

**MOJAVE DESERT RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT (MDRCD)
NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

To: San Bernardino County
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
385 North Arrowhead Avenue
San Bernardino, CA 92415

From: Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District
15415 W. Sand Street, #103
Victorville, CA 92392

and

Office of Planning and Research
State Clearinghouse
1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Project Title: Mojave Desert Land Trust Palisades Ranch Restoration Project

SCH Number: To be assigned

Project Location: Palisades Ranch is located in San Bernardino County, California, approximately 25 miles southwest of Barstow, California. The nearest cross streets are Bryman Road and Heritage Road. It consists of $\pm 1,647$ acres (21 parcels), approximately ± 3.5 miles along a north-south axis and ± 1.25 miles wide on an east-west axis. The project site is located within the USGS Topo 7.5-minute map for Helendale, CA and the rough center of the 1,647-acre project site is located in Section 12, Township 6 North and Range 4 West. The approximate GPS coordinates of the project site are 34.47166, -117.34820.

The property forms an irregular shape and varies topographically from horizontal expanses to vertical cliffs. Steep, 80-foot bluffs separate the river channel in the eastern part of the property from the alluvial flats to the west. For the most part, the property sits vacant, unimproved, and unused. Approximately 820 acres of the project site lies in the Mojave River floodplain. This means approximately 820.80 acres lie outside a floodplain. A small portion of the property had been previously used to grow hay/alfalfa and as a fruit orchard. Neither of these uses are currently operational, and the fields lie fallow. The property includes four residences, two steel buildings, an office and apartment, two open sided hay barns, wells and water tanks, and miscellaneous improvements.

Project Description: The Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) intends to implement a conceptual restoration and design plan for Palisades Ranch that meets state and regional priorities to identify restoration measures for critical hydrological processes and habitat health. The objectives of the restoration plan were to improve riparian and aquatic habitats for special status species (including San Emigdio blue butterfly, Mojave tui chub, southwestern willow flycatcher, western yellow-billed cuckoo, least Bell's vireo, and Lucy's warbler) while keeping in mind water allocation (groundwater/aquifer recharge, water conservation) and maintenance required for sustainable and successful restoration. Given that MDLT proposes to implement a habitat restoration plan within an area of conservation, MDRCD has agreed to serve as the CEQA Lead Agency for this project.

The restoration plan involves reconnecting a 170-acre abandoned agricultural field that was historically riparian habitat to the Mojave River by reestablishing a nested floodplain that resembles historic floodplain conditions. This would entail constructing a 6,600-foot main side channel, a 1,425-foot west branch side channel, and two higher elevation 5-year return interval channels within the proposed nested floodplain in the abandoned agricultural field. This approach would restore the historic floodplain and braided channel form during annual high flows, promote natural recruitment of riparian vegetation and beaver colonization, and boost groundwater storage of the floodplain aquifer. Approximately 130 acres of riparian habitat would be restored as a result of this project. The design would also include a 2-acre pond that would provide habitat for Mojave tui chub. The design would not be hard engineering, rather the design would create a system that allows natural processes to take place, creating the greatest ecological benefit possible.

The Implementation of the proposed Palisades Ranch Restoration Project—which includes fence installation, habitat restoration, and installation of signage—is anticipated to require up to 5 years (60 months) with a target completion date of 3 years (36 months), with the anticipated start date of construction in October 2022. The project could be completed as early as October 2025, though it may be completed at the latest around October of 2027.

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Project Sponsor(s): Mojave Desert Land Trust

This is to advise that the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District, acting as the lead agency, has prepared an Initial Study to determine if the project may have a significant effect on the environment and is proposing to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration based on the following finding:

- The Initial Study shows that there is no substantial evidence that the project may have a significant effect on the environment.
- The Initial Study identified potentially significant effects but:
 - (1) Revisions in the project plans or proposal made or agreed to by the applicant before this proposed Negative Declaration was released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur; and,
 - (2) There is no substantial evidence before the agency that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment.

A copy of the Initial Study and all other material which constitutes the record of proceedings upon which the MDRCD based its decision to adopt this Mitigated Negative Declaration may be obtained at the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District offices at 15415 W. Sand Street, #103, Victorville, CA 92392 and online at: <https://www.mojavedesertrcd.org/palisades-ranch>

The CEQA-required public review period of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration begins May 19, 2022 and ends on June 17, 2022 (30-days). Written comments on the Initial Study should be submitted to Ms. Dana Raponi at the mailing address listed above no later than June 17, 2022 (by 5:00 PM).

	President	MAY 12, 2022
Signature	Title	Date

Date received for filing and posting

- Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
- OPR