



THE WILDLANDS CONSERVANCY

Ladies and Gentlemen---Good Morning

Senate Bill 2921 will preserve California's last large unprotected desert landscapes, including the geographic center, as Mojave Trails National Monument. This legislation will not impact millions of acres being studied or planned for renewable energy in California.

The Mojave Trails National Monument honors one of America's storied landscapes. This land includes the Creation Trail that's sacred to all seven Colorado River tribes. It includes the Mojave Trail, the route early pioneers forged through the steep red rock canyon walls of Afton Canyon along the Mojave River. It includes the National Trails Highway, which John Steinbeck traveled in search of America's soul and dubbed the Mother Road in *The Grapes of Wrath*. It covers a vast network of Jeep roads for exploring, sight seeing, and remote camping amid heroic scenery with names like: Sleeping Beauty Mountains and Pisgah Lava Flow. It encompasses hiking trails that wind into Amboy Crater, a National Natural Landmark; and trails leading to Trilobite fossil beds, home of 450 million year-old creatures that were among the first living things on Earth to have eyes. It includes valleys and vistas so vast that our hopes seem grand and our problems seem small. These iconic national treasures, including magnificent cactus gardens, are bundled into the Mojave Trails National Monument.

The Wildlands Conservancy answered our nation's call when Catellus Development Corporation was selling over 600,000 acres inside Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, 20 congressionally designated wilderness areas, and critical wildlife habitat. TWC donated \$45 million in private funds toward acquiring this land, which was called the largest land gift in American history. This gift became the hallmark of Vice President Gore's Legacy of the Land Program. Vice President Gore called these lands "some of the most pristine and scenic desert lands in the world." He also stated, "These stunning California Desert lands are being preserved for future generations through a true public-private partnership..."

[REFERRING TO MAP]

The monuments and wilderness areas in this legislation are outside of the Department of the Interior's 351,069 acre Solar Energy Study Areas as well as outside California's preliminary 2,771,807 acre Renewable Energy Study Area. All 14 federal fast-tracked wind, solar and transmission projects lie outside the conservation lands in this bill. Over 1 million acres of BLM applications for solar, wind and geothermal energy projects in California are outside this bill's proposed conservation lands. Additionally, environmentalists support solar energy on hundreds of thousands of acres of degraded, fallowed or abandoned farmlands throughout high solar insolation areas in California.



Opponents of this legislation say the Mojave Trails Monument will take a million acres out of potential solar development.

1. 468,672 acres of the 941,000 acre monument are in Wildlife Management Areas and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, 99% of which is restricted from disturbance.
2. 84,400 acres are in the Cady Mountains Wilderness Study Area and off limits to solar.
3. 103,221 acres that are outside the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern were donated and pledged for conservation.
4. Of the remaining 283,707 acres, less than 78,000 acres is under 5% slope and suitable for solar.

Conservationists initially recommended a 2.8-million-acre national monument that was scaled down to 941,000 acres to accommodate energy projects on the east, west, and south sides of the monument boundary, many of which will industrialize lands donated for conservation. TWC supports the legislation's provision for the acquisition of private inholdings inside Mojave Trails National Monument as a one to one land compensation for donated lands outside the monument repurposed for energy development.

This legislation honors the representations to protect this land (which you have copies of) made by President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, and BLM Director Tom Fry. Ten years ago prominent democrats and republicans alike saluted this donation as a patriotic private sector solution. We can protect America's natural heritage while developing renewable energy resources. We must do both.



David Myers
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The Wildlands Conservancy