

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**ANZA-BORREGO FOUNDATION OBTAINS FINAL LINK IN PROVIDING WILDLIFE  
CORRIDOR FROM DESERT TO LAGUNA MOUNTAINS**

BORREGO SPRINGS, CA —Anza-Borrego Foundation (ABF), official partner of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, today announced the final elements in the conservation of the Lucky 5 Ranch in the Laguna Mountains, northeast of San Diego. ABF purchased just under 1,130 acres and obtained a conservation easement on 433 acres to fulfill decades-long efforts by California State Parks, ABF, The Nature Conservancy, and others to connect the 4,245-acre ranch to adjacent pieces of federal and state conservation land, creating a major parcel of exceptional natural beauty and biological importance. The acreage will eventually become part of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

ABF's actions are the final piece in the creation of a wildlife corridor—a continuous connection of publicly protected lands—from the desert floor to the Laguna Mountains. The large confluence of protected lands provides numerous recreational opportunities, sites for research and study, expanses of scenic landscape, support for abundant wildlife, and the potential for several species of animals to relocate if needed because of the effects of climate change.

“Adding another piece of the Lucky 5 ranch to be preserved within Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is quite an achievement for Anza-Borrego Foundation and valuable to conserving San Diego County’s backcountry,” says Anza-Borrego Desert State Park Superintendent Kathy Dice. “In addition to creating a wildlife corridor and unbroken transition zone from montane to chaparral to desert habitats, this property also represents a prime example of 19th- and 20th-century Southern California ranching. These are the very things that fall into the mission of California State Parks – to preserve the best of California forever.”

The Lucky 5 Ranch property, first homesteaded in 1860, lays between two large state parks — Anza-Borrego Desert and Cuyamaca Rancho. In the early 1970s, because of its scenic qualities, size and location, and natural and cultural richness, the property was considered for addition to the California State Park system. While budgets rose and fell and land acquisition priorities shifted over the years, Lucky 5 remained the property of the Daley family. Former State Parks District Superintendent and current ABF Trustee David Van Cleve affirms, “State Parks staff have been looking to permanently protect this property since the 1960s, so this latest and final acquisition is a terrific testament to their vision and hard work.”

Fueled by the offer of a \$2 million private donation, efforts to obtain the property accelerated in the late 1990s. ABF used that donation and a combination of federal and state grants, along with Foundation funds, to purchase 2,675 acres, or 63 percent of the ranch, in 2001. The land was then transferred to the state and added to the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Since that time, State Parks has expanded its system of riding and hiking trails within Anza-Borrego Desert and Cuyamaca Rancho state parks. It has also built a day-use parking lot for

trail access, along with restroom facilities, equestrian trailer parking, and trail signage, expanding recreational access to Cuyamaca Lake, Pacific Crest Trail, and California Riding & Hiking Trail.

The connections among protected properties provided by the Lucky 5 Ranch is consistent with a major shift in State Parks planning that occurred in the 1990s. Rather than continue to establish “stand-alone” parks, the goal changed to connect existing open space preserves. Connections did not have to be only between state parks, just established preserves.

The new focus on connectivity also led to a major change in the Anza-Borrego Foundation. Instead of spending its energy solely on park inholdings, the Foundation developed a vision of establishing protected corridors from the State Park to other protected reserves -- other state parks, federal wilderness areas, and Department of Fish and Wildlife reserves.

Among the wildlife supported in this protected corridor are golden eagle, mountain lion, bobcat, gray fox, mule deer, and numerous species of reptiles and birds. The Lucky 5 Ranch property is habitat for plants designated as endangered by California (Parish’s meadowfoam) and federally (San Bernardino blue grass).

The especially steep escarpment of the eastern flank of the Laguna Mountains provides excellent potential for several species to relocate if made necessary by the effects of climate change. In many ecosystems, species might have to relocate hundreds of miles to find suitable habitat. In steep ranges such as the Lagunas, it may be possible that some species could adapt by moving relatively short distances up or down the slopes. With a permanently protected wildlife corridor, such possibility may be the subject of research and investigation by the Steele/Burnand Anza-Borrego Desert Research Center, operated by UC Irvine in partnership with Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Anza-Borrego Foundation.

The conservation easement on 433 acres held by ABF permits the Daley family to own the property, live in the ranch house, and enjoy the use of the ranch as they do now. Present and future family members or successive owners of the property, however, according to the easement, may not subdivide the property, build any new structures outside a “building envelope,” or conduct activities that might have a negative effect on the area’s conservation value.

Funding for the acquisition was provided by The Nature Conservancy, SANDAG TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program, Resources Legacy Fund, Wildlife Conservation Board, Cuyamaca Rancho Foundation and individual donors to Anza-Borrego Foundation.

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Anza-Borrego Foundation is the nonprofit cooperating association for Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. The mission of Anza-Borrego Foundation is to protect and preserve the natural landscapes, wildlife habitat, and cultural heritage of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. ABF's education programs provide high quality, in-depth educational courses to over 1,300 visitors each year. [www.theABF.org](http://www.theABF.org)

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