

# Joshua Tree park closes trail so bighorn sheep can get water

June 7 2022

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In this Jan. 10, 2019 photo, people visit Joshua Tree National Park in Southern California's Mojave Desert. The popular trail to the Fortynine Palms Oasis in Joshua Tree National Park has been temporarily closed so that bighorn sheep can have undisturbed access to the water. The National Park Service says the park is under extreme drought conditions and herds in the area are increasingly reliant on the oasis spring to survive the hot summer months. Credit: AP Photo/Jae C. Hong,File

A popular hiking trail to an oasis in Joshua Tree National Park has been temporarily closed so [bighorn sheep](#) can get undisturbed access to water.

"The park is under extreme drought conditions and herds in the area are increasingly reliant on the oasis spring to survive the hot summer months," a park statement said.

The Fortynine Palms Oasis spring is surrounded by palms in mountains on the northern side of the park.

The closure started June 1 and will remain in effect until summer monsoon rains provide enough water for the bighorns.

An estimated 100 to 200 desert bighorn live in the park. They are among a [population](#) of about 13,000 in parts of California, Nevada, Arizona and Utah, according to the [Joshua Tree website](#).

The [current population](#) is about 10% of what it was before the settlement of the western U.S., the website said.

Bighorns are very sensitive to disease, and research in Joshua Tree shows there has been a significant loss of water from springs and places where water seeps from the ground that has contributed to a significant loss of bighorn habitat.

The [park](#) also warned hikers that summer temperatures on trails can reach more than 120 degrees (49 Celsius). Hikes should begin before or at sunrise and be completed by 10 a.m., or not begin until after 4 p.m., to avoid risk of heat illness and death.

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