

# Staff Report 67

## **APPLICANT:**

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California Desert Land Conservancy, DBA Mojave Desert Land Trust

## **PROPOSED ACTION:**

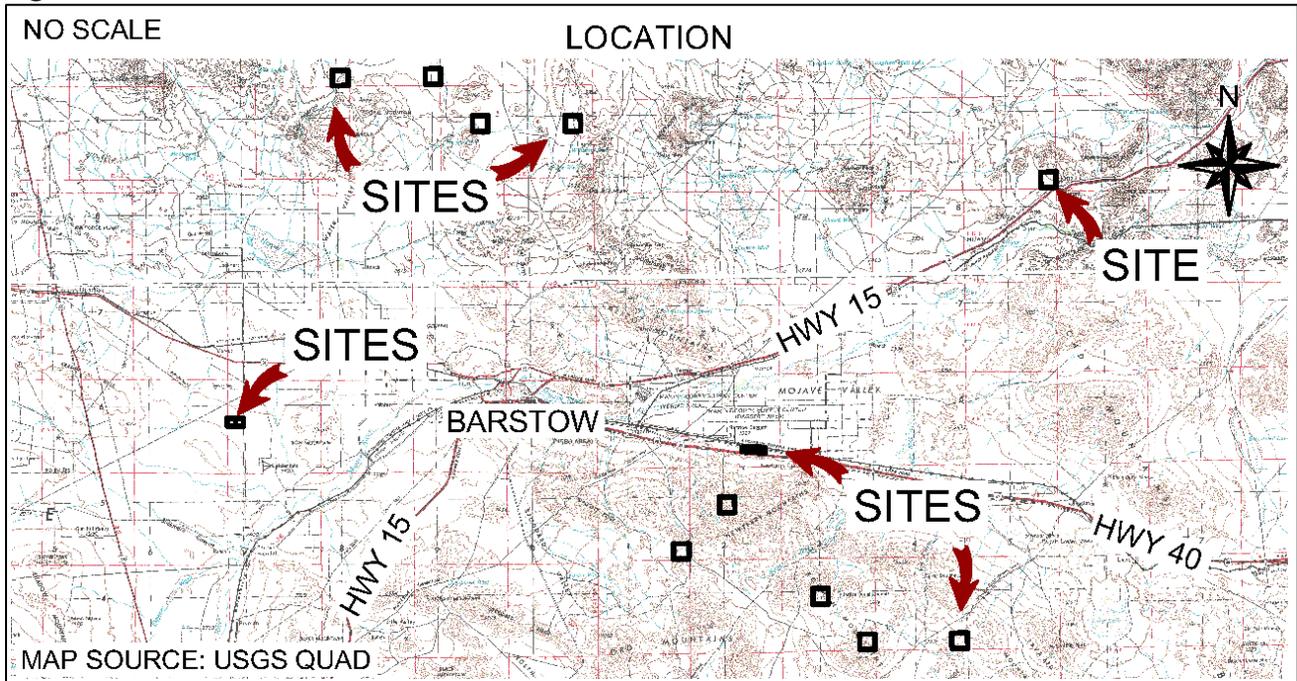
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Issuance of a General Lease – Other Use.

## **AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:**

Approximately 7,087 acres of State-owned school lands, located on 16 parcels, including, Section 16, Township 32 South, Range 46 East; Section 16, Township 32 South, Range 47 East; Section 36, Township 31 South, Range 44 East; and Section 36, Township 31 South, Range 45 East, all within the Mount Diablo Baseline & Meridian; and Section 36, Township 12 North, Range 5 East; Section 16, Township 8 North, Range 2 East; Section 36, Township 8 North, Range 1 East; Sections 16 and 36, in Township 7 North, Range 3 East; Section 36, Township 7 North, Range 4 East; South half of Section 18, Township 9 North, Range 4 West; the North half of North half, Section 35, and the Northeast quarter of North half, Section 34, and the South half of South half, Section 26, and the Southeast quarter of South half, Section 27, all in Township 9 North, Range 2 East, San Bernardino Baseline & Meridian, within the deserts surrounding the greater Barstow area, all within San Bernardino County (as shown in Figure 1).

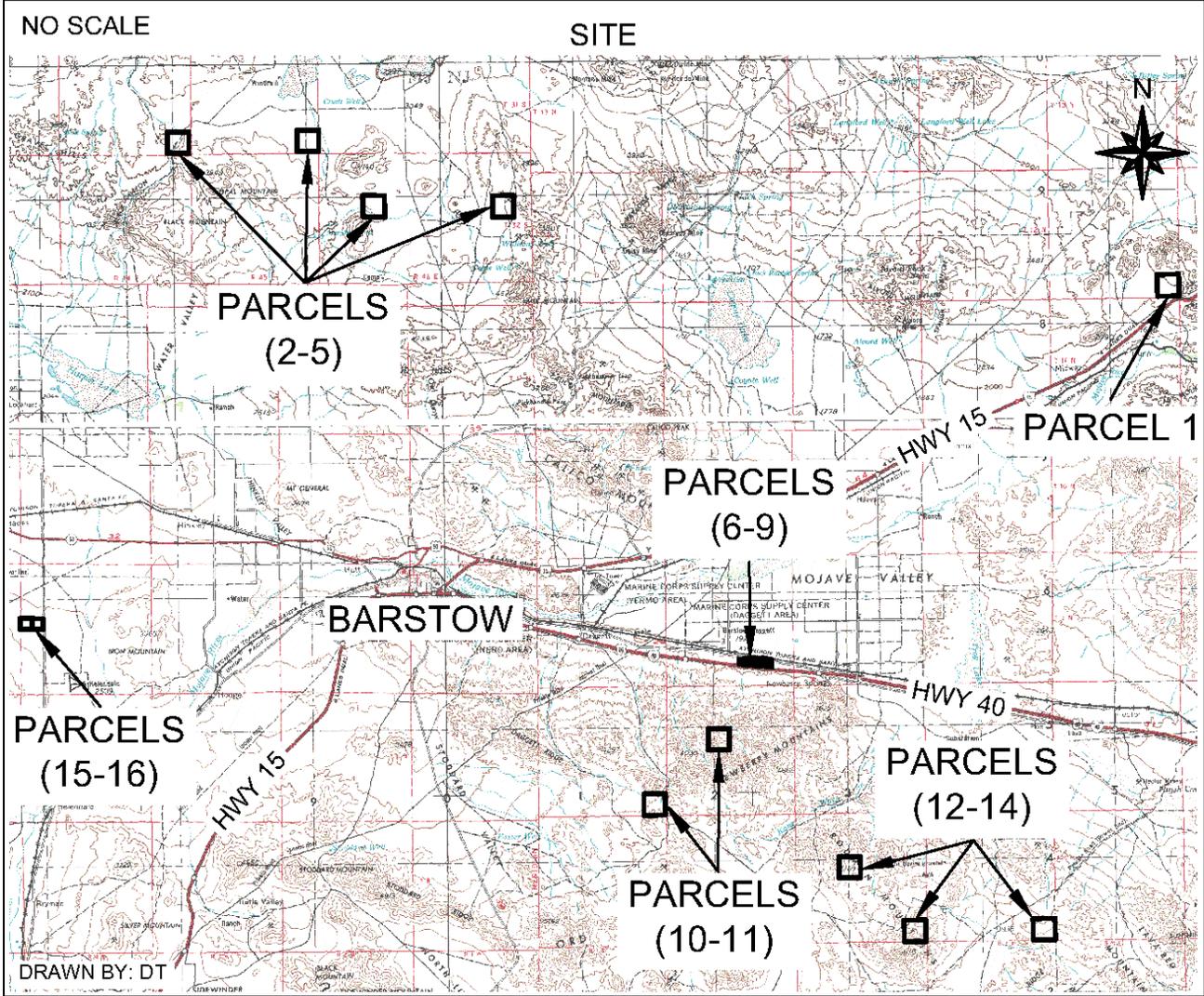
**Figure 1. Location**



**AUTHORIZED USE:**

Biological Survey and Data Collection (as shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Site Map



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

**TERM:**

5 years, beginning February 9, 2026.

**CONSIDERATION:**

\$167 per year with annual Consumer Price Index adjustments.

**SPECIFIC LEASE PROVISIONS:**

- Lessee shall not add or allow any other party to add any improvements on the Lease Premises.
- Lessee may collect seeds by hand and conduct biologic surveys.
- Insurance: Liability insurance in an amount no less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence.

**STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

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**AUTHORITY:**

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6216, 6217.5, 6301, 6501.1, 6503, and 8701; California Code of Regulations, title 2, sections 2000 and 2003.

**STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

The Applicant is a nonprofit organization, founded in 2006, with a mission to protect the Colorado and Mojave Desert ecosystems and their natural, scenic, and cultural resources. Since its founding, the Applicant has protected approximately 125,000 acres of ecologically significant land and grown over 120,000 native plants for restoration and community use through a multi-faceted conservation strategy that uses land acquisition, restoration, stewardship, plant cultivation, and education to ensure the long-term preservation of the California desert.

The Applicant proposes to conduct a comprehensive biological land assessment that could then be used to inform and suggest various conservation actions in the future on State lands and in the broader Mojave Desert region. Surveying and data-collection will be used to determine the concentration and types of habitats and species on each site. The Applicant will conduct surveys for important wildlife, such as desert tortoise and bighorn sheep, survey native and rare plants, collect seeds from plants of interest, evaluate existing habitat conditions, assess any negative impacts to the lands from unauthorized activities, and collect other general information that could inform future restoration and conservation efforts. The research activities being proposed are consistent with the state's broader priorities and goals to promote conservation, climate resiliency, and protection of biodiversity, including, for example, the California Desert Conservation Program within the Wildlife Conservation Board in the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

No other activities are approved under the terms of this lease that involve any type of improvements, such as fence installations or the manipulation of existing roadways.

**CLIMATE CHANGE:**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Climate change is significantly altering California's deserts, the hottest and driest regions in the state. As the atmosphere warms, there are more extremely hot days and unpredictable rainfall. Longer droughts are expected, and precipitation patterns will change in timing and intensity, affecting plant growth and distribution. The desert is likely to see a corresponding increase in wildfires and flash flooding. These impacts may affect areas subject to the proposed lease, in San Bernardino County.

**DATA AND PROJECTIONS:**

In the desert areas of California, daily average high temperatures are projected to increase significantly by the end of the century ([Inland Deserts Summary Report](#), California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, 2018). As the atmosphere heats, it can hold more water, and release it in sudden, intense events that may cause flash flooding during the winter months. In the summer months, the monsoon rain patterns that have historically contributed to 30 percent of the desert's annual rainfall are expected to dry up and disappear from the region. Models project there will be more "dry years" (with less than average rainfall) than "wet years" (with more than average rainfall). Finally, many areas in the desert are prone to high wind speeds, and wind speed is projected to increase by 10 percent by 2100.

**Table 1. Projected Temperature Increases (in degrees Fahrenheit) in CA Desert**

Year	Lower GHG Emissions	Higher GHG Emissions
Present - 2039	+5	+6
2040 - 2069	+6	+10
2070 - 2100	+8	+14

Source: Table adapted from Figure 5, p. 14, [Inland Desert Summary Report](#), California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment.

**Table 2. Extreme Heat and Rainfall Projections for CA Desert by 2100**

<b>Climate Event</b>	<b>Present Day</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
Extreme Heat Days/year (>95 degrees Fahrenheit)	90 (Mojave)	141 (Mojave)	+57%
Extreme Heat Days/year (>95 degrees Fahrenheit)	130 (Palm Springs)	179 (Palm Springs)	+38%
Annual Rainfall Average	5 inches	2.5 inches (dry years)	-50%
Annual Rainfall Average	5 inches	7-8 inches (wet years)	+40-60%

Source: Table adapted from “21<sup>st</sup> Century Climate Projections” section, pp. 14-21, Inland Desert Summary Report, California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment.

**ANALYSIS:**

More intense rainfall events, drier soils, and stressed and sparse vegetation in this arid region will increase the probability of flash foods. Dry soils are poor absorbers of rainfall, resulting in high runoff rates. Infrastructure built in dry climates is generally not designed to handle the large flows of water that may be generated in a flash food event. Flash flooding can also leave behind large deposits of mud and debris which may damage roads and other infrastructure ([California OES, 2024](#)).

The lease premises and improvements will likely experience increased exposure to prolonged and extreme heat, unpredictable precipitation patterns, increased frequency of flash floods, and higher wind speeds for the duration of the lease term. These conditions may increase the risk of wildfire exposure and flooding to the lease premises.

Wildfire risk is also likely to increase in the desert, in connection with the increase in extreme weather. Wildfire risk in the desert is tied to fuel (vegetation) availability, which will fluctuate in relationship to precipitation, and atmospheric conditions. High winds can damage power transmission infrastructure, providing an ignition source for fire, and can also propel fires over more terrain.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Pursuant to the proposed lease, the Applicant acknowledges that the lease premises and adjacent upland are located in an area that may be increasingly subject to the effects of climate change such as extreme heat, unpredictable

precipitation patterns, flash flooding and wildfires and will conduct any information collection visits to the lease premises accordingly for its own safety. In addition, the Applicant should consider the effects of climate change when planning any restoration projects that are identified during information collection surveys.

**CONCLUSION:**

For all the reasons above, staff believes the approval of the lease application is in the best interests of the State. Staff recommends approval of this non-exclusive General Lease – Other Use application.

**OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

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1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects the use of State-owned school land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's school lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant will not be authorized to collect seeds and other data on school lands. The Applicant has no right to a new lease or to renewal of any previous lease.
2. This action is consistent with addressing the challenges and opportunities described in the Commission's 2021-25 Strategic Plan to "Embrace and safeguard multi-benefit School Lands and resource management stewardship that equitably balances responsible local and regional economic development, supports living wages, environmental protection, and revenue generation."
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 6, Information Collection; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15306.

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061.

**EXHIBIT:**

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A. Land Description

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

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It is recommended that the Commission:

### **CEQA FINDING:**

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 6, Information Collection; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15306.

### **STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

Find that proposed lease is in the best interests of the State.

### **AUTHORIZATION:**

Authorize issuance of a General Lease – Other Use to the California Desert Land Conservancy, DBA Mojave Desert Land Trust, to conduct seed and data collection for the period starting February 9, 2026, through February 8, 2031; annual rent in the amount of \$167, with an annual Consumer Price Index adjustment, on 16 parcels of State school lands, as shown on Exhibit A, attached and incorporated by reference herein.

**EXHIBIT A**

**A 5051**

**LAND DESCRIPTION**

Sixteen parcels of School Lands located in San Bernardino County, State of California, more particularly described as follow:

**PARCEL 1**

All those lands within Section 36, Township 12 North, Range 5 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved November 10, 1856, San Bernardino County, State of California.

**PARCEL 2**

All those lands within Section 16, Township 32 South, Range 46 East, Mount Diablo Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved February 29, 1856, San Bernardino County, State of California.

**PARCEL 3**

All those lands within Section 16, Township 32 South, Range 47 East, Mount Diablo Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved April 23, 1913, San Bernardino County, State of California.

**PARCEL 4**

All those lands within Section 36, Township 31 South, Range 44 East, Mount Diablo Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved April 23, 1913, San Bernardino County, State of California.

**PARCEL 5**

All those lands within Section 36, Township 31 South, Range 45 East, Mount Diablo Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved January 18, 1915, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 6

All those lands within S $\frac{1}{2}$  of S  $\frac{1}{2}$ , of Sections 26, Township 9 North, Range 2 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on the Official U. S. Government approved June 4, 1856, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 7

All those lands within SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of S  $\frac{1}{2}$ , of Sections 27, Township 9 North, Range 2 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on the Official U. S. Government approved June 4, 1856, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 8

All those lands within N  $\frac{1}{2}$  of N  $\frac{1}{2}$ , of Sections 35, Township 9 North, Range 2 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on the Official U. S. Government approved June 4, 1856, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 9

All those lands within NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of N  $\frac{1}{2}$ , of Sections 34, Township 9 North, Range 2 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on the Official U. S. Government approved June 4, 1856, San Bernardino County, State of California

PARCEL 10

All those lands within Section 16, Township 8 North, Range 2 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved April 2, 1920, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 11

All those lands within Section 36, Township 8 North, Range 1 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved March 10, 1857, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 12

All those lands within Section 16, Township 7 North, Range 3 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved June 2, 1921, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 13

All those lands within Section 36, Township 7 North, Range 3 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved June 2, 1921, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCEL 14

All those lands within Section 36, Township 7 North, Range 4 East, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved June 2, 1921, San Bernardino County, State of California.

PARCELS 15 & 16

All those lands within S ½, of Section 18, Township 9 North, Range 4 West, San Bernardino Meridian, as shown on US Government Township approved January 12, 1857, San Bernardino County, State of California.

Accompanying plat is hereby made a part of this description.

**END OF DESCRIPTION**

Prepared 06/12/2025 by the California State Lands Commission Boundary Unit.

