

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—June 25, 2008

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Additional pictures available on request

Nolina Peak: Future Secured

The Mojave Desert Land Trust

Celebrates the extraordinary efforts
of concerned citizens and generous donors

Nolina Peak saved for future generations!

The Mojave Desert Land Trust chose the summer solstice to hold their Nolina Peak Celebration. Acquisition of the Peak, which is on the Joshua Tree boarder with Yucca Valley, marked a major milestone in the Land Trust's mission and an important victory for the entire Morongo Basin.

Immediately after its creation in 2005, The Mojave Desert Land Trust was challenged to develop a major campaign to purchase over 600 acres bordering Joshua Tree National Park. This was identified as a critical open space buffer between Joshua Tree and the park, and became the Land Trust's. The intent was to acquire this critical land and donate it to the National Park Service.

The entire Morongo Basin, neighboring communities and a large land conservation foundation responded, and in May 2007 escrow closed and Nolina Peak, named by the Land Trust, became a major community symbol and regional triumph. The mountain was put on a fast-track program to transfer into Joshua Tree National Park and today, June 2008, this process is nearing completion. Within the next few months Nolina Peak will become part of Joshua Tree National Park forever.

Two-for-One?

Touching the northern boundary of Nolina Peak is Section 10, owned by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These 640 acres complete the Quail Mountain watershed originating in Joshua Tree National Park. Once the Land Trust conveys Nolina Peak to the National Park Service, the BLM can consider transferring the adjacent Section 10 to the National Park as well: Two for One! In order for Section 10 to be transferred it must be contiguous with the Park boundary - Nolina Peak is essential to this dream. The two sections together would complete the permanent protection of 2 square miles of pristine desert land.

To mark and celebrate the completion of this groundbreaking program, and to honor the extraordinary support and involvement from our community, The Mojave Desert Land Trust conducted a solemn and moving ceremony, high on the mountain Saturday, June 21.

Late in the afternoon the threads of flute music, played by Ernest Siva, a Serrano Elder, drew us together as he blessed the ceremony. Into an olla or *pahot* (Serrano), a hand-crafted clay vessel created by Tony Soares in the traditional method, the participants was placed:

- the names of charter members and donors,

- a coin to date the sealing and placement,
- hand collected native seeds and plant clippings, representative tokens of the signature food plants, healing plants, and spiritual plants from this peak, and
- other tokens from the attendees.

Each item represented some element of the history, nature, and legacy of the mountain. The *pahot* was sealed and buried.

The Land Trust then hosted a party at the Black Rock Campground Visitor Center. There was a short program featuring Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent Curt Sauer, a Land Trust media presentation, and a program by photographer David McChesney entitled “What we are saving.” This was an inspiring plant and wildlife slide presentation accompanied by a live performance, with harmonica and voice, of an original song by Mr. McChesney.

It was a bitter-sweet celebration for some who had given of their time and resource to make it happen and who, on this evening, could let go and take comfort in knowing that Nolina Peak would be safe in the care of Joshua Tree National Park. Susan Parker Chapman, the previous owner of the property, captured the moment for many attending, in her letter, read by Pat Flanagan of The Land Trust. She said:

“Here, thanks to the Mojave Desert Land Trust, is a place where the rare and beautiful Nolina Plant may prosper, bloom, and propagate, undisturbed by the all too often uncaring and heavy footprint of mankind. Here may the Nolina, with her brother and sister creatures, thrive, unfurling her golden loveliness in the fragile beauty of these untrammelled spaces. Here may they all prevail, in nurturing quietude, until time itself kneels to the greater cosmic rhythm.”

Susan Parker Chapman, 2008

For more information on Nolina Peak and this project visit <http://www.mojavedesertlandtrust.org/nolina.html> or contact Pat Flanagan at The Mojave Desert Land Trust, pat@mojavedesertlandtrust.org or call 760-366-5440