

# **California Minerals, Off-Road Recreation, and Conservation Act Summary**

HR 3668, the California Minerals, Off-Road Recreation, and Conservation Act, presents a balanced approach to protecting, managing, and using our desert and forest areas in San Bernardino and Inyo Counties. This bill deals with managing existing federal land and does not increase federal landownership.

HR 3668 offers a sensible solution that addresses the needs of our off-highway vehicle recreation areas, protects mineral and mining sites, while still preserving our majestic desert landscapes for future generations.

## **Title I: National Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas**

Title I designates a total of six existing administrative off-highway vehicle areas as “National Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Areas.” These are Johnson Valley, Spangler Hills, El Mirage, Razor, Dumont Dunes, and Stoddard Valley. This would give additional protection to OHV users by ensuring that the areas couldn’t be closed administratively and would set up the first system of National OHV Recreation Areas in the nation. Three of these OHV areas would be expanded by a total of roughly 61,000 acres. The six OHV areas total just over 300,000 acres.

## **Title II: Wilderness**

Title II designates approximately 342,000 acres of wilderness study areas in the California Desert as permanent wilderness. This includes approximately 249,000 acres of wilderness managed by the Bureau of Land Management, 88,000 acres of wilderness managed by the National Park Service, and 5,600 acres of wilderness managed by the United States Forest Service. Existing roads and trails within the wilderness are preserved through cherry-stems to maintain public access. Additionally, Title II releases approximately 154,000 acres of existing wilderness study areas for recreational and economic use.

## **Title III: National Park System Expansions**

Title III adds approximately 68,000 acres of land to the National Park System. It adds 35,000 acres to Death Valley National Park. In the Castle Mountains, it transfers approximately 14,750 acres of land to the Mojave National Preserve, while leaving the remaining 13,250 acres in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) so that Castle Mountain Gold Mine could continue operations. Once mining operations have ended and reclamation is complete, the remainder of the Castle Mountains would be added to the preserve. It adds approximately 4,500 acres of land on the northern border of Joshua Tree National Park to the park. One thousand six hundred acres are owned by the Mojave Desert Land Trust which would donate them to the park. Additionally, it authorizes the park to acquire the Joshua Tree Visitor Center.

#### **Title IV: Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers**

Title IV designates 77 miles of wild, scenic, and recreational rivers. Three of these are in the San Bernardino Mountains: Deep Creek, Holcomb Creek, and Whitewater, while the other two are in Inyo County: Amargosa River and Surprise Canyon. These designations will maintain all current legal off-highway vehicle use and have been scouted to ensure that no currently existing activities on these rivers will be impacted.

#### **Title V: Black Lava Butte and Flat Top Mesa**

Title V designates approximately 6,500 acres of BLM land north of Yucca Valley and west of Flamingo Heights as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. It would preserve and protect magnificent vistas and Native American cultural sites that are threatened by energy development.

#### **Title VI: Mojave Trails Special Management Area**

Title VI designates a “special management area” covering approximately 965,000 acres in the Mojave Desert northeast of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. It protects all existing mining operations and allows for new and expanded mining so long as it never exceeds a total of 10% of the land area in Mojave Trails (approximately 96,500 acres). It protects the entire area from industrial-scale renewable energy development and protects from new mining claims approximately 196,000 acres that were donated to the government for conservation purposes. Additionally, it designates approximately 1,400 miles worth of roads and trails for OHV use. It also includes language that would consolidate and expedite the environmental review for repairing the 130+ trestle bridges on historic Route 66.

#### **Title VII: Sand to Snow National Monument**

Title VII establishes a national monument covering approximately 140,000 acres of federal land between Joshua Tree National Park and the San Bernardino National Forest in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Currently, nearly all of this land is designated as part of the San Gorgonio Wilderness or part of the Big Morongo Canyon Reserve. It includes language guaranteeing continued access to all private in-holdings within the monument as well as language preventing the designation from interfering with any potential future communications facilities in the Morongo Gorge. It protects hunting, hiking, and the use of off-highway vehicles on designated trails within the Monument.

#### **Title VIII: Land Conveyances, Withdrawals, and Related Provisions**

Title VIII provides for several land exchanges to consolidate private holdings within Sand to Snow National Monument and conveys approximately 4,710 acres of land to the Town of Apple Valley and the City of Twentynine Palms. Specifically, it transfers 4,630 acres to Apple Valley to establish its own local OHV park and it conveys approximately 80 acres to Twentynine Palms

to add to a park and recreation area. It also prohibits renewal energy generation on approximately 28,000 acres of land at Juniper Flats, blocking the revival of the North Peak wind project.

### **Title IX: Miscellaneous**

Title IX includes various provisions protecting tribal cultural activities within lands affected by this bill as well as protecting the Department of Defense's right to conduct low-level overflights. Additionally, it allows the Department of the Interior to accept easements and deed restrictions on donated lands within the California Desert Conservation Area in the future. It also specifically bars the President from using the Antiquities Act to designate monuments in any lands designated as either a "Special Management Area" or "National Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area" in this bill. It includes language expediting environmental permitting for an Inyo County project to install fiber optic cable for broadband internet in eastern Inyo. Finally, it includes language making it easier to install wildlife "guzzlers" to protect local populations of bighorn sheep.