

California Proposes Plan to Protect Its Famous Joshua Trees

今回は、カリフォルニア州を象徴する木「ジョシュアツリー」を守るための新しい保全計画のニュースです。この木は独特な形で知られていますが、今あることが原因でその生存が危ぶまれているそうです。この問題の解決にどんな計画が立てられているのでしょうか。過放牧という意味の「overgrazing」や道路がない場所で四輪駆動車などを運転する「off-roading」など、広大な土地を持つカリフォルニアならではの単語にも注目しながら、自然や環境保護について話してみましょ



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has released a proposed plan to protect the state's famous Joshua trees. Environmentalists say the trees are threatened by wildfires, human development and climate change.

An early version of the plan calls for avoiding or reducing direct and indirect effects of **overgrazing**, insect-killing chemical use and **off-roading** activity. The plan advises moving trees when projects require their removal or could harm them. It also calls for identifying and protecting lands where the trees could survive if the climate in southern California becomes drier and hotter.

“In many ways, it's a good comprehensive plan of the things we need to do if the western Joshua tree is going to survive the very, very difficult decades ahead,” said Brendan Cummings. He is conservation director with the Center for Biological Diversity based in Tucson, Arizona. The nonprofit group asked the California government in 2019 to list the western Joshua tree as threatened under the state's Endangered Species [Act](#).

The conservation plan is a requirement by the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act. California lawmakers passed the act last year. It is the first law in the state to protect a species from the threats of climate change. The law also bars anyone from killing, damaging, or removing a tree without state permission.

The proposed plan lists ways to help identify land that should be recognized as most important for conservation. This includes large areas with Joshua trees or areas with a high density of healthy and adult trees. The plan suggests placing [restrictions](#) on areas where there is low risk of such threats as fires, invasive plants and animals, development and where [pollinators](#) and seed-spreading animals exist. It aims to identify these lands by December 2025 and place permanent restrictions on 70 percent of them by 2033.

The plan also calls on land managers and wildfire workers to create methods to reduce and fight wildfires that threaten the trees and lessen effects from rehabilitating burned areas. That includes protecting trees, replanting them, planting other native species, and controlling invasive ones.

The proposed plan says, its effectiveness and the survival of the trees will mainly depend on whether reductions can be made in the release of heat-trapping gases. Such emissions come mainly from burning coal, oil and gas.

Cummings said climate change could destroy most, if not all, of the areas where the trees live if the situation does not change.

If emissions are limited as planned, Cummings said, “we have a very good chance of saving the species if all the things outlined in this plan are carried out. And primarily that’s doing what we can to protect as many of them as possible.”

Approval from California’s Fish and Game Commission is necessary for the proposed plan to go into effect.

I’m Caty Weaver.

The Associated Press reported this story. Caty Weaver adapted the story for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **overgrazing (n.)** the situation in which cows, sheep, or other farm animals eat too much of the grass in an area

Overgrazing in this area has damaged the soil and some of the native plants.

2. **off-roading (n.)** driving a motorbike or four-wheel drive car in an area with no roads

Sometimes John likes to go off-roading on weekends.

3. **act (n.)** a government law

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects Americans from many kinds of discrimination.

4. **restriction (n.)** a limit

Many religions have food restrictions that members must follow.

5. **pollinator (n.)** an animal, such as a bee, that spreads pollen from flower to flower

Some farming chemicals can injure or kill pollinators.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What are the major dangers to Joshua trees in California?
2. Based on the plan from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, how will the trees be protected?
3. According to Brendan Cummings, what is the most important factor in protecting the tree population?
4. About 1,500 species of plants, animals, and fungi in Japan are endangered. Do you know the names of any of them and where they live?
5. What can you do to help prevent species extinction?