

**REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF BOARD GOVERNED COUNTY SERVICE AREAS
AND RECORD OF ACTION**

April 21, 2026

FROM

NOEL CASTILLO, Director, Department of Public Works – Special Districts

SUBJECT

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Plans and Specifications for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Acting as the governing body of County Service Area 20 Joshua Tree:

1. Adopt the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project.
2. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project.
3. Approve the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project as defined in the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration.
4. Approve the plans and specifications for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project.
5. Authorize the Director of the Department of Public Works – Special Districts to advertise the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project for competitive bids.
6. Direct the Department of Public Works – Special Districts to file and post the Notice of Determination for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project as required under the California Environmental Quality Act.

(Presenter: Noel Castillo, Director, 387-7906)

COUNTY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Ensure Development of a Well-Planned, Balanced, and Sustainable County.

Provide for the Safety, Health and Social Service Needs of County Residents.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approval of this item will not result in the use of Discretionary General Funding (Net County Cost). The total cost of up to \$2,000,000 for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project (Project) will be funded through a grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), as approved by the Board of Supervisors (Board) on October 24, 2023 (Item No. 75). Sufficient appropriation for the Project is included in the District's 2025-26 budget and will be included in future recommended budgets as needed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Desert View Conservation Area (DVCA) is comprised of approximately 605 acres of largely undisturbed habitat located south of State Highway 62 in Joshua Tree. Mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding are all popular activities within the DVCA. The DVCA is managed by the

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April 21, 2026**

Department of Public Works – Special Districts (Department) on behalf of County Service Area (CSA 20) Joshua Tree.

On December 17, 2019 (Item No. 69), the Board of Supervisors awarded Construction Contract No. 19-863 for various improvements to the DVCA, including the development of a designated parking area, restroom, main informational kiosk, and two complementing trail routes in the natural open space area with signage. These improvements (Phase I), which were funded through federal and state grants, are now complete.

Phase II of the DVCA development seeks to make additional improvements as requested by the local community and planned with the Department. The Phase II improvements include trail directional signage, informational kiosks with covered seating areas, habitat shelters, viewing platforms, discovery interpretive panels, picnic tables, and mileage posts.

On May 9, 2023 (Item No. 59), the Board authorized CSA 20 Joshua Tree to submit a grant application to the WCB requesting Project funding in an amount not-to-exceed \$2,000,000. The WCB accepted the grant application and subsequently identified CSA 20 Joshua Tree as a grantee award recipient.

On October 24, 2023 (Item No. 75), the Board approved Grant Agreement No. 23-1127 with WCB and authorized the use of \$2,000,000 from the grant for the Phase II DVCA Recreation Trails Project.

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its implementing Guidelines, an Initial Study (IS) was conducted to assess potential environmental impacts of the project. The study determined that all potentially significant impacts associated with construction of the Project can be mitigated to less-than-significant levels. Accordingly, adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is recommended.

The IS/MND was circulated on January 15, 2026, to the responsible and trustee agencies, interested organizations and individuals, and the State Clearinghouse for the 30-day comment period as specified in the CEQA Guidelines. Comments were received and responded to via a Response to Comments document, which is an attachment to the IS/MND document.

As all the potential environmental impacts can be adequately mitigated during Project construction, the Department of Public Works – Special Districts recommends the following:

- Adoption of the IS/MND
- Adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program in compliance with Section 15074 of the CEQA Guidelines
- Approval of the Project as defined in the IS/MND
- Filing of the Notice of Determination

In addition, this item seeks Board approval of the Project's plan and specifications and authorizes the Department Director to advertise the Project for competitive bids.

PROCUREMENT

Upon Board approval of this item, the Project will be advertised in accordance with Section 22037 of the California Public Contract Code. The District will utilize a Formal Request for Bid solicitation method in accordance with County Purchasing Policy. A publicly advertised, sealed

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Recreational Trails Project
April 21, 2026**

competitive bidding process will be conducted to solicit bids from qualified contractors, ensuring full compliance with procurement requirements and award to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder. The Department anticipates returning to the Board in July 2026 with a recommendation for award of the Project's construction contract.

REVIEW BY OTHERS

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Sophie Curtis, Deputy County Counsel, 387-5455) on March 20, 2026; Purchasing (Dylan Newton, Buyer, 387-8258) on April 10, 2026, and County Finance and Administration (Matthew Dalton, Administrative Analyst, 387-5005) on April 2, 2026.

**Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and Plans and Specifications for the Phase II Desert View Conservation Area Recreational Trails Project
April 21, 2026**

Record of Action of the Board of Supervisors
Board Governed County Service Areas

APPROVED (CONSENT CALENDAR)

Moved: Joe Baca, Jr. Seconded: Curt Hagman
Ayes: Col. Paul Cook (Ret.), Jesse Armendarez, Dawn Rowe, Curt Hagman, Joe Baca, Jr.

Lynna Monell, CLERK OF THE BOARD

BY  _____
DATED: April 21, 2026



cc: File - SDD/Board Governed County Service Area - CSA 20
(Joshua Tree) w/attach
CCM 04/24/2026