

Avi Kwa Ame National Monument Brochure



By: Friends of Avi Kwa Ame

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MONUMENT ESTABLISHMENT

The Avi Kwa Ame National Monument was established on March 21, 2023 by President Biden through a proclamation under his authority in the 1906 Antiquities Act. The national monument spans approximately 506,814 acres of lands managed by the Interior Department’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service. (NPS). All of the land reserved by the proclamation is currently owned by the Federal government. Existing private lands within the boundary are not included in the monument. The NPS and the BLM will manage the monument cooperatively through a management agreement.



The Monument proclamation calls for the establishment of an advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act with the specific purpose of providing information and advice regarding the development of the management plan and management of the monument. It calls for the advisory committee to consist of a fair and balanced representation of interested stakeholders. A majority of the committee membership is required to be made up of members of Tribal Nations with a historical connection to the lands within the monument, with the remaining members representing local governmental entities, recreational users, conservation organizations, wildlife or hunting organizations, the scientific community, business owners, and local citizens.



MONUMENT PURPOSES

- **Preserve the diverse array of natural and scientific resources**, ensuring that the cultural, prehistoric, historic, and scientific values of this area endure for the benefit of all Americans.
- **Protect native plants and wildlife**, including federal, state and county protected species. Biodiversity conservation is one of the primary management objective of the Monument.
- **Protect sacred Native American cultural sites, values and practices** and gives the associated tribes an important role in the planning and management of the Monument.
- **Ensure continued access** to hunting, camping, hiking, birdwatching, photography, motorized touring, stargazing, off-highway vehicle use on designated routes, and other recreational activities.
- **Honor** existing private landowner rights.
- **Protect the spectacular viewscapes, socioeconomic and rural character** of the area.
- **Protect dark night skies** which exist in many areas of the Monument.
- **Prevent fragmentation** of the natural and cultural landscape caused by large-scale development (e.g. industrial energy development such as wind projects) on public lands.
- **Allow for** aerial surveys, wildlife infrastructure installation and maintenance and a wide range of other wildlife management activities.
- **Withdraws** the area from mineral entry.



MONUMNET OVERVIEW

The Avi Kwa Ame National Monument contains some of the most visually stunning, biologically diverse and culturally significant lands in the entire Mojave Desert. In travelling through the area, you are struck by the lush desert vegetation, rich biodiversity and the unbroken natural landscapes.



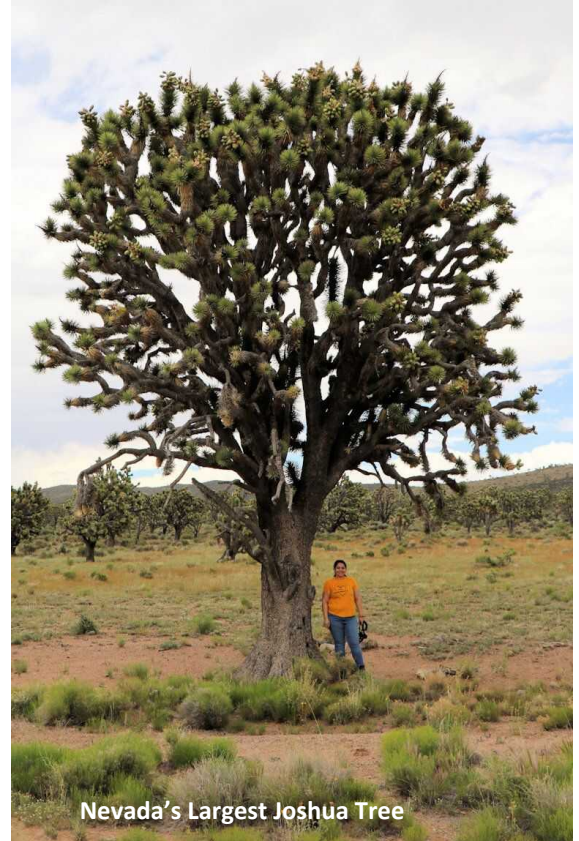
The Monument conserves the natural, cultural, visual and recreational resources and values of this special piece of the East Mojave Desert in Nevada for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Monument protects an expanse of relatively intact East Mojave Desert ecosystem in Nevada that provides continuity to the other parts of the East Mojave Desert ecosystem already protected on the California side of the state line. The Monument creates an essential protected corridor that connects the Mojave National Preserve, Castle Mountains National Monument, Mojave Trails National Monument and Dead Mountain Wilderness Area in California with Lake Mead National Recreation Area in Nevada. This serves as a contiguous block of habitat of sufficient quality and quantity to promote the survival, growth, reproduction, and maintenance of viable populations of Mojave Desert flora and fauna



As important as this area is ecologically, it is equally significant as a cultural landscape. The Monument is a “living laboratory” showcasing the progression of human history in the Eastern Mojave Desert, a literal crossroads of the American West. There are significant elements of Native American, Western-American, and Mining History, including the historic Walking Box Ranch which figures prominently in the history of movie making in America.

This entire area is considered sacred by the ten Yuman speaking tribes as well as the Hopi and Chemehuevi Paiute. For the Yuman tribes, the area is empirically tied to their creation, cosmology, and well-being. Spirit Mountain, called Avi Kwa Ame by the Mojave Tribe, is located on the eastern boundary of the Monument. It is designated a Traditional Cultural Property on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its religious and cultural importance.

The Monument further provides a wide variety of recreational experiences and opportunities for the public to explore and enjoy, including hiking, backpacking, wildlife viewing, scenic driving, as well as opportunities for solitude, dark night skies, and personal discovery



Nevada's Largest Joshua Tree

The shrub canopy of the main Monument Valley floor formed by extensive cover of creosote-bursage scrub is a critical habitat element in the harsh Mojave Desert, and represents outstanding desert tortoise habitat, as well as habitat for other sensitive species. The scrub canopy provides several biologically valuable services by: moderating microclimate (shade, reduced temperatures, and evaporation), reducing heat loss, and biogeochemical processing and cycling. The shrub canopy is also the primary location for seed-foraging by rodents and birds, and insects foraging by birds and lizards. The vegetation is diverse and there is an abundance of burrows, including desert tortoise, kangaroo rats, pocket mice, and white-tailed antelope squirrels.



Above the Valley floor is a transition to a Montane Shrub community which is dominated by blackbrush, Joshua trees, Mojave Yucca, and less frequently, Banana Yucca. This community is found on the upper bajadas and slopes of the mountain ranges. Blackbrush typically occurs between 3,800 to over 5,500 feet. The Joshua Tree Forests within the Monument are among the most significant ones on the planet. At the higher elevations of the Montane Shrub community Utah juniper and single-leaf pinyon pine are often present. Associated shrubs may include spiny hopsage, Mormon tea, shadscape, and desert thorn.



Washes are visible green oases in the arid Monument landscape. Larger washes support catclaw, cheesebush, and sweetbush. The diverse invertebrate communities in these microclimates support higher tropic complexity than in the surrounding uplands. Desert washes provide optimal microclimates, cover from predators and extreme environmental conditions, food resources, and serve as a critical source of water.

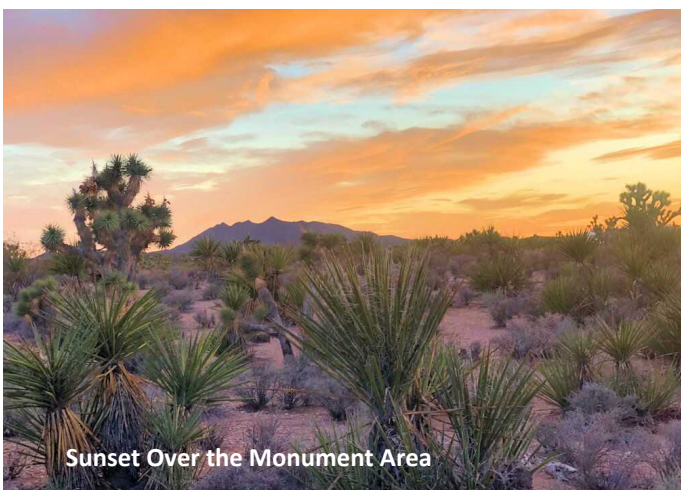
There are also a number of springs within the Monument, the most notable are Pine, Hiko, Granite, and McCullough Springs. Springs support a suite of plants unable to survive in drier areas, and offer unique habitat for birds, spring snails, and some aquatic species. Springs also serve as important stops for larger animals, such as bighorn sheep, which travel to springs for water and lush vegetation, and bats, which are attracted by insects and open water. Because of the unique habitat and number of species dependent on springs, their preservation is important to maintaining high biodiversity and critical ecological linkages.



Board, Laughlin Town Advisory Board, Clark County Commission, Boulder City Council, and the Henderson City Council.

The Nature Conservancy’s Mojave Desert Ecological Assessment was used for the *ecological analysis* as it provides a rigorous, scientifically sound basis for determining where the highest overall ecological values intersect. This Assessment identifies areas that are important for the continued survival of the full suite of the Mojave’s biological diversity. The Assessment divides all Mojave Desert lands into four categories: Ecologically Core, Ecologically Intact, Moderately Degraded, & Highly Converted. The lands included within the proposed Monument boundary represent the two highest conservation categories—Ecologically Core (around 29%) and Ecologically Intact (around 68%). Only about 3% of the boundary include lands classified as Moderately Degraded and these are mostly old mining and previously disturbed sites.

The ecologically core category include lands with low levels of human disturbance which supports conservation targets and whose protection is critical for the long-term conservation of the Mojave Desert Ecoregion’s biological diversity. The ecologically intact category are lands with low levels of human disturbance or which support conservation targets and which requires a level of protection that will enable it to continue to support ecological processes and provide connectivity.



Sunset Over the Monument Area



Highland Range – East Side

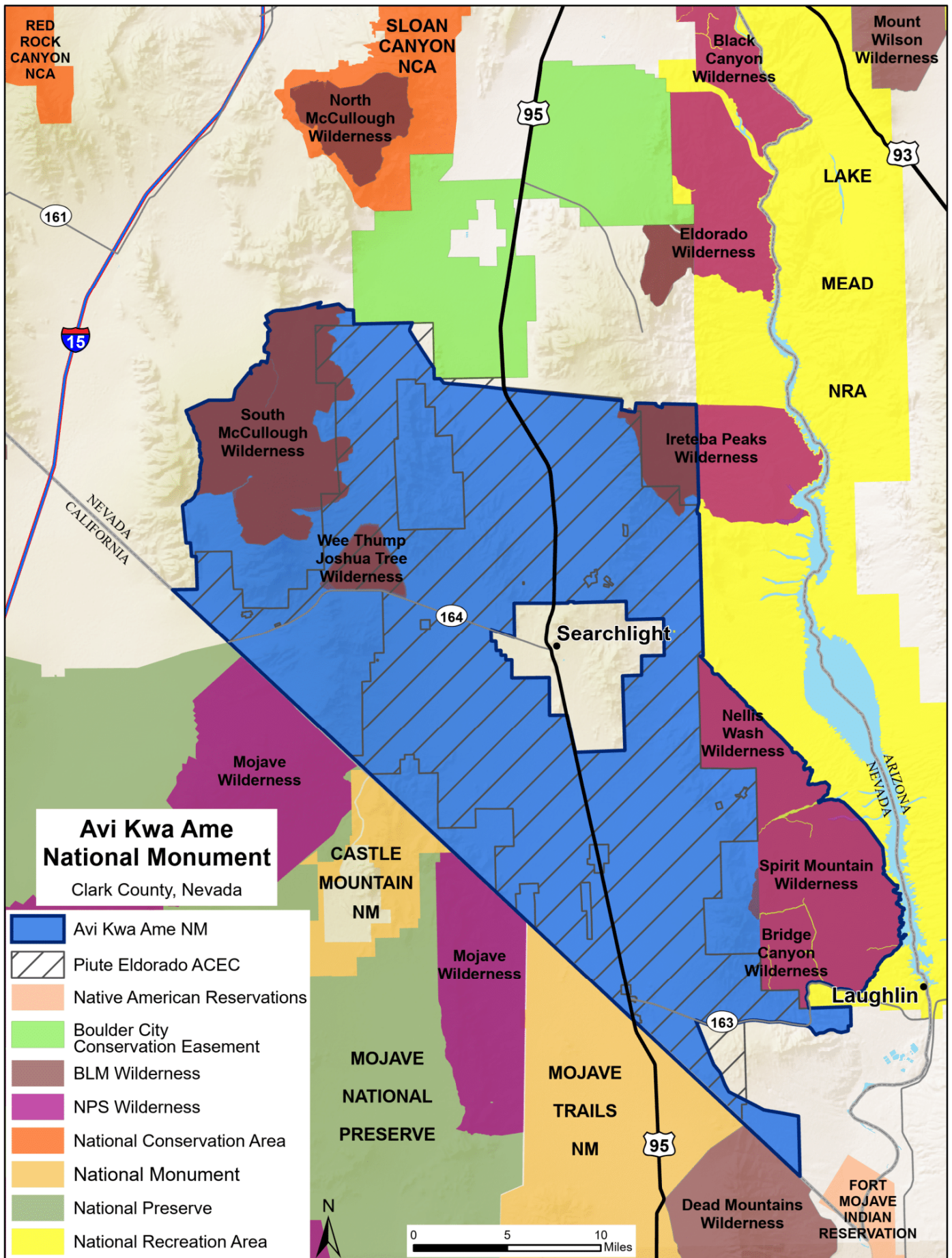
As the Assessment points out, “the relative lack of disturbance is of great importance, because the Mojave’s arid climate, delicate soils, and slow pace of ecological succession render it exceedingly fragile and slow to recover when disturbed. Protecting these intact landscapes will be essential if the full complement of native species and communities are to persist into the future. Conserving connections between species preferred habitat allows individual movements and multi-generational dispersal, thereby increasing long-term species viability.” Because most of the land within the proposed boundary are relatively undisturbed and connect to other protected lands, the Monument offers the opportunity to provide species and communities with the space and interconnectedness they may need to help adapt to climate change. Maintaining landscape integrity across elevational gradient and transition zones increases the ecosystem’s resilience to long-term environmental changes, such as changing temperatures and precipitation.



Ireteba Peaks—Teddy-Bear Cholla



Spirit Mountain in Distance





Spring Green-up



McCullough Spring



Backcountry Exploring



Highland Range—South End

ECOLOGICAL AND GEOLOGIC RESOURCES

Few places in the American Southwest can rival the pristine quality of the region. It is a critically important ecological area because of the work done over the years to provide permanent protection for key components of the ecosystem. With its habitat linkages, wildlife corridors, and intact ecosystems, the area offers exceptional opportunities to study plant and animal movement and connections between diverse natural systems, especially in the context of climate change.

The Monument boundaries are designed to connect water flow and wildlife corridors and provide connectivity with other key components of the ecosystem such as the Wee Thump and South McCullough Wilderness Areas, Castle Mountains National Monument, Mojave National Preserve, Spirit Mountain Traditional Cultural Property, Piute/Eldorado Valley ACEC, Walking Box Ranch conservation easements, and the recent work to restore the cultural integrity of the Walking Box Ranch itself.



The Monument focuses on lands that support a broad range of rare and common species, as well as areas that remain relatively undisturbed. Maintaining the integrity of this landscape, both within the Monument itself and through connections to adjacent areas, will be critical for long-term survival of the ecosystem. The topographic diversity in the area encompasses the wide variety of niches and microhabitats that allow current resident species to survive in an otherwise harsh desert landscape.



Clark County, in their Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, designates most of this area under the “Intensively Managed” lands category which speaks to its importance in sensitive species management and recovery.

Plants/Unique Grasslands: The area is a hotspot of botanical diversity. The uplands part of the Monument contains a unique arid grassland community in Nevada and extending into California. The unique plant assemblage includes 28 species of native grasses, about half of which are rare. This area contains the only stands of diverse C4 perennial grasslands west of the Colorado River, a subtropical grassland that is normally found in the Sonoran Desert uplands in Arizona and Mexico. Grass species common in this plant community flower and seed during the warm seasons of summer and fall, especially after strong monsoon rainfall events.



Joshua Tree Forest: The Monument forms the eastern terminus of the world’s largest Joshua tree forest. The area is home to some of the oldest and largest Joshua trees on the planet. These ancient ones have grown tall in the silence of the desert, some rising to more than 30 feet over 900 years. Nevada’s largest Joshua Tree is found in the Monument area.

Desert Tortoise Nevada Special Status Species: The area contains critical habitat for the desert tortoise. The area has the largest area of high quality tortoise habitat in the State of Nevada and may also possess the highest desert tortoise population densities. Moreover, this high-density population of desert tortoise is contiguous with a large, high-density area in California. In addition to the Desert Tortoise, there are 34 additional special listed as Nevada Sensitive Species within the Monument area.



Bighorn Sheep: The Monument lands would serve as an important migratory corridor for desert bighorn sheep. A herd of desert bighorn sheep lives on the steep, rocky slopes of the Castle Mountains and the New York Mountains. They and other wildlife traverse the area between the Piute Mountains and the New York Mountains and north to the South McCullough Mountains. Some also move east to the Newberry and Eldorado Mountains. The Highland Range within the Monument is designated as Crucial Bighorn Habitat.



Desert Bighorn Sheep



Curve Billed Thrasher

Important Birding Area: The area has been designated by Audubon as an “Important Birding Area.” The area has a unique Sonoran bird fauna that is more typical of Arizona --Gilded flickers, Harris’ Hawks and a possible resident population of curved-billed thrashers. The area is also important for migratory birds due to its proximity to foraging habitat, nesting habitat, and to the Colorado River, one of the most significant features in the Pacific Flyway.

Golden Eagles/Raptors: The area contains one of the highest known density of golden eagles in Nevada. In addition, various species of raptors, which use diverse habitat types, reside in the Monument area: American kestrel, bald eagle, prairie falcon, barn owl, burrowing owl, Cooper’s hawk, ferruginous hawk, merlin, northern goshawk, northern harrier, northern saw-whet owl, osprey, peregrine falcon, red-tailed hawk, rough-legged hawk, sharp-shinned hawk, short-eared owl, turkey vulture, and western screech owl.



Golden Eagle



Harris Hawk

Biological (Cryptobiotic) Soil Crust: Since much of the Avi Kwa Ame landscape has received relatively little disturbance over the years, it has retained a healthy biological, or cryptobiotic) soil crust overall. This biological soil crust is a living soil that's comprised mostly of cyanobacteria, as well as lichen, moss, fungi, and other bacteria. Cryptobiotic soil has been dubbed the 'protector of the desert'. The slow-growing cyanobacteria move through wet soil to form a complex web of sticky fibers. This web is what fuses soil particles together, creating a thick, hard layer for new growth, which also helps to prevent erosion. And, this layer has maximum water absorption thanks to its sponge-like make up. This function helps to regulate water runoff and reduce evaporation.

As a result, this increase in human activity and disturbance to the crust could lead to significant damage due to wind and water erosion, as well as nutrient loss. When damaged, the colony of organisms could take **several hundred to 5,000+ years** to recolonize and reform in arid places (you read that right.) Biological soil crust is the lifeline of the desert because it plays a vital role in soil stability, moisture, and nutrient cycles. Without it, nothing can grow and the plant and animal life that rely on this, would not survive. Also, humans would not be able to fare well in the desert without this intelligent soil crust.

Raptor species are protected by State and Federal laws. In addition, bald eagle, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, flammulated owl, golden eagle, northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, prairie falcon, and short-eared owl are Nevada Department of Wildlife species of special concern and are target species for conservation as outlined by the Nevada Wildlife Action Plan.

Gila Monster: Elevations up to 4,300 feet within the Monument area are important habitat for the Gila monster. Its range is limited to regions that receive several inches of rain during the summer months and have mild winters and hot summers. The Gila monster spends a significant portion of its life underground and is most active during the spring.

Important Water Sources: There are a number of natural springs and guzzler water developments that provide precious water for the wildlife found throughout the area. The most prominent springs are Pine Spring, Hiko Spring, Granite Spring, and McCullough Spring.

Biological Soil Crusts: Soil biological crust is a mix of organisms that occupy and protect the surface of the soil in most desert ecosystems. The organisms often include filamentous and non-filamentous cyanobacteria, mosses, lichens, liverworts and fungi. Biological crusts protect the soil and hold weeds at bay. These living soil crusts naturally sequester carbon dioxide, and thus these regions are a pool for carbon that can help offset climate change impacts, as long as it is not mechanically disturbed. Biological soil crusts are common throughout the proposed Monument boundaries.



Hiko Springs Canyon

Geologic Resources: There are several prominent geologic features within the Monument. The volcanic Highland Range on the northeast section of the Monument is about 10 miles long and remarkably rugged and



Granite formations in Eldorado Mountains

rugged. The multicolored volcanic peaks tower several thousand feet above the surrounding valley and are remarkably scenic and is a designated Crucial Bighorn Sheep Habitat area.

The Nevada portion of the scenic volcanic Castle Mountains are within the Monument. They rise to a height of over 5,000 feet, presenting a picturesque skyline visible from many locations within the Monument. Hart Peak is the prominent feature in the Castle Mountains skyline at 5,543 feet. The jagged, steep, rust-colored Dead Mountains in the southern part of the Monument rise to elevations of 3,598 feet at Mt. Manchester on the southern part of the Monument.

Scenic Canyons: There are a number of scenic canyon areas within the proposed Monument lands, the most spectacular being Hiko Springs Canyon. Hiko Springs is a natural spring and a hike through the canyon downstream takes you through some spectacular scenery and some ancient American petroglyphs.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

The area is a ‘living laboratory’ showcasing the progression of human history in the Eastern Mojave Desert. It is truly the crossroads of the American west.

Native American Association

The entire area within the proposed National Monument is within the viewshed of Spirit Mountain and considered sacred by the 10 Yuman speaking tribes which include the Mohave, Hualapai, Yavapai, Havasupai, Quechan, Maricopa, Pai Pai, Halchidhoma, Cocopah, and Kumeyaay. The area is empirically tied to their creation, cosmology, and well-being. Spirit Mountain, called Avi Kwa Ame by the Mojave Tribe, is located on the eastern boundary of the Monument, mostly within Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Spirit Mountain is also a sacred site to the Hopi and Chemehuevi Paiute. The Chemehuevi Paiute see the area as a cultural corridor that is sung about in their sacred Salt Songs. The part of Spirit Mountain not within Lake Mead is included in the Monument boundaries.



Spirit Mountain itself was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a **Traditional Cultural Property (TCP)** on September 8, 1999 in recognition of its religious and cultural importance. This designation followed a 3-year process of negotiations between the National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management with the affected Native Tribes. It became the first listed TCP in Nevada. A TCP is an area that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community. The Spirit Mountain TCP is rooted in the Yuman community's history and is important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community, which the proposed Monument will protect, along with the larger area of association.

What distinguishes this type of significance for a TCP is the historical and ongoing relationship between the property and the cultural practices, values, and beliefs of the people for whom the property has importance. The concept of tradition refers to aspects of culture—values, beliefs, customs, and practices—that have been passed down from previous generations, and thus are grounded in past (historical) patterns of thought and behavior of the community. These traditions are also evident in current behavior patterns of a living community—there is continuity between earlier and contemporary beliefs, customs, and practices of the living community. Anthropologists refer to this quality of cultural systems as “cultural continuity.”

Spirit Mountain (Avi Kwa Ame) is the center of the Yuman tribes’ creation and figures predominately within their spiritual ideology. The Yuman Tribes believe the mountain is the spiritual birthplace of the tribes, the place where ancient ancestors emerged into this world. In order to be identified and listed in the National Register, a property has to have a specified boundary. In establishing a boundary for the Spirit Mountain TCP nomination, the tribes recognized the legal need for a formal boundary but were clear there is a much larger area which they consider to be associated with their religious beliefs and practices.

According to the Mojave Tribe, which serves as caretaker of the mountain and surrounding landscapes on behalf of the other Yuman tribes, the area within the proposed Monument is physically and spiritually connected to the viewshed and landscapes that surround Avi Kwa Ame. They believe this connection is through the mountain peaks and ranges surrounding Avi Kwa Ame. They say “the physical network of Mojave trails and cultural sites (tangible cultural resources) and the corresponding Mohave Bird Songs and Creation Stories (intangible cultural resources) links their tribe and religious traditions,” to this important landscape.



Another important area to the Mojave and Chemehuevi Tribes religious and cultural traditions is the Dead Mountains in the southern portion of the proposed Monument lands. The portion of the Dead Mountains in California is officially designated by Congress as the Dead Mountains Wilderness Area. However, the Nevada portion of the Dead Mountains and the important Granite Springs site area, has no protected status and, therefore, has been included within the proposed Monument. It should be noted that the Dead Mountains Wilderness Area was specifically designated to provide protection of Native American values. The Dead Mountains contains areas of both sacred and ritual importance that are associated with traditional cosmogony, delineate religious events, embody religious figures, and define burial places. These important values are subject to the provisions of the American Indian Religious Act. Additionally, there are biological values as well. Bighorn sheep populations utilize the Granite Springs area. The Homer Mountain Ocotillo Plant Assemblage and the Piute Valley Smoke Tree Assemblage also occur here. There are important petroglyphs elements at Granite Springs.

Also of importance in the Monument area is the **Salt Song Trail**. The cosmological significance to tribes are encoded in songs that describe events from the past. These songs are known as Salt Songs, which describe the experiences of ancestors and spirit beings, while referencing particular places on the landscape. Many of these songs are sacred and used at memorials and other ceremonies for cultural and spiritual purposes. Hundreds of Salt Songs are sung by Mojave, Chemehuevi, and other Southern Paiute (Nuwuvi) tribes.



The Mojave, Chemehuevi and other Southern Paiutes possess creation songs and Salt Songs that describe the movements of spirit beings that travel across the desert, marking places and providing the features, such as water, natural resources, or rock features, that make these places distinctive.

Salt Songs are not only a ritual song cycle, but an actual physical imprint. The sacred landscape along its route exist in dreams and the spirit world and also in the natural world—a cultural landscape linked by a network of connected physical trails. In geographical terms, the song cycle describes travel from landmark to landmark through the desert.

When someone passes away, their friends and family move them along this Puha Path by singing over a period of days, a series of Salt Songs and Bird Songs. Each set of songs moves the departed person along the trail to a specified physical or spiritual place. The departed person only moves along the Salt Song Trail and movement is directly tied to the singing of Salt Songs"



Members of the Mojave Tribe gather to meet U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez-Masto

No formal cultural resources surveys have been conducted for the entire proposed Monument lands, but important cultural resources are known to exist from tribal information and the result of the environmental reviews for a number of proposed (and cancelled) projects in the past. Historical trash scatters and prehistoric lithic scatters and sites, including rock shelters, petroglyphs, and quarry sites, are known throughout the area.



Mojave Singers & Dancers

Historic Cattle Grazing/Walking Box Ranch : Cattle Ranching in the Monument area began in the first decade of the 20th century when the Rock Springs Land and Cattle Company (RSLCC) began to move cattle into the Paiute Valley from their headquarters in California. The Walking Box Ranch became their base of operations. The grazing rights associated with the Walking Box Ranch extended north to Railroad Pass, east to the Colorado River, south to the Newberry Mountains, and west across the Crescent Peaks to the California border.

The RSLCC suffered financial reverses as a result of several seasons of drought in the 1920s and decided to sell its assets, including land, livestock, grazing and water rights. As part of this disposition, the Nevada ranch lands were given to John Woolf. The ranch was then purchased by Rex Bell in May 1931. Walking Box Ranch continued as a working cattle ranch until Bell sold it to rancher Karl “Cap” Weikel in 1951. Weikel sold the ranch to Viceroy Gold Corporation in 1991, which restored the ranch house for use as an executive retreat. The Nature Conservancy acquired the property in the 1990s and the BLM purchased the ranch and surrounding ranch site in 2004. The property was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. The BLM has restored the historic integrity of the ranch and will be offering public interpretive tours of the ranch.



The most colorful part of the Walking Box Ranch history was when film stars Rex Bell and his wife Clara Bow owned the property. The remote mystique of the Mojave Desert is what attracted the Rex Bell and Clara Bow to purchase the ranch, who craved solitude and a way of escaping the rat race. Bell and Bow constructed a two-story, 5,060-square-foot home in the Spanish-Colonial Revival style popular in Southern California during the 1920s and 1930s. Walking Box Ranch gets its name from the ranch brand, a camera box on a tripod. Structures on the property include the house, a barn, caretaker’s residence, guesthouse, tennis court, a 60- by 120-foot swimming pool and a 575-square-foot cactus garden. On the first floor, a grand living room features a dramatic stone fireplace; upstairs, Rex and Clara’s bedroom overlooks the Joshua tree forest.



Rex Bell and Clara Bow were some of the biggest film actors of the 1920s and 30s. Rex Bell acted in a variety of films, but soon earned a reputation of starring in roles he had a personal affinity for: Westerns. By the late 1920s, Rex Bell went on to act as the lead in many westerns, like *The Cowboy Kid*, *Battling with Buffalo Bill*, *The Man from Arizona*, *Tombstone*, and *Lonestar*. Bell married Clara Bow in 1931, who had earned the reputation of “The It Girl” in Hollywood. She earned her success in the silent film industry initially before transitioning to “talkies”, or films with audio capability. Typically playing characters who embodied sexuality or broke traditional gender roles, Bow became one of the most famous celebrities of her time and even inspired the famous Betty Boop cartoon character.



Walking Box Ranch Barn



Both of their careers took off in a way they couldn’t anticipate. Considering they were some of the most famous actors of their time, their home soon became the most famous ranch in the state of Nevada, attracting other Hollywood icons. The Walking Box Ranch was an escape they all craved, and the ranch soon became a regular hangout for Clark Gable and Carole Lombard, along with Errol Flynn, Lionel Barrymore and John Wayne. Together, Rex and Clara retired from the film industry and lived at their fortress, where they were perfectly content with cowboying for real, tending to elaborate rock and cactus gardens, and drinking in every minute of silence they had created for themselves in their “Desert Paradise.” Here, they raised two sons, Rex Jr. and George. Bell and Bow separated in the mid-1940s and Bell went on to serve as Nevada’s lieutenant governor from 1955 until his death in 1962.

Historic Mojave Trail/Road: In the southern part of the proposed Monument is a section of the historic Mojave Trail/Road. The Trail was originally used by Mojave and other Native Americans to transport goods from the southwest to trade with the Chumash and other coastal tribes. This trail originated at a crossing at the Colorado River and connected numerous springs and water sources throughout the Mojave Desert that formed the backbone of the Mojave Trail.



Remains of Fort Piute



Dead Mountain

Between 1857 and 1859, Lt. Edward F. Beale surveyed for and established a wagon road from Fort Defiance, New Mexico Territory along the thirty-fifth parallel to the Colorado River. As part of his survey, Beale used 25 camels imported from the Middle East to better deal with the desert conditions that he would encounter. Once entering the Mojave Valley, he crossed the Colorado River at what would become known as Beale's Crossing and followed the Mojave Trail west. What he called Beale's Crossing was indeed the indigenous crossing used for centuries by Native Americans that signified the eastern terminus of the Mojave Trail. Due to the early use of the Beale Road, relations between emigrants and the local Tribes resulted in the establishment of Fort Mojave, located on the eastern banks of the Colorado River at this crossing. Due to early problems with supplying such a remote military installation, the Mojave Trail was modified into the Mojave Road, also called the Government Road



This route later served to some extent in the westward expansion. In the 1860s, the Mojave Road served both civilian and military travelers, mail carriers and supply wagons between Arizona Territory and California. The U.S. Army built a series of small military posts along this important supply route, including Fort Piute, to protect key water sources and provide assistance for travelers.

Today, the Mojave Road is a popular four-wheel drive road and is unique in that for most of its 138 mile stretch is in much the same condition as the pioneers would have found it, and a lot of the trail passes through country that is virtually unchanged since prehistoric times.

The United States Army Camel Corps 1856-66: The Camel Corps came into existence in 1855 after Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, became convinced that camels could supplement horses and mules in the transportation of military supplies and heavy weapons, and he convinced Congress to authorize money to bring 75 camels and their drivers on a Navy vessel from Egypt to the United States to serve as frontier military beasts of burden because of their adaptability to desert heat, drought and food. It was thought by Davis and other high-ranking Army officers that camels would prove superior to horses and mules during marches through sandy and rocky terrain of the American West. The notion was that camels could carry heavier loads than mules or horses, that they could subsist on comparatively less food and water in the desert, and that they were better suited anatomically to a desert environment.

Lt. Edward Beale, a navy officer who years later would become an Army Brigadier General, used 25 of the camels in his expedition to blaze a new wagon route through the Southwest. The camels' shakedown cruise would take them and their handlers from Texas and through New Mexico, Arizona and the southern tip of Nevada, along a route that would, in part, follow what much later would become Route 66. As mentioned in the previous discussion of the Mojave Road, they crossed the Colorado River into Nevada north to Fort Mohave on October 18, 1857 at what would become known as Beale's Crossing and followed the Mojave Trail west to southern California. The expedition had lasted nearly four months and covered over twelve hundred miles.

Even though camels had proven themselves to be superior to horses and mules in the desert, the Civil War was approaching, and the people who supported the Camel Corps went off in different directions. Time, unfortunately—in the persona of American politics, caught up with the camels. In 1861 the Southern states seceded and Jefferson Davis was elected President of the Confederacy. The camels, based in Texas, were in the possession of Davis' government, but there was little use the Confederacy could make of them. Once the Confederacy surrendered, anything with Jeff Davis' stamp on it was anathema to the Union. The Camel Corps was a Davis idea.

After the war, steam engines and railroads made evaluating the effectiveness of a potentially new desert-crossing medium less necessary. The camel program simply became lost amid the more pressing postwar concerns of rebuilding and reuniting the country. The Camel Corps was disbanded and the camels were auctioned off by the government to zoos and local freight haulers or released into the desert, where they apparently roamed for years. Ten of Beale's camels hauled commercial freight from Sacramento to Nevada Territory. Others purchased in 1860 carried salt, ore and supplies through Central Nevada.

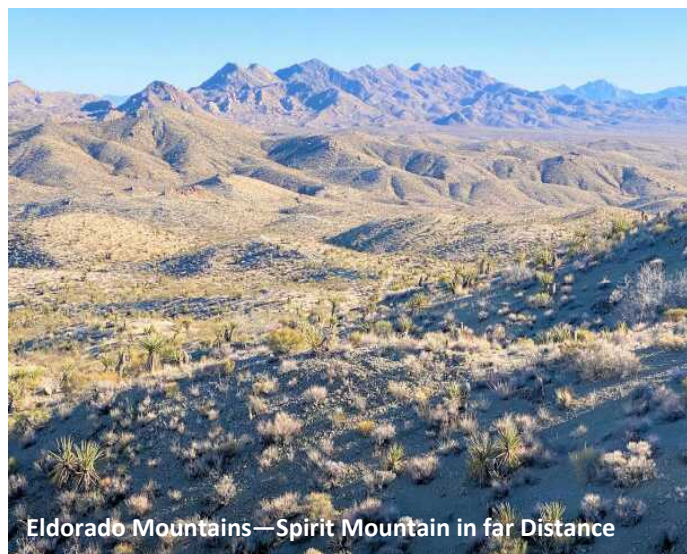


The Garces Expedition:

Seeking to open a land route between the Missions of Sonora and California, Fray Francisco Garces, a Spanish Franciscan Missionary priest and explorer, was the first European to enter the present boundaries of Nevada. He departed Mission San Xavier del Bac near Tucson in October of 1775, and by late February of 1776, Garcés had reached the Mohave villages located just south of Laughlin on the banks of the Colorado River. Garcés was now traveling in areas never before seen by a non-Native American.

Relying on Native American guides, he walked from village to village. The Mohave agreed to lead him to the Pacific coast along a route used for trade purposes. On March 4, 1776, accompanied by four natives, Garcés left the banks of the Colorado and set out across the lands in the southern part of the proposed Monument and the remainder of the Mojave Desert. He reached Mission San Gabriel Archangel 20 days later. Upon his return, he again visited the Mohave villages in May of 1776. His route followed a much older prehistoric trail used to bring shells and other trade goods to the tribes of the desert and mountain west.

On July 19, 1781, in a Quechan revolt against Spanish forces, Father Garcés was killed at La Purisima Concepción Mission near the Yuma Crossing. Padre Garcés' body was later interred in the Franciscan church of the College de la Santa Cruz, Querétaro, Mexico.



Eldorado Mountains—Spirit Mountain in far Distance



The Garces Expedition Marker near Laughlin

Piute Springs/Fort Piute: The access to Piute Springs and Fort Piute just across the California border in Mojave National Preserve is through proposed Monument lands along the historic Mojave Road. The ruins of Fort Piute, one of a string of military outposts built along the Mojave Road, is located at Piute Springs. It was built of volcanic rock on a small rise at the mouth of a canyon at the base of the Piute Range.

The fort was small by most standards. It basically consisted of two roofed structures, one for horses and one for men, purposely close together to deter raiders from stealing their horses or supplies. It is thought that the number of men stationed at the fort never exceeded 18. Yet, for all its simplicity, the design had clever features such as entryways with right-angle turns, so no sniper could hit a soldier by shooting directly into the opening. This post was used for only several months, for the main traveling route was soon moved a short way to the south.

The human history of Piute Creek is as compelling as its natural history. Archeological evidence suggests that humans have used the area for thousands of years.

Searchlight/Gold & Silver Mining: Searchlight has a most interesting and intriguing history that includes many famous names: Clara Bow, Rex Bell, Edith Head, Louis Meyer, LT William Nellis, U.S. Senator Harry Reid, John Macready, James Cashman, and an endless list of colorful and fascinating characters that are fodder for the legends of the old west. Retired U.S. Senator and Majority Chair Harry Reid grew up in Searchlight.

Initial discoveries of predominately gold ore were first made at this location on May 6, 1897. G. F. Colton filed the first claim, later to become the Duplex Mine. The Searchlight Mining District was founded July 20, 1898. The Quartette Mining Company, formed in 1900, became the mainstay of the Searchlight District, producing almost half of the area's total output. In May, 1902, a 16-mile narrow-gauge railroad was built down the hill to the company's mill on the Colorado River.

The Searchlight Post Office was established in October 1898. Searchlight began to boom in 1902 and reached its peak year in 1907. Up to 1940 total production amounted to \$4.5 million. On March 31, 1907, the 23.22-mile Barnwell and Searchlight Railroad connected the town with the then main Santa Fe line from Needles to Mojave. By 1919 trains were operating over the B and S Railroad only twice a week. A severe washout on September 23, 1923, halted traffic completely and train service was never restored.



In the 1900's, Searchlight was a typical busy mining town of a reported 1,500 people. At this time, they were larger than Las Vegas. There were many gold and silver mines that were good producers in the Searchlight mining district. The "Mines of Searchlight" map dated October 1906, shows that there were well over 300 mining claims in the area at that time. Eventually, the gold and silver production cost went up and the grade of ore went down, so people started to move on. By 1927, there were about 50 people left in Searchlight. Scott Joplin,

who never lived in Searchlight, was so intrigued by the stories of his composer friend, Tom Turpin - who had spent time in Searchlight in his youth - that he composed the Searchlight Rag.

Today the Searchlight community has approximately 300 residents and about 50% of them are retired. The other 50% are an eclectic mix of miners, ranchers, small business owners and artists. Several of the mines are reopening and starting production with the higher price for gold on today's markets. The Monument honors existing mining claims in its boundary.

Crescent Peak Area Turquoise Mining: The Crescent Peak area has a rich history associated with turquoise mining. Around 1889, an area centered around Crescent Peak became known as the Crescent Peak Mining District. This followed a discovery of turquoise by a miner named George Simmons. He was following a trail up the side of Crescent Peak and came upon the abandoned remains of a mine worked by the early Native Americans. Larger fragments of turquoise lay scattered about, together with abandoned stone chisels, wedges, and hammers. Archaeologists estimate the mine must have been worked and abandoned 200 years before Columbus reached America.



Simmons cleared out the pits and found the vein of turquoise, which turned from the vertical and dipped at a considerable angle. The aboriginal miners had followed this vein until the overhanging roof became a menace. There was no provision for safety in aboriginal mining. The usual way of extracting the ore was to build a fire against the face of the rock, then throw water on the hot stone, causing it to crack. Wedges were then driven into the cracks until the mass broke away. Simmons dug a quantity of turquoise from the mine and took it to London for appraisal. Assured of the quality and the probable price he could expect, he returned and expanded operations.



He abandoned the mine when the ore dwindled to a point where it could no longer be mined profitably at decreased prices. In 1896 Simmons sold the mine to his partner, J.R. Woods who renamed it The Turquoise Mine. Over the years, a number of miners worked the veins and abandoned them. The mines at Crescent Peak have been known by a variety of names, including the Simmons Mine, the Turquoise Mine, the Aztec Mine, Right Blue Mine and the Crescent Peak Mine.



Highland Range—East Side



Diverse Habitat—Castle Peaks In distance

RECREATIONAL & VISUAL RESOURCES

Hiking, hunting, sightseeing, rock hounding, nature studies, geological sightseeing, orienteering, archaeological sightseeing, outstanding landscape and nature photography, rock scrambling, rock climbing, peak bagging, night sky viewing, burro packing, horseback riding, archeological study, backpacking, journaling, sketching, and painting opportunities abound in this area.

Backcountry Roads: The area is particularly inviting for people wanting to explore the landscape on the



Crescent Peak Backcountry Road



McCullough Spring Backcountry Road

existing system of around 500 miles of designated backcountry roads. The existing network of formally designated roads would remain open with Monument designation. There are dozens of scenic routes that can access the diversity of the Monument landscape. The most popular backcountry roads are: Christmas Tree Pass Road; Pine Spring Road, Walking Box Ranch Road, Wee Thump Loop Road, Knob Hill Road, McCullough Spring Road and the road through the valley between the South McCullough Mountains and the Highland Range.

Dark Night Sky: One of the really special natural wonders in our world is the dark night skies. The proposed Monument offers many areas in which this experience can still take place. A ‘true dark sky’ is a natural resource that’s becoming increasingly rare. According to the new National Geographic Atlas of the night sky across the entire globe, more than 80% of the planet’s land areas lie under skies so blotted with man-made light that the Milky Way has become virtually invisible. As a result, we have lost some of the connection with our roots. Because we are fast losing our dark night sky resource in this country and globally, there is growing interest and pressure to protect that resource and one of the best ways of doing that is protecting the lands underneath the dark night sky. Protecting the lands under these skies through Monument designation will keep them dark, open, and accessible for Nevadans and wildlife to enjoy.



Protecting our dark night sky where it stills exists is particularly important in Clark County as Las Vegas has the greatest light pollution of any area in the world. Within the Las Vegas Valley, it is no longer possible to experience dark night skies. As a result, a high percentage of the children in our Las Vegas community have never had the experience of seeing a dark night sky or the Milky Way. You can still experience dark night skies within the proposed Monument lands. Here, at many locations, true darkness abounds, beckoning professional astronomers and amateur stargazers. On a clear, moonless night, thousands of stars, numerous planets, star clusters, meteors, man-made satellites, the Andromeda Galaxy, and the Milky Way can be seen with the naked eye. The area boasts some of the darkest night skies left in the Southern Nevada. Low humidity and minimal light pollution, combined with some higher elevations, create a unique window to the universe.

Natural Quiet: The extensive designated backcountry road system allows visitors to access remote nature. Here, very little man-made sounds can be heard. Enjoying natural quiet and solitude can be a breathtaking experience and is increasingly rare. and the ability to enjoy increasingly rare natural quiet.

Viewscapes: One of the most valuable resources in the area are the spectacular viewscapes. From almost everywhere within the Monument, you can see the prominent granitic Spirit Mountain as well as the Castle Mountains and Castle Peaks. The Highland Range and the South McCullough Ranges can be seen from most areas in the northern section of the Monument and the Dead Mountains from the southern part of the Monument lands. The area abounds in being able to view distant horizons.

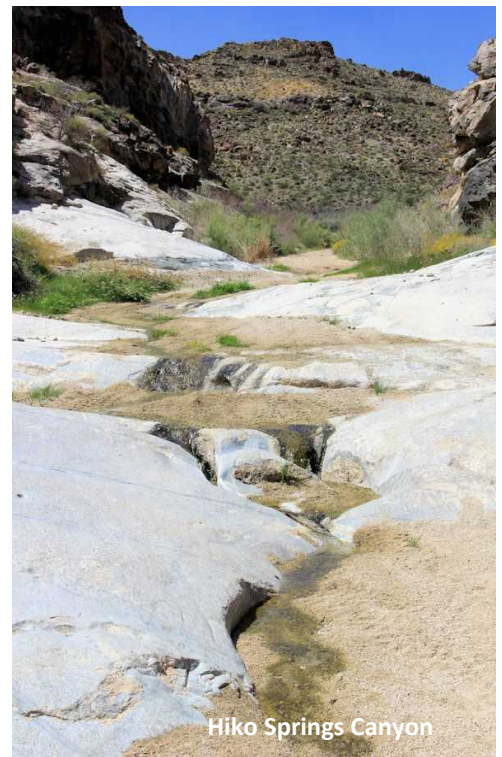
Maintaining Rural Lifestyle: The rural nature of the area, combined with the diversity of recreational activities available, is one of the main reasons many of the Searchlight and other rural residents live here or moved here in the first place. The Monument would help protect the rural character of the area.



Joshua Tree in Bloom



Cactus in Bloom



Hiko Springs Canyon



Crescent Peak after a snow



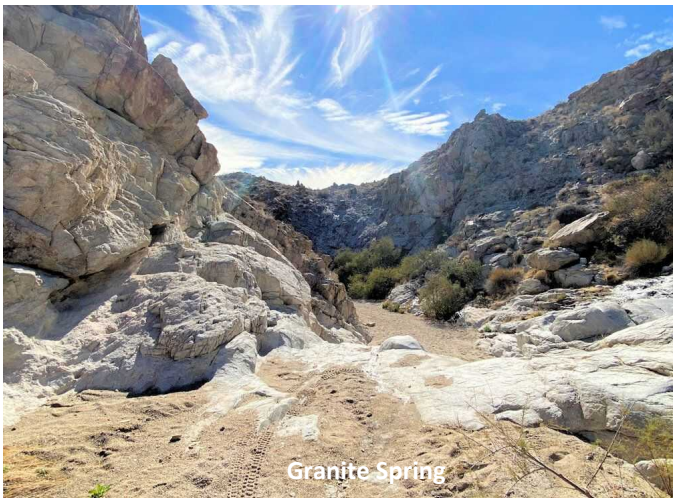
Highland Range (east side)

AVI KWA AME N. M. AND 30X30 CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE

Protecting and managing natural ecosystems like Avi Kwa Ame is increasingly recognized as a necessary, efficient, and relatively cost-effective strategy for addressing climate change. It is not the only strategy, but an important one. Protecting natural landscapes is the centerpiece of the 30x30 Global Initiative to protect 30% of the planet's land and oceans by 2030. It is also the centerpiece of President Biden's 'American the Beautiful Initiative.' The proposed boundaries for the Monument were developed to connect existing protected areas in the eastern Mojave Desert and to include critical migratory routes and elevational and transitional zones and niches. By connecting the Monument to Lake Mead National Recreation Area, you are also essentially connecting the East Mojave Desert to the Colorado Plateau, providing an even larger connected landscape.

Building connectivity increases ecosystem resilience and the ability to maintain its functions (biological, chemical, and physical) in the face of disturbance. Therefore, it was important to establish boundaries at a scale that maintains ecosystem structure and diversity, with populations of species large enough to survive over time.

In a changing climate, protected areas like Avi Kwa Ame are safe havens for plants and animals to reproduce despite changing conditions. Under climate change, we know species' ranges will shift and many habitats will be altered by factors like increased disturbance and changes in weather patterns and natural processes such as forest fires, pest and disease outbreaks. Connecting terrestrial habitats across varied landscapes enables plants and animals to shift ranges and survive in new locations.



Specific Climate Change Benefits of Avi Kwa Ame:

- Avoids potential conversion to other land uses and loss of carbon that is already present in vegetation and soils.
- The Monument would serve as a carbon sink, helping to mitigate and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from land use changes that could occur in presently unprotected portion of the Monument lands.
- Help sequester carbon dioxide. A healthy natural system like Avi Kwa Ame helps reduce the levels of greenhouse gases causing global warming through natural biological processes that draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.
- Helps protect the integrity of ecosystems, communities, and species, and of the processes that confer resilience in ecosystems.
- Provides space for evolution and a baseline for future restoration and could serve as a benchmark for measuring change in other parts of the Mohave Desert.

