

Soda Mountains Proposed Wilderness

Size: Approximately 115,000 acres

Management Agency:
Bureau of Land Management,
Barstow Field Office

Location: Located to the northwest of the I-15 between Barstow and Baker. Exit at Afton Road, Basin Road, or Zzyyxx Road to access the backcountry.

Maps: BLM Desert Access Guide Soda Mountains

Photo courtesy of John Dittli



Landscape

and History: This scenic, horseshoe-shaped range includes the terminus of the great Mojave River—at the Cronese Lakes most recently, and Silver Lake in the not too distant past. Ancient Native Americans' use of the Soda Mountains is seen in archaeologically significant rock alignments, anthropomorphic figures, portions of aboriginal trail systems, and a large lithic workshop. Salt and hunting camp localities used by Chemehuevi Indians are also found here. A designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern at the Cronese Lakes recognizes some of these resources.

Wildlife and Plants:

Creosote, barrel cacti, cholla, and yuccas can be found along with the unique Crucifixion thorn. Two intermittent lakes, East Cronese and West Cronese, provide habitat for wintering and migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, including the endangered Yuma clapper rail. The unusual concentrations of water related birds also make this a choice area for raptors. Desert Bighorn Sheep live in large swaths of the range as well.

The southern portion of the Soda Mountains contains critical habitat for the federally and state threatened Desert Tortoise. Habitat lies within the Superior Cronese Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA) for the Desert tortoise as codified by the BLM's West Mojave Plan. Tortoise habitat is also within the Western Mojave Recovery Unit (as identified in the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan). This unit has shown some of the most significant declines in Desert Tortoise populations when compared with the whole Desert Tortoise range.

Activity

Highlight: Located just off Interstate 15, the Soda Mountains provide hikers with ready access to multicolored canyons with steep, rocky walls grading from brown at the base, to red in the middle, to gold at the top.

For More Information:

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