



May 26, 2020

Mr. William J. Douros
Regional Director
National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration
National Ocean Service
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries/West Coast Region
99 Pacific St. Building 100, Suite F
Monterey, California 93940

*Delivered electronically through the Federal eRulemaking Portal
(<https://www.regulations.gov>) with Docket Number NOAA-NOS-2020-0063.*

Dear Mr. Douros,

During these unprecedented times, the California Natural Resources Agency remains committed to protecting the state's ocean and marine environment, economy, and historical and cultural artifacts. With this letter, I submit for the record my enthusiastic support to renew the nomination for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS).

With changing ocean conditions associated with the threats of climate change, National Marine Sanctuaries are critically important management tools to preserve California's incredible marine biodiversity as well as safeguard the local economies that depend on a healthy ocean ecosystem. The proposed CHNMS would also importantly advance the state and federal governments' increasing collaboration with Native American tribes in natural resource protection.

In the past year, it has been my distinct honor to appoint Tribal Representatives to the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Statewide Leadership Team, of which the West Coast Regional Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) is also appointed. The proposed CHNMS would not only would protect submerged Chumash Tribal Sacred Sites (a consideration for National Significance Criteria 2), but would also provide partnership opportunities between ONMS, Tribal Representatives, and the rest of the MPA Statewide Leadership Team to continue to consider tribal interests in marine protected area management (aligned with Management Consideration 6).

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Like my predecessor, former Secretary John Laird, I too value and prioritize designations of protected areas to ensure that California's unique ocean ecosystems are shielded from oil and gas exploration and production. The proposed CHNMS would cover the area from Gaviota, where the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary begins, to Cambria, where the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary ends. This would not only provide important ecological connectivity to the existing National Marine Sanctuaries but would also protect ecosystems from oil and gas exploration that have already experienced significant oil spills in 1969 and 2015. Protecting this area from adverse impacts from future oil spills as well as future sea bed mining directly aligns with Management Consideration 3, and nearly all of the 11 sanctuary nomination process criteria. For this reason, in addition to the many other benefits to tourism, research, and natural and cultural resource protection, I encourage ONMS to renew the nomination for the CHNMS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wade Crowfoot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Wade Crowfoot
Secretary for Natural Resources