



Northern Chumash Tribal Council

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Chumash Heritage Marine Sanctuary Moves Forward

Nomination for proposed Central Coast sanctuary accepted

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced today that the nomination for a new Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary has been accepted. The acceptance recognizes the site as deserving special status, and puts it officially under consideration for protection as part of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. The proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would be the first one to focus on indigenous culture and history as a primary core value along with protection of ocean habitat.

"Many coastal Chumash people are very interested in learning how the proposed sanctuary would affect traditional cultural resources, both natural and archaeological," said Roberta Cordero, a member of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation. "They hope for a vigorous dialogue throughout the process at all levels, including the possibility for consultation at the tribal level with NOAA."

The nomination was submitted by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council, which has been working on the initiative with Central Coast environmental groups and Sierra Club California for the last two years. The area proposed for the national marine sanctuary stretches from Santa Rosa Creek in Cambria to Gaviota Creek in Santa Barbara, protecting marine habitat along some 140 miles of coastline.

As part of an effort to have more public involvement in nominating and designating national marine sanctuaries, NOAA revamped its process to encourage community-driven nominations, as compared to its previous top-down approach.

"NOAA's grassroots sanctuary nomination process is about making it possible for people in coastal communities to take a stand for special places," said Kathryn Phillips, Director of Sierra Club California. "This nomination is about taking action to make sure the natural wonders of California's Central Coast will be here for future generations."

"There is tremendous potential for good here," said Fred Collins, Administrator of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council. "A Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary will preserve and recognize the importance of our tribal history, safeguard our shared coastal resources, and open new doors for research and economic growth. We hope to move forward to designation as soon as possible."

"It has been an amazing experience working with Fred and other Chumash leaders along with other environmental groups, local businesses, hundreds of local residents and Cal Poly students," said

Carol Georgi of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of Surfrider Foundation. “This is a great day for our ocean.”

In accepting the nomination, NOAA confirmed that the proposed national marine sanctuary has:

- natural resources or habitat with special ecological significance;
- maritime heritage resources with special historical, cultural and archaeological significance;
- important economic uses like tourism, fishing, diving, and other recreational activities that depend on conservation and management of the resources; and
- local marine resources that face potential threats and impacts, and existing management and regulations that could help with sanctuary conservation efforts.

NOAA also concluded that a marine sanctuary off the coast of San Luis Obispo and northern Santa Barbara Counties would present opportunities for research, education, and local partnerships.

A study commissioned by the Sierra Club of the potential economic impacts of a national marine sanctuary concluded that such a designation on the Central Coast could add “at minimum 23 million dollars per year to the local economy and create almost 600 new jobs.”*

“A national marine sanctuary would provide new opportunities for locals and visitors to explore, learn and recreate off our coast,” said San Luis Obispo County Supervisor Bruce Gibson. “Such a designation would be a win for our communities and our economy,”

* http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/santa-lucia-chapter/news/Econ_Report_for_Sierra_Club_9-25-14.pdf

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