

Saving It



The 30x30 initiative, which aims to protect 30 percent of California lands and waters by 2030, is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reverse the biodiversity crisis, invest in equity, build climate resilience, and enhance access to California’s natural spaces. Local communities bring a deep understanding of our conservation needs and challenges and are our state’s greatest resource for ensuring that the 30x30 goal is achieved. This process will work only if it's informed by those who are feeling the biodiversity, climate and equity crisis the most.

The Santa Lucia Chapter, working in coalition with sixteen state and regional conservation groups, filed comments on the Central Coast Region for the 30x30 statewide process with the California Natural Resources Agency. Our comments highlight our values, the threats to the Central Coast Region and associated urgency of our needs, the solutions we propose for consideration and inclusion in the state’s final plan, and the special landscapes we hope to protect within the California 30x30 Initiative.

These are some of the San Luis Obispo County Special Places and Projects put forward as meriting state support under the aegis of 30x30:

Project name: *Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary*

Description: In 2015, the northern Chumash Tribal Council submitted a proposal to NOAA for a Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, to be located along 140

miles of coastline between Monterey and the Channel Islands. This area contains diverse ecosystems including large concentrations of kelp forest, wetlands, and estuaries, as well as extensive cultural Chumash sites – an ideal location for the ecosystem-based management regime of the National Marine Sanctuary System. At the southern edge of the proposed site is an area known as Point Conception, which has been recognized internationally as a historically significant site of archaeological evidence of pre-history. The Chumash know it as Humqaq, the “Western Gate,” one of the most sacred Native American sites on Chumash lands and in all of North America. US Reps. Salud Carbajal, Barbara Lee, Alan Lowenthal, Julia Brownley, and Jimmy Panetta, along with Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, have urged the Dept. of Commerce and NOAA to begin the designation process for the sanctuary, pointing out that the proposal supports a suite of the Biden administration’s priorities, especially America the Beautiful (30x30).

Project name: *Rehabilitate the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, 4,750 acres*

Description: Intact coastal dune ecosystems are extremely rare. The Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, a California’s State Parks unit, is a dynamic natural sand dune system that is a component of one of the largest such ecosystems in the world. It provides many rare habitats that support diverse threatened or endangered plants and animals, including federally designated critical habitat for the western snowy plover, and fronts the under-served community of Oceano in San Luis Obispo County. It is also the only state park in California that allows recreational driving on the beach and coastal dunes. Hence, it is hard to overstate the magnitude of the March 18, 2021, decision of the California Coastal Commission to order the removal of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) from the park, giving the California Dept. of Parks and Recreation a deadline of Jan 1, 2024, to do so. The Commission noted that the Latino majority residents of Oceano “have no options for beach recreation free of cars fronting their community, and these residents bear the significant burden of air quality and public health problems, with little benefit from park operations. In addition, the Northern Chumash do not support continued OHV use, and they consider the park to include areas that are sacred ancestral lands that should not, in any circumstance, be used in these ways.... They have asked that the vehicles and OHVs that degrade this area be removed so that this sacred natural space can be honored and cherished.” Multiple lawsuits have been filed by the off-road lobby in an effort to turn back the Coastal Commission’s decision, but most local residents are clear that it is time to look to the future, begin to restore the dunes, and turn the region into a prosperous, environmentally conscious California coastal community.

Project name: *Preserve Diablo Canyon Lands, 12,000 acres*

Description: 12,000 acres of pristine, undeveloped California coastal land owned by the Pacific Gas & Electric Company will be up for grabs upon the shutdown and decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, scheduled for 2025. To that end, over a dozen local groups and non-government organizations formed the coalition that drafted a Framework for Conservation of the Diablo Canyon Lands and submitted it to

the California Public Utilities Commission in May. We recommend state funding for this project.

TAKE ACTION

California's Draft [Pathways to 30x30 strategy](#) document is available for public feedback through Friday, January 28. Click on the link to read the document and file a comment via the online form, email, voicemail, or the postal service.