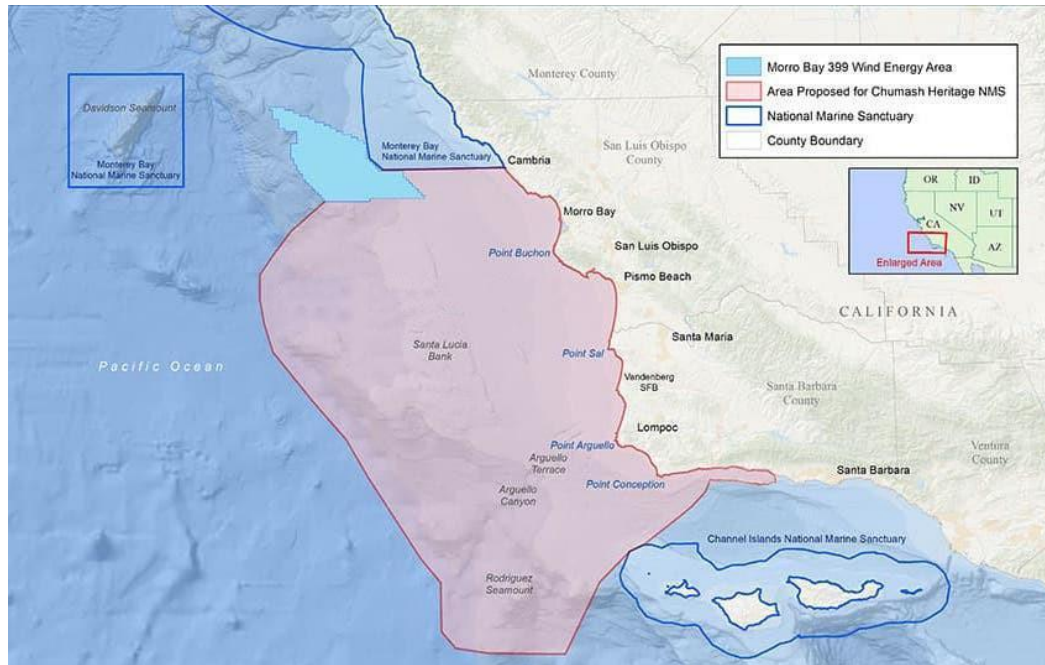


## 98,000 Voices for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary



**What do we want? This.** An overwhelming majority favors a Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary with the full Initial Boundary line and Gaviota Extension.

More than 98,000 comments were submitted in support of the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary during the final public comment period for the marine sanctuary, according to an independent analysis of the publicly available comments submitted to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The 60-day comment period, the final phase in the Chumash Sanctuary’s public designation process, ended on October 25th. It followed the release of NOAA’s Draft Management Plan, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and Draft Proposed Rule for the Chumash Sanctuary.. The comment period was specifically intended for NOAA to gather public input on the draft documents to inform the Chumash Sanctuary’s final designation documents. Designation of the Chumash Sanctuary is expected in mid-2024.

“We saw an outpouring of support for the Chumash Sanctuary during this crucial moment,” said Violet Sage Walker, Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chairwoman and the daughter of original sanctuary nominator, Fred Collins. “This was the final chance for our communities to show up and say exactly what we want the sanctuary to look like. The overwhelming majority of commenters are joining us in saying, ‘We need the Chumash Sanctuary to protect the entire Central Coast from Cambria to Gaviota, now!’”

NOAA received 98,721 comments during this final and defining public comment period, including letters of support signed by tens of thousands of individuals, and hundreds of organizations and businesses. These comments represented over 100,000 individuals and organizations. More than 99% of the comments indicated support for the Chumash Sanctuary, according to the analysis of the publicly available comments posted on regulations.gov as of November 3, 2023.

Support came from individuals on a local to global level, with strong representation from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. Comments of support were signed and submitted by thousands of Central Coast residents and Californians, Central Coast businesses, local elementary, high school and college students, and many local environmental and community organizations, chapters, and programs.

“This campaign has been a textbook example of what can be done when a community steps up together,” said Andrew Christie, Director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. “It’s also a validation of NOAA’s decision a decade ago to revive the process for the designation of national marine sanctuaries and invite nominations from the public. The main requirement of that process was a demonstration of broad support. I’d say that requirement has been met.”

Tribes and Indigenous organizations voiced their support during the comment period, including, but not limited to the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation, Brotherhood of the Tomol, Northern Chumash Bear Clan, Chumash Barracuda Clan of the Gaviota Coast, the Maui Nui Makai Network, North Coast Native Protectors Tribal Marine Collaborative, Northern California Osage Committee, the Norton Bay Watershed Council, and Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribe.

Coalitions and joint letters were submitted from partners of many backgrounds. Sign-on letters were submitted in support of the Chumash Sanctuary designation with over 100,000 combined signees, including from The Northern Chumash Tribal Council, Audubon, Environment California and Environment America, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace USA, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, OnlyOne, Sierra Club, and Surfrider Foundation. 115 organizations across the United States signed a joint letter of support coordinated by the America the Beautiful for All Coalition in addition to over 75 letters directly from local to global organizations. Official letters were submitted from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation, and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

Hundreds of scientists wrote in support, including the UCSB Benioff Ocean Science Laboratory; the UCLA Center for Diverse Leadership in Science with 97 supportive signees from across California; a letter signed by 181 scientists; a letter from 16 academic researchers working in the Central Coast region; and over 20 individual letters from scientists and academics. The Aquarium Conservation Partnership submitted a joint letter of support from 13 US Zoos and Aquariums and the Monterey Bay Aquarium submitted an additional extensive letter of support.

Youth showed up in support, including a youth letter with 130 individual signatories and 19 youth-led/youth-serving entities, a letter from 40 elementary school students, and letters from high school students. Religious leaders and organizations wrote in support as well, including from Hispanic Access Foundation's Por La Creación Faith-Based Alliance, National Religious Partnership for the Environment, Creation Justice Ministries' letter with 43 faith leader signees, Central Coast Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), St. Barbara Parish at Old Mission Santa Barbara, and the Unitarian Universalist Congregations of Goleta, San Luis Obispo and Riverside.

Other coalition letters included Environment California's Offshore Wind Now Coalition, the Central Coast Clean Cities Coalition, Conejo Climate Coalition, the Healthy Ocean Coalition, Oceano Beach Community Association, and SLO Climate Coalition.

Federal, state, and local elected representatives, government officials and governing bodies shared their strong support, including Wade Crowfoot (California Secretary for Natural Resources), Senator John Laird (Senate District 17), Assemblymember Dawn Addis (30th District), Supervisor Bruce Gibson (District 2, San Luis Obispo County), Supervisor Jimmy Paulding (District 4, San Luis Obispo County), Supervisor Das Williams (District 1, Santa Barbara County), Supervisor Joan Hartmann (District 3, Santa Barbara County), Christina Hernandez (Guadalupe City Council), Jan Marx (San Luis Obispo City Council), the City of San Luis Obispo, Cayucos Citizens Advisory Council, and the City of Santa Cruz.

We are now in the final phase of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary designation process. NOAA will review the comments to inform their preparation of the final designation documents. The California Governor and Congress will have an opportunity to review and comment on the documents before designation becomes effective. NOAA currently estimates that the designation decision will be made by mid-2024.

Under the initially nominated boundaries, the Chumash Sanctuary will protect upwards of 7,500 square miles of ocean and 156 miles of coastline from Cambria to Gaviota Creek and will bridge the gap between the existing Monterey Bay and Channel Islands sanctuaries to create hundreds of contiguous miles of protected ocean. However, this contiguity is at risk of being lost, with NOAA's Agency-Preferred boundary alternative cutting out over 2,000 square miles of ocean, notably excluding the area from Cambria to Hazard Canyon Reef (Los Osos area). If the final sanctuary boundary excludes the area between Cambria and Los Osos, it will become the only section of unprotected waters in over 19,000 square miles of ocean protection extending down the California coast. The vast majority of public comments submitted to NOAA advocated for the full 7,500 square mile sanctuary.

The sanctuary nomination was submitted to NOAA in 2015 by Fred Collins, the late Chairman of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, with the support of a local coalition of environmental organizations. This was the first Tribally-nominated national marine sanctuary in the United States. The efforts to designate a sanctuary off the Central Coast date back more than 40 years.

Visit [chumashsanctuary.org](http://chumashsanctuary.org) to learn more about the campaign to designate the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary led by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council.

More information about NOAA's designation process for the proposed Chumash Sanctuary is available at [sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage/](https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage/), or by contacting Paul Michel, West Coast Region Policy Coordinator at (831) 241-4217, [paul.michel@noaa.gov](mailto:paul.michel@noaa.gov).

## Job Opportunities with the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation

### [Master's Student Internship Opportunity](#)

#### Position Summary

The greater Monterey Bay region's waters and food webs are contaminated by ubiquitous microplastics (MPs) and macro-plastics that break apart into MPs. MPs have been detected in sanctuary waters from the surface to 1000 m depth, in the sediment, and in organisms including krill, fish, seabirds, and whales. Our project aims to establish the greater Monterey Bay region as a model for studying MPs in large aquatic ecosystems, by quantifying the flux of MPs into and out of MBNMS using a mass balance framework, including flows between the biota, ocean, rivers, and beaches. This intern will sample and analyze water from the four major rivers that enter the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Monitoring will include collecting water samples for microplastic analysis as well as collecting, documenting, and analyzing macro-plastic samples. Microplastics will be analyzed by the intern and members of the project team. Macro-plastics will be categorized by product and use, to assess whether the origin is agricultural, industrial or urban. [Learn More.](#)

### [Tribal Coastal Stories Project Associate](#)

#### Position Summary

There is a pressing need to hear, document and capture the traditional uses, practices, ceremonies, and ways of stewarding coastal marine resources of indigenous tribes along California. The newly launched Tribal Marine Stewardship Network (TMSN) is an alliance of Tribal Nations working collaboratively to steward, protect, and restore the ocean and coastal resources within their ancestral territories. The Tribal Coastal Stories Project Associate will work closely with CMSF's marine spatial ecologist to develop and improve educational content that tells Tribal histories and roles in more inclusive ways, sharing untold experiences and ecological histories along the coast.



"Tomol Rides Wishtoyo," a mural by Chumash artist John Khus, on the wall of the Cambria Post Office.