THE MOJAVE DESERT LAND TRUST

Land Trusts in General
For many years, creative people have been saving their natural and cultural landscapes by forming land trusts. Land trusts are qualified nonprofit organizations under Internal Revenue Code §501(c)(3). As such they are eligible for tax deductions for income and estate tax planning purposes.

People are able to work with land trusts for the outright purchase of sensitive lands such as the Nolina Peak acquisition. Land trusts can also accept donations of permanent conservation easements as well as outright donations of land.

Mojave Desert Land Trust
A small group of concerned citizens formed the Mojave Desert Land Trust in June 2005. They recognized that substantial growth was coming to the California Desert. It was time to accommodate that growth with the careful planning techniques of a land trust to preserve the rich natural heritage, cultural values, and scenic beauty of the desert.

Planning for the California Desert
With a special foundation grant, the Land Trust completed a professional "visioning" for the entire California Desert. More than 100 experts were contacted by survey and through workshops to share their experience and insights in the development of a desert-wide strategy for sustainable conservation planning.

In-Holdings in Desert National Parks
In-holdings are privately owned parcels of land located within national park units. They are holdovers from homesteaders, ranchers, and miners who owned the lands prior to the formation of the national parks. The Mojave Desert Land Trust is now working with Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and Death Valley National Park to facilitate the acquisition of in-holding properties. These in-holdings will be acquired from willing sellers, many of whom are also vitally interested in the natural, scenic, and cultural values of the land. They will then be transferred to the National Park Service.

Nolina Peak
Directors and supporters of the Mojave Desert Land Trust saw a major conservation opportunity bordering the Covington Flats area of Joshua Tree National Park—639 acres of ancient trees and nolinas, as well as breathtaking panoramic views of surrounding wildlands (Nolina Peak). It is undeveloped, but close to the housing developments on the eastern border of the Town of Yucca Valley. The Mojave Desert Land Trust is now in escrow to buy the Nolina Peak property, and when completed next May will transfer the property to Joshua Tree National Park.

The Bureau of Land Management owns 640 acres of prime wildlife habitat immediately north of the Nolina Peak property. The Land Trust is working to turn the Nolina Peak acquisition into a 2-for-1 deal by helping to arrange for the transfer of the BLM parcel to Joshua Tree National Park.

The Mojave Desert Land Trust and its supporters must raise $972,500 by May 11, 2007, to complete the purchase of Nolina Peak. For more details on how to participate in the Nolina Peak Campaign, see page 4.
The Mojave Desert Land Trust

Our Mission:
To protect the Mojave Desert ecosystem and its scenic and cultural values.

Board of Directors:
Dave Miller
Claudia Sall
Danny Sall
John Simpson
Jane Smith
Paul Smith

Executive Director:
Pat Flanagan

The Mojave Desert Land Trust
P.O. Box 207
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277
Phone: 760.361.6401
Fax: 760.367.2266
info@mojavedesertlandtrust.org
www.mojavedesertlandtrust.org

The Mojave Desert Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) public charity.

NOLINA NOTES

The Mojave Desert Land Trust is now purchasing Nolina Peak near Covington Flats for donation to Joshua Tree National Park. Nolina Peak was named for the superb stands of Parry nolina, *Nolina parryi*, found on its dry, rocky slopes. Parry nolina is only one of around 25 species in the genus *Nolina* in the southern United States and Mexico, but it is one of the largest. Some specimens, those that have found a particularly moist niche, can grow over 6 feet tall and have a number of branches.

The range of the Parry nolina is mostly confined to the Mojave Desert and surrounding mountains, from elevations of around 3000-6000 feet. The most northerly stands are found in the Kern Plateau west of the Sierra Nevada. In the Sonoran Desert, at elevations of around 1000-4500 feet, another species, Bigelow nolina, *Nolina bigelovii*, is found. This nolina grows in the Cottonwood and Eagle Mountains within Joshua Tree National Park. It doesn’t become as tall as the Parry nolina, and the leaf edges break into curling fibers as they age, while the leaves of the Parry nolina remain minutely serrate, never becoming fibrous.

Nolinas are monocots, meaning flowering plants that have a single leaf in the seed—mainly grasses and lilies. Along with yuccas, nolinas are currently placed in the Lily family. (Unlike birds, plants do not have an overarching organization that dictates classification, and different states and do classify plants in different families. Arizona currently has the genus *Nolina* classified in a family all its own, Nolinaceae.)

Go for a hike around Noline Peak or Black Rock and look for these plants with their stiff, sword-like leaves that spring fountain-like from a wide base rosette. Nolinas are mostly dioecious, meaning that there are separate male and female flowers on different plants of the same species; the male flowers, carrying the pollen, are feathery; the female flowers have large, showy bracts that can range in color from ivory through pale rose or green. These bracts tend to last in a golden papery form for months, leading people to believe they are in bloom much of the year. They are definitely the showpieces of Nolina Hill.

Elize Van Zandt
Interpretive Specialist, Retired, Joshua Tree National Park

La Doux at Joshua Tree National Park will be working with the principal investigator Dr. Olle Pellmyr of the University of Idaho.

THE EDGE EFFECT

Nolina Peak is an important addition to Joshua Tree National Park’s boundary area, particularly for its buffer effect from the increasing real estate development in that area. Biologists know that rapid development at the edge of wild areas creates a potential for disruption of natural communities.

A study of these effects has been funded by a grant from the Lee Family Foundation to Joshua Tree National Park and Joshua Tree National Park Association. The principal investigator is Richard A. Redek Ph.D. at the Department of Entomology, University of California, Riverside.

The purpose of his research will be to determine the effect of urbanization on anthropods (spiders and insects) at the interface between the Park and urban development. His team will study changes in species diversity as you move away from the interface with the urban development, changes in predation patterns, and trends in the presence of exotic non-native anthropod species.
Dear friend of the desert,

Yes, you can do something.

It’s not often that we each have the opportunity to actually take a hand in dealing with urban sprawl and its effects on our desert lifestyle. Nolina Peak is that opportunity. You can help donate Nolina Peak to Joshua Tree National Park for permanent protection as one of this country’s very special places.

**NOLINA PEAK**

You probably know Nolina Peak. It is located in the mountains south of Highway 62, near the boundary of Joshua Tree and Yucca Valley. It commands the surrounding desert with a large communications tower on top.

Nolina Peak is a section of land adjacent to Covington Flats in Joshua Tree National Park. It is mountainous terrain which provides important habitat for large mammals such as mule deer, mountain lion, coyotes, and possibly big horn sheep. It is home for many species of plants, small mammals, birds, reptiles, and invertebrates. Some very old nolinas are located on the mountain. Elize Van Zandt has written of these very special ancient plants in this issue.

**GROWTH IS COMING**

Just six years ago the population of the United States stood at 214 million. Now, it is over 300 million. By 2030 it will be over 525 million. The high desert cannot escape that growth, and the pressure for more housing is not about to end.

People have to live somewhere. Two developments now in the works on La Contenta Road will add over 1/3 to the population of the Yucca Valley area along this boundary with the town of Joshua Tree. Growth is coming.

**THE OPPORTUNITY**

Nolina Peak is pristine. Developers have not yet turned a shovel on its ground. The owners have given us this opportunity because they realize the value Morongo Basin residents and visitors place on their ridgeline views and dark night skies. They also love the Park and realize that this section of land is part of a watershed which originates in the Park and naturally belongs within the Park’s boundary. The Land Trust is currently in escrow and has until May 11, 2007, to raise $972,500 for purchase. This amount supports all the property related costs and a portion of the Land Trust’s organizational expenses for a year.

Each of us has a stake in this special opportunity. What will happen if we don’t seize it? The land can be sold and developed. This wilderness forms the southeastern boundary of Yucca Valley, with homes rapidly approaching from the west. Our quality of life, including the economic value of existing neighborhoods, will be served if Nolina Peak is preserved in its natural state.

**POSSIBLE TWO-FOR-ONE DEAL**

The Nolina Peak gift to Joshua Tree National Park will likely develop into a two-for-one deal with the transfer of the 640 acres in BLM section 10 to the Park. This transfer is only possible when the currently isolated BLM section shares a boundary with the Park.

**PRESERVING THIS WILD AND BEAUTIFUL AREA**

Let’s not forget the beauty of it all. When these transactions are completed, the result will be preservation of two square miles of a sensitive and beautiful mountain range which frames the eastern edge of Yucca Valley. Not only will wildlife be protected, but so will one of the major scenic vistas of the Morongo Basin.

**GIVE BIG NOW—THIS IS A GIFT FOREVER**

Working together we can manage the growth that is headed our way. Join the Nolina Peak acquisition team so that our special areas are protected and the quality of life for all of us is preserved.

Make your donation now and you will:

1. Make an important addition of “Park Quality” land to Joshua Tree National Park;
2. Become a member of the Mojave Desert Land Trust; and
3. Receive your own Honorary Deed for this important addition to Joshua Tree National Park. (See back page for details.)

Sincerely,

**Claudia Sall**

President, Mojave Desert Land Trust

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**Guided Walks on Nolina Peak**

January through May 2007

For schedule, check

- our web site
- local newspapers
- call or email the office.
Three Ways You Can Participate in The Mojave Desert Land Trust
Become a member  •  Buy acres that count  •  Give gifts and involve friends and relatives

Annual Membership
☐ $250–499 Sponsor
☐ $100–249 Friend
☐ $50–99 Patron
☐ $25–49 Individual
☐ $____ Other

Members enjoy:
• The opportunity to directly preserve wild lands in the desert
• A periodic newsletter with Land Trust updates and desert news
• Desert tours and hikes
• Volunteer opportunities
• Educational programs

Nolina Peak Campaign — 639 acres of “wild” land for Joshua Tree National Park
Campaign Deadline May 11, 2007
Includes an Honorary Deed and an Annual Membership. Donations are tax deductible.

Donation
☐ 2 acres $  3,044
☐ 1 acre $  1,522
☐ $0.5 acre $     761
☐ 7 acres $10,654
☐ 10 acres $15,220
☐ 20 acres $30,440
☐ 40 acres $60,880

81% of the funds raised are dedicated to property related costs. See www.mojavedesertlandtrust.org for campaign budget.

“I think it far more important to save one square mile of wilderness, anywhere, by any means, than to produce another book on the subject.” —Edward Abby