



Aug 3, 2017

Representative Paul Cook
1222 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Response to Western Caucus Letter dated June 30, 2017

Dear Representative Cook,

Friends of the Inyo is a grassroots nonprofit conservation organization based in Bishop, California, dedicated to the stewardship, exploration and preservation of the Eastern Sierra's public lands and wildlife. Over our 30 year history, Friends of the Inyo has become an active partner with federal land management agencies including the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and the Forest Service. Through these partnerships, we work on many designated lands, including national monuments.

We supported the proposal for Mojave Trails National Monument, and are aware that the designation enjoyed overwhelming public and scientific support. We write today to convey our disapproval of your support for reduction in the size of Mojave Trails National Monument, evidenced by your sign-on to the "Western Caucus Letter" dated June 30, 2017.

In signing the Western Caucus Letter, you disregarded your constituents' overwhelming position in support of the Monument. The truth is, the decision to designate Mojave Trails was backed by widespread public support from local communities, business owners, and visitors as well as elected officials and NGOs. Public records show over 175 businesses, 26 elected officials and local governments, three tribes and tribal organizations, 15 leaders of faith, dozens of veterans and active service members and dozens of scientists from a variety of disciplines wrote letters or signed petitions in support of the Mojave Trails. Secretary Jewell assessed all of this data and held a public hearing in Riverside County that was attended by over 1,000 people, the majority in support of the designation. This public meeting was the culmination of dozens of other town halls and public hearings over the previous nine years. In short, the Obama administration did their due diligence to make sure this monument had community buy in and local support.

The local economy surrounding Mojave Trails National Monument is driven by a thriving outdoor recreation industry. Hiking, camping, horseback riding, off-

highway recreation and wildflower/wildlife viewing are all popular activities. The over 200 businesses that benefit financially from the outdoor industry and protected federal lands are testament to the economic benefit monument status provides.

The 1.6 million acre Mojave Trails National Monument preserves the core of the Mojave Desert and its major landscape linkages, connecting 15 wilderness areas, Joshua Tree and Death Valley National Park's and Mojave National Preserve. Its objects of historical cultural and scientific interest include significant biological diversity, a number of threatened and endangered species, recent discoveries of species new to science, unique geological resources and abundant historical and archeological resources. The monument also contains some of the best examples of intact wilderness, scenery, and recreational opportunities in the west. The Monument is home to the federally threatened desert tortoise, southwest willow flycatcher, Bell's vireo, desert bighorn sheep, golden eagle, and many other wildlife species. Geologically, this unique landscape contains a stunning diversity of lava flows, mountains, playas, sand dunes, bajadas, washes, and other features. The area has been a focus of geological research for decades. There are also the 550 million-year-old trilobite fossil beds of the Marble Mountains and many other unique geologic formations.

Culturally, the monument would preserve the most pristine, undeveloped remaining stretch of historic Route 66, known as the Mother Road, which is arguably the most famous highway in America. The Monument also preserves the rich and storied history of the American railroad, homesteading, General Patton's World War II desert training sites, and westward migration. Prehistorically, irreplaceable archeological and cultural sites abound with rock art, home sites, and sacred Native American trails and trade routes.

Instead of seeking to undermine Mojave Trails, we ask that you retract your sign-on and express your support for retention of the Monument's current boundaries. We ask that you help your constituents reap the economic benefits of Mojave Trails National Monument, instead of discouraging their ability to do so. Further, we ask that you work to ensure adequate long-term funding and appropriate management.

Please provide the courtesy of a written response to the positions asserted in this correspondence.

Sincerely,

/s/ Wendy Schneider
Executive Director