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Valley leaders to dedicate new hiking trail for first time in a decade

PALM DESERT – The Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy (CVMC) and Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM), in conjunction with several partner agencies, are proud to announce a grand opening celebration will be held on March 9, 2018 for the Kim Nicol Trail. The event will start at 8:15 a.m. at the trailhead, which is located near the intersection of 20th Avenue and Corkill Road in the unincorporated community of Desert Edge.

This marks the first time in more than 10 years that a major hiking trail has been opened in the Coachella Valley. The 5.6-mile loop traverses across sandy terrain and has moderate height gains, providing trail users with stunning views of the open desert and the surrounding hills.

“The Kim Nicol Trail will become a must-see destination for valley residents and visitors who want to embrace the Coachella Valley’s natural environment,” said Jim Karpiak, Executive Director of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy. “Creating this trail required cooperation from a number of local and state agencies, and we’re grateful that so many came together to provide this trail access to the public.”

The Kim Nicol Trail is a joint project of Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy and Friends of the Desert Mountains. The effort started in 2010, when a study funded by a grant from Southern California Edison identified more than 20 potential trail locations in the northern Coachella Valley. CVMC provided funding to cover the environmental analysis and other expenses, while the FODM’s experienced volunteers provided the manpower necessary to create the trail.

The Kim Nicol Trail is located on land owned by CVMC, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC). The project also received support from Coachella Valley Hiking Club and Desert Trails Hiking Club.

The trail is named in memory of Kim Nicol, a regional manager for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife whose career was devoted to protecting endangered species and open space in the Coachella Valley. She passed away in January 2015 following a courageous battle with cancer.

“Kim was passionate not just about protecting our natural environment, but about providing people with access to learn more about the plants and animals that are unique to the desert,” said Katie Barrows, Director of Environmental Resources for the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission. “This trail is a fitting tribute to her legacy in the Coachella Valley.”

In addition to its impressive views, the Kim Nicol Trail will provide hikers with additional information about the lands that are protected by the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. The visionary 75-year plan, which is spearheaded by the CVCC, outlines a path to conserve nearly

240,000 acres of land valley-wide and protect 27 plants and animals, including Peninsular bighorn sheep, desert tortoises and the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard.

The creation of the new trail involved extensive clean-up of illegal dumping and debris and closed off access to off-road vehicles. The trail also directs hikers away from the most sensitive habitat areas and will include interpretive signs that educate hikers about the Plan and the species that live in the area.

The Kim Nicol Trail was built to provide an additional hiking venue in the Northern Coachella Valley, currently underserved by trail access. In addition, the CVMC & FODM are working on two new trails near Indio and Desert Hot Springs.

“Our volunteers were honored to contribute to this worthy project, which fits in with our goals of protecting sensitive habitat,” said Tammy Martin, Executive Director of Friends of the Desert Mountains. “By providing safe access to our open desert, we can provide a hands-on education of our desert landscape for generations to come.”

Friday’s grand opening celebration will be immediately followed by a hike along the trail. The trail is accessible to hikers, dogs, equestrians and cyclists, but it is not open to motorcycles or other motorized vehicles.

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