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“MOJAVE MAXINE” EMERGES AND MAKES IT OFFICIAL: SPRING IS HERE!
Student Contest Winners Will Receive Gift Certificates & Mojave Maxine T-Shirts

PALM DESERT/INDIAN WELLS, CA (March 11, 2013) ... Never mind the East Coast’s Groundhog Punxsutawney Phil, the West Coast has The Living Desert Zoo’s Mojave Maxine, the desert tortoise, and she’s emerged from her burrow to make it official: Spring is here! Take that, Punxsutawney Phil!

While Phil’s early Spring prediction is falling short for East Coasters smothered in snow, Mojave Maxine proved her natural born skill by emerging from her underground burrow Saturday, March 2nd, at 10:17 a.m. With Valley temperatures hovering in the 70’s and 80’s, it seems Maxine is an excellent predictor of Spring in the desert.

Nine hundred and forty students from Inyo, Imperial, San Diego, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Ventura, and Kern counties entered the contest of The Living Desert and the Desert Management Group to guess when Maxine would make her first appearance. The winning students from each of the nine Southern California counties will receive \$50 gift certificates and their entire class will receive Mojave Maxine t-shirts.

Educators throughout the region recognize and applaud the contest as a great way to teach kids about the desert environment and help create awareness about the threatened Mojave desert tortoise.

“Mojave Maxine creates a double thrill for us at The Living Desert,” said Peter Siminski, Director of Education and Conservation. “It’s exciting to have so many young kids be enthusiastic about desert wildlife and participate in the contest, and it’s always fun for us too, to see when Mojave Maxine will peak out of her burrow and slowly make her way onto the desert landscape in search of fresh flowers.”

Mojave Maxine is a 35-year old desert tortoise who lives at The Living Desert. Each year, she retires for the winter to her underground burrow. She stays there in a state of "brumation" (reptilian hibernation) for several months. She emerges in early spring as the warm days begin to arrive in the desert, promising fresh flowers-- a favorite meal for the desert tortoise.

For more information, visit www.LivingDesert.org or contact 760-346-5694.

About The Living Desert:

The Living Desert is an AZA-accredited zoo and gardens that is dedicated to conservation and education. It is a family-friendly place to explore nature and create meaningful experiences for guests that are remembered for a lifetime. *For more information:* (760) 346-5694 or visit www.LivingDesert.org. The Living Desert is located at: 47900 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert, CA 92260.

