# We Support a Marine Reserve Off Point Sal



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In response to the California Fish and Game Commission's request for petitions for the adaptive management of [California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network](#), the Natural Resources Defense Council has put forward a proposal to designate a new State Marine Reserve around Point Sal, from Mussel Point to the end of Brown's Beach. The goals of this new MPA are to protect this rich and productive ecosystem and the biodiversity found within it, protect the larval retention zone and the connectivity dynamics within the region, and enhance the climate resilience of the broader state MPA network.

Located near Guadalupe, Point Sal is an ecologically rich and relatively remote promontory along the coastline that supports a diverse marine ecosystem and provides critical habitat for seabirds and marine mammals alike. The nutrient-rich waters found at this site allow for a diversity of ocean life to thrive here, with kelp beds, rich tidepools, and productive waters that support humpback whales, gray whales, a variety of sea lions and seals, sea otters, and a biologically important feeding area for endangered blue whales nearby. Offshore, Lion Rock is a significant roosting site for seabirds like the recently endangered Brown pelican, and also acts as

an undisturbed haul out for sea lions, seals, and other pinnipeds, underlining the area's conservation value for these animals as the California coastline becomes increasingly developed. In addition, the leeward waters of Point Sal act as a larval retention zone, which are highly beneficial areas for enhancing the recruitment of fish and invertebrate offspring in upwelling zones while promoting the biodiversity of the surrounding ecosystem. Historically, Point Sal also holds cultural significance for the Chumash people, with evidence of their occupation being as recent as 250 years ago and as far back as 4,800 years ago; Chumash artifacts are visible throughout Point Sal, and analyses of burial sites from the area demonstrate the rich cultural ties to the traditional stewards of this land.

The Santa Lucia Chapter was a vocal proponent in the campaign that led to the establishment of the Central Coast Marine Protected Area network in 2007. Last November, we signed on to a letter to Eric Sklar, President of the California Fish and Game Commission, in response to the Commission's request for recommendations for California's Marine Protected Area network. We strongly support the designation of a new State Marine Reserve or a No-Take State Marine Conservation Area with exceptions for cultural and subsistence take by local Indigenous communities and/or Tribes around Point Sal.

Protecting the waters of Point Sal aligns strongly with the goals set by the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), especially with regards to the protection of natural biodiversity found in relatively undisturbed marine ecosystems. Given the remote nature of Point Sal, its relative lack of human disturbance, and increasing threats to the California MPAs found nearby, there is an urgent need to protect the ecological merits and maximize the biological benefits that Point Sal provides to the marine species that inhabit the area and to the broader Central California region. As development of the state's coastline and seascape progresses, protecting these untouched areas will add to the resilience of the MPA network by providing refuge for marine life from encroaching threats. Designating an MPA in the proposed area will improve recreational, educational, and study opportunities at Point Sal and support equitable access to coastal resources moving forward into the future.

We commend the continued work of the Commission to advance the conservation of our state's valuable and unique marine resources. Designating a protected area at Point Sal will further bolster the strength of California's MPA network, advance the goals of the MLPA, and safeguard our coastal ecosystems against future stressors such as climate change.