



Northern Chumash Tribal Council

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For Immediate Release

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Northern Chumash Tribal Council Celebrates Decision to Advance Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Designation

Washington, DC – Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [published a Notice of Intent](#) advancing the public process to designate the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS). Violet Sage Walker, the Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chairwoman hails this announcement as a crucial first step towards President Biden’s initiative to conserve and restore at least 30 percent of our nation’s lands and waters by 2030.

“Successfully designating the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will protect ocean life, sacred Chumash sites, strengthen Indigenous communities and serve as a model of environmental justice,” Sage Walker stated. “Today’s announcement marks a major milestone after more than 40 years of tireless advocacy for ocean protection, and also represents the first tribally nominated sanctuary in the nation. Today my father would be proud. This is one of the things he wanted to see the most.”

Fred Collins, the late Tribal Chair and Nominator, had a lifelong vision for establishing the Chumash Heritage NMS to conserve precious life and cultural sacred sites in heritage waters. “Grandmother Ocean has been providing life to the Chumash Peoples for over ten thousand years, now is the time for all communities to work together and assist her in rebuilding her Vibrant Thrivability for all future generations,” Collins said before he [passed into spirit on October 1, 2021](#), just 40 days before this announcement.

Chumash have been the guardians of the Central Coast of California since time immemorial and look forward to working with NOAA and other partners to collaboratively steward this critical coastline for the benefit of current and future generations. We join with Indigenous Communities around the world working together to find solutions to better protect the Earth and all who depend upon it. We would also like to thank our grassroots supporters like the Sierra Club, Surfrider Foundation, Marine Sanctuary Alliance, Environmental Defense Center, Wishtoyo Foundation, and thousands of allies for their commitment and hard work to get us to this point.

Rep. Salud Carbajal (CA-24), Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA) [wrote](#) to the U.S. Commerce Secretary and the NOAA Administrator in August to urge advancement of the proposed Chumash Heritage NMS for designation, noting: “The waters off the Central Coast of California are some of the most biologically diverse and ecologically productive regions in the world. This spectacular marine environment includes feeding grounds for numerous species of whales and dolphins, sea otter populations, kelp forests, and is home to vital commercial and recreational fisheries. Designating this area as a marine sanctuary would ensure we continue to be good stewards of these natural resources while maintaining sustainable access for commercial and recreational fishing.”

“It’s impossible to fully calculate all the benefits the Central Coast will receive as a result of the ecosystem-based management that a national marine sanctuary brings, as marine sanctuaries offer

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environmental protections other regulations don't," noted Andrew Christie, Director of the Santa Lucia Sierra Club.

All of our many supporters should take this opportunity to celebrate this moment as we continue all our efforts towards ultimate designation. Visit chumashsanctuary.org to learn more about the proposed sanctuary and how you can support it.

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Links:

chumashsanctuary.org

[Media toolkit](#)

[Tribute to Late Tribal Chair Fred Collins](#)

[Federal Register Notice of Intent](#)

[NOAA Press Release](#)

sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage

[America the Beautiful Report](#)