

# WILDERNESS RECORD

News Journal of the California Wilderness Coalition

WINTER 2010



**A Desert Wilderness Bill at Last!** PAGE 5

Invitation to the 2010 Wilderness Conference PAGE 4    Thank Rep. Darrell Issa PAGE 14



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*The California Wilderness Coalition protects the natural landscapes that make California unique, providing clean air and water, a home to wildlife, and a place for recreation and spiritual renewal. CWC is the only organization dedicated to protecting and restoring California's wild places and native biodiversity on a statewide level. Since 1976, we have empowered local communities and conservationists to be the voice for wild California.*



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COVER: GOLDEN VALLEY, CA — SAM ROBERTS  
ABOVE: PROPOSED DEATH VALLEY WILDERNESS —  
CWC STAFF

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# DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**A**s you know CWC has begun a strategic planning process with the intention to expand our membership base, increase our outreach to the community and strategically place CWC at the forefront of wilderness designation and restoration in California. An additional component of the strategic planning process included the identification of the specific leadership needs of the organization. In doing so, I was promoted as Executive Director of California Wilderness Coalition in October.

I am excited to begin 2010 in my new role as Executive Director with California Wilderness Coalition. With the beginning of every new year, I take the opportunity to assess the prior year's challenges and successes and make plans for the impending year. In 2009, CWC led the effort to pass the California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act, Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness Act and The Eastern Sierra and Northern San Gabriel Wild Heritage Act, all of which were signed into law on March 30th. We also recruited and trained a record number of volunteers in the Yuki Wilderness to assist the Mendocino National Forest in providing on-the-ground management of the wilderness area. In the final days of December, CWC led the efforts in galvanizing statewide support to introduce two wilderness bills.

2010 provides with us an unprecedented opportunity to lead grassroots efforts to permanently protect over two million acres of California wild lands. *Ryan Henson, Monica Argandoña, Laurel Williams, Catherine Nicklen* and

*Marisa Calderon* have worked extremely hard to generate a diversity of grassroots support to introduce two important pieces of wilderness legislation: the "Beauty Mountain and Agua Tibia Wilderness Act of 2009" (HR 4304) that would add over 7,796 acres to the existing Agua Tibia Wilderness and expand the Beauty Mountain Wilderness by an additional 13,635 acres, and the California Desert Protection Act of 2010 (S.2921) which will protect nearly two million acres of beautiful *and threatened* desert. Without the dedication and commitment of all of our staff and board members, volunteers, community partners and our donors this work would not be possible.

Additionally in 2010, California Wilderness Coalition will be co-hosting the 2010 Western Wilderness Conference. The conference will provide an opportunity for all wilderness advocates, both old and new, from Alaska to Arizona to gather and share their conservation campaign experiences. Each participant will leave with a tool box of conservation campaign tools, which will allow them to be more effective advocates for their local wild places throughout the western states.

I hope that you will join CWC in April at the University of California Berkeley for this wonderful opportunity.

Wishing you all the very best 2010! I look forward to meeting many of you at the 2010 Western Wilderness Conference ([www.westernwilderness.org](http://www.westernwilderness.org)) or at one of our campaign events to share in our future wilderness achievements.

**Kristi Davis, CWC Executive Director**



**JOIN US: 04 08 10 – 04 11 10**

Wilderness preservation has never been more important — or more possible. In the last 4 years, wilderness advocates have succeeded in establishing over 2 million acres of protected wilderness. Curious about what it takes to succeed on this scale?

## Join us on April 8–11th at the 2010 Western Wilderness Conference

**WHO:** California Wilderness Coalition in collaboration with the Sierra Club, Northwest Wilderness and Parks Conference, The Wilderness Society, Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Desert Survivors, Audubon California, Tuleyome, and Californians for Western Wilderness.

**WHAT:** 2010 Western Wilderness Conference

**WHEN:** Thursday, April 8th–Sunday, April 11th, 2010

**WHERE:** U.C. Berkeley, Martin Luther King Jr. Student Union

**WHY:** The 2010 Western Wilderness Conference will bring grassroots wilderness advocates together in Berkeley from throughout the western states to build upon the recent success of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. The gathering will empower and train a new generation of activists and provide opportunities for activists to share experiences and plan collaborative conservation campaigns. The lessons that participants take home will make them more effective advocates for their local wild places.

Because this is a critical moment for conservation work, the conference is being specifically designed to maximize opportunities for participants to acquire or improve the practical knowledge that leads to more successful local conservation work. Whether in the areas of fundraising, political advocacy, mapping and data acquisition, community organizing, restoration, etc., workshops and seminars will provide attendees with the tools and lessons to maximize their impact within the campaigns they are personally involved in.

Please visit [www.calwild.org](http://www.calwild.org) or [www.westernwilderness.org](http://www.westernwilderness.org) to register or for more program details.





# A Desert Wilderness bill at last!

The California Desert Protection Act of 2010  
is introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein

Monica Argandoña and Ryan Henson

Senator Dianne Feinstein's (Democrat, California) California Desert Protection Act (CDPA) of 1994 protected over seven million acres of desert landscape as wilderness and created Death Valley National Park (it had been a much smaller national monument), Joshua Tree National Park (ditto), and the Mojave National Preserve. The CDPA remains the largest land preservation bill in California history and Senator Feinstein rightly considers its passage to be one of her greatest accomplishments as a United States Senator. Now, 15 years later, on December 21st Senator Feinstein introduced the California Desert Protection Act of 2010 (S.2921) which will protect nearly two million acres of beautiful *and threatened* desert, and CWC is proud to be a *very active* supporter of this important piece of legislation.

Golden Valley — SAM ROBERTS

**T**he road leading from the passage of the original CDPA to the introduction of the CDPA of 2010 has been a very long one.

At the time the original CDPA was working its way through the legislative process, the U.S. Army's Fort Irwin National Training Center announced its desire to expand into areas surrounding the base — "wilderness study areas" (WSA) overseen by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that were being considered for wilderness protection by Congress. It was understood by the people working on this bill, including environmental groups, Senator Feinstein, and Congressman Jerry Lewis (Republican, Redlands), that once Fort Irwin finished its expansion, the remaining areas would become wilderness. We informally refer to these places as the

"Fort Irwin WSAs" as a result. They are the Avawatz Mountains, Kingston Range, Soda Mountains, Cady Mountains, and the "Bowling Alley" (a long but narrow strip of BLM land on the southern border of Death Valley National Park along Harry Wade Road). The Army finished its plans for the Fort Irwin expansion in 2001 and enlarged the base to include a portion of the Avawatz Mountains WSA.

In 2002 after the Fort Irwin expansion was completed, CWC asked Senator Feinstein's staff to start looking at the remaining "Fort Irwin WSAs" for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, but it would take five more years of slow but steady support-building until we could really get their attention. The first policymaker to include the Fort Irwin WSAs



in legislation was Senator Barbara Boxer (Democrat, California) who added them to her California Wild Heritage Act in 2002. Unfortunately, while many areas in her bill have since become wilderness, the desert areas have not.

In 2007, CWC took Senator Feinstein's Deputy State Director, James Peterson, and her field representative for San Bernardino County, Chris Carrillo, on a tour of the Fort Irwin WSAs. They seemed to be very impressed by the beauty of the areas and the fact that there were not many conflicts that would make it difficult to include them in legislation. Since we now had their attention, we also gave them a list of other places in the desert that were not included in the original CDPA but were prime candidates for wilderness designation. With the help of our wonderful volunteers and other activists we were able to compile a list of about 32 special places stretching from Inyo County to Imperial County that are some of the most pristine and ecologically important areas in the California Desert. The Senator's staff came back to

us with some restrictions for the potential new areas that they would consider: 1) they had to be inside the boundaries of the BLM's California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA, a vast region that encompasses most of southeastern California) and 2) they had to have had some conflict that had prevented them from being included in the original CDPA that had since been resolved. This whittled our list down to 17 proposed wilderness areas, some additions to Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve and Surprise Canyon and the Amargosa River, two proposed wild and scenic rivers. The 17 proposed wilderness areas were the Fort Irwin WSAs, Malpais Mesa Wilderness Additions, Slate Range, Great Falls Basin WSA, Golden Valley Wilderness Additions, Trilobite Wilderness Additions, Clipper Mountain Wilderness Additions, Sleeping Beauty, Table Mountain WSA, Palo Verde Wilderness Additions, Indian Pass Wilderness Additions, Milpitas Wash, and Vinagre Wash. All of these would probably have been included in the original CDPA but for one or more now-resolved conflicts that prevented them from being protected as wilderness at the time.

Between April and August of 2007, we took the Senator's staff to each of these areas, traveling over 3,600 miles in nine days (that is the equivalent of driving from Los Angeles to New York City and then driving from there to Kansas City). The Senator required her staff to visit every area we were asking her to include in a desert protection bill, and we knew if they saw how beautiful each of them was, we would have them hooked. The tours seemed to make a very profound impression on her staff, but we still had to convince the Senator herself.

We followed the CWC's usual approach to working with Congressional staff by spending the next year surveying each area carefully in the field and answering our list of "50 questions." By using the "50 questions" process we ensure that we have identified every known or potential conflict whether it be mining, military use, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, the existence of utility rights of way, historical structures, marijuana farms, mountain bike use, etc. It is important to identify and resolve as many of these conflicts as possible so that a politician will agree to include an area we have researched in a wilderness bill. If they include an area that we have recommended to them and then they find out that it is legally open to OHVs or that it is riddled with mines for example, they may not only drop the area from the bill but they may never be willing to work with us again.

As the Senator was deciding whether to introduce a second desert bill, her staff made it very clear that

Great Falls Basin — SAM ROBERTS

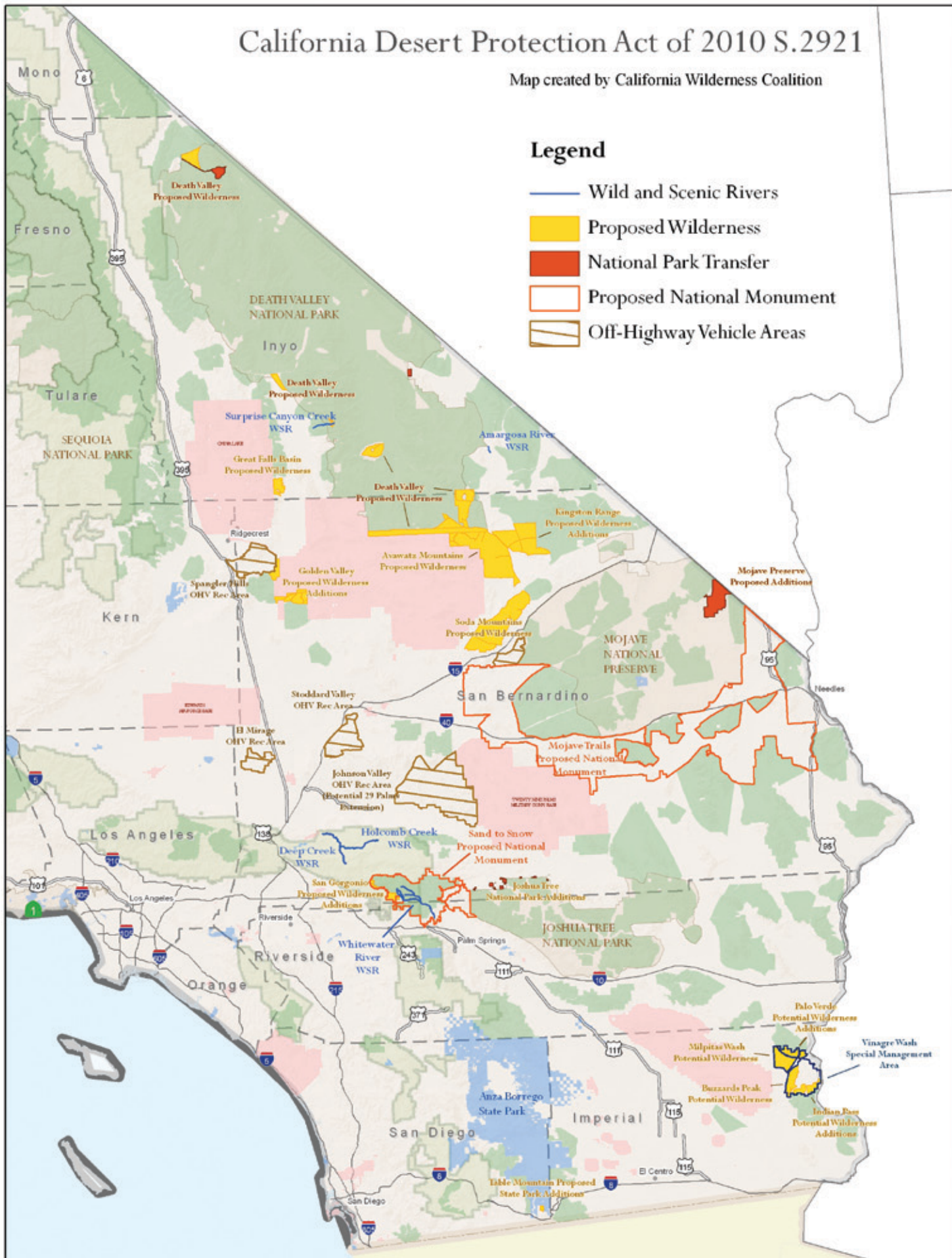


# California Desert Protection Act of 2010 S.2921

Map created by California Wilderness Coalition

## Legend

- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Proposed Wilderness
- National Park Transfer
- Proposed National Monument
- Off-Highway Vehicle Areas







we would have to resolve all of the real or perceived conflicts we identified as we went through our “50 questions” checklist for the 17 remaining proposed wilderness areas, the additions to Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve and the two proposed wild and scenic rivers. While resolving major problems involved making significant boundary changes at times, for some areas we refused to compromise. For instance, a portion of the Malpais Mesa Wilderness Additions called Conglomerate Mesa is one of the most beautiful, untouched places in all of the CDCA. It has never been mined, grazed, or homesteaded, and from the top of the mesa you have a 360 degree view of the Owens Valley, the Sierra Nevada (including Mount Whitney, the tallest peak in the U.S. outside of Alaska) and Telescope Peak in Death Valley. It is truly a spectacular place, yet there are mining claims all over the top of it. In 2008 a company called Timberline Resources, of Idaho, decided to lease those mining claims and filed plans with the BLM to pursue gold mining. We had discussions with Timberline but made it very clear that mining in this area was unacceptable, and even if the Senator decided not to include the area in her bill, we would still fight any mining proposals.

Thanks to the help of many CWC members, desert activists, and the Lone Pine Paiute, Big Pine Paiute, and Timbisha Shoshone Indian tribes we were able to make Timberline Resources abandon its mining proposal. Sadly, however, because of the mining controversy Conglomerate Mesa did not make it in to the CDPA 2010 legislation, but we will continue to fight any other mining proposals in the future so that it can one day receive the wilderness protection that it deserves.

In September 2008, CWC was able to meet with the Senator herself in Washington, D.C. where we shared with her photos, fact sheets and the results of our “50 questions” research for each of the areas we wanted her to consider. She gave us the green light on many of them, but also gave us a laundry list of questions to answer and potential conflicts to resolve. She had made a commitment to introduce a bill though, and we left her office elated and energized, and determined to complete the tasks she had asked us to perform.

In the meantime, the importance of protecting desert wild lands took on an even greater urgency when a new threat emerged — a frenzy of solar and wind power project applications that resembled the California



Gold Rush in their number, scope and the excitement they generated among investors. By the beginning of 2009 there were over 100 wind and solar applications covering a million acres (1,565 square miles) of the CDCA. For many, this does not seem like a threat. After all, renewable energy is much needed and the desert seems like a logical place for it. While the CWC does not oppose responsible energy development, we live by the old real estate maxim of “Location, location, location.” However “green” the energy source, solar and wind projects are still large-scale industrial developments that can have catastrophic aesthetic and environmental impacts, especially since many of these applications were in some of California’s most pristine wild areas that sheltered a variety of sensitive plant and animal species like the endangered desert tortoise. In addition, according to the staff of the California Energy Commission only 128,000 acres (200 square miles) are needed to meet California’s solar power generating goals — not one million. CWC and other groups also maintained that it makes more sense to develop already disturbed lands near existing transmission corridors and roads, not wild lands miles away from existing infrastructure. Lastly, some solar technologies use a great deal of water. Where would it all come from in this arid landscape? In addition to these very practical objections to allowing vast swaths of unspoiled desert to be destroyed for “green” energy, the solar gold rush triggered a very basic ethical concern that was over 147 years in the making.

In 1862 as the West was being settled, Congress passed the Pacific Railway Act that gave railroad companies 20 square miles of government land for every mile of rail the companies built (in some cases the land was given away but nothing was built). This resulted in vast swaths of government land being given away to the railroads, and since the parcels consisted of every other square mile of land they created a distinctive “checkerboard” pattern on maps. Over the years, railroad companies either sold the land to mining, logging, or development interests or they became developers themselves. The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railroad sold off many of its holdings in the Mojave Desert but they created a subsidiary called Catellus Corporation to serve as its real estate arm to either develop or sell off the rest. Conservationists were desperate to acquire these lands from Catellus before they could be developed.

Between 1999 and 2004, approximately 600,000 acres of railroad lands were purchased from Catellus using \$45 million in private donations from the Wildlands Conservancy and \$18 million in funds appropriated by

Congress, and Senator Feinstein spearheaded the effort. The BLM was then given the lands with the understanding that the former railroad property would be managed for habitat conservation. By 2009, however, there were dozens of renewable energy applications all over the former Catellus lands, and Senator Feinstein along with many conservation groups were very unhappy about this development because it had required an enormous investment of blood, sweat, tears and greenbacks to acquire them. Senator Feinstein, the Wildlands Conservancy, and countless others felt betrayed.

The Senator wrote Interior Secretary Ken Salazar a letter voicing her concerns, but it appeared that the BLM would still consider development proposals on these lands. The Senator wrote, “The former Catellus lands between the Mojave National Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park were purchased by or donated to the federal government so they would be protected forever. I feel very strongly that the federal government must honor that commitment.”



Great Falls Basin — SAM ROBERTS

Early in 2009, Senator Feinstein decided to protect these lands by proposing to include them in the “Mojave Trails National Monument.” In her press release from the time she states, “We have an obligation to honor our commitment to conserve these lands — and I believe we can still accomplish that goal while also fulfilling California’s commitment to develop a clean energy portfolio. There are many places in the California desert where development and employment are essential and appropriate. But there are also places that future generations will thank us for setting aside.” As a result, the Senator added the Mojave Trails National Monument proposal to the wilderness, wild river and national park bill she had agreed to introduce.

While Senator Feinstein decided how to respond to the development threats on the former Catellus lands, the CWC worked at a frenzied pace to build public support for a new CDPA in the five affected counties (Inyo, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego and Imperial). In collaboration with other groups and individual activists, we lead hikes to the proposed wilderness areas and other special places, we generated hundreds of support letters to Senator Feinstein, and we met with countless stakeholders including the mayors of desert cities, the Department of Defense, OHV enthusiasts, mining firms, energy developers and a host of others. One of our most complex negotiations was with the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command which includes the famed Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) forces who use our proposed wilderness areas in Imperial County for training purposes. Fortunately, we were able to develop an agreement with the Navy that would allow the areas to be protected while the SEALs continued to use them for low-impact training.

As a result of all of this hard work Senator Feinstein’s CDPA of 2010 will:

- Establish the 941,413-acre Mojave Trails National Monument in eastern San Bernardino County along the southern boundary of the Mojave National Preserve;
- Designate the 133,524-acre Sand to Snow National Monument that stretches between Joshua Tree National Park on the east and the high country of the San Gorgonio Wilderness in the San Bernardino National Forest to the west;
- Designate 346,108 acres as wilderness, including:
  - Avawatz Mountains Wilderness (86,614 acres)
  - Great Falls Basin Wilderness (7,871 acres)
  - Soda Mountains Wilderness (79,376 acres)
  - Death Valley National Park Wilderness Additions (90,152 acres)
  - Golden Valley Wilderness Additions (21,633 acres)
  - Kingston Range Wilderness Additions (53,321 acres)
  - San Gorgonio Wilderness Additions (7,141 acres)
- Establish the 75,575-acre Vinagre Wash Special Management Area in Imperial County where many ecologically and culturally sensitive areas would be protected from development and vehicle use, including 48,699 acres that would essentially be managed as wilderness;
- Enlarge Death Valley National Park by 40,740 acres, Mojave National Preserve by 29,246 acres and Joshua Tree National Park by 2,904 acres;





## SAMPLE LETTER

Please edit to include your own personal experiences and voice.

The Honorable \_\_\_\_ (Your representative)

US House of Representatives

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing in support of the California Desert Protection Act of 2010 (S. 2921). This bill will designate unique, undeveloped, ecologically and geologically significant, culturally important, and scenic areas of public land within the California desert as wilderness, national monuments, wild and scenic rivers, and national parks.

I urge you to support this legislation that will protect:

The Avawatz Mountains, Soda Mountains, Kingston Range additions, Golden Valley additions, and Great Falls Basin, Palo Verde Mountains additions, Milpitas Wash, Indian Pass additions, and Buzzard's Peak wilderness areas, protect segments of Deep Creek, the Amargosa River, Whitewater River, and Surprise Canyon Creek as wild and scenic rivers, establish the Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow National Monuments, and expand Joshua Tree and Death Valley National Parks and the Mojave National Preserve.

I have visited/would like to visit (list areas and talk about your visits and/or what you like to do and see).

Wilderness, national parks and monument designations have been shown to increase tourism and attract new residents, thereby generating substantial economic benefits for nearby communities through local employment and tax revenue.

Additionally, these proposed designations will contribute to our region's superior desert and mountain vistas, air quality, water quality, peaceful soundscapes, and dark night skies.

Desert wilderness and wild rivers are an important component of our community's historic, cultural, economic, and social identity.

Protected public lands will provide local residents and visitors with opportunities for many recreational activities including hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, photography, camping, orienteering, wildlife viewing, scientific research, and nature study.

Protecting wild places would ensure that future generations can enjoy them tomorrow as we do today.

Please co-sponsor the California Desert Protection Act of 2010. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Your full name

Your address (to show that you are a constituent)

- Add over 76 miles (24,300 acres) of stream to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System along the Amargosa River, Deep Creek, Surprise Canyon and the Whitewater River;
- Permanently prohibit the staking of new mining claims on approximately 10,000 acres of land sacred to the Quechan Tribe in Imperial County;
- Mandate the study and protection of a cultural trail and the features associated with it along the Colorado River that is sacred to several tribes;
- Make it more difficult for developers to excessively exploit groundwater in or near the Mojave National Preserve;
- Transfer a 994-acre BLM holding in San Diego County to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and require the state to manage the land as wilderness;
- Protect land from development in the CDCA that has been donated to or acquired by the federal government for conservation purposes; and
- Require the Department of the Interior to study the future impacts of climate change on the California desert, to mitigate these impacts and to identify and protect important wildlife migration corridors in the region.

However, it is unrealistic to think that such a large and important conservation measure cannot have some legislative “carrots” for potential opponents. For instance, the bill will also:

- Withdraw protection from 33,571 acres of the Soda Mountains WSA;
- Withdraw protection from the 84,400-acre Cady Mountains WSA (however, all but 5,500 acres of the area will be included in the Mojave Trails National Monument);
- Facilitate the transfer of isolated parcels of state-owned in exchange for federal assets, potentially including parcels of BLM land;
- Turn five existing administratively-designated OHV recreation areas covering 314,000 acres into legislatively-designated OHV areas that cannot be closed without another act of Congress;
- Require the Secretary of the Interior to study the possibility of expanding these OHV areas somewhat; and
- Allow for the expansion of a small airport in Imperial County.



Great Falls Basin — SAM ROBERTS

We did not get everything we wanted in the bill, but we cannot downplay the importance of this legislation that will protect some of the most special places in our beautiful desert. We urge you to visit the Senator’s website, <http://feinstein.senate.gov/public/>, and read her press statement and the details of the bill. We also encourage you to visit our desert campaign website, [www.californiadesert.org](http://www.californiadesert.org), for more information, press coverage, fact sheets, and pictures. Please feel free to call CWC if you have any questions about the bill or our desert conservation program. Monica Argandoña, S. California Conservation Director, [margandona@calwild.org](mailto:margandona@calwild.org), 909-946-1855 or Ryan Henson, Senior Conservation Director, 530-246-3087.



# HOW TO SUPPORT US

## Invest in California Wilderness Coalition

Each new membership adds to the grassroots strength that CWC needs to protect the last wild places in California. With your donations we led the efforts to introduce two wilderness bills in December. These wilderness bills would protect California's amazing wild places.

## We need your e-mails to protect wild California

If you are interested in receiving the latest wilderness and wild lands news for California, send an e-mail to [info@calwild.org](mailto:info@calwild.org) and we'll add you to our California Wilderness Alert e-mail list. Once signed up, you'll receive action alerts and e-newsletters. Together we can help generate the political will to protect wild California!

## Save trees: Sign up to receive the *Wilderness Record* electronically!

Help the environment by sending an e-mail to [info@calwild.org](mailto:info@calwild.org) requesting to receive electronic versions of

the *Wilderness Record* instead of paper versions. Your first electronic copy of the *Wilderness Record* will be the Spring 2010 issue.

## Become a monthly member today!

By making a monthly donation, you will help us save precious dollars and plan your giving more effectively. With a gift as little as \$11 a month, you'll be doing your part to protect wild California.

Monthly giving levels are \$11, \$15, \$20, \$35, \$50, \$100, or more.

New monthly donation members (with a minimum gift of \$11 per month) will receive a subscription to the *Wilderness Record*, a CWC tote bag, invitations to wilderness events, Galen Rowell Wilderness note cards, and a wilderness map.

Go to our website and sign up today, or fill out and mail the envelope located in the center of the *Wilderness Record*, or call us at 510-451-1450.

## Coalition News

CWC is excited to welcome Sean Baumgarten as our new Policy/Development Intern. Sean (pictured at right) began volunteering with CWC in October and has proven to be a strong asset to the organization. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from UC Davis in Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology and most recently worked as a 5th–7th grade science teacher at St. Jarlath School in Oakland. He is familiar with a wide range of environmental issues and is committed to a career that actively promotes the long-term sustainability of the earth and its natural resources.

We welcome Kristi Davis as the new Executive Director of the CWC! Kristi (pictured on page 3) is a native Californian, who comes to CWC with a long track record of success in non-profit advocacy work. She has spearheaded campaigns to provide clean drinking water and enhanced clean air standards to Californians; she has also worked in the field of youth development on public policy campaigns to provide employment skills, outdoor opportunities and outdoor education to urban youth. Davis has held various leadership positions and is an experienced leader, educator, advocate and activist. She has earned a reputation as a trusted and respected leader. Equally important, she shares a passion for and commitment to the mission of CWC, to protect and conserve California's wild places. "Kristi will step into this role at a good time," said Alan Carlton, Board Vice-President. "CWC has spent the year building a broad, highly experienced leadership team and has designed the right approach to accomplishing the organization's mission. The board has chosen a leader who embodies the characteristics essential to continuing and expanding upon this work: an extraordinary mind and an uncompromising commitment to getting the job done."



# Thank Representative Darrell Issa for working to protect San Diego County wilderness!

Ryan Henson

**O**n December 14, 2009, Representative Darrell Issa (Republican, Vista) who represents northern San Diego County introduced the “Beauty Mountain and Agua Tibia Wilderness Act of 2009” (HR 4304), a bill strongly supported by CWC and local residents because it would protect two of southern California’s most important areas of open space as wilderness.

The Beauty Mountain and Agua Tibia Wilderness Act of 2009 would add over 7,796 acres to the existing Agua Tibia Wilderness and would expand the Beauty Mountain Wilderness by an additional 13,635 acres. Representative Issa’s bill would build on successful legislation sponsored earlier this year by Senator Barbara Boxer (Democrat, California) and Representative Mary Bono Mack (Republican, Palm Springs) whose “California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act” established the Beauty Mountain Wilderness and enlarged the Agua Tibia Wilderness that was established in 1975. “This legislation will protect and preserve lands for use by current and future generations,” said Representative Issa in a recent press statement. “Many of my constituents and their families who live near these lands will be able to enjoy and use them.”

Characterized by deep canyons and rugged coastal sage scrub, Agua Tibia is enjoyed by hikers and equestrians who travel through the region via the rugged Cutca

Trail. It is home to such sensitive species as the California gnatcatcher and the rosy boa constrictor. As its name implies, Beauty Mountain is a scenic jewel draped in chaparral, fascinating rock formations and oak woodlands. Both of these areas provide endless recreational opportunities as well as priceless habitat for endangered wildlife. Both areas serve as critical plant and wildlife migration corridors between Anza-Borrego Desert State Park on the east and the coastal mountains of Riverside and San Diego counties to the west. All too often such biological pathways are severed by development, especially in southern California.

Representative Issa’s bill is unusual in that it will require the Bureau of Land Management to build a campground and trailhead parking area outside of the Beauty Mountain Wilderness to improve recreation opportunities in the area. “We are very impressed that Congressman Issa’s bill not only protects two important wild places but that it will very directly improve recreation opportunities for equestrians, hikers, hunters, campers and countless others,” notes Kristi Davis, CWC’s Executive Director.

Representative Issa toured the areas several months ago and agreed to help protect them both for their scenic and habitat values and also because they provide excellent recreation opportunities for his constituents and others.

Agua Tibia — CWC STAFF

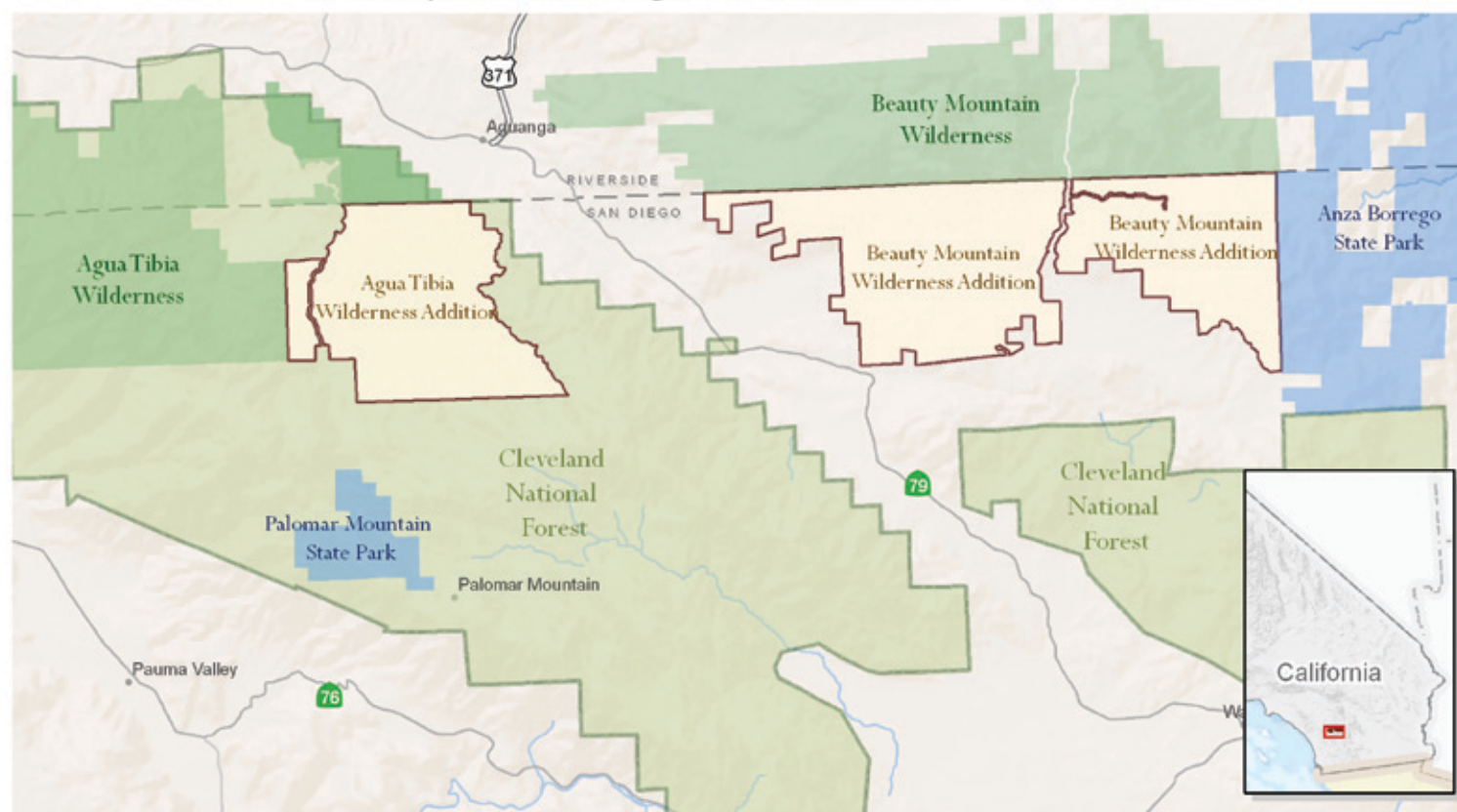


Beauty Mountain — DOUGLAS STEAKLEY





## The Beauty Mountain and Agua Tibia Wilderness Act of 2009, HR 4304



Please take a moment to mail or e-mail Representative Issa to thank him for his efforts to protect these beautiful places. If you have visited either of them or if you are one of his constituents, please share that information with him as well.

The Honorable Darrell Issa  
US House of Representatives  
1800 Thibodo Road, #310  
Vista, CA 92081

To send him an e-mail, go to  
<https://forms.house.gov/issa/webforms/contact.html>

You can also fax your letter to:  
760-599-1178

Dear Congressman Issa:

Thank you for introducing the Beauty Mountain and Agua Tibia Wilderness Act of 2009. I strongly support your efforts to protect these areas.

Your bill will not only enhance the local tourism economy and improve recreation opportunities, but it will ensure that magnificent scenery and rich wildlife habitat are conserved for the future as well.

Thank you again for introducing this important bill.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Address

**SAMPLE LETTER**

Please edit to include your own personal experiences and voice.

## CALIFORNIA WILDERNESS COALITION

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**Volunteers and wilderness explorers needed!**  
Join us to explore newly proposed  
wilderness, restore OHV damage, pick up  
litter and have fun. For more information, or  
to reserve your spot, contact Laurel Williams  
909-260-8833 or [lwilliams@calwild.org](mailto:lwilliams@calwild.org).



Ibex Dunes Wilderness, Death Valley — CWC STAFF

## Monday, February 15th and Tuesday, February 16th, 2010 | President's Day El Paso Mountains Wilderness Stewardship Project

Located in Kern County, just off Highway 395 near Ridgecrest.

We'll join the Student Conservation Association and the Ridgecrest BLM to help restore this wilderness area from OHV intrusions. Join us for the day or overnight.

El Paso Mountains wilderness is characterized by reddish-colored buttes and dark, uplifted volcanic mesas. The wilderness is also known for its incredible archaeological sites. The southern portion of the wilderness is included in the Last Chance Archaeological District and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Wildlife includes raptors, Mojave ground squirrel and the desert tortoise. A creosote bush scrub community intermixed with Joshua trees can be found on the western side of the mountain, and visitors are treated to sweeping desert vistas from the higher elevations.