



**ANZA
BORREGO
FOUNDATION**

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



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Our Mission

To protect and preserve the natural landscapes, wildlife habitat and cultural heritage of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and its surrounding region for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

LETTER FROM ABF'S PRESIDENT, BILL MCDONALD

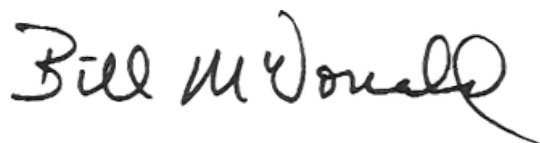
A dozen or so years ago, when I joined the board of trustees of ABF, many board members assisted in the operation of the organization. They aided the small number of staff members, often performing tasks essential to the effective functioning of ABF. We were what is called a “working board.”

In more recent years, as you've seen in our annual reports, ABF has become a different organization — a larger, professional staff developing, overseeing and running a significant expansion of programs and activities. It was time for the board's role to change as well.

At a planning retreat last fall, the board resolved to become a “governing board.” Our ongoing focus will be on providing organizational support to ABF staff and for the programs they create and maintain.

As this report is published, ABF Executive Director Bri Fordem and I are attending a multi-session “governance lab” sponsored by The Nonprofit Institute at the University of San Diego. When it concludes, we resolve to apply the principles we will have learned to bring about an effective board/staff relationship, all for the further achievement of ABF's mission.

Warmly,



Bill McDonald, ABF President

“ Our ongoing focus will be on providing organizational support to ABF staff and the programs they create. ”

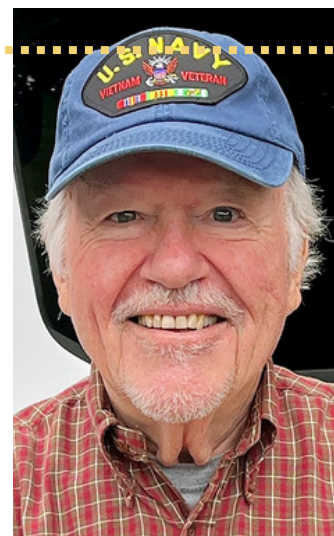




Photo: Sandeep Dhar

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRI FORDEM

Thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report. What follows is an honest account of how we showed up for Anza-Borrego Desert State Park during a year that demanded both resilience and innovation. 2024-2025 tested us in ways we anticipated and some we didn't. We showed up anyway.

In Sacramento, I sat in hearing rooms arguing for the integrity of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park while legislation threatened to fast-track infrastructure projects through protected lands. The proposed transmission line corridor didn't disappear just because AB 3238 stalled in committee. The threats remain. But so do we. And so do you.

That persistence matters because the truth about this work is simple: there is no finish line. Anza-Borrego will always need allies. The land doesn't stop needing protection when we close a deal on 100 acres or defeat a bad Bill. The desert doesn't pause between victories. Our job is to match that constancy, through increasing access to outdoor education programs, through communications that extended the story of the desert to millions of readers, through retail operations that adapted when wildflowers didn't bloom and visitation dropped, through volunteer hours and photo contests and sunset gatherings at Fonts Point.

What strikes me most this year isn't just what we accomplished, though the numbers tell a strong story. It's HOW we accomplished it. When challenges arose, our team didn't retreat into comfortable routines. We innovated. We refined systems. We led with intention. We launched mobile retail trailers and updated online stores and campaigns that actually moved the needle. This is what growth looks like in difficult times, not perfect execution, but thoughtful adaptation and relentless forward movement. I am so grateful for our team, their love of the Park and passion that keeps us motivated in tough times.



Photo: Bruce Herwig



“When challenges arose, our team didn't retreat into comfortable routines. They innovated.”

But here's what keeps me up at night: the greatest threat to Anza-Borrego isn't a transmission line or a policy change. It's disconnection. We live in a world increasingly distracted by screens, shaped by consumption, moving faster but connecting less, especially to the natural world. The people who fought to protect this desert decades ago understood something we risk forgetting: these places were set aside for all of us, and for those who come after us. They knew that Anza-Borrego, one of the most biodiverse state parks in California, serves as critical habitat and vital connectivity for wildlife across the desert landscape. Not for our convenience, but for our survival as human beings who need wild places to remember what matters.

When a child camps under dark skies for the first time during one of our education programs, when a first-time visitor learns why Peninsular bighorn sheep habitat corridors matter, when a supporter chooses to give again because they believe this work matters, that's how we build the next generation of advocates. That's how we think seven generations ahead instead of just to the next quarterly report.

Your support makes that possible. Not just financially, though that matters deeply. Your support says you still believe in the long game. You understand that protecting Anza-Borrego is ongoing work, not a campaign with an endpoint. You're willing to stand with us through legislative battles and quiet seasons, through growth and adaptation, through the relentless and necessary work of caring for this place. Thank you for that partnership. The desert is still here because people like you refuse to look away.

With gratitude and resolve,



Bri Fordem
Executive Director



ADVOCACY

Protecting Anza-Borrego Desert State Park has always required more than appreciation; it requires action. While much of our work focuses on education, stewardship, and land conservation, advocacy has become increasingly essential to safeguarding the Park's wilderness, wildlife, and cultural landscapes. In 2024, that responsibility intensified as major infrastructure and policy proposals emerged that could permanently alter the Park's integrity.

On May 10, 2024, the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) Board of Governors approved a 145-mile, 500kV transmission line—the "Imperial Valley to North of SONGS Project," now known as the Golden Pacific Powerlink. This approval raised immediate concerns about impacts to designated wilderness, habitat connectivity, cultural resources, and the very qualities that make this Park one of California's most treasured protected places. In April 2024, we became aware of Assembly Bill 3238, proposed legislation that would have dramatically changed how transmission lines are approved in California. Early versions of the bill included provisions that would have removed environmental review and reduced protection of cultural and natural resources, thus creating a serious risk for protected public lands statewide. For Anza-Borrego, this was not an abstract policy issue. It represented a direct threat to the Park's ability to remain whole, wild, and protected for future generations.

In response, we showed up where decisions are made. Executive Director Bri Fordem traveled to Sacramento, testified, and participated in key hearings to ensure that Anza-Borrego's voice was heard in the legislative process. Through our advocacy,



Photo: Frederic Pache



**PROOF THAT
INFORMED PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT CAN
PROTECT THE PARK
IN REAL TIME**



Photo: Thomas Blackman

alongside the Desert Protective, California State Parks Foundation Trust, Earth Advocacy and other partners, AB 3238 was amended to remove a major CEQA exemption related to existing rights-of-way. While this was an important step forward, the bill still posed a serious risk by eliminating the requirement to analyze alternatives to building new transmission lines. Under current law, agencies must demonstrate that new construction is superior to less-damaging alternatives, including upgrades to existing lines. AB 3238 would have weakened that safeguard.

Thanks to the collective efforts of supporters, partners, and advocates, AB 3238 ultimately stalled and died in appropriations—a major victory, and proof that informed public engagement can protect the Park in real time. But even with this win, the proposed transmission line remains a serious concern, and statewide efforts to streamline electrification projects to meet renewable energy goals set by the Governor continue. Looking ahead, we are participating in formal proceedings with the California Public Utilities Commission and meeting directly with decision-makers to ensure Anza-Borrego is understood not only as the largest and one of the most biodiverse state park in California, but as a globally significant desert ecosystem deserving of the strongest protection as part of our goals to meet renewable energy goals. With your support, we will continue to defend this Park with the same commitment we bring to every part of our mission, ensuring Anza-Borrego remains wild, connected, and protected for generations to come.

Senate Energy, Utilities and
Communications Committee,
Monday, June 24, 2024



Proposed Power lines



Existing Power lines

EDUCATION

This past year marked a powerful chapter of growth for our education efforts—one defined not just by expansion, but by deeper connection. Across the Park, people of all ages stepped into the desert with curiosity and openness: hiking alongside naturalists, learning directly from scientists, camping under dark skies for the first time, and encountering a landscape that often surprises with both its beauty and resilience. These experiences are where understanding begins, and where care for this place takes root.

Education programs reached further than ever before, reflecting both growing public interest in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and our commitment to meeting that interest with meaningful, high-quality experiences. We intentionally refined our programs to focus on what participants most value: immersive time outdoors, access to expert knowledge, and opportunities to learn through direct experience. Many participants arrived as first-time visitors; many left with a new sense of belonging to this desert.

**118 TOTAL
EDUCATION
PROGRAMS**

112 in-person programs

16 virtual programs

**8 brilliant educators and
outreach champions
making it all happen!**

**1,686 TOTAL
PARTICIPANTS
SERVED**

33% Members

42% Non-Members

20% Students

A core focus for 2024-2025 was accessibility. Through free and low-cost programs, scholarships, family camping opportunities, teacher trainings, and community-centered events, we worked to ensure that education in the Park is welcoming and inclusive. These efforts helped remove barriers for students, families, and educators—often introducing people to the desert for the very first time and opening the door to long-term engagement with the Park.

Much of this momentum was made possible by a growing and dedicated education team and strong collaboration with Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, partners, researchers, educators, and Indigenous partners connected to this landscape. Reflecting on the year, Education Director Samantha Young shared:

EDUCATION

“

“One of the accomplishments I’m most proud of this year is stepping fully into the role of supervising education staff across ABF’s education and outreach programs. I met regularly with each team member to clarify priorities, improve protocols, remove roadblocks, and support their individual growth. As a result, education programs grew significantly, and we nearly tripled registration income from the previous year which allows our education department to be sustainable and offer scholarships. We fine-tuned our offerings to focus on what participants most want to experience.”

”

Ultimately, education is one of the most powerful tools for protecting Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Every program is an invitation to see the desert more closely and to understand its complexity, its cultural history, and its global significance. When people learn here, they form a relationship with the land. And people protect what they feel connected to. This year’s education efforts helped cultivate the next generation of desert advocates, ensuring that Anza-Borrego remains cared for, understood, and cherished for generations to come.

15 ACCESS PROGRAMS

Free and low-cost programs that remove barriers and open doors

268 Participants

5 Scholarships

2 Teacher Symposia



LAND



Photo: Alana Asmussen

This fiscal year marked a period of meaningful progress, challenges, and steady resolve for our Land Program. Each step forward—whether highly visible or quietly behind the scenes—moved us closer to our long-held goal of helping make Anza-Borrego Desert State Park whole. Our work continues to focus on connecting fragmented landscapes, securing vulnerable parcels, and ensuring these lands are protected forever as part of the Park’s vast and irreplaceable wilderness.

“

“One specific accomplishment I am most proud of in FY 2024/2025 was resolving an unexpected title issue that allowed our land transfer of more than 3,000 acres to move forward. What began as a stalled process required months of coordination, trust-building, and careful problem-solving to ultimately clear the title and prevent what could have become a far more complex and costly challenge for our organization.” Lino Morales, Land Program Manager

”

This behind-the-scenes effort ensured that years of conservation work remained on track and that these lands could continue moving toward permanent protection.

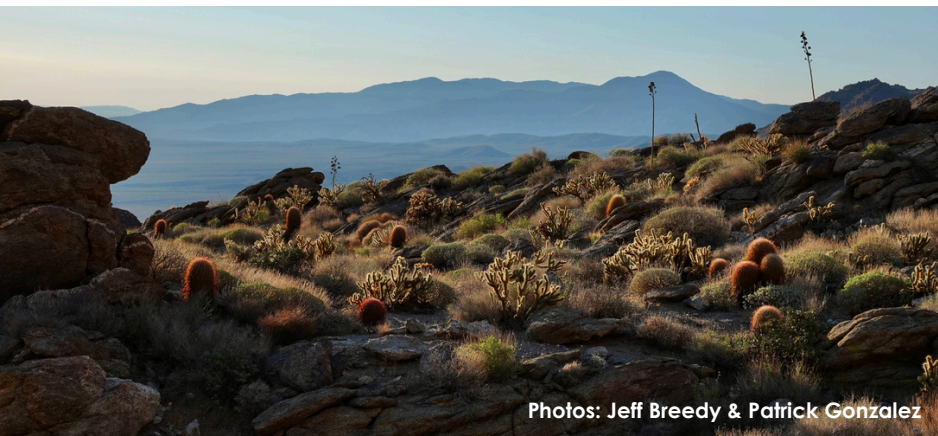
We also continued to expand protected lands within critical areas of the Park. New acquisitions strengthened existing wilderness designations and helped safeguard ecologically sensitive habitats, including areas within the Borrego Sink and the Borrego Springs Mesquite Bosque.

LAND

These landscapes support groundwater-dependent ecosystems and serve as vital corridors for wildlife and natural processes. Protecting them today helps ensure ecological resilience in the face of climate change, development pressure, and water uncertainty.

This year also reinforced that conservation is as much about relationships as it is about land. Through thoughtful communication and collaboration, we successfully navigated a challenging situation with neighboring landowners—avoiding litigation and strengthening trust. Maintaining these positive relationships is essential to long-term conservation success. It reflects our belief that lasting protection is best achieved through partnership whenever possible.

Behind the scenes, we focused on building a stronger foundation for the future. With the help of dedicated volunteers, we formalized workflows, improved documentation, and implemented clearer systems to guide land transactions and stewardship work. These efforts ensure that when opportunities arise, we are ready to act efficiently, transparently, and responsibly, bringing us closer to a more connected, resilient desert landscape protected for generations to come.



Photos: Jeff Breedy & Patrick Gonzalez

**ALMOST 58,000
ACRES PROTECTED
THROUGHOUT ABF'S
HISTORY**



**Near Fonts Point: 10
Near Texas Dip: 10.23
North Clark Dry Lake: 5
Coyote Canyon: 10
Near Buttes Pass Road: 7
Hills of the Moon: 10
Borrego Sink: 53.88**

**101.11 ACRES
CONSERVED
IN 2026**

OUTREACH

In 2024-2025 outreach continued to play a vital role in strengthening our connection with the community, serving as a welcoming bridge between Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the people who already love it, and those just beginning to discover it. Through community events, volunteer engagement, partnerships, and signature programs like our Annual Photo Contest, we help ensure Anza-Borrego's story is shared widely, personally, and with heart.

Meeting people where they are remains a cornerstone of our outreach efforts. From bustling farmers' markets to regional community events and intimate Desert Connection Mixers, we create spaces for conversation, curiosity, and connection. Thousands of meaningful interactions take place at outreach tables each year—conversations that range from wildflower tips and trail recommendations to deeper discussions about conservation, stewardship, and why this desert matters. For many, these moments are their first step toward becoming members, volunteers, photographers, or long-term supporters.

WE MET THE COMMUNITY WHERE THEY ARE:

**Connected with
5,151 people
at 40 events**

**Hosted 10 Desert
Connection Mixers
Welcomed 60 participants**

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM:

**84 Total volunteer
participation**

**35 New volunteers
joined**

692 Volunteer hours

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our outreach and education programs. This year, our growing and dedicated volunteer community supported dozens of programs, many of them entirely volunteer-run, demonstrating an extraordinary level of trust, commitment, and shared purpose. By contributing their time, skills, and enthusiasm, volunteers extend our reach far beyond what staff alone could accomplish and show what's possible when a community comes together on behalf of a place it cares deeply about.



OUTREACH

Our annual Anza-Borrego Desert Photo Contest remains one of our most powerful outreach and engagement tools. Through photography, participants of all ages are invited to slow down, look closely, and share how they experience the desert. The contest celebrates creativity while encouraging a deeper appreciation for the Park's landscapes, wildlife, and stories transforming moments of beauty into meaningful support for conservation and education.

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of our outreach and education programs.”

Our outreach efforts are strengthened through partnerships and sponsorships that reflect a shared investment in Anza-Borrego's future. Local businesses, community partners, and event sponsors help support education programs, BioBlitz events, and the Photo Contest, demonstrating how collaboration amplifies impact. Our outreach work builds a broader, more connected community that feels personally invested in the Park and inspired to protect this extraordinary desert for generations to come.

PHOTO CONTEST

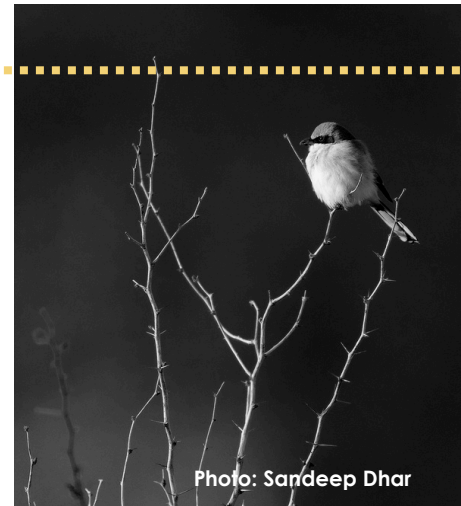
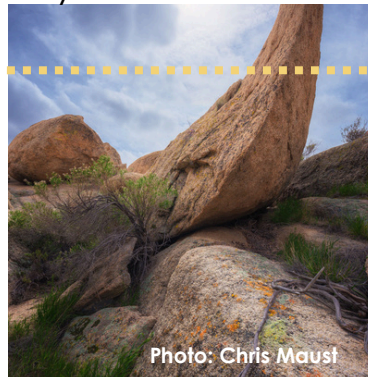
792 Entries

170 Participants

13 Youth engaged

311 Photos sold

2025 ANZA-BORREGO DESERT PHOTO CONTEST PHOTOS



RETAIL



EVERY PURCHASE PROTECTS THE PARK

Retail plays a unique and vital role in supporting Anza-Borrego Desert State Park connecting visitors to the landscape through thoughtfully chosen goods while generating direct support for the Park's protection, education, and stewardship. Last year began much like others, with the arrival of seasonal merchandise, the return of familiar staff, and careful planning for signature events like Borrego Days. As the season unfolded, we welcomed additional seasonal team members, giving us greater flexibility and the ability to pilot new ideas, including a mobile retail operation designed to meet visitors where they are.

When you shop with us, your purchase becomes part of caring for Anza-Borrego—supporting education, conservation, and stewardship across the Park

In November, we reached an important milestone with the launch of the second version of our online store. After months of behind-the-scenes work, troubleshooting, and refinement, the new platform went live just in time for the holiday season. Each product was carefully photographed, described, and positioned to reflect both its story and its connection to

RETAIL

the desert. The online store expanded access to Park-inspired merchandise for supporters near and far, offering a meaningful way for people to support Anza-Borrego even when they couldn't visit in person.

As the calendar turned, the spring season brought unexpected challenges. With little moisture to support wildflowers and broader economic uncertainty affecting visitation, fewer people entered the Park. In response, we adapted quickly. With the support of Park leadership, we launched our mobile retail trailer at Borrego Palm Canyon Trailhead—bringing practical, desert-ready items and Park-inspired designs directly to visitors. This flexible approach helped meet visitor needs and supported campground staff during a period of limited resources. It ensured that retail continued to contribute to the Park even during a difficult season.

Reflecting on this effort, Retail Director Mario Mouett shared a proud moment from the year:

“

One accomplishment I'm especially proud of was finding a creative solution to improve trailhead coverage at Borrego Palm Canyon during our busiest spring season. By reactivating our mobile sales trailer for the first time in several years, we turned a staffing challenge into a win-win opportunity. The trailer allowed us to share trail updates and safety information directly with hikers, introduce them to the work we do as an organization, and provide last-minute essentials like sunscreen, hats, sunglasses, and UV shirts. This approach helped keep visitors safe and informed during peak weekends while also supporting our mission.

”

Behind the scenes, we continued to strengthen retail support for the broader organization. By better understanding shopping patterns and refining our product mix, we focused on quality, relevance, and connection rather than volume alone. We also intentionally aligned retail with education programs—inviting participants to begin their experiences at our store, offering member discounts, and creating opportunities for new memberships. Each purchase directly supports Anza-Borrego Desert State Park—helping fund education programs, protecting sensitive lands, and ensuring this extraordinary desert remains cared for and accessible for generations to come.

DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT THAT SUSTAINS THE PARK

Our development efforts reflected the strength of a community that believes deeply in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the work required to protect it. From grassroots celebrations to major gifts and advocacy, supporters showed up in meaningful ways, demonstrating that conservation



is strongest when it is shared. Every contribution through events, memberships, or advocacy, helped advance education, land protection, and stewardship across the Park.

Signature events and moments of generosity played a powerful role in supporting our mission. Community gatherings like Front Porch Revue brought people together through music, connection, and shared purpose, while also benefiting ABF as a charitable beneficiary. We extend our sincere thanks to longtime ABF supporter and retired board member Jimmy Smith for organizing Front Porch Revue, and to the Borrego Springs Performing Arts Center for generously hosting the event. We were also honored to recognize extraordinary leadership with the Desert Warrior Award, presented to Diana and Lowell Lindsay, in recognition of their enduring commitment to protecting Anza-Borrego. Events such as Pints 4 the Park continued to blend celebration with impact, drawing supporters together and reinforcing the idea that collective action fuels conservation.



**PINTS 4 PARK
ATTENDANCE**

175 Attendees

**FRONT PORCH
REVUE RAISED**

\$10,536.31

DEVELOPMENT

Support also came through deeply personal moments. It was our 58th birthday, which became an opportunity to give back—bringing together dedicated members at Fonts Point at sunset to celebrate both a milestone and a shared love for the desert. Throughout the year, our membership community continued to grow, reflecting an expanding base of supporters who feel connected to Anza-Borrego and invested in its future.

**MEMBER
INCREASE:**

12% Increase

**CENTURY CIRCLE
MEMBERS:**

94 total

Major donors and recurring supporters played a critical role in sustaining our work. Century Circle members provide steady, reliable support that allows long-term conservation, education, and advocacy efforts to move forward with confidence. Their generosity creates stability in an uncertain landscape. It enables us to respond thoughtfully to both opportunities and emerging threats.



Desert Warrior Awards

FY24/25 FINANCIALS

EXPENSE	Dollar Amount
Education	\$539,818.00
Interpretive Sales	\$694,822.00
Land Acquisition	\$144,671.00
Park Support	\$114,247.00
Fundraising	\$231,759.00
Management & General	\$283,654.00
TOTAL	\$2,008,971.00

REVENUE	Dollar Amount
Donations & Memberships	\$459,135.00
Merchandise Sales	\$467,435.00
Grants & Contracts	\$50,000.00
Program Revenue	\$113,849.00
Investment Income	\$902,881.00
Miscellaneous	\$34,810.00
TOTAL	\$2,008,110.00

ABF'S DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF PARK PROGRAMS

Public Park Programming

- “Archaeology Day” free public event: covered expenses for speakers, activities and exhibits
- Paid fees for the Annual Borrego Days Festival, allowing for Park outreach and interpretation at the two-day event
- Paid speaker honoraria for various public park programs

Research & Restoration

- Purchased new tablets and laboratory equipment for the Paleontology Department
- Paid for architectural drawing for a greenhouse that will be used to grow native plants for restoration projects

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

- Funded a new film for the Park Visitor Center focused on the Park's wildflowers
- Visitor Center Volunteer supplies
- Digital File work to enhance the VC experience

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

425+
Media Mentions



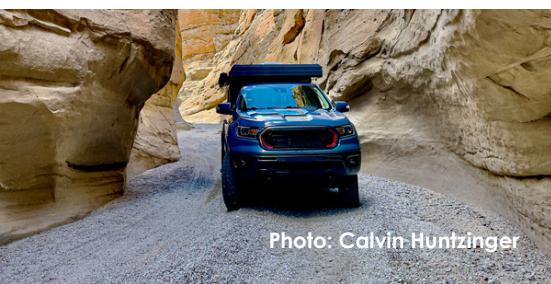
500,000
Website Visits



2.6 MILLION
Social Reach



6,000
New Email Subscribers



This past year, our communications and marketing efforts played a vital role in expanding how people experience, understand, and support Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. By pairing thoughtful storytelling with data-informed strategy, we reached more people than ever before. We introduced new audiences to the Park while strengthening trust and loyalty among our core supporters. Every story shared, campaign launched, and update sent helped turn awareness into meaningful connection and action.

Even with limited capacity, we found creative ways to extend our reach and amplify impact across the organization. Our website, email communications, and social platforms became powerful entry points that helped people discover education programs, engage with conservation issues, support land protection, and participate in events. Behind the scenes, we focused on working smarter: refining systems, using automation intentionally, and extending the life of content so that each effort traveled farther and worked harder in service of our mission.

Communications also supported growth across membership, retail, and education. By personalizing messages, we strengthened relationships with supporters and reinforced a sense of belonging that continues to drive extraordinary engagement and loyalty. Improved digital experiences—such as streamlined online giving and shopping—helped reduce barriers to participation and invited people to support the Park in ways that felt easy, meaningful, and aligned with their interests.

Beyond our own channels, we elevated Anza-Borrego's voice through media coverage, advocacy communications, and regional

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

leadership. Strategic storytelling advanced public understanding of land conservation, responsible visitation, and large-scale initiatives such as the 30×30 campaign and regional Mojave Colorado Desert Biosphere Region collaboration. By working closely with Park partners, scientists, and allied organizations, we helped ensure that the importance of this desert—and the urgency of protecting it—reached far beyond the Park’s boundaries.

Reflecting on the year, Communications & Marketing Director Jaime Purinton shared that one of her proudest moments came at the very end while completing the year-end report itself.

“For the first time, I could see the full story in one place,” she reflected. “All of the long days and behind-the-scenes work showed up clearly in real numbers that told a bigger story—about growth, trust, and impact. Seeing how communications supported education, land protection, advocacy, retail, and fundraising all at once made the work feel tangible, cohesive, and deeply worth it.”

Ultimately, communications and marketing serve as a multiplier for everything we do. By connecting people to the Park’s stories, science, and landscapes, we help build understanding, inspire stewardship, and invite lasting support. This year’s momentum reflects not just broader reach, but deeper impact—laying a strong foundation for continued growth, engagement, and conservation leadership in the years ahead.

Photo: Jennifer Valkier



Official Park Swag!



Find exclusive Park merchandise at our recently expanded State Park Store:
587 Palm Canyon Dr.
Suite 110
Borrego Springs

WWW.THEABF.ORG/STORE