

# California Desert Conservation Area



*30th Anniversary*  
*1976-2006*



*National Landscape Conservation System*  
Public Lands USA: Use, Share, Appreciate

# Celebrating 30 Years

The year 2006 marks the anniversary of the passage of a landmark piece of public land legislation – the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Often referred to as BLM’s “Organic Act,” which, in law means “fundamental,” FLPMA changed the way all public lands were to be managed and laid out a national mission for BLM.

Of all 300 million acres of public lands in the country at that time, Congress singled out only one area worthy of special designation and management: the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA).

In Section 601 of FLPMA, Congress and the President spelled out six reasons why the CDCA was “special,” starting with: “The Congress finds that the California Desert contains historical, scenic, archeological, environmental, biological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational, and economic resources that are uniquely located adjacent to an area of large population....”

Congress directed BLM to develop the first land use plan under FLPMA: “prepare and implement a comprehensive, long-range plan for the management, use, development, and protection of the public lands in the California Desert Conservation Area. Such plan shall take into account the principles of multiple use and sustained yield in providing for resource use and development, including, but not limited to, maintenance of environmental quality, rights-of-way, and mineral development.”

Citizen involvement was mandated through the establishment of BLM’s first multiple use advisory committee, charged with advising BLM on developing the “Desert Plan.” BLM, with the Advisory Committee’s help (now chartered as the Desert Advisory Council or DAC) met that challenge,

The original Desert Plan was signed by both outgoing Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus under President Jimmy Carter and incoming Secretary of the Interior James Watt under President Ronald Reagan. This unusual bi-partisan support was a testament to the plan’s balance and inclusiveness of all points of view.

Since then, the Desert Plan has been updated dozens of times to reflect the complexity of this thriving region. BLM has recently completed, with extensive public participation and help from the DAC, major amendments to update the plan in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Other plan amendments are underway to reflect changing public demands and need for additional environmental protection.

It’s a delicate balancing act – the CDCA contains 25 million acres within a region with a current population in excess of 20 million people. BLM’s 11 million acres of public lands provide critical open space for survival of wildlife and plant resources and protection of cultural and scenic values, while also providing access for recreation, powerlines, renewable energy, and other important public uses and projects.

Thirty years ago, Congress recognized these “pressures of increased use,” from “a rapidly growing population,” and acknowledged the desert environment is “extremely fragile, easily scarred, and slowly healed.”

Balancing public use and environmental protection was the task given to BLM in 1976, and this brochure outlines 30 years of progress. The next 30 are likely to be even more challenging – but with the involvement and help from all those who care about the California Desert, I believe the future is a bright one.



Mike Pool, California BLM State Director

## California Desert Conservation Area

Federal Land Policy and Management Act

Sec. 601. [43 U.S.C. 1781] (a) The Congress finds that—

- (1) the California desert contains historical, scenic, archeological, environmental, biological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational, and economic resources that are uniquely located adjacent to an area of large population;
- (2) the California desert environment is a total ecosystem that is extremely fragile, easily scarred, and slowly healed;
- (3) the California desert environment and its resources, including certain rare and endangered species of wildlife, plants, and fishes, and numerous archeological and historic sites, are seriously threatened by air pollution, inadequate Federal management authority, and pressures of increased use, particularly recreational use, which are certain to intensify because of the rapidly growing population of southern California;
- (4) the use of all California desert resources can and should be provided for in a multiple use and sustained yield management plan to conserve these resources for future generations, and to provide present and future use and enjoyment, particularly outdoor recreation uses, including the use, where appropriate, of off-road recreational vehicles;
- (5) the Secretary has initiated a comprehensive planning process and established an interim management program for the public lands in the California desert; and
- (6) to insure further study of the relationship of man and the California desert environment, preserve the unique and irreplaceable resources, including archeological values, and conserve the use of the economic resources of the California desert, the public must be provided more opportunity to participate in such planning and management, and additional management authority must be provided to the Secretary to facilitate effective implementation of such planning and management.



*Vast sandscapes, rugged canyon gorges, unusual wildlife, and swaying palms meld together creating a distinctive beauty for all Americans to enjoy.*



# CDCA Special Features



- 1 BLM District Office
- 5 BLM Field Offices
- Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument
- 69 Wilderness Areas
- 22 Wilderness Study Areas
- 14 Threatened or Endangered Wildlife Species
- 10 Threatened or Endangered Plant Species
- 85 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Desert Tortoise Natural Area
- Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area
- Historic U.S. Route 66
- 6 National Natural Landmarks
- Sand and Gravel, Gold, and other Mines
- 3 National Trails: Pacific Crest, Old Spanish, and San Juan Bautista
- Bradshaw Historic Trail
- 7 Herd Areas for 340 Wild Burros/180 Wild Horses
- Geothermal, Wind, and Solar Energy Facilities
- 10 Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas
- 8 Energy Production and Utility Corridors
- 9 Watchable Wildlife Sites
- 4 Long-term Visitor Areas
- 11 Campgrounds



# California Desert District

The CDCA is managed by BLM's California Desert District (CDD), under the BLM California State Office in Sacramento. The CDD, headquartered in Moreno Valley, oversees five Field Offices, based geographically throughout Southern California in Barstow, El Centro, Needles, Palm Springs and Ridgecrest.



Some 200 Federal employees from a broad array of disciplines take care of these 11 million acres of public lands. They include archeologists, biologists, geologists, range conservationists, realty specialists, recreation planners, and many others. A special category is the cadre of desert rangers, uniformed officers given law enforcement authority through FLPMA, the first such authority ever given to BLM.

The CDCA is managed under a unique landscape planning framework, consisting of "zoning" land by classification for the desired use level. Within that framework, hundreds of specific land management decisions have been made over the past 30 years ensuring a balance of protection, development, and public use.

A major accomplishment has been completion of route designations. Thousands of miles have been inventoried and decisions made designating routes as open, closed, or limited for public use. Another key aspect of the plan is designation of "Areas of Critical Environmental Concern" a special land use designation authorized by Congress in FLPMA. First applied to the CDCA, there are now 85 ACECs in the Desert, providing special management and protection for cultural, biological, botanical, scenic, and historic sites.

## CDCA Acres at a Glance

25 million acres total

- 11 million BLM Public Lands
- 5.3 million National Parks
- 4.2 million Private/Other Lands
- 3.2 million Military Bases
- 1.1 million State of California
- 120,000 Indian Lands
- 8,000 Wildlife Refuges

## CDD's Mission

*To protect the natural, historic, recreation and economic riches, and scenic beauty of the California Desert*



# Partnerships

**B**LM works closely with the other land management agencies in the Desert region, including the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Department of Defense, and numerous State, county and local agencies, as well as private land owners. Native American tribal governments are also closely consulted on a “nation to nation” basis.

In addition, BLM enjoys numerous partnerships with private organizations. Examples range from wildlife protection groups such as the Bighorn Institute, to land conservation groups such as The Wildlands Conservancy, to recreation groups such as the American Sand Association. Desert restoration efforts with the Student Conservation Association, tourism efforts such as the United Desert Gateway, and numerous “Friends” groups who help care for special areas are all part of the more than 125 formal partnerships currently in effect in the Desert.

Perhaps BLM’s most visible partnership is the citizen advisory council established by Congress in FLPMA. The Desert Advisory Council consists of 15 members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. They represent a cross-section of desert interests, including elected officials, environmental protection, nonrenewable resources, recreation, renewable resources, transportation and rights-of-way, wildlife, and public-at-large. These dedicated volunteers meet quarterly throughout the Desert to gather public input, discuss programs and projects, and advise the BLM on the ongoing and emerging natural resource issues facing the region.



## *Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*

*85 ACECs in the CDCA, including:*

- Afton Canyon
- Trona Pinnacles
- Desert Tortoise
- Harper Dry Lake
- Patton’s Iron Mtn Camp
- Big Morongo Canyon
- Amargosa Canyon
- Chuckwalla Bench
- Dinosaur Trackway
- Indian Pass
- Plank Road
- Pilot Knob
- In-ko-pah Mountains



# Bureau of Land Management

[www.blm.gov/ca](http://www.blm.gov/ca)





## California State Office

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Mike Pool, California State Director

## California Desert District Office

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Moreno Valley, CA 92553  
951/697-5200  
Steve Borchard, District Manager

### Legend

-  Public Lands
-  District Boundary
-  Field Office Boundary
-  County Boundary

**Ridgecrest Field Office**  
300 S. Richmond Road  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555  
760/384-5400  
Hector Villalobos, Field Manager

**Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office**  
690 W. Garnet Avenue, PO Box 581260  
North Palm Springs, CA 92258-1260  
760/251-4800  
Gail Acheson, Field Manager

**Barstow Field Office**  
2601 Barstow Road  
Barstow, CA 92311  
760/252-6000  
Roxie Trost, Field Manager

**Needles Field Office**  
1303 S. Highway 95  
Needles, CA 92363  
760/326-7000  
Larry Morgan, Field Manager

**El Centro Field Office**  
1661 S. 4th Street  
El Centro, CA 92243  
760/337-4400  
Vicki Wood, Field Manager



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