesign of the spring monitoring program. Information that is currently being collected will help determine impacts of elevated annual temperatures and drought conditions and provide improved data about vegetation changes, invasive growth rates and soil instability.





# Climate Resiliency

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Mojave Trails National Monument was established, in part, because of the area's extensive role in the history of the WWII era Desert Training Camps. The camps were sporadically spread across a massive area of the Mojave, Colorado, and Sonoran Deserts.

The Desert Training Center, also known as California–Arizona Maneuver Area, was a World War II training facility established in the Mojave Desert and Sonoran Desert, largely in Southern California and Western Arizona in 1942. Its mission was to train United States Army and Army Air Forces units and personnel to live and fight in the desert, to test and develop suitable equipment, and to develop tactical doctrines, techniques and training methods. Mojave Trails National Monument currently has five of those training camps within the boundary. However, interest in those camps is not just historic, they can also tell a story of an intensive use of the desert environment and the resiliency of the desert vegetation.

Please see the photo documentation below of Camp Iron Mountain.



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# Social and Environmental Justice

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During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic Mojave Trails National Monument halted face-to-face interactions with cities, partners, and tribes. In some cases, this meant meeting on many other platforms and in other cases this meant thinking about how to get back on track with new ways to meet.

This year has demonstrated that the BLM and Mojave Trails National Monument is always thinking about how to keep up with those essential relationships.

With assistance from the Needles Field Office and at the request of the Native American Land Conservancy (NALC), in the fall of 2021 the Monument Manager met with NALC's Director and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. This in-field meeting was essential to creating needed communication paths. NALC represents intertribal groups interested in the protection of off-reservation sacred sites. The organization's mission is to acquire, preserve, and protect Native American sacred lands.

An on-site field meeting, in the landscape where there were concerns, was an effective setting for meaningful communication between BLM and NALC. NALC manages a landscape that abuts the boundary of MTNM. They have strong interest in future planning for their parcel and that of their neighbor, Mojave Trails National Monument. Mojave Trails National Monument is very interested in keeping these conversations open and to make sure all voices are heard. Communications are ongoing. BLM hopes to continue to make progress on a draft BLM/NALC MOU that was drafted by the Needles Field Office prior to the pandemic.

## Events

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Mojave Trails National Monument is dynamic in providing an outlet for volunteer projects and education programming to the public. In 2021 the Monument hosted two research groups, an education talk, and a Boy Scouts of America service project.

The Boy Scouts of America have been a huge contributor to the Mojave Trails National Monument service projects for years. Last spring the Scouts came out to Mojave Trails to assist with a fencing and revegetation project. They blocked an area where vehicles were intruding into wilderness and helped restore the area vegetation. The Scout Troop camped overnight and then worked for five hours to install the fence and conceal the impacts of the past intrusion.





# NATIONAL CONSERVATION LANDS

## **Mojave Trails**

### **National Conservation Area**

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