

Susan Trost -JOSHUA TREE CA HOME OWNER

California Fish and Game Commission
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Subject: Urgent Need for Reform, Transparency, and Community Protections when considering the Western Joshua Conservation Act and Draft Conservation Plan.

Dear Commissioners,

As a resident of Joshua Tree and part of a community that lives alongside the Western Joshua tree every day, I am compelled to submit this letter in the desire to avoid legal action initiated by Morongo Basin Joshua Tree & land owners versus FGC and the state of California.

THE PROCESS USED TO GENERATE The Western Joshua Conservation Act and Draft Conservation Plan IS NOT LEGAL ACCORDING TO CALIFORNIA PRECEDENTS AND REGULATIONS.

This DISRUPTIVE ACT represents the first and only time a plant species has been subject to a complex and restrictive land use permitting processe, coupled with high fees and mitigation costs to be incurred by land owners who are the legal owners of all vegetation on their property. The Act is attempting to set the stage for unprecedented regulation of private property, community growth, and infrastructure development. It is out of the confines of and truly perverts the tenants of CDFW California Desert Native Plants Act. See Chapters 4 and 5 if you are unfamiliar with the **California Desert Native Plants Act**.

Who exactly are the California law makers who included this in the state budget? Who chose the “scientific experts” who defined **Joshua Tree** endangerments and how they should be mitigated? How much were they paid? What are the names of these experts?

An unprecedented process has been used to develop The Western Joshua Conservation Act and Draft Conservation plan.

1.The Act was passed as part of the state budget, **behind closed doors**, without meaningful public review, input from local governments, or the communities most affected.

2. NO landowners in the affected areas were even notified of your project.

3. The resulting regulations are confusing, inconsistent, and burdensome for residents and agencies.

4.The Department is attempting to **delegate permit authority** to local governments—yet these agencies were not consulted in developing the Act or the permitting rules and many have **no interest in administering complex, unworkable rules**.

You are negatively affecting Housing, Infrastructure, and Public Needs

The Act and Plan are already creating significant harm to:

- **Homeowners and housing developers**, by halting or delaying home construction in an area that has long been expected to grow to meet California’s housing needs.
- **Infill housing projects**, where existing urban and suburban areas are being blocked from reasonable development.
- **Critical infrastructure projects** for water, energy, and public safety—many of which now face **extremely high mitigation fees** and delays.
- **Wildfire safety projects**, where necessary fire hardening and vegetation management efforts are mired in permitting confusion.

HOW DARE YOU inflict this financial burden on one the the poorest California Counties?

1. **21% of the population is below poverty level**
2. **41% of the population need medical to survive.**
3. **345,004 residents receive EBT out of a population of 2,214,281**
4. **62.9% of our children qualify for free school meals. many of their parents are barely above the poverty line.**
5. **4000 individuals are homeless. Thousands more live in temporary shelters**

WE NEED LOW INCOME HOUSING which will not be built with the crippling costs you want to impose on San Bernardino County.

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The Plan also creates a **double penalty** for projects by requiring both Costly on-site mitigation or minimization measures, and Payment of an **in-lieu fee** under the Act.

All of the residents in the Morongo Basin and surrounding area treasure our Joshua trees. We will not intentionally do anything to harm them. Many of us propagate them from seed. Do not financially penalize us for wanting to live decent lives economically. Human lives matter just as much as Joshua Tree lives.

If the state and general public wants to follow the Draft Conservation Plan, the state and general public should pay for it.

The Commission must recognize that this is not simply about protecting a species—it is about setting a precedent for how California will balance **conservation, housing, infrastructure, wildfire safety, and community needs** in the future.

The current plan creates more harm than good. It threatens the very communities that live alongside the Western Joshua tree, and it was developed in a way that **excluded** those most affected.

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The current plan creates more harm than good. It threatens the very communities that live alongside the Western Joshua tree. I, Cat, was developed in a way that **excluded** those most affected. I urge the Commission and the Department to engage in an open, transparent public process to develop workable solutions.

Thank you for your consideration of our TREEserious concerns.

Sincerely,

Susan Trost

Joshua Tree, Ca Home Owner