

NEWS

FROM THE OFFICE OF

ROBERT A. LOVINGOOD

**First District Supervisor,
County of San Bernardino**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: February 12, 2016

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Lovingood: Monument designation ignores public participation, may cost county millions

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Robert A. Lovingood said he is disappointed at the President's order designating national monuments within the County, saying it bypasses local voices, the legislative process and jeopardizes millions in potential mining revenue to the County.

Lovingood said the presidential designation does not protect off-highway vehicle areas that would be protected by Congressman Paul Cook's compromise bill making its way through Congress. OHV recreation has an economic impact of at least \$70 million to the County and supports numerous small and rural businesses.

"This designation affects 2,800 square miles of our desert, and unfortunately the administration did not hold a single public hearing in the First District," Lovingood said. "This is the public's land for the public's use, and the public should have been heard."

It's too early to determine the full economic impacts, and it will probably be more than a year before the management plan is written. But the president's order appears to jeopardize a gold mining operation in the Castle Mountains. That operation, if it is allowed to scale up to full production in the next phase, is expected to become the second-largest gold mine in California, creating approximately 300 full-time positions with a direct tax benefit in excess of \$225 million to the County. Under the president's executive action, it appears there is no mechanism for the Park Service to issue the necessary permits.

"I love the desert and have worked hard to protect it," Lovingood said. "Recreation, conservation and mining can all coexist. But the president's designation ignores the historic approach that the desert is a land of many uses."

Lovingood said he said he believes that promises of a boom in tourism and federally funded road improvements in the monument areas are unlikely.

Because the monument designations bypassed Congress, they contain no funding and may become "orphan monuments," with little congressional support.

The new monument areas are already open to tourism and are protected by the Bureau of Land Management. Lovingood cited a 2014 National Park Service report that the three areas designated by the 1994 desert bill (Death Valley National Park, Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Preserve) have a backlog of more than \$351 million in deferred maintenance to roads, bridges, trails and other infrastructure.

1994 Desert Protection Act covered 11,875 square miles of the California desert -- more land than the entire states of Rhode Island, Delaware and Connecticut combined.

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Note: The report cited above is titled, "NPS Deferred Maintenance by State and by Park, Sept. 30, 2014."
http://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/upload/FY14-DM-by-State-and-Park_2015-03-13.pdf