

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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December 5, 2016

Congresswoman Lois Capps
2231 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Designation

Dear Congresswoman Capps,

I write on behalf of the California Coastal Commission in support for the designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS) offshore San Luis Obispo and northern Santa Barbara Counties. In October of 2015, NOAA accepted the CHNMS nomination package. The next critical and important step is for NOAA to initiate the formal sanctuary designation process. As the long-time representative and champion for this magnificent stretch of coastline, your support for initiating full sanctuary designation would be a fitting environmental finale to your distinguished Congressional career.

By accepting the nomination package submitted by the Chumash and supported by numerous public agencies, NGOs and elected officials, NOAA has already acknowledged that these waters have nationally significant marine, geological, biological and cultural characteristics worthy of protection. These include abundant populations of diverse marine mammals and fish, sensitive benthic habitats and kelp forests, major oceanic upwellings, and areas of unique beauty and cultural significance for the region's indigenous peoples. There is a growing consensus that the marine waters off the Central Coast are in need of additional study and protection.

National Marine Sanctuary status is consistent with California Coastal Act policies protecting water quality, marine and coastal habitats, recreational access, sustainable fisheries, and archeological and aesthetic resources. The Commission and NOAA have a long history of successful partnership in coast and ocean stewardship in and around the four existing marine sanctuaries in California. Integrated coastal management is more important now than ever, as we grapple with climate change adaptation, sea level rise, ocean acidification, and a whole host of related challenges. Sanctuary status will enhance coordination efforts, scientific research, and funding opportunities.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you urge President Obama to act on this important matter by directing NOAA to formally initiate the sanctuary designation process for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. This would be a fitting final achievement for your legacy of environmental protection, and time is of the essence.

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Thank you again for your many years of service. Your consistent support of California's Coastal Management Program has been invaluable to the Commission's work. We wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Kinsey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

STEVE KINSEY, Chair
California Coastal Commission

cc: William Douros