

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Designation

The Northern Chumash Tribal Council is headed towards the final comment period for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary off the central coast of California.

On May 9, 2023, Congressman Salud Carbajal (CA-24), U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, and a group of 12 other Members of Congress from California urged the U.S. Department of Commerce to **prioritize completing the designation process** for the proposed sanctuary.

Background

In 2015, the Northern Chumash Tribal Council submitted to NOAA a nomination for the creation of a sanctuary. Rep. Salud Carbajal, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, and thousands of citizens urged NOAA to commence the designation process for the marine sanctuary. NOAA deemed the nomination complete and qualified for designation. NOAA opened the scoping process for the proposed marine sanctuary nomination. NOAA collected input from all stakeholders to inform its preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the Draft Management Plan for the proposed sanctuary.

The California central coast is a transition zone between cold northern waters and warm southern waters. It serves as a crucial feeding ground for migratory and resident species. Increasingly, these waters are experiencing the adverse consequences of a changing climate. The proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will protect 7,000 square miles of this vulnerable, ecologically significant area.

This is the first National Marine Sanctuary nominated by a Native American Tribe. There is tremendous potential for good here. The sanctuary will preserve and recognize the importance of tribal history, safeguard shared coastal resources, and open new doors for research and economic growth, while prioritizing Indigenous collaborative management.

Website: Chumashsanctuary.org