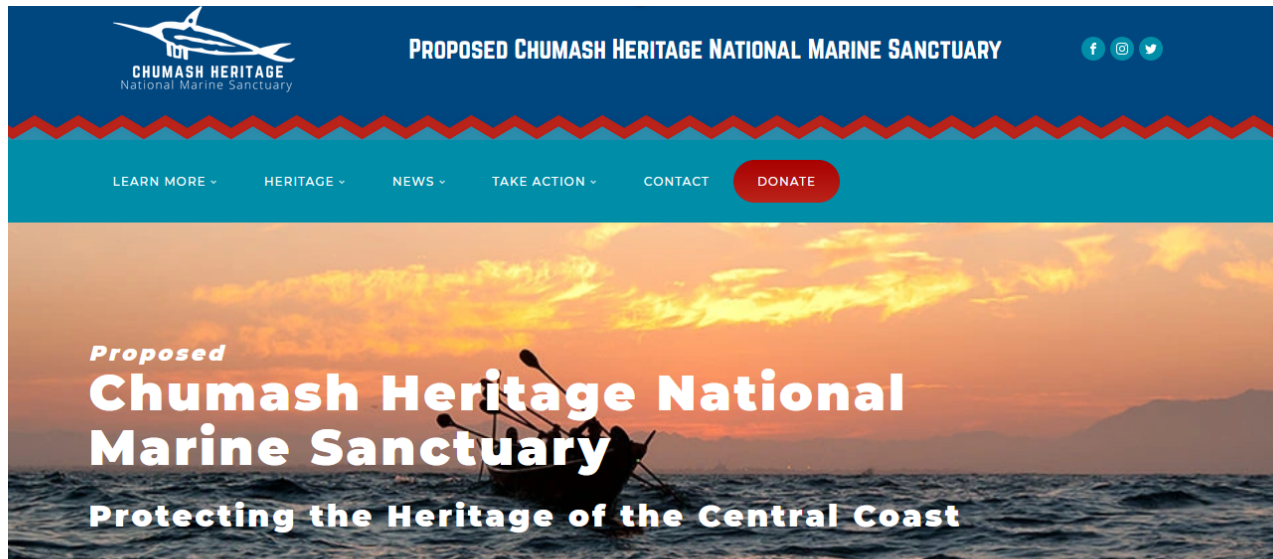


Very Necessary Protection



Chumashsanctuary.org

How will the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary provide economic benefits and environmental protections to the Central Coast? Let us count the ways.

A 2014 study of the potential economic impacts of a national marine sanctuary off the central coast conducted by Jason Scorse, Director of the Center for the Blue Economy at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and Judith Kildow, Director of the Center’s National Ocean Economics Program, found that a national marine sanctuary off the Central Coast could add, “*at minimum*, \$23 million per year to the local economy and create almost 600 jobs.” [Emphasis added].

As recently summed up by Dr. Scorse:

“We found significant potential for the Sanctuary to boost local employment and income, and we still believe this to be the case. Sanctuaries bring in money for research, from increased tourism, and increased property values. Given the indigenous heritage of the Chumash region, we believe that there will be significant interest from both a cultural and historical perspective in a new Sanctuary of this kind. If anything, recent trends in the US towards better appreciation of native rights and culture should make the proposed Sanctuary even more valuable to the public than when we conducted our study.”

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' Socioeconomics Research and Monitoring Program regularly [reports on the economic impacts of existing marine sanctuaries](#). (Spoiler alert: the impacts are positive, especially for commercial and recreational fishing, which are particularly dependent on the health of marine resources and habitat.)

The oft-heard claim that we have plenty of local, state, and federal regulations that protect our local coastal waters already so we don't need a marine sanctuary should be tested against recent history.

Congress allowed the 1982 moratorium on oil and gas leasing off the Pacific and Atlantic coasts to [expire in 2008](#). Since then, we have seen an array of stopgap measures and [bills introduced](#) at the state and federal level that have [died at the hands of Big Oil](#) and its allies. The latest fail came last December, when Senator Joe Manchin stripped a ban on Pacific and Atlantic coastal drilling out of the Build Back Better Act. There are about [20 known oil fields](#) in federal waters off the SLO coast. The CHNMS will immediately and permanently protect our coastal waters from drilling.

Then there were the times in 2002 and in 2005 when SLO County had to fend off efforts by the Bureau of Reclamation to [dump toxic irrigation wastewater](#) from the San Joaquin Valley into Estero Bay.

Then there was PG&E's proposed 2012 seismic survey offshore of Diablo Canyon, which ignored emerging benign technologies and opted for the cheapest and most environmentally destructive means of detecting underwater earthquake faults: Towing 250 decibel sound cannons through coastal waters all day, every day, for over a month. 250db is approximately what you would hear if you stood next to the engine of a 747 on takeoff.

Halting both the proposed seismic survey and wastewater dumping project required Herculean feats of local organizing over many months by dozens of local groups. In both cases, the outcome could easily have gone the other way.

At a July 2005 Bureau of Reclamation town hall in Cayucos, a resident asked if the potential expansion of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to encompass the waters off SLO County might hinder the plan to dump toxic wastewater here. The federal rep replied that at that moment there was no marine sanctuary off the SLO Coast, our waters therefore were not protected, therefore there would be no such impediment to the project.

PG&E's 250db seismic survey had reached its final stage of approval, with all other required state and federal permits in hand, by the time it reached the Coastal Commission and was turned back. Before it did, the utility eliminated one of the proposed survey vessel tracks -- the one that would have taken it into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

This history -- and the benefit of having a national marine sanctuary in your corner when you really need one -- is worth keeping in mind as the designation process goes forward.

Also worth keeping in mind are two federal studies that anticipated the claim that our oceans already have enough protection and don't need the protection a sanctuary brings. [A 1981 report](#) of the U.S. General Accounting Office put its findings in its title: "Marine Sanctuaries Program Offers Environmental Protection and Benefits Other Laws Do Not." In 2008, the intervening 27 years had not altered this reality when the Inspector General of the Department of Commerce affirmed that the national marine sanctuary program "effectively complements other federal, state, and local resource protection efforts by offering benefits other laws or regulations do not."

From the mouth of Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria to the kelp forests off Point Conception, spanning 20,000-year-old Chumash ancestral sites now underwater, we are blessed with some of the most unique marine habitat and cultural heritage in the world, deserving of the protection that only a national marine sanctuary can provide.

TAKE ACTION

[Visit this guide](#) to find out how to most effectively add your voice in support and submit your comment today. **All public comments are due in writing to NOAA by January 31, 2022.**



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