

# Response to the FEIS for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

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## Roundup of Statements, Releases, and Quotes

9/11/2024

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### BACKGROUND

**On September 6th, NOAA released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. In October, 30 days after the FEIS, the final management plan and regulations will be released. This is the final stage of the designation, with official designation expected in December.**

Forty years ago, this community-led effort to protect the sacred natural, historical, archaeological, and cultural resources in the ocean waters of Central California began. The initiative has since been carried by many local community advocates, with our brothers and sisters from across the Chumash Nation being among the earliest supporters. In 2012, concern about Central Coast acoustic testing galvanized a local alliance, with Chief Fred Collins and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) chosen to spearhead the Sanctuary campaign. In 2015, the NCTC, with a broad coalition of local Tribes, leaders, organizations, and businesses, submitted a formal nomination to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to establish the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. On August 25, 2023, nearly 10 years later, this multigeneration effort moved forward as NOAA released a proposal to designate the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary as a 5,617-square-mile area offshore of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties in Central California. During a 60-day public comment period that ended October 2023, NOAA received more than 110,000 comments from the public (read the comments:<https://chumashsanctuary.org/2024/01/24/2023s-final-comment-period-was-a-big-success/>), with over 99% supporting Sanctuary designation.

**A roundup of statements, press releases, and quotes from members of Congress and outside organizations, can be found below.**

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# Statements/Press Releases

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## Congressional Statements and Press Releases

### 1. Statement: California Congressional Delegation Members

<https://carbajal.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3042>

#### **Carbajal, Brownley, Padilla, Panetta Celebrate Imminent Final Designation of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**

Biden-Harris Administration released environmental impact study teeing up finalized 4,500 square-mile marine sanctuary, the nation's third largest once designated I Plan includes pathway for later expansion to fully connect to existing Monterey and Channel Islands sanctuaries

Today, Congressman Salud Carbajal (CA-24), Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), Congresswoman Julia Brownley (CA-26), and Congressman Jimmy Panetta (CA-19) hailed the release of the Biden-Harris Administration's environmental impact study for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, the final step that puts the decades-long push for this federal designation on track to be finalized by the end of this year.

*"The Central Coast has pursued this sanctuary designation for decades, and as someone who's been helping push for it in Washington since I first got to Congress I am so pleased to see us passing the final checkpoint on our way to seeing the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary made official before the end of this year," said Congressman Salud Carbajal. "This historic designation will come not a moment too soon. Our oceans and our communities are facing unprecedented challenges from a changing marine environment, this new sanctuary comes at a critical time for our region. I look forward to working with our tribal and local stakeholders and federal partners to finalize these boundaries – which will nearly double the coastline protected along the Central Coast – and build on them to protect every coastal community and ecosystem in our region."*

*"Today's announcement represents a critical step forward and one of the final hurdles before the long-awaited designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. The proposed designation would be a major victory for the Chumash people, environmental conservation, and the responsible development of offshore wind to help meet our ambitious offshore wind energy goals," said Senator Padilla. "I look forward to collaborating with NOAA officials, my House colleagues, Tribal leaders, and local stakeholders to push forward the final designation for this vital marine ecosystem across the finish line."*

*"As the representative of California's 26th Congressional District, I know how important the establishment of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is to my constituents who live along the Central Coast. Not only will designation of the sanctuary help honor our region's rich*

*Native American heritage, but it will also protect vulnerable marine wildlife and our coastal areas, which are hubs for economic activity including our fisheries industry and recreation and tourism industry. I look forward to continuing to work with tribal leaders, regional and national stakeholders, and the U.S. Department of Commerce as we move forward with the designation,”* **said Rep. Brownley.**

*“I commend NOAA for engaging with Congress and listening to feedback from all sides including local tribal, environmental, and industry leaders to thoughtfully balance our conservation and clean energy goals in the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary,”* **said Congressman Panetta.** *“The release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement brings us another step closer to protecting more than four thousand miles of biologically diverse marine ecosystem. NOAA’s Final Preferred Alternative Boundary is a thoughtful, pragmatic approach that will help us in our goals to deploy over three gigawatts of clean energy to the grid while protecting the beauty and heritage of the Central Coast.”*

The boundary released in the environmental impact study will be 4,543 square miles off the Central Coast from Gaviota and Point Conception to Pismo Beach and southern San Luis Obispo County. The proposed sanctuary will cover 116 miles of coastline, entirely within California’s 24th Congressional District.

The final proposed boundary will be the nation’s 3rd largest marine sanctuary, and is the first ever to be nominated by a local tribe.

The plan released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) today also lays the groundwork for a later expansion of the marine sanctuary boundaries to cover Avila Beach and Morro Bay, connecting the new sanctuary with the southern-most border of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. This framework mirrors the approach endorsed earlier this year by local tribes and the leaseholders of the proposed offshore wind sites off Morro Bay, as well as Carbajal, Brownley, Padilla and other local leaders.

Rep. Carbajal has been a consistent advocate for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary since coming to Congress in 2017.

In 2020, Carbajal and California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris successfully secured an extension (<https://carbajal.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=743>) of the proposed sanctuary from the Trump Administration, keeping the process alive for enough time for the Biden-Harris Administration to move forward with the designation process in 2021 without needing to review a new proposal.

The proposed sanctuary moved into the designation phase in November 2021.

Rep. Carbajal has also advocated balancing this sanctuary with the development of floating offshore wind off the Central Coast.

As a result of lobbying efforts by Rep. Carbajal and other local stakeholders and officials, including through Rep. Carbajal’s Offshore Wind Working Group, Carbajal and Biden Administration leaders (<https://carbajal.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=896>)

unveiled an agreement in May 2021 to allow offshore wind development off the coast of Morro Bay.

The U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's environmental review of the proposed offshore wind leases in Morro Bay found no significant potential impacts on Central Coast ecosystems (<https://www.boem.gov/newsroom/press-releases/boem-completes-environmental-review-offshore-wind-leasing-central>).

## **2. House Natural Resources Committee/Congressmen Grijalva and Congressman Carbajal**

<https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/media/press-releases/grijalva-carbajal-celebrate-key-milestone-in-proposed-chumash-heritage-national-marine-sanctuary>

### **Grijalva, Carbajal Celebrate Key Milestone in Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**

WASHINGTON – House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.) today celebrated the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) release of the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, marking a key milestone in the process to officially designate the sanctuary. Once designated, the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will play a pivotal role in conserving the rich biodiversity of California's coastal waters while preserving vital cultural resources.

"Today's announcement is a significant victory for the Chumash people and for all those who care about preserving our natural and cultural heritage," said Ranking Member Grijalva. "Throughout the EIS process, NOAA worked diligently to ensure the Chumash people's cultural heritage is preserved and protected. The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will safeguard one of the most biologically diverse and culturally significant marine areas in the country, and it will do so with the guidance and leadership of the Chumash people. I'm heartened to see the Biden-Harris administration continue to deliver on its commitment to advancing tribal co-management and protecting the ecological and cultural resources of our oceans. But this is just the beginning. I want to thank Congressman Carbajal for his continued leadership and I look forward to the full designation, which will give these waters the permanent protection they deserve."

"The Central Coast has pursued this sanctuary designation for decades, and as someone who's been helping push for it in Washington since I first got to Congress I am so pleased to see us passing the final checkpoint on our way to seeing the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary made official before the end of this year," said Congressman Carbajal. "This historic designation will come not a moment too soon. Our oceans and our communities are facing unprecedented challenges from a changing marine environment, this new sanctuary comes at a critical time for our region. I look forward to working with our tribal and local stakeholders and federal partners to finalize these boundaries – which will nearly double the coastline protected along the Central Coast – and build on them to protect every coastal community and ecosystem in our region."

The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary could be the first national marine sanctuary in U.S. history to be designated following an Indigenous-led nomination. This groundbreaking effort reflects the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to honoring tribal nations, respecting Indigenous knowledge, and advancing co-stewardship of our natural and cultural heritage.

### **3. California State Senator John Laird**

“The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would protect over 5600 square miles of coastal and marine habitat – and benefit our region by the research and tourism dollars that the sanctuary designation will bring. The release of the Final EIR puts us one step away from the final designation. I am grateful for the leadership and years of advocacy by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, the Sierra Club, and tens of thousands of local residents. I am proud to have been part of this effort to sustain the beauty and vitality of the Pacific Ocean along the Central Coast – and look forward to the sanctuary designation and implementation.”

# Organizational Statements

## 1. Press Release: Northern Chumash Tribal Council

### Final Environmental Document Issued to Designate Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

<https://northernchumash.org/final-environmental-document-issued-to-designate-chumash-heritage-national-marine-sanctuary/>

*Northern Chumash Tribal Council Celebrates Milestone*

PRESS RELEASE



*Avila Beach/Tsipxatu, CA* — Designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS) entered its final phase today when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This major milestone is one of the last hurdles to clear in the decades-long campaign led by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) to protect the Central California coastline, submerged cultural sites, ocean habitat, and abundant wildlife held sacred to the Chumash Peoples for millennia. Final Sanctuary designation is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

**Violet Sage Walker, Chairwoman, Northern Chumash Tribal Council** *“This is a huge moment for the Chumash People and all who have tirelessly supported our campaign over the years. My father, the late Chief Fred Collins, began the journey to protect these sacred waters many years ago and we have been so proud to continue his work. I am delighted to celebrate his vision, today’s success, and the future of our People who will always be connected to past, present, and future by this special stretch of coastline and the true magic its waters hold.”*

The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is the first Tribally nominated national marine sanctuary in the history of the United States and the first new sanctuary in California in over 25 years. When finalized later this year, it will provide an exceptional opportunity for the National Marine Sanctuary Program and Central Coast Indigenous Peoples to collaboratively protect, manage, and steward the area’s rich ecological and cultural resources, drawing from generational Tribal Ecological Knowledge, diverse community input, and innovative academic research.

The Sanctuary will prohibit new oil drilling and mining within its boundaries and support climate solutions by promoting the health of kelp forests and other ocean habitats that serve a host of vital ecosystem functions, including carbon storage. It will protect a globally significant ecological transition zone that is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including many at-risk species such as snowy plovers, southern sea otters, leatherback sea turtles, black abalone, and blue whales. The Sanctuary will also provide opportunities to advance cultural and environmental education and outreach.

Today’s announcement is a testament to the lifelong vision and dedication of **Fred Collins, the late Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chair, who originally nominated the Sanctuary in 2015.** “Grandmother Ocean has been providing life to the Chumash Peoples for over ten thousand

years, now is the time for all communities to work together and assist her in rebuilding her Vibrant Thrivability for all future generations,” said Collins before he passed into spirit on October 1, 2021.

Following today’s release of the FEIS, Sanctuary designation will enter a 30-day period before designation documents can be issued. We anticipate the final designation documents, including the final management plan and regulations, to be released October 7, 2024. This will trigger a 45-day Congressional and State review, leading to finalized designation in December 2024.

The Northern Chumash Tribal Council and Chumash Sanctuary campaign partners extend our thanks to the Biden-Harris Administration for prioritizing federal ocean protection and for championing the designation of this groundbreaking sanctuary. We hope this is the first of many more Tribally nominated and Tribally co-stewarded national marine sanctuaries.

*“We anticipate final designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary,” said **Gabriel Frausto, Chairman, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation**. “For us, this means the opportunity to collaboratively-manage and protect our sacred lands and waters, to support our efforts for cultural revitalization, and continue in restoring our traditional practices and reinforcing our tribal sustainability and sovereignty.”*

*“The Central Coast has pursued this sanctuary designation for decades, and as someone who’s been helping push for it in Washington since I first got to Congress I am so pleased to see us passing the final checkpoint on our way to seeing the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary made official before the end of this year,” said **Congressman Salud Carbajal**. “This historic designation will come not a moment too soon. Our oceans and our communities are facing unprecedented challenges from a changing marine environment, this new sanctuary comes at a critical time for our region. I look forward to working with our tribal and local stakeholders and federal partners to finalize these boundaries – which will nearly double the coastline protected along the Central Coast – and build on them to protect every coastal community and ecosystem in our region.”*

*“This sanctuary shows the power of local community engagement,” said **Gianna Patchen, Chapter Coordinator of the Santa Lucia Sierra Club Chapter**. “The Sierra Club is honored to be a longtime partner of NCTC and our local communities, whose work made this possible. Over the last 15 years, Central Coast residents from Tribal Elders to college students have tabled at the farmer’s market, knocked on doors, sent postcards and emails, circulated petitions, and organized and attended meetings on behalf of the marine sanctuary. We are so pleased to see our community’s hard work come to fruition.”*

*“The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would protect over 5,600 square miles of coastal and marine habitat – and benefit our region by the research and tourism dollars that the sanctuary designation will bring,” said **Senator John Laird**. “The release of the Final EIR puts us one step away from the final designation. I am grateful for the leadership and years of advocacy by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, the Sierra Club, and tens of thousands of local residents. I am proud to have been part of this effort to sustain the beauty and vitality of the Pacific Ocean along the Central Coast – and look forward to the sanctuary designation and implementation.”*

*"I celebrate the upcoming designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary! My deepest gratitude goes to Chairwoman Violet Sage Walker, the late Chairman Fred Collins, and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for their unwavering commitment to protecting their marine and cultural heritage. This community-driven effort sets a powerful precedent for future ocean protections shaped by local voices. I am also grateful to all who stood with the Chumash people, including our Latino communities. The ocean is vital to our lives and the air we breathe. This is a moment to celebrate, now and for generations to come!"* **Maite Arce, President and CEO of Hispanic Access Foundation**

*"The Environmental Defense Center has long advocated for expanded protections of the Santa Barbara Channel and Central Coast, and we are delighted to see the advancement of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary that brings us one step closer to this goal,"* said **Alex Katz, Executive Director of the Environmental Defense Center**. *"We are grateful for the leadership and guidance of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council in this nomination process. The Council's tireless efforts to establish this Sanctuary will protect sacred submerged Chumash sites and incredible marine resources and wildlife for generations to come."*

*"Protecting these submerged ancient villages from future industrial encroachment will ensure the resting places of their ancestors remain undisturbed,"* said **Dr. Sylvia Earle, founder of Mission Blue**. *"The cultural significance of Chumash heritage makes this National Marine Sanctuary the only one of its kind. Bravo to the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for leading this very important nomination as a National Marine Sanctuary and as a key part of the international network of Hope Spots."*

*"The designation of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is a transformational moment for our coastal California waters and all stewards of our shared ocean. Truly, the first Indigenous-nominated sanctuary is an historic achievement for our country, benefiting the natural wonders of these waters as well as the people and communities that are at the heart of its story,"* said **Joel R. Johnson, president and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation**. *"The designation of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary advances ocean justice and equity by protecting ancestral waters and upholding the Central Coast Tribes' traditional knowledge and ways of stewarding cultural and marine resources."*

*"This stunning stretch of coast has long been a central part of life for Indigenous people. Their efforts to designate the Chumash Heritage National marine sanctuary is a gift to us all. It's a celebration of a place that has always had a sanctuary in their hearts and now they are sharing that with everyone,"* said **Dr. Steve Palumbi from Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station**. Dr. Palumbi is currently collaborating with the Northern Chumash Tribal Council to combine Indigenous and Western science in the proposed Chumash Heritage Sanctuary waters.

# # #

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Gianna Patchen - reach Gianna at (805-543-8717, Santa.lucia@sierraclub.org)

Dr. Sylvia Earle - reach out to Huntley Penniman, Director of Communications for Mission Blue for press inquiries (hpenniman@missionblue.org) and Shannon Rake, Hope Spots Program Manager for Mission Blue for Hope Spot Inquiries (srake@missionblue.org)

Dr. Steven Palumbi - reach Dr. Palumbi at (831-601-7002, spalumbi@stanford.edu)

Northern Chumash Tribal Council

Established in 2006, the Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) is a California non-profit corporation 501(c)(3) and a State Recognized Tribal Government under the guidelines of the state of California Senate Bill 18. Our mission is to offer a foundation for Chumash people to bring our Culture and Heritage back to life, to create dignity with the people, and to educate the public that the Chumash have always been here, we have not gone anywhere, and we will always be here, one continuum. We are Chumash, by our cultural understanding we have lived on the Central Coast of California since time immemorial. <https://northernchumash.org/>

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Campaign

The Campaign supports the Northern Chumash Tribal Council's efforts to secure designation of the Sanctuary. The Campaign is supported by dozens of conservation, Tribal, community, environmental justice, science, education, business, and other partners. <https://chumashsanctuary.org/>

## 2. Statement: Environment America

<https://environmentamerica.org/media-center/statement-newest-marine-sanctuary-announced-along-californias-coast/>

### Statement: Newest marine sanctuary announced along California's coast



SAN FRANCISCO — California's central coast is slated to receive permanent protections from oil and gas drilling in the coming months. On Thursday, President Joe Biden's administration announced the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. The proposed sanctuary is set to become the nation's third largest stretch of federally protected waters. This announcement marks one of the final steps to designate the sanctuary, which was proposed by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council.

Once designated, the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will protect 116 miles of the Central coast from oil and gas drilling, and provide additional funding for science and research in

the region. The area [includes](#) a confluence of major ocean currents and is a feeding ground for marine life migrating along the Pacific coast.

In the most recent round of public feedback on the proposal, the Sanctuary received over [100,000 supportive comments](#), including a letter from [181 scientists](#). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) must wait 30 days after publication of the FEIS before it can release a final decision on sanctuary designation.

In response, Environment California State Director [Laura Deehan](#) released the following statement:

“The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will formally recognise what visitors and residents have long known: this winding stretch of California’s coastline is a true natural treasure, home to sea otters, whales, sea turtles and a wide array of ocean life.

“This designation will forever protect these special waters from oil and gas drilling and create the staging ground for valuable science that can help us understand our ocean in a changing climate. Thank you to the Biden administration for taking action to protect more nature, and to Violet Sage-Walker and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for their leadership in the decades-long effort to protect this amazing place.”

### **3. Press Release: America the Beautiful for All Coalition**

<https://americathebeautifulforall.org/press-releases/>

#### **America the Beautiful for All Coalition Leaders Applaud Biden-Harris Administration Chumash Announcement**

WASHINGTON, DC (September 6, 2024) – The Biden-Harris Administration today announced a Final Environmental Impact Statement proposing the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. The new sanctuary will safeguard this unique and irreplaceable ecosystem along 116 miles of California’s coast from offshore oil expansion, acoustic testing, and other threats, while generating an estimated \$23 million in economic activity and 600 new jobs for the local community.

**Jasmin Graham, Executive Director, [Minorities in Shark Science](#)**, stated: “I am deeply grateful to the Biden-Harris administration and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for their unwavering commitment to preserving our marine ecosystems. Publishing the final management plan for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is a monumental achievement that honors the rich cultural heritage of the Chumash people and protects vital marine habitats. This sanctuary will serve as a beacon of hope and a model for future conservation efforts. Thank you for your dedication to safeguarding our oceans for generations to come.”

**Angelo Villagomez, Senior Fellow, [Center for American Progress](#)**, stated: “This sanctuary honors the rich cultural heritage of the Chumash people and underscores a commitment to protecting our precious ocean resources for future generations. This is also an important step toward conserving 30 percent of the ocean in the United States. This is a moment of healing for

our planet, but also for Indigenous communities around the world who have shown their support for this effort.”

**Jenna Valente, Director of Advocacy, Healthy Ocean Coalition**, stated: “I am thrilled to congratulate the Biden-Harris administration and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council on this important milestone for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This incredible achievement is a testament to your dedication to preserving our natural and cultural heritage. The sanctuary will play a crucial role in protecting marine biodiversity and supporting the resilience of our coastal communities. Thank you for your visionary leadership and for championing the cause of ocean conservation.”

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act, NOAA must wait 30 days after publication of the final environmental impact statement before making its final decision on designation. Following the 30 days, should NOAA decide to designate the sanctuary, the agency will release the final regulations and final management plan.

#### **4. Statement: Surfrider Foundation**

<https://www.surfrider.org/news/noaa-moves-forward-with-the-chumash-marine-sanctuary-designation-submit-your-comments-in-support-today-0>

#### **NOAA Advances the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Proposal**

Nine years ago, the Northern Chumash Tribal Council officially proposed the creation of a Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary off the central California coast with support from the Surfrider San Luis Obispo Chapter, the Sierra Club and other partners. On September 6, the federal government released the final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed sanctuary, one of the last remaining steps of the designation process. The announcement from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a strong signal that the agency intends to officially designate the sanctuary in the very near future.



“The Surfrider Foundation applauds NOAA for moving forward with designating the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary”, said Surfrider’s Ocean Protection Manager, Pete Stauffer. “The sanctuary will help protect more than 4,500 square miles of vital marine and cultural resources off the central California coast, while honoring the Indigenous peoples who have lived in this region for time immemorial. Surfrider urges NOAA to officially designate Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary this fall with a strong management plan that will achieve the proposed goals of the sanctuary.”

The waters off Central California are some of the most productive, biologically diverse and culturally significant on the West Coast. Significant features include Chumash sacred sites, feeding grounds for 13 species of whales and dolphins, major upwelling processes, sea otter population, thriving kelp forests, world class fish diversity, pinniped spawning areas – the list

goes on and on. Yet, these invaluable resources are highly vulnerable to human impacts, including potential offshore oil and gas exploitation and other harmful activities.

A National Marine Sanctuary designation will help to conserve these natural and cultural resources, while promoting scientific research, recreation, and public education. National Marine Sanctuaries are a type of marine protected area that is managed by NOAA. While sanctuaries allow for a range of human activities including recreational and commercial fishing, a primary management goal is to conserve the marine environment. Accordingly, sanctuaries include management measures to help protect ecological and human resources.

In 2023, NOAA released the draft EIS, management plan, and proposed rule for public review. While Surfrider was generally pleased with the draft regulations, we were concerned with the agency’s plan to reduce the size of the sanctuary by removing the area from Morro Bay to Cambria from the sanctuary boundaries. Accordingly, Surfrider has advocated for the designation of the original proposed boundaries through a phased approach that allows for the installation of transmission cables to the Morro Bay Offshore Wind Energy Area. Surfrider also supports the Gaviota Coast 5B Extension to include the coastal waters off northern Santa Barbara in the final boundaries. Read Surfrider’s full comment letter here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/14fDIK-KU9-BpeiaJ3VxsJHy22yWyYI5Z/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14fDIK-KU9-BpeiaJ3VxsJHy22yWyYI5Z/view?usp=share_link)

#### **5. Quote: Meg Caldwell, Interim Vice President of Environmental Science at the Packard Foundation**

“The intention to designate the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is not only about preserving the ocean for future generations but also about acknowledging the critical role of Indigenous knowledge in guiding us toward a more sustainable future. The wisdom of the Chumash people teaches us the importance of balance—between people, nature, and the climate. We are honored to support this vital work.”



#### **6. Quote: Richard Charter, Senior Fellow at The Ocean Foundation**

“We join Tribal leaders and all stakeholders in welcoming this Administration’s important step forward toward the designation of the new Chumash National Marine Sanctuary. Many years of dedicated effort on behalf of native people and the ocean environment are now nearing the positive conclusion of bringing us permanent protection.”

Richard Charter, Senior Fellow, The Ocean Foundation

#### **7. Press Release: National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Celebrates Announcement of Indigenous-Nominated Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**

<https://marinesanctuary.org/news/foundation-celebrates-announcement-of-indigenous-nominated-chumash-heritage-national-marine-sanctuary-marine-sanctuary/>

*The country’s 17th national marine sanctuary will protect ocean sites sacred to Indigenous Peoples and hotspots of biodiversity along the California coast*

**Silver Spring, Md. – September 6, 2024** – The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation joined Indigenous, national, state and community leaders in celebrating the advancement of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, announced today by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as a milestone achievement for marine conservation and elevating Indigenous perspectives and cultural values in ocean conservation.

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will become our nation’s 17th national marine sanctuary protecting 4,543 square miles of ocean along 116 miles of the south Central California Coast; it represents a step toward addressing major global issues including climate change, biodiversity loss, and systemic inequity. It protects sacred sites of Indigenous Peoples, feeding grounds for numerous species of whale and dolphin, sea otters, kelp forests, and is home to vital commercial and recreational fisheries. The sanctuary supports protected corridors and ecological connectivity for fish and other wildlife. The designation advances the Biden-Harris Administration’s America the Beautiful Initiative, which supports locally-led collaborative conservation efforts across the country with a goal to conserve and restore 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 to protect biodiversity and address the climate crisis.

The sanctuary designation process, formally initiated by NOAA in 2021, is the culmination of more than a decade of work on the nomination led by Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chair Violet Sage Walker and the late Chief Fred Collins, and consultation of diverse community groups and advocates.

**Joel R. Johnson, president and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation**, said, “The designation of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is a transformational moment for our coastal California waters and all stewards of our shared ocean. Truly, the first Indigenous-nominated sanctuary is an historic achievement for our country, benefiting the natural wonders of these waters as well as the people and communities that are at the heart of its story.”

“The designation of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary advances ocean justice and equity by protecting ancestral waters and upholding the Central Coast Tribes’ traditional knowledge and ways of stewarding cultural and marine resources.

“The diversity of America’s network of marine protected areas is strengthened with this designation, and it closes a biodiversity protection gap along the California coast. Blue whales, leatherback sea turtles, black abalone and southern sea otters are just a few of the species gaining new habitat protection. People will benefit from access to recreational activities like fishing and surfing. The communities who steward the sanctuary will benefit from new opportunities for public-private partnership. Indigenous collaboration in its management will secure cultural practices for generations to come.

“National marine sanctuaries are critically important management tools to conserve marine biodiversity and sources of solutions facing our waters and our world. We applaud NOAA and the Administration, and all the partners who worked hard to advance this nomination for many years, for protecting these magnificent ancestral waters.”

## About Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

Located along the south Central California coastline, from just south of Diablo Canyon Power Plant in San Luis Obispo County to the Gaviota Coast in Santa Barbara County. Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will become our nation's 17th national marine sanctuary. The sanctuary would become the third largest national marine sanctuary in the National Marine Sanctuary System by protecting 4,543 square miles of ocean along 116 miles of the south Central California Coast.

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is a culturally and biologically diverse coastline. These waters are an essential part of the heritage of the Chumash and other Central California tribes. The area provides a special sense of place to coastal communities and international visitors because of the significant historic, archaeological, cultural, aesthetic and biological resources found here.

The central coast of California encompasses some of the most biologically diverse and ecologically productive regions in the world. The sanctuary includes important offshore ecological habitats, including Rodriguez Seamount, Arguello Canyon, and part of the Santa Lucia Bank. The sanctuary contains a key transition zone that includes vital upwelling of great biological productivity supporting kelp forests, wetlands, estuaries and rookeries. Onshore, the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes are the largest remaining dune system south of San Francisco and the second largest in California. These diverse habitats are crucial for vulnerable species such as the endangered western snowy plover and the threatened southern sea otter and are also designated critical habitat for several species including the Chinook salmon and the leatherback sea turtle. Sustaining these vulnerable populations requires maintaining ecosystem diversity through protection of this wide variety of representative and unique habitats.

For millennia, Indigenous peoples have traversed these waters, forging a profound connection with their depths and the diverse marine life they harbor. The sanctuary would protect waters that are essential to the heritage of numerous Central Coast Tribes and Pacific Ocean voyaging tribes predating European colonization. Their long-standing historical relationships with land and sea run deep. Chumash heritage sites, including evidence of astronomical observatories and other cultural resources, are now submerged. The more holistic perspective on stewardship that this knowledge offers is invaluable for equitable, effective, community-led management and collaborative conservation moving forward. The sanctuary designation strengthens Indigenous perspectives and cultural values in ocean conservation by supporting locally led and locally designed conservation efforts, providing support for Tribal groups priorities, and integrating an equitable and inclusive Framework for Indigenous Collaborative Co-Stewardship for meaningful engagement.

In addition to these submerged Chumash historic and cultural resources, there are also over 200 known historic shipwrecks in the region. Sanctuary designation will preserve these wrecks in perpetuity, allowing for study and interpretation of these historically, culturally, and archaeologically distinctive national treasures.

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will join America’s national marine sanctuaries as the essential network of protected waters, which sustain miraculous species, coastal communities, and our shared heritage. The National Marine Sanctuary System includes 17 national marine sanctuaries and two marine national monuments. These unique waters sustain critical, breathtaking marine habitats that provide homes to endangered and threatened species. They preserve America’s rich tapestry of cultures and maritime heritage and are living laboratories for science, research, education and conservation. Sanctuaries also offer world-class outdoor recreation experiences for all ages and support local communities. Communities across the nation look to sanctuaries to protect nationally significant areas of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Contact: Chip Weiskotten, Director of Strategic Communications, 301-754-6134, [chip@marinesanctuary.org](mailto:chip@marinesanctuary.org)

### 8. Quote: Sarah Guy, Executive Director for the Ocean Defense Initiative

“We celebrate the anticipated designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary with gratitude for the leadership and perseverance of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council and the broad coalition of supporters who have spent decades working to protect the natural, historical, archaeological, and cultural resources along this part of California’s central coast. Thank you to the Biden-Harris Administration for advancing this nomination. We look forward to the final designation of the first tribally-nominated national marine sanctuary soon.”



### 9. Quote: Azul's Founder and Executive Director, Marce Gutiérrez-Graudiņš

*Azul celebrates the release of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This important step brings the nation one step closer to designating the first Indigenous-proposed national marine sanctuary, which includes necessary and popular protections for our nation's ocean areas like prohibitions on offshore oil, gas, and mineral exploration, development, and production. According to our latest national poll, these protections are important for both our ocean and communities: an overwhelming majority of Latino voters in the state of California support the strongest possible protections for our ocean and support actions to ban offshore drilling for oil and natural gas. For decades, the Northern Chumash Tribal Council and Tribal and community leaders like Chairwoman Violet Sage Walker have been working to protect the ocean waters of Central California. We celebrate this multi-generational, community-led effort to advance Tribal collaborative co-stewardship and look forward to the completion of this process in 2024.*



## 10. Quote: Mark Haver, Global Policy Officer for the Sustainable Ocean Alliance

*When mobilizing communities for ocean action, wins like this new Sanctuary inspire hope and enthusiasm. Violet, PJ, and Mike have done such a wonderful job keeping everyone excited and motivated, and now the work has paid off! Thank you!*



## 11. Press Release: The Sierra Club

<https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2024/09/noaa-releases-final-report-proposed-chumash-heritage-national-marine#:~:text=SAN%20LUIS%20OBISPO%2C%20CA%20%2D%2D,site%20as%20a%20marine%20sanctuary.>

### NOAA Releases Final Report on Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA -- Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. It is the final administrative stage required before the official designation of the site as a marine sanctuary.

In August 2023, NOAA released a proposal to designate a 5,617-square-mile area offshore of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties in Central California as the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. A public comment period that same year was overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal, with over 110,000 comments and 99% in support.

The release of the FEIS (Volume I, Volume II) kicks off a 30-day waiting period before the final management plan and regulations will be released by NOAA. An official designation could occur as soon as December.

In response, Gianna Patchen, Sierra Club's Santa Lucia Chapter Coordinator, released the following statement:

“For nearly four decades, Tribes and communities have led the effort to protect these precious coastlines, habitat, and sacred sites on the Central California Coast. Today’s announcement gets us one step closer to achieving that goal. We will continue to support our Tribal partners as we work to secure protections for the full area of the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.”

#### Contact

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## 12. Statement: Audubon California

<https://ca.audubon.org/press-release/audubon-california-applauds-noaas-progress-chumash-heritage-national-marine-sanctuary>

## **Audubon California Applauds NOAA's Progress on the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**

Audubon California celebrates the advancement of the historic Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary towards designation today with the release of the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Audubon California has strongly supported the designation and the efforts of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) to protect this crucial area of Central California coastline, with Audubon members sending 18,757 comments letters to NOAA last year in support of this designation.

“We are thrilled to see this tribally-led and community-driven effort move forward,” said Liliana Griego, Senior Coastal Program Manager at Audubon California. “The Central Coast provides essential habitat for both migratory and resident birds and we are excited to be one step closer to having this critical area designated and protected for generations to come.”

The years-long campaign entered its final phase today as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released its final EIS, and designation is anticipated by the end of the year. Once established, the Sanctuary will be the first Tribally-nominated National Marine Sanctuary in the US and the first new sanctuary to be designated in California in more than 25 years.

“Marine protected areas are an essential tool in protecting seabirds and shorebirds,” said Bethany Kraft, Senior Director of Coastal and Marine Resilience at the National Audubon Society. “Audubon is proud to support Indigenous-led marine conservation throughout the hemisphere and we look forward to seeing opportunities for the leadership of Central Coast Indigenous Peoples in the management plan.”

Situated between Monterey Bay and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuaries along California’s Central Coast, the more than 4,500 square miles would protect an internationally significant ecological transition zone for seabirds, fish, and marine mammals. The richly diverse area supports Snowy Plovers, Brown Pelicans, and significant populations of Brant's Cormorants and Pink-footed Shearwaters. Sooty Shearwaters gather in the hundreds of thousands, relying on the open waters of the proposed sanctuary for food to make their annual migrations that span up to 40,000 miles.

“Morro Coast Audubon Society has supported the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary from the inception of the proposal up to this new milestone, the release of the final EIS,” said Dave Tyra, conservation chair for Morro Coast Audubon Society. “We are pleased to see this commitment to the diversity of central California wildlife and the goal to conserve 30% of our lands by 2030 (30x30), and look forward to the completion of this process in 2024.”

Audubon California thanks the Biden-Harrison Administration for prioritizing the protection of culturally and environmentally significant public lands. The organization urges them to continue this important progress towards the administration’s 30x30 conservation goals by also designating the Chuckwalla National Monument in Southern California.

# # #

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### 13. Statement: Center for American Progress (CAP)

<https://www.americanprogress.org/press/statement-cap-welcomes-progress-in-designating-chumash-heritage-national-marine-sanctuary/>

#### **STATEMENT: CAP Welcomes Progress in Designating Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary**

Washington, D.C. — Today, the Biden-Harris administration moved one step closer to designating the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary with the release of a final environmental impact statement. The new sanctuary along 116 miles of the central California coast will safeguard this unique and irreplaceable ecosystem from offshore oil expansion, acoustic testing, and other threats, while generating an estimated \$23 million in economic activity and 600 new jobs for the local community. In response, Angelo Villagomez, senior fellow for Conservation Policy at the Center for American Progress, released the following statement:



This sanctuary honors the rich cultural heritage of the Chumash people and underscores a commitment to protecting our precious ocean resources for future generations. This is also an important step toward conserving 30 percent of the ocean in the United States. This is a moment of healing for our planet, but also for Indigenous communities around the world who have shown their support for this effort.

For more information or to speak with an expert, please contact Sam Hananel at [shananel@americanprogress.org](mailto:shananel@americanprogress.org)

### 14. Statement: Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation

“After an effort that has spanned four decades, we congratulate the Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) and their partners, including the Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter and San Luis Obispo Surfrider, on the pending designation of Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS). The sanctuary designation process is a testament to the collaboration and dedication of Indigenous, national, state, and community advocates and to the vision seeded in the nomination led by NCTC Chair Violet Sage Walker and the late Chief Fred Collins.



**Monterey Bay  
National Marine  
Sanctuary Foundation**

Our Monterey Bay chapter, along with 100,000 citizens who submitted online public comments, has supported the originally proposed boundary of 7,600 miles for full protection. We also hope that the sanctuary will receive full funding upon designation so its essential work can begin right

away. As the sixth national marine sanctuary on the West Coast and the first to prioritize equitable, collaborative management, this sanctuary marks a key advancement in meaningful engagement with Tribal governments and Indigenous leaders to protect biodiversity and address the impacts of climate change.

Welcome to the national marine sanctuary family!”

**15. Quote: Van Curaza, Founder and Director of Operation Surf**

I am so happy to honor Fred Collins, and to celebrate the success of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary as a testament of his passion for caring for and protecting these sacred waters and marine wildlife.



I have learned that the hard, right decision is usually the right thing, even if the full impact takes time to be felt. The life lessons the ocean has taught me saved my life and were fundamental to my commitment to healing others through Operation Surf by connecting Veterans to the ocean’s healing power. Without access to a healthy coastline, I wouldn’t have been able to offer these life-changing experiences to others.

Thank you to all the tribal leaders, past and present, whose wisdom has brought us here, with special thanks to Violet Sage Walker for carrying on her father’s legacy. In gratitude and respect, thank you for protecting our oceans.“

**16. Quote: Maite Arce, President and CEO of Hispanic Access Foundation**

“Thank you to the White House for releasing the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Chumash Heritage Marine Sanctuary! This is a critical step towards the designation of the first Tribally led national marine sanctuary. My deepest gratitude goes to Chairwoman Violet Sage Walker, the late Chairman Fred Collins, and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for their community-driven effort which sets a powerful precedent for future ocean protections. I am also grateful to all who stood with the Chumash people, including our Latino communities. This is a moment to celebrate, now and for generations to come!”



**17. Quote: Pastor Claudio Lapidus, Por La Creación Faith-Based Alliance member, Hispanic Access Foundation**

“The establishment of this sanctuary not only protects the wonders of God’s creation, but also enriches our Hispanic community and all who call this region home. By preserving the natural beauty and resources that sustain us, we ensure a brighter future for generations to come. We also want to thank Violet Sage Walker and the Northern Chumash family for their leadership and dedication in making this vision a reality.”

"El establecimiento de este santuario no solo protege las maravillas de la creación de Dios, sino que también enriquece a nuestra comunidad hispana y a todos los que llamamos hogar a esta región. Al preservar la belleza natural y los recursos que nos sostienen, aseguramos un futuro más brillante para las generaciones venideras. También queremos agradecer a Violet Sage Walker y a la familia Chumash del Norte por su liderazgo y dedicación en hacer realidad esta visión."

**18. Quote: Andrea Sanchez Davidson, Resources Legacy Fund**

"After a 40-year campaign, I am excited to see that President Joe Biden's administration announced the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This achievement is especially significant as it honors the stewardship and vision of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, whose deep cultural connection to these waters has guided the proposal from the start. I have had the privilege to work closely with the campaign team over the last four years and witnessed firsthand the dedication, expertise, and passion that have gone into making this initiative a reality. This collaborative spirit has been key to moving the project forward and ensuring that this sanctuary not only protects the marine environment but also highlights the rich cultural history of the Chumash people. I am honored to be building a lasting legacy for future generations as part of this incredible team."



RESOURCES LEGACY FUND  
CREATIVE SOLUTIONS. LASTING RESULTS.

**19. Quote: Gabriel Frausto, Chairman, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation**

"We anticipate final designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. For us, this means the opportunity to collaboratively-manage and protect our sacred lands and waters, to support our efforts for cultural revitalization, and continue in restoring our traditional practices and reinforcing our tribal sustainability and sovereignty."



**20. Quote: Gianna Patchen, Chapter Coordinator, Santa Lucia Sierra Club Chapter**

*"This sanctuary shows the power of local community engagement. The Sierra Club is honored to be a longtime partner of NCTC and our local communities, whose work made this possible. Over the last 15 years, Central Coast residents from Tribal Elders to college students have tabled at the farmer's market, knocked on doors, sent postcards and emails, circulated petitions, and organized and attended meetings on behalf of the marine sanctuary. We are so pleased to see our community's hard work come to fruition."*



**21. Quote: Alex Katz, Executive Director, Environmental Defence Center**

*“The Environmental Defense Center has long advocated for expanded protections of the Santa Barbara Channel and Central Coast, and we are delighted to see the advancement of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary that brings us one step closer to this goal. We are grateful for the leadership and guidance of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council in this nomination process. The Council’s tireless efforts to establish this Sanctuary will protect sacred submerged Chumash sites and incredible marine resources and wildlife for generations to come.”*



**22. Quote: Dr. Sylvia Earle, Founder, Mission Blue**

*"Protecting these submerged ancient villages from future industrial encroachment will ensure the resting places of their ancestors remain undisturbed. The cultural significance of Chumash heritage makes this National Marine Sanctuary the only one of its kind. Bravo to the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for leading this very important nomination as a National Marine Sanctuary and as a key part of the international network of Hope Spots."*

**23. Quote: Dr. Steve Palumbi, Stanford University**

*This stunning stretch of coast has long been a central part of life for Indigenous people. Their efforts to designate the Chumash Heritage National marine sanctuary is a gift to us all. It’s a celebration of a place that has always had a sanctuary in their hearts and now they are sharing that with everyone.”* Dr. Palumbi is currently collaborating with the Northern Chumash Tribal Council to combine Indigenous and Western science in the proposed Chumash Heritage Sanctuary waters.

**24. Quote: Jasmin Graham, Executive Director, Minorities in Shark Science**

*“I am deeply grateful to the Biden-Harris administration and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council for their unwavering commitment to preserving our marine ecosystems. Publishing the final management plan for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is a monumental achievement that honors the rich cultural heritage of the Chumash people and protects vital marine habitats. This sanctuary will serve as a beacon of hope and a model for future conservation efforts. Thank you for your dedication to safeguarding our oceans for generations to come.”*



**25. Quote: Jenna Valente, Director of Advocacy, Healthy Ocean Coalition**

*“I am thrilled to congratulate the Biden-Harris administration and the Northern Chumash Tribal Council on this important milestone for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This incredible achievement is a testament to your dedication to preserving our natural and cultural heritage. The sanctuary will play a crucial role in protecting marine*



biodiversity and supporting the resilience of our coastal communities. Thank you for your visionary leadership and for championing the cause of ocean conservation.”

**26. Quote: Amy Kenney, Executive Director, National Ocean Protection Coalition**

“We're thrilled to celebrate this milestone, which brings the U.S. one step closer to the first-ever Tribally nominated National Marine Sanctuary," said Amy Kenney, Executive Director of the National Ocean Protection Coalition. “The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will not only protect California’s Central Coast and at-risk species like sea otters and blue whales, but it will also expand the vital network of U.S. marine protected areas that keep our ocean healthy and help communities thrive.”

