

**Community Focus Statement A:** Preserve the desert ecosystem, its natural beauty, and the community's harmonious relationship with the environment.

**Action Statement A.4: Promote respect for local ecosystems and be stewards of the environment.**

A4

**Benchmark:** Community members collaborate with the Joshua Tree National Park Association (JTNP) to regularly organize and maintain an environmental stewardship program and provide education materials to the community to respect wildlife, habitats, corridors, and the local ecosystems. Under community leadership, collaboration occurs with organizations like the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and work with local, regional, and state agencies to identify resources and obtain feedback for continuing efforts to minimize impacts on the environment.

**Champion:** Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

**Estimated Cost:** \$250–\$1,000



Protected desert environment in Joshua Tree National Park. Photo source: [Shane Burkhardt](#)

Preservation of natural resources is essential to sustainable conservation and overall community sustainability. Sustainable conservation would ensure the community would be able to use and enjoy natural resources (i.e., water supply, energy, air, desert ecosystems, etc.), and minimize impacts on local ecosystems of native landscape and wildlife. Sustainability programs can help promote resource conservation and community awareness about the efficient use of natural resources, while respecting the environment and individual property rights. Developing an appreciation and understanding of the environment and wildlife habitat can help the community respect wildlife and nature. In partnership with organizations including the National Park Service (NPS), develop sustainable conservation practices that could include:

- Learn how to coexist and encourage the community to protect wildlife and native species.
- Observe wildlife from a distance and avoid them during sensitive times such as mating, nesting, raising young, or harsh weather conditions.
- Secure food from animals by keeping edibles in the car or a hard-sided container and placing all garbage in bins.
- Protect riparian areas: camp at least 200 feet from water sources and use designated camping areas and trails.
- Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- Pack it in, pack it out, and inspect the campsite and rest areas for trash removal.
- Start a recycling or composting program in individual businesses or enhance any existing program.
- Be paper free: reduce, reuse, and recycle as much as possible.
- Buy local merchandise to support local economy and reduce energy needed to transport goods long distances.
- Maintain landscaping by using native plants to save water and support the local ecosystem.

Each year, NPS volunteers contribute tens of thousands of hours to Joshua Tree National Park. Visitors, residents, families, school groups, scouts, clubs, and businesses help care for the trails, campgrounds, visitor centers, libraries, climbing rocks, and oases of in the park. Most people work for half a day or more on the trails or roads, and a few spend several months working in various locations throughout the park.

Action:	Action Leader:	Timeline:	Resources:
1. Create a community group to collaborate with Joshua Tree National Park Association and advocate to be stewards of the environment.	Champion with Local environmental nonprofit groups	Month 1	Joshua Tree National Park Association, Our Work <a href="http://www.joshuatree.org/our-work/">http://www.joshuatree.org/our-work/</a>
2. Engage with JTNPA members to focus efforts on environmental and ecological stewardship to encourage the community to respect ecosystems and keep them protected. Create an environmental and ecological stewardship program.	Community Group	Month 1	National Parks Conservation Association, Our Advocacy <a href="https://www.npca.org/advocacy">https://www.npca.org/advocacy</a>
3. Select a member to serve as environmental and ecological stewardship program lead to provide leadership coordination with the JTNPA and as contact person for related topics and issues.	Community Group	Month 1	National Park Service, Joshua Tree, Keep Wildlife Wild <a href="https://www.nps.gov/jotr/keep-wildlife-wild.htm">https://www.nps.gov/jotr/keep-wildlife-wild.htm</a>
4. Develop a list of community issues and regulations that relate to the importance of conservation and living with wildlife habitat and local ecosystems.	Community Group	Month 2	National Park Service, Joshua Tree, Volunteer <a href="https://www.nps.gov/jotr/get-involved/volunteer.htm">https://www.nps.gov/jotr/get-involved/volunteer.htm</a>
5. Develop key partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies for obtaining knowledge on community information, resources, and training programs on an ongoing basis.	Joshua Tree National Park Association, with support and knowledge from National park Service, National Parks Conservation Association, other local, regional and state agencies	Months 2-4	
6. Continue partnerships and relationships with the JTNPA and agency members to promote knowledge and awareness on environmental and ecological stewardship.	Joshua Tree National Park Association, with support and knowledge from National park Service, National Parks Conservation Association, other local, regional and state agencies	On-going	