

30,000 people weigh in to support the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

More than 30,000 people expressed their support for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, according to comments submitted to NOAA.

LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA, USA, March 1, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 30,000 people expressed their support for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, according to analysis of comments submitted to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and posted on [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). The 83-day public comment period, part of NOAA's scoping process for the Chumash Heritage NMS off the Central Coast of California, ended on Jan. 31.



Tomol crossing. Credit: Robert Schwemmer, NOAA

“

The incredible outpouring of support for the Chumash Heritage sanctuary shows just how much people care about this incredible part of the world”

Violet Sage Walker, Northern Chumash Tribal Council Chairwoman

“The incredible outpouring of support for the Chumash Heritage sanctuary shows just how much people care about this incredible part of the world,” said Violet Sage Walker, Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) Chairwoman and the daughter of original nominator Fred Collins.

“Community members and business owners in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, scientists, ocean users of all kinds, and indigenous people from around the world spoke out in a strong voice, ‘Protect this sacred place now!’”

NOAA received 22,479 comments during the public scoping process, including several letters

signed by thousands of individuals and organizations. Of the 21,828 posted comments analyzed by NCTC, more than 99% indicated support for the sanctuary. NOAA will continue to process comments submitted before the Jan. 31 deadline over the coming weeks.

Supportive comments were submitted from people around the country, including a strong showing of local support from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. Comments supporting the sanctuary were submitted by [hundreds of Central Coast residents](#), more than 30 regional businesses, and eight conservation organizations with local Central Coast chapters.

“Over the last 15 years of tabling, knocking on doors, sending postcards, circulating petitions, and organizing meetings and benefit film showings on behalf of the marine sanctuary throughout the Central Coast, we’ve seen support for a sanctuary rising steadily but we were blown away by these numbers,” said Andrew Christie, director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

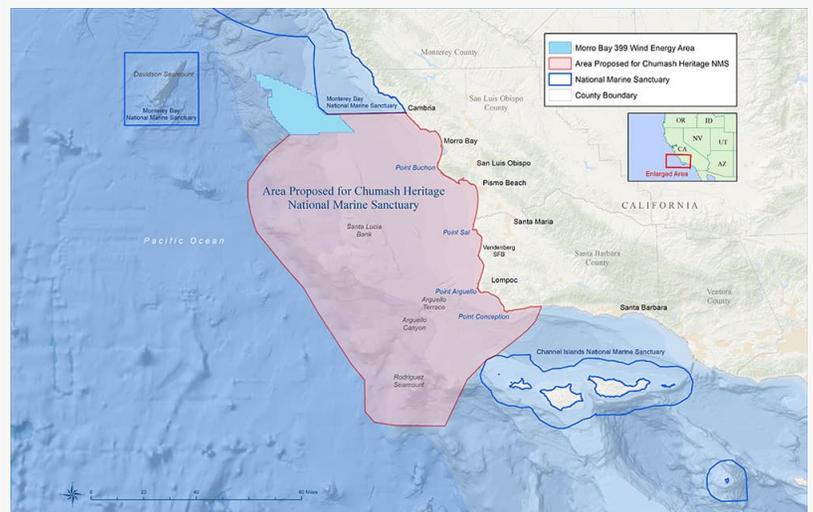
Tribes and other indigenous organizations, including the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation, InterTribal Sinkiyone Wilderness Council, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Brotherhood of the Tomol, and Northern Chumash Bear Clan voiced their support during the comment period.

Joint letters were also submitted representing 156 scientists and marine researchers as well as the Monterey Bay Aquarium on behalf of 75 aquariums and zoos. Patagonia, the prominent global outdoor clothing and gear brand headquartered in Ventura, also submitted a letter in support.

Federal, state and local elected representatives shared their strong support, including U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, Reps. Salud Carbajal, Jimmy Panetta, Jared Huffman, and Julia



Violet Sage Walker. Credit: Jeremy Bishop



Map of area proposed for Chumash National Marine Sanctuary

Brownly, and State Senator John Laird. The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a resolution in support of the sanctuary in December.

“Recognizing these abundant waters are essential to the heritage of ocean-going bands among the First People of the Pacific Coast, we support designating the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary in name,” they stated.

The NOAA designation process has four steps. The scoping process has just concluded. Next, NOAA prepares draft designation documents and conducts environmental reviews, followed by a second public comment period for input on these draft documents. After considering this public input, NOAA will prepare a final designation document and adopt a final environmental impact statement.

Under the current proposal, the Chumash Heritage NMS will protect upwards of 7,000 square miles of ocean and 156 miles of coastline from Cambria to Gaviota Creek. The proposed sanctuary will bridge the gap between the existing Monterey Bay and Channel Islands sanctuaries to create hundreds of continuous miles of protected ocean.

The sanctuary nomination was submitted to NOAA in 2015 by Fred Collins, the late Chairman of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, with the support of a group of local environmental organizations. Efforts to designate a sanctuary on the Central Coast date back more than 40 years. Visit chumashsanctuary.org to learn more.

More information about NOAA’s designation process for the proposed Chumash Heritage sanctuary is available at sanctuaries.noaa.gov/chumash-heritage/, or by contacting Paul Michel, West Coast Region Policy Coordinator at (831) 241-4217, paul.michel@noaa.gov.

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