

MBEP Selected as Coordinating Entity for National Heritage Area Study

Legislation Introduced by U.S. Rep. Panetta Legislation Moves Forward the Process for Designation

MARINA, CA, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- U.S. Jimmy Panetta (CA-19) on Friday reintroduced the [Monterey Bay National Heritage Area Study Act](#), legislation that

“

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*Tahra Goraya, Monterey Bay
Economic Partnership
President and CEO*

would direct the National Park Service (NPS) to initiate a comprehensive study on whether the coastal communities surrounding the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary qualify for designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA). Rep. Panetta is working in tandem with the [Monterey Bay Economic Partnership](#) (MBEP) as the local coordinating entity for this study.

National Heritage Areas are public-private partnerships that leverage federal support to empower local conservation efforts, provide technical assistance, and spur economic development. National Heritage Area designation would highlight the region's cultural, historical, and ecological significance while fostering sustainable economic growth, heritage tourism, and community

collaboration.

“National Heritage Area designation would bring federal investment that could be leveraged to create jobs in our unique region, fostering community-driven collaborations and sustainable economic development,” said Monterey Bay Economic Partnership President & Ceo Tahra Goraya. “The possibility of National Heritage Area designation has profound and positive implications for this special place. Since our founding in 2015, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership has been committed to improving the economic health and quality of life in the Monterey Bay region, and as a regional convener, MBEP is uniquely qualified to bring together the diverse array of voices throughout our region to move this National Heritage Area designation study forward.”

The National Heritage Area System (NHAs) expands on traditional conservation approaches by supporting large-scale, community-driven initiatives that engage communities in heritage preservation activities. NHA entities serve as catalysts for community and economic

development, collaborating with stakeholders to determine how to make heritage relevant to local needs and interests. Across the country, National Heritage Areas and their partners are reviving historic downtowns, preserving large landscapes and cultural practices, and sharing our nation's history through the arts.

According to [cumulative data](#) for 2024, National Heritage Areas:

- Leveraged \$60 million in cash and in-kind support to carry out heritage projects and programs, creating over a 2:1 impact of the \$28.1 million in federal Heritage Partnership Program funding received.
- Engaged 2,021 formal partners and 3,245 informal partners in heritage area activities.
- Benefited from 18,525 volunteers contributing over 178,740 hours for heritage area projects with an estimated value of over \$5.7 million.

Federal law requires a National Heritage Area Study to be conducted before Congress can consider legislation to formally grant the designation.

About Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP): Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) is a regional member-supported nonprofit organization consisting of public, private, and civic entities located throughout the counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. Founded in 2015, our mission is to improve the economic health and quality of life in the region.

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