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For immediate release

**Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy completes Shumway Ranch acquisition for habitat conservation and historic preservation**

*Palm Desert, June 28, 2017.* – The Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy this week completed the long-contemplated purchase of the historic Shumway Ranch in the mountains above Palm Desert. The ranch consists of 640 acres off of Highway 74 that are prominently placed in a transition zone at the edge of the Pinyon area, where Grapevine Canyon descends sharply into the desert floor. It includes a large portion of Asbestos Mountain, large wash areas and a relatively flat section with inspiring views of Deep Canyon and the Valley floor. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that it contains critical habitat for the endangered peninsular bighorn sheep, which will help the species adapt to climate change and offer researchers opportunities to study the impacts of such change.

Historically, the land was part of the Cleveland National Forest until President Wilson removed it by executive order in 1916 and made it available for claims under the 1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act. In 1938, the land was granted as a homestead to Percy Shumway and Nina Paul Shumway, who were part of a well-known agricultural family in the Eastern Coachella Valley; local records indicate that this was the last stock raising homestead granted in California. In the early 1960s, the ranch was sold to silent movie star Irene Rich, whose daughter, noted sculptress Frances Rich, inherited it and lived and worked there until the 1980's, when she donated the land to the Living Desert.

The Conservancy has worked since 2014 facilitate the purchase of the site from the Living Desert for a purchase price of \$1.565 million, using money from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Proposition 84, the water bond enacted by California voters in 2006. All but ten acres of the land will be owned and managed as perpetual open space. The remaining ten acres makes up the Shumway homestead, including three historic buildings, which the Conservancy will work to preserve as a historical and public educational site. The Living Desert has pledged a significant contribution to assist in renovation efforts.

“This is great example of collaboration among government agencies and local nonprofits that implements the important habitat conservation objectives of the Conservancy while at the same time preserving irreplaceable features of local history,” said Conservancy Executive Director Jim Karpiak. The Conservancy is a state agency whose mission is to facilitate the acquisition and perpetual holding of open space and mountainous lands in and surrounding the Coachella Valley for the protection of natural and cultural resources along with the public’s enjoyment of those resources.

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