



Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Newsletter



Point Conception Lighthouse
Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA

About the Designation

A large community consortium led by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council submitted a nomination for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary in July 2015. NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) is currently considering sanctuary designation to protect the region's important marine ecosystem, maritime heritage resources, and cultural values of Indigenous communities. The proposed sanctuary stretches along 156 miles of coastline adjacent to San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties, and would provide a haven for marine mammals, invertebrates, sea birds, and fishes, create an overarching framework for community-based spatial management for many threats, and recognize Indigenous and tribal history and culture in the area.

Summary of Public Scoping and Next Steps

NOAA published a [Notice of Intent](#) to conduct public scoping for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary on November 10, 2021. Public comments were accepted from November 10, 2021 through January 31, 2022, during which NOAA hosted three virtual public scoping meetings.

In total, NOAA received approximately 1,200 individual oral, written, and electronic comments; some included thousands of form letters and signatures. Comments covered a variety of topics including boundary size, sanctuary name, tribal co-management, and regulations.

NOAA is currently reviewing all public comments, and as the next step in the [designation process](#), will prepare a draft management plan and environmental impact statement that carefully considers the public comments.

In an effort to provide further clarification on the sanctuary designation process, NOAA has developed several ways to inform the public about this designation. A [Chumash Heritage designation website](#) will continue to serve as the primary source of information and updates. A listserv was created to provide periodic updates and announcements. To sign up for the listserv, visit [GovDelivery](#) and create a login. Additionally, this quarterly newsletter will update the public about the designation process.



Bubblegum coral and crabs at 1,000 meters. Photo: NOAA/Ocean Exploration Trust

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.

- National Marine Sanctuary
- ▲ Marine National Monument
- Proposed National Marine Sanctuary

Issue Area Workshops

Several workshops have been held by NOAA with key partners and the public to inform staff about various issues in the proposed sanctuary area. These workshops will further inform development of the draft management plan. NOAA held one workshop in April on water quality and three on research and monitoring (inshore, offshore, and socio-economic and cultural). In May, NOAA held a workshop on climate change. One more workshop is scheduled in June on Outreach and Wildlife Disturbance. If you have information to contribute to any of these discussions, please contact the staff person listed below.

Information from these workshops will inform development of the draft management plan.

#1 Water Quality
bridget.hoover@noaa.gov

#2 Research and Monitoring
ryan.m.freedman@noaa.gov

#3 Climate Change
sara.hutto@noaa.gov

#4 Outreach and Wildlife Disturbance
michele.roest@noaa.gov

Google Meet Virtual meeting:
 June 14, 11:00 – 12:15 p.m.

Visit our website for more information on the proposed designation and be sure to sign up to our listserv for updates.

Did You Know?

Did you know ONMS will be celebrating its 50th anniversary on October 23, 2022? On this day in 1972, Congress passed what is now called the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, which established the National Marine Sanctuary System. ONMS will be celebrating the 50th anniversary throughout 2022 with the “Save Spectacular” campaign, which includes web stories, social media, education materials, events, and commemorative posters. Many of the materials and posters are available to download. Visit the [50th anniversary webpage](#) for more information. Join in the celebration!



Sea otter in Morro Bay Harbor
 Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



Boats in Morro Bay Harbor
 Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



A humpback whale breaching
 Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA

Did you know the proposed area for designation includes Rodriguez Seamount, which was once an island that stood 230 feet above the surface of the sea. Due to sea level rise, a subsiding or sinking seafloor, and “coastal” erosion when the seamount was an island, it is now considered a “guyot”, a flat-topped seamount. Rodriguez Seamount is currently home to 26 known species of cold-water corals and supports abundant marine life. It is located southwest of Point Conception in northern Santa Barbara County.



Morro Rock from Estero Bluffs State Park
Photo: NOAA



A resting western gull
Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



Kayakers off Pismo Beach
Photo: NOAA

The Designation Process

