



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2023

Contact: Suzanne Spencer, suzanne@fcpccommunications.com, 510-508-0383

**POWER IN NATURE COALITION APPLAUDS ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW EFFORT TO
DESIGNATE CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT AND EXPAND JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL
PARK**

Sacramento, CA – Today, the Power in Nature coalition applauded an announcement from Representative Raul Ruiz (CA-25) on a new effort to designate Chuckwalla National Monument in the California Desert and protect lands adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park. At an event in Coachella alongside local elected officials, Tribal and community leaders, and residents, Representative Ruiz urged President Biden to use the Antiquities Act to designate the monument and expand the park.

The new monument would permanently protect approximately 660,000 acres of public lands in Riverside and Imperial counties. Permanently safeguarding these public lands and expanding the national park is critical to California's efforts to fight climate change and protect biodiversity. Some of the species that would benefit include the chuckwalla lizard, the desert tortoise, the desert bighorn sheep and one of the few populations of giant saguaro (*Carnegiea gigantea*) found in California.

"We are thrilled to hear about this new opportunity to designate the new Chuckwalla National Monument and expand Joshua Tree National Park," **said Moises Cisneros, Field Organizer with the Sierra Club's Conservation and Outdoors Campaign.** "At 660,000 acres, this would contribute significantly to state efforts to conserve 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. We urge President Biden to take action in order to protect biodiversity and expand equitable access to nature in local communities."

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) estimates California must protect 6 million acres by 2030 to achieve its 30x30 goals. So far, 11% of the 6 million has been conserved, according to [CNRA's May progress report](#). Designating the Chuckwalla National Monument would help protect the vast majority of the estimated 750,000 acres that must be conserved annually between now and 2030. The monument would be the largest protected area of the

Colorado Desert bioregion, which is a unique climate and biological community in the California Desert.

The proposed monument is located south of Joshua Tree National Park and reaches from the Coachella Valley region in the west to near the Colorado River in the east. Currently, there are “islands” of protected public lands in this region, including Joshua Tree National Park and wilderness areas. The proposed national monument and Joshua Tree National Park expansion would connect protected lands and safeguard core habitat areas and linkages. The ability for wildlife (plants and animals) to move is critical to the survival of native species as they face climate impacts like habitat loss, warming temperatures, and increased drought.

The monument will also help increase equitable access to nature for eastern Coachella Valley residents and honor cultural landscapes. Lands within the proposed national monument are the traditional homeland of the Iviatim, Nüwü, Pipa Aha Macav, Kwatsáan and Maara’yam peoples (Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Quechan, and Serrano nations).

Along with the new monument, this effort proposes to protect approximately 17,000 acres of public lands in the Eagle Mountains that are adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park. These lands would be managed cohesively by the National Park Service.

Representative Ruiz called on President Biden to use the Antiquities Act to designate the monument and protect lands adjacent to the national park. The Antiquities Act is a 1906 law that grants U.S. presidents the ability to designate federal public lands, waters, and cultural and historical sites as national monuments with a Presidential Proclamation.

This effort has already garnered diverse local support, including from over a dozen current and former local elected officials, the Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, the cities of Banning, Palm Springs, and Desert Hot Springs in Riverside County and Calipatria in Imperial County, over a dozen businesses, Chambers of Commerce, and over 1,000 residents of the eastern Coachella Valley and neighboring areas. More information is available here: protectchuckwalla.org.

#

About the Power in Nature Coalition

Power In Nature is a statewide coalition of over 100 community groups, environmental and conservation organizations, land trusts, indigenous organizations and tribal members dedicated to advancing California’s 30x30 commitment. The Power In Nature coalition has identified nearly 100 potential 30x30 projects across the state and works on a broad range of issues including biodiversity protection, climate resilience, equity, recreation, outdoor access and social justice. For more information, please visit [our website](#).