

Hello Friends,

We started the month of September off on a fantastic positive note! I am proud to formally announce that Friends of the Desert Mountains has acquired the Rancho Royale property off Highway 62 in the City of Desert Hot Springs. This property will no longer be the future location of a master-planned community of up to 1,998 dwelling units (previously approved for 2,200 units per proposed tentative map). This beautiful desert gateway to Sand to Snow National Monument will forever be protected!

The biological importance of this property is probably one of its most significant features. As some of you may know, the Coachella Valley is a biodiversity hotspot, and this property is an excellent example of that. It hosts three different vegetation types; Sonoran creosote bush scrub, Sonoran mixed woody & succulent scrub, and Desert dry wash woodland. Having these three different vegetation types on the property means that these 481 acres provide the vital habitat and resources needed by various species, some of which are endemic or endangered, making this property an indispensable wildlife corridor from Big Morongo to Mission Creek and Whitewater Canyon.

The acquisition of Rancho Royale is by far one of the most challenging and vital land purchases Friends of the Desert Mountains has completed in recent years. It would not have been possible without a package of state and federal funding assembled by the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our funding partners for their contributions to this acquisition project. Together we helped protect the vital habitat, linkages, fluvial, and aeolian sand transport corridors found within this property.

Sendy Hernández Orellana Barrows, Acquisition Coordinator