



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Sean Larsen

slarsen@chumash.gov

SANTA YNEZ CHUMASH NAMED COLLABORATIVE MANAGER OF PROPOSED NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

SANTA YNEZ, CA — August 24, 2023 — The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians was named collaborative manager of the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS) today in a newly released draft management plan published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Under the plan, NOAA proposes the tribe work on a government-to-government basis with the U.S. and the State of California, in the first national marine sanctuary that was developed with meaningful tribal engagement from its inception.

“We appreciate the honoring of our Chumash maritime traditions and the ability of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians to participate in collaborative management of this proposed national marine sanctuary,” said Kenneth Kahn, Tribal Chairman for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. “We are proud to contribute our cultural and management practices towards protecting this shared resource. Designating this

sanctuary, with our government as a strong collaborative partner, is the right thing to do and demonstrates a strong respect for the indigenous people of our country.”

Under the proposed designation and draft management plan, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and the State of California will work with NOAA to collaboratively manage the sanctuary through their roles on the Intergovernmental Policy Council (IPC). The IPC will help set broad objectives, provide timely advice and input on important research, resource protection and educational programs, coordinate the work of staff, and oversee the work of other volunteer boards. The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians also intends to participate as an active member of both the Sanctuary Advisory Council, and the Indigenous Cultures Advisory Panel (ICAP), which advises the Sanctuary Advisory Council on cultural resource issues.

While the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians is currently the only federally recognized tribal government with a tie to the region, the tribe looks forward to engaging with other non-federally recognized Chumash groups to ensure that visitors to the Sanctuary understand the full indigenous history of our region.

“I want to offer my special thanks to our Members of Congress who supported Tribal co-management from day one, and the leadership at NOAA, which really took the time to engage in consultation,” added Chairman Kahn. “I think we both learned something from each other. That’s how true government-to-government dialogue is supposed to work.”

Additional Background

The Santa Ynez Reservation is located in Santa Barbara County and was established and officially recognized by the federal government on December 27, 1901. Today, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians remains the only federally recognized Chumash tribe in the nation. The tribe is a self-governing tribal sovereign nation and follows the laws set forth in its tribal constitution.

The proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is a 7,000-square-mile area off the central California coast that would protect the region's important marine ecosystem, maritime heritage resources and cultural values of Indigenous communities, while allowing NOAA to manage compatible uses within its boundaries. CHNMS has been on NOAA's inventory of nominations since October 2015, which is the first step to become eligible for a national marine sanctuary designation. In order for the area to obtain the sanctuary designation, the site must go through the complete designation process, which includes drafting of a management plan and several opportunities for public comment and review. The draft plan is subject to public comment until October 25, and finalization is subject to designation of the proposed CHNMS as a National Marine Sanctuary by NOAA and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In a letter sent May 9, 2023, Congressman Salud Carbajal, Senators Padilla and Feinstein, and 12 other Members of Congress urged the U.S. Department of Commerce to prioritize work on CHNMS and for the Chumash Tribe to co-manage the sanctuary upon designation. A link to the letter may be found [here](#).

###