

Mojave Desert

Springs, wetlands, riparian areas, and other water-dependent habitats are significant in the California portion of the Mojave Desert. Although limited in extent, they are rich in biodiversity; support numerous endangered, threatened, and sensitive native species, such as the desert tortoise; and provide recreation for visitors. Rapid population growth on the edge of the California desert has resulted in an increased demand for limited water resources. This competition for water is affecting water-dependent habitats, which are essential to the well-being of plants, animals, and recreation in the area.

The Mojave Desert in California has extensive Federal lands. Between them, the Department of the Interior (DOI) and Department of Defense (DOD) manage three national parks, the 12 million acre California Desert Conservation Area, and five of the Nation's military training bases. Management decisions increasingly rely on the results of water and biological research, which USGS

conducts in partnership with DOI, DOD, and State agencies through the California Desert Managers Group (DMG).

In FY 2001, USGS, in partnership with the DMG, will focus new efforts on water and ecological resources in the Mojave Desert. Existing water data, such as ground-water levels, spring sources, water chemistry, and surface water, will be compiled into a spatial database for analysis by DMG partners and other stakeholders. The USGS will also complete a draft protocol that can be used desert-wide to monitor water chemistry and quality, water levels, discharge, and water use. This monitoring protocol will be modified to include ecological data, such as significant or rare water-dependent plants and animals. When completed, the monitoring protocols can be used to track trends in water use and availability and to demonstrate the dependence of biological systems on a stable water supply.

USGS will also produce databases and decision support systems that will be readily accessible by land managers over the Internet. In addition to members of the DMG, the information will be made available to communities, the private sector, and the public, who need ready access to integrated scientific information on status and trends of the desert's hydrologic and ecological systems.

Successful land management of the Mojave depends on the use of current scientific information on physical and biological resources and their trends. It is especially important to know the condition of the resource and how that condition is changing in response to management actions and natural and human change. Without a way to assess changing conditions, land managers cannot measure conservation progress or the effectiveness of actions prescribed in land management plans. USGS work will provide tools that managers need to evaluate the success of their efforts to protect these lands for people and wildlife.

	(Dollars in Thousands)
National Mapping Program	
Geographic Research and Applications	+\$ 400

As the nation's largest water, earth and biological science and civilian mapping agency, the USGS works in cooperation with more than 2000 organizations across the country to provide reliable, impartial, scientific information to resource managers, planners, and other customers. This information is gathered in every state by USGS scientists to minimize the loss of life and property from natural disasters, contribute to sound economic and physical development of the nation's natural resources, and enhance the quality of life by monitoring water, biological, energy, and mineral resources.