

# The Mojave Desert Land Trust

6393 Sunset Road, Suite 211  
Joshua Tree, CA 92252

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December 22, 2008

Attn: Tom Barnes  
On Behalf of Joshua Basin Water District  
707 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90017

Sent by E Mail to [tbarnes@esassoc.com](mailto:tbarnes@esassoc.com)

Dear Mr. Barnes:

The Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the proposed recharge basins planned by the Joshua Basin Water District to provide additional groundwater recharge, storage, and capacity in the Joshua Basin. We appreciate this forward thinking project as it should reduce the demand for local groundwater and enhance the reliability of the water supply as the area continues to grow.

The proposed EIR will address a number of issues. We would like to draw your attention to the biological resources which could be compromised if the recharge ponds were constructed on either side of Twentynine Palms Highway at Wilton Road. The open creosote bush scrub on either side of the road has a rich assortment of species including Big Galleta (*Pleuraphis rigida*) an excellent forage plant for desert tortoise, available when other annuals and perennials are dormant. Desert Tortoise, a threatened species, is well known in the area. The ponds could be a magnet for ravens, a predator of juvenile and hatchling tortoise.

This area along the highway was identified during MDLT's California Desert Strategic Visioning Project as a "Community Buffer" [http://www.mojavedesertlandtrust.org/images/mojave\\_community\\_buffers\\_low.jpg](http://www.mojavedesertlandtrust.org/images/mojave_community_buffers_low.jpg). Although particular parcels were not identified, residents felt that the area separating the Community of Joshua Tree from the Town of Yucca Valley was important to preserve each community's unique character. Prior to the Visioning Project, the Morongo Basin Economic Consortium also expressed a similar position in support of the areas tourist economy. Currently open land filled with the signature Joshua trees are the gateway visitor experience to Joshua Tree National Park's west entrance. The proposed six foot high earthen berms, lighting, and construction footprint could detract from this experience.

The land trust is enthusiastic about locating the recharge basin behind the Community Center. It does not have the same problems as the locations adjacent to Twentynine Palms Highway and has the added benefit of being conveniently located to become a small wetland which could be used by community members for bird watching and other educational activities. Nothing like this exists in the area and would be a prized recreational amenity. We hope that this possibility can be explored in the EIS.

Thanks you for this opportunity to comment and we look foreword to participating in the next phase of the project.

Sincerely,

Pat Flanagan  
Program Coordinator

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