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News Release

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For Immediate Release

Friday, February 2, 2024

Mojave Max Watch Begins Today

Mojave Max Is Southern Nevada's Punxsutawney Phil

Today, "Groundhog Day," Clark County officially begins "Mojave Max Watch."

Mojave Max is a real live tortoise that lives on a 15-acre natural habitat at the Springs Preserve. Although the live Mojave Max is still in brumation (reptilian form of hibernation), all students from Clark County, Nevada, in grades K-5, who are enrolled in public, private and registered home schools are encouraged to enter a guess as to when they think Mojave Max will wake up from his long winter nap.

The Clark County Desert Conservation Program (a division of the Department of Environment and Sustainability) has hosted the annual Mojave Max Emergence Contest since 2000. Mojave Max has become the preeminent indicator of spring-like weather in Southern Nevada.

While Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog, is pulled from his burrow and asked if he sees his shadow, Mojave Max simply waits for the moment when the days gets longer, and temperatures are just right before coming out from his burrow and proclaiming spring.

Like all desert tortoises, every fall when the hot Las Vegas weather cools off, Max goes into his burrow to begin brumation. He sleeps for four or five months and then emerges sometime in the spring, signaling the beginning of the season.

Clark County, along with its partners, hosts the annual Mojave Max Emergence Contest, education programs and school assemblies in support of Mojave Desert environmental education. As part of the contest, students are encouraged to guess when Mojave Max will first exit his burrow each year. To enter the contest, teachers, students, and parents can log onto www.MojaveMax.com and click on the "Emergence Contest" button.

The Clark County student who guesses closest to the actual time of Max's emergence, without going over, wins the contest for their classroom. The winning student receives their own laptop computer, a backpack filled with outdoor gear for exploring the desert, a laptop computer for their teacher, T-shirts and Olympic-style medals for their entire class, a trophy for their school, and a class pizza party and field trip to the Springs Preserve to meet the live Mojave Max. The winning student also receives a year-long family pass to the Springs Preserve and a year-long pass that can be used at all federally managed fee areas.

The Mojave Max Education Program is provided by a partnership among Clark County, the Clark County School District, the Springs Preserve and Get Outdoors Nevada.

For more information visit www.MojaveMax.com. For Max Watch updates, follow Mojave Max on Instagram (@MojaveMax) and Facebook (MojaveMaxNV).

About the Department of Environment and Sustainability

The Department of Environment and Sustainability is the air pollution control agency, regional Endangered Species Act compliance program, and sustainability office for all of Clark County, Nevada. Established as the Department of Air Quality by the Clark County Commission in 2001, it was renamed in 2020 and is comprised of two divisions: Air Quality and Desert Conservation Program. Through these two divisions, DES is ensuring the air we share meets healthful, regulatory standards, administering the County's Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and addressing climate change through the All-In Clark County initiative.

Clark County is a dynamic and innovative organization dedicated to providing top-quality service with integrity, respect, accountability, leadership and excellence. With jurisdiction over the world-famous Las Vegas Strip and covering an area the size of New Jersey, Clark is the nation's 11th-largest county and provides extensive regional services to 2.3 million citizens and 45.6 million visitors a year (2022). Included are the nation's 8th-busiest airport, air quality compliance, social services and the state's largest public hospital, University Medical Center. The County also provides municipal services that are traditionally provided by cities to 1 million residents in the unincorporated area. Those include fire protection, roads and other public works, parks and recreation, and planning and development.