



## Case Study

# PARTNERSHIP CREATION MOJAVE DESERT, UNITED STATES

*Creating a new desert protection non-profit land trust on the California-Nevada border.*

In 2002, The Nature Conservancy conducted a conservation assessment in the Amargosa region of the Mojave Desert, a land of few people and small towns where the Federal government owns the majority of the land. Prior to 2000, the Conservancy had engaged in transferring private land to public entities in the Amargosa River region several times, but had never invested in ongoing dedicated staff.

In the area, private landholders own most of the area's few water sources. Threats from water withdrawal were having a negative impact on the high level of biodiversity, including a number of endemic species. Key influencers and funders began urging stronger Conservancy involvement, and offered financial support. But the Conservancy only wanted to apply its resources if it knew that the Amargosa would be protected for the long-term. However, the Conservancy did not want to be burdened with property ownership and local leadership staffing indefinitely because it would hamper the ability to protect other critical areas.

The Conservancy began informal conversations about the dilemma, and discovered conservation-oriented town leaders in two of the small towns in the region. Additional potential partnership assets were out-of-towners who loved the area, visited frequently, but lived far away.

During discussions an organizational concept emerged that would combine the conservation leadership of the area with the resources and energy of the Amargosa-loving outsiders. This model had emerged in other higher profile natural areas in California and Nevada such as the "Mono Lake Committee" and "Friends of Yosemite."

The idea of a local land trust was articulated to two key townspeople concerned with regional conservation, and then the idea circulated informally through the community. An attorney in Los Angeles agreed to draw up the Land Trust Agreements and tax documents free of charge, and "The Amargosa Conservancy" was born.

Years later, the Amargosa Conservancy continues to do powerful conservation work in the region, and they are currently planning how to make sure that the renewable energy industry sites new plants away from ecologically important areas.