



## Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Newsletter Dec 2022



Brown pelican flying over water.  
Photo: Sam Bailey

### 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 152 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.

### NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Releases New Strategic Plan and Long Term Vision

Fifty years ago, the U.S. ushered in a new era of ocean conservation with the enactment of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Since then, the system has grown into a nationwide network of 15 national marine sanctuaries and two marine national monuments that conserve more than 620,000 square miles of spectacular ocean and Great Lakes waters, an area nearly the size of Alaska.

To celebrate this significant anniversary, NOAA has developed a new five-year strategic plan, [Our Vision For America's Treasured Ocean Places: A Five-Year Strategy For The National Marine Sanctuary System](#), and a new 20-year vision, [A Transformational Vision for National Marine Sanctuaries: National Marine Sanctuaries 2042](#). Together, these documents will guide actions and decisions to protect the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections, and economic productivity of the National Marine Sanctuary System into the future.

The new strategic plan sets forth NOAA's actions in the short to medium term as it strives to fundamentally change how national marine sanctuaries and other marine protected areas contribute to meeting the challenges ahead, preserve special marine places, and leave the generations that follow a model to emulate for marine conservation.

### Summary of Indigenous Engagement Webinar

On August 26, 2022, ONMS hosted an online public webinar to describe a draft organizational framework to support Indigenous collaborative management of the proposed national marine sanctuary. Nearly 60 people attended and learned about how ONMS staff had been informed and inspired by ideas from local area tribes as well as tribal engagement arrangements at other protected areas. Staff explained a possible organizational structure that includes government to government consultation with federally recognized tribe(s), an Intergovernmental Policy Council, several Indigenous culture seats on the Sanctuary Advisory Council, and a special Indigenous Cultures Advisory Panel to bring together relevant expertise and knowledge. Staff explained how joint project agreements could be formed with non-profit foundations interested in partnering with ONMS to help implement sanctuary programs. Staff fielded a range of questions, and explained local tribes have been given an opportunity to provide feedback on this possible arrangement. The presentation is available on the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary website. ONMS intends to outline some form of Indigenous collaborative management structure in the draft management plan for public comment.

## GIYS Photo Contest Winners

The [2022 Get Into Your Sanctuary Photo Contest](#) had a record year! Over 700 photos were submitted from members of the public from all over the world in four different categories – Sanctuary Views, Sanctuary Life, Sanctuary Recreation and Sanctuaries at Home. The winners in each category were announced in December 2022. We hope you enjoy viewing some of the winners here, but all photos that were submitted [can be viewed online](#).

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries hosted multiple events from June to September 2022 promoting recreation in and around national marine sanctuaries for Get Into Your Sanctuary, including this photo contest. We hope you consider contributing one of your photos next year!



1st Place: Leighton Lum. Green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) at sunset on Maui's west coast.



1st Place: Daryl Duda. Flamingo tongue snail (*Cyphoma gibbosum*) on a sea rod with a diver in the background at Elbow Reef off Key Largo in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.



1st Place: Dustin Harris. Paddlers near Scorpion Anchorage, in Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, explore sea caves and rock gardens. Kayaking allows for visitors to the Sanctuary and National Park to get up-close and personal with all of the unique ecosystems and features that inspired this area to be protected.



1st Place: Alison Hibbert. A watercolor painting of a leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and some research documented in a journal.

## Wildlife Viewing Guidelines

Encountering wildlife can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! ONMS has created some simple guidelines to educate the public on “Responsible Wildlife Viewing” to prevent human/wildlife conflict while promoting positive and memorable experiences and these guidelines can be used almost everywhere. The ONMS wildlife viewing webpage also includes additional resources for wildlife viewing and frequently asked questions about wildlife viewing. Feel free to share the guidelines with your network to help spread the



word and when visiting the webpage be sure to “Take the Pledge for Wildlife”!



Several entities within San Luis Obispo County also offer wildlife viewing guidelines. Visit [Sea Otter Savvy](#) to learn viewing guidelines specific to sea otters. [Respect Wildlife](#) is a collaboration amongst 13 organizations to educate the public on safe wildlife viewing practices.

### Did You Know?

Black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) is a relatively large mollusk ranging from approximately Pt. Arena in northern California, USA, to Bahia Tortugas and Isla Guadalupe, Mexico. Black abalone occur in rocky intertidal and shallow subtidal habitats on exposed outer coasts, where they occur primarily in crevice microhabitats and feed on large drifting fragments of marine algae such as kelps, including the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.

Endangered black abalone were rescued from Big Sur in the winter (Feb-March 2021) after a lethal combination of the [Dolan Fire and an atmospheric river event](#) generated multiple debris flows burying several hundred meters of rocky intertidal habitat under terrestrial sediment.

UC Santa Cruz doctoral student Wendy Bragg was in the process of collecting data from multiple sites within the Dolan Fire scar when the January 2021, a deluge of 15 inches of rain fell on the Big Sur coast in less than 72 hours. As Wendy and a team of scientists went back to the sites in February 2021 to assess the

damage, they found massive numbers of dead abalone and a rocky intertidal habitat that had, in many cases, turned into sandy, gravelly beach, covered with several feet of new sediment washed down from the burned watershed above.



A partially buried black abalone in Big Sur.  
Photo: Dr. Steve Lonhart/NOAA

Wendy and her colleagues, including Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary staff, began to dig and unbury dozens of black abalone, many of which were still alive, and transported them to a facility in Cayucos with running sea water systems to recuperate. Working with multiple agencies that oversee the management of the endangered black abalone, the team was able to rescue almost 200 black abalone from several sites in Big Sur. Although some of the black abalone succumbed to injuries while in the holding facility, about 75% survived, and [during July 2021 nearly 150 black abalone were returned to sites in Big Sur](#) that had not experienced debris flows. Monitoring of the rescued black abalone continues through 2022 and tagged abalone continued to be found.



Scientists transplanting a rescued abalone.  
Photo: Dr. Steve Lonhart/NOAA



View of Morro Rock and Morro Bay Estuary.  
Photo: Nicole Capps/NOAA



Sea otter in Morro Bay Harbor.  
Photo: Robert Schwemmer



An underwater scene off Montana de Oro State Park.  
Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA

## The Designation Timeline

