



California Desert and Mountain Wilderness *Campaign*

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Riverside County Wilderness Bill Approved by House *Bono Mack's widely supported conservation bill ready for Senate*

Riverside County, CA – Local wilderness supporters and a broad coalition of conservation groups today applauded the US House of Representative's passage of the California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act (H.R. 3682). Representative Mary Bono Mack's (R-CA) broadly supported desert, forest and river conservation bill for Riverside County next goes before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Rep. Bono Mack's legislation would permanently protect more than 190,000 acres across four new wilderness areas, including South Fork San Jacinto and the Pinto Mountains, and six additions to existing wilderness areas, among them Joshua Tree National Park. It would also expand the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument by approximately 8,000 acres and add 31 miles of four rivers to the National Wild and Scenic River System. Together, these protections will ensure that a broad range of family recreational opportunities, such as hiking, hunting, horseback riding, bird watching, camping and other outdoor activities will remain widely available in Riverside County for future generations.

Congresswoman Bono Mack and Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), who is sponsoring companion legislation in the Senate, spent nearly two years consulting with diverse stakeholders and making numerous accommodations to address local concerns. As a result, the bill is supported by a wide range of local interests, including Riverside County supervisors, municipalities, chambers of commerce, realtors, equestrians, and businesses.

Local business owner and Hemet resident, Chama Cliff, explained, "This bill will have a positive impact on our community's recreational opportunities, quality of life, and local economy. This is a broadly supported bill, and it is wonderful to see it move forward."

Murrieta resident and director of The Colony Home Owner's Association HOA board of directors MaryAnn Plume said, "It is terrific to see a bill that truly balances the diverse needs of our community, protecting our region's open space, preserving our high quality of life, while maintaining and enhancing our economy—the California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act succeeds on all counts."

"This is a bi-partisan success story," said Jon Owen, Deputy Campaigns Director for Campaign for America's Wilderness. "Representative Bono Mack and Senator Boxer reached across the partisan divide, found common ground and protected it."

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments and eleven municipalities have formally endorsed the legislation. In addition, the Desert Chapter of the Building Industry Association, seven local chambers of commerce and more than 50 businesses support the measure because of the economic benefits of preserving the scenic beauty of Riverside County.

The bill will protect habitat for threatened Peninsular bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, and mountain yellow-legged frog, as well as many other species, including mule deer, mountain quail, and bald eagles. It will also preserve the biologically important watersheds of Fuller Mill Creek, Bautista Creek, Palm Canyon Creek and North Fork San Jacinto River.

The House also approved the Sequoia-Kings Canyon Wilderness Act (H.R. 3022), which will permanently protect 115,000 acres of wilderness in the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park, including 69,500 acres to be named the John Krebs Wilderness after the former Fresno congressman and conservationist who fought to protect these lands in the Mineral King Valley. The bill was introduced by Representatives Jim Costa (D-CA) and Devin Nunes (R-CA). A companion bill was sponsored by Senator Boxer (D-CA).

The California Desert and Mountain Wilderness Campaign is composed of California Wilderness Coalition, Friends of the River, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and Campaign for America's Wilderness.

For a map and area descriptions visit: www.desertmountainwild.org/lands_rivers.html

For high resolution photos visit: www.desertmountainwild.org/lands_rivers.html#hi-res

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