



Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Newsletter June 2023



Surfer entering the water at Jalama Beach. Photo: Robert Schwemmer

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 area proposed for the new sanctuary covers 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.

Coming Soon – Draft Designation Documents, Workshops, Hearings!

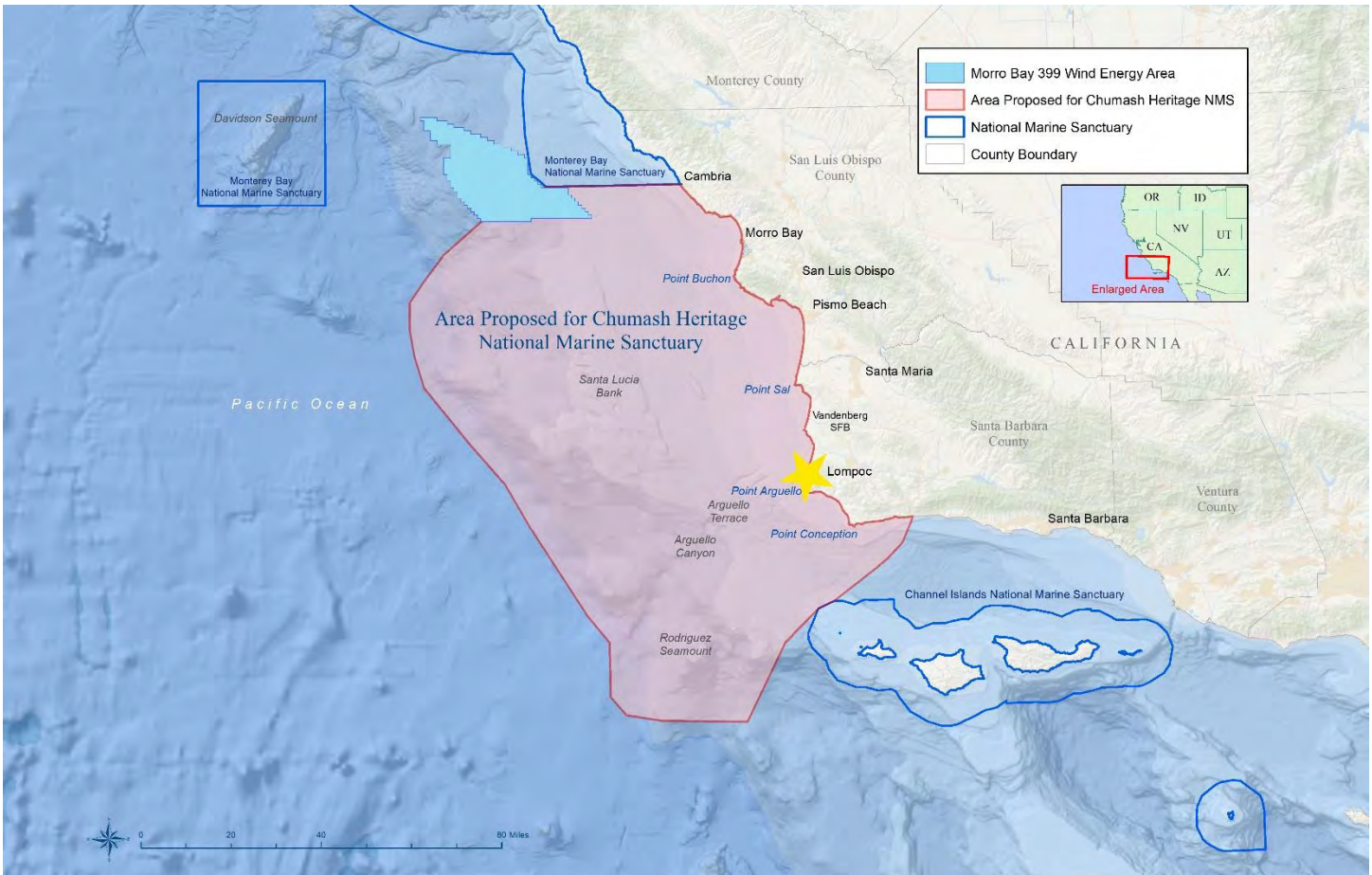
Since early in 2022, NOAA staff have been busy drafting the designation documents for the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary (CHNMS) based on comments received during scoping, workshops on various topics, and years of sanctuary staff experience. These documents will include: a) the draft management plan, describing the non-regulatory programmatic strategies and actions the new sanctuary will undertake for an initial five-to-10-year period; b) a draft proposed rule (and terms of designation) that describe the proposed regulations; and c) a draft environmental impacts statement (draft EIS) required by the National Environmental Policy Act, that primarily analyzes the impact of designating the new sanctuary. The draft management plan will be the roadmap for implementation of programs like education and outreach, research and monitoring, resource protection, and maritime heritage. It will also include a draft proposed framework for collaborative management to ensure tribal participation in the sanctuary and inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge, culture, and values. The draft EIS will include various alternatives, including boundary alternatives for consideration. The proposed rule will include the proposed regulations, as well as permit processes to allow activities otherwise prohibited. As of this newsletter publication, the draft designation documents are undergoing final review and clearance. We hope to publish early this summer, so please stay tuned to the [website](#), where we will publish the documents and give notice for dates and locations of public informational workshops and comment hearings. The website will also explain how to submit written comments. NOAA still is hopeful its initial goal to designate the new sanctuary in the first half of 2024 can still be met.

Interesting News from central California

Honda Point Naval Disaster

The 100th year anniversary of the Honda Point Disaster that occurred at Point Pedernales near Honda Creek, now part of the Vandenberg Space Force Base, will be commemorated in 2023. On September 8, 1923, Destroyer Squadrons Eleven and Twelve, consisting of 14 Clemson Class destroyers, departed San Francisco enroute to their homeport in San Diego. Under the command of Captain Edward H. Watson, the destroyers were to carry out high-speed endurance trials and maintain radio silence, as ordered by the Fleet Command. USS *Delphy* served as Flagship with

Watson aboard, and led the squadron in single-file formation at a speed of 20 knots. At 2100 hours, Captain Watson ordered a course change of 55°, or 095-turn. Ideally, the turn would have taken the destroyers down into the Santa Barbara Channel. What he didn't know was that the destroyers were off course, too far north, and too close to land when the order was given to turn east. As the four-stack destroyers navigated the turn in *Delphy's* wake, they plunged into a heavy layer of fog.



Map of the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary and the general location of the Honda Point Naval Disaster.

Within 10 minutes, nine battle-ready destroyers valued at a total of 13 million dollars lay impaled and stranded along the treacherous reefs nicknamed Devil's Jaw near Honda Creek, and Point Pedernales. Seven destroyers would become a total loss, and this unfortunate accident resulted in the loss of life for 23 Navy sailors. The Honda Point Disaster was the largest peacetime loss of ships in U.S. naval history. A combination of factors may have contributed to this navigational error. The squadron captains knew the steamship *Cuba* had gone ashore on San Miguel Island that very morning, and they feared repeating its fate. Strange underwater currents (caused by an earthquake seven days earlier in Japan), or perhaps excessive speed during reduced visibility may have partially altered the course of the destroyers. Concerns over the accuracy of the new Radio Direction Finder system also caused doubts regarding course positions, so instead the navigators relied on dead reckoning to determine their position by speed and time elapsed without a fix. This proved to be a fatal mistake. The survivors of the Destroyer Squadrons showed great courage and discipline in the face of tragedy, saving the majority of sailors on one destroyer and getting sailors from two destroyers safely to shore. The Secretary of the Navy issued "Letters of Commendation" recognizing their heroism. Historical records show there were also unsung heroes from the local communities who traveled to the disaster site to provide assistance and supplies.



Seven battle-ready destroyers lay impaled and stranded along the treacherous reefs of the Devil's Jaw near Honda Creek, USS *Delphy*, USS *Chauncey*, USS *Young*, USS *Woodbury*, USS *Fuller*, USS *S.P. Lee*, and USS *Nicholas*. Photo: Maritime Library, Robert Schwemmer/NOAA

Update: Separating Ships and Whales to Reduce Ship Strike Risk

The August 2022 newsletter provided information on the International Maritime Organization's approval to amend the Santa Barbara Channel Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS), or shipping lanes, and the Area to Be Avoided (ATBA). The 13 nautical mile extension of the TSS and the expansion of the ATBA, both of which are within the area proposed for Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, will assist in separating ships from sensitive ecological resources and will reduce the risk of groundings and collisions. Although approved in 2022, the extended TSS and expanded ATBA in the Santa Barbara Channel region went into effect on June 1, 2023. A Local Notice to Mariners was published by the United States Coast Guard District 11 on May 23, 2023, which includes a graphic showing the latitude and longitude of the new shipping lanes and ATBA.

New Bren School Master's Group Project: Assessing and Managing Marine Debris in the Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

A team of graduate students at the U.C. Santa Barbara Bren School of Environmental Science & Management will be working over the next year to analyze the accumulations, spatial patterns, and sources of marine debris

in watersheds, on beaches, and in the marine environment within and around the proposed CHNMS. This research will allow managers to track marine debris levels in CHNMS pre- and post-designation, and compare these levels to other west coast sanctuaries, including Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, which border the proposed CHNMS.

Specific objectives of the project include: 1) conduct a baseline assessment of marine debris in the proposed sanctuary using citizen science data from beach cleanup mobile apps and databases, 2) create a reproducible hotspot analysis of marine debris accumulations in this area using geographic information systems (GIS) to identify beaches that function as collection areas for marine debris. Also, identify the geographical factors that influence this spatial distribution of marine debris, including beach orientation to prevailing wind conditions, ocean currents, and proximity of beaches to marine debris sources such as watersheds, public access areas, fishing hotspots, and urban centers, and 3) compare management strategies across west coast national marine sanctuaries and offer recommendations for marine debris mitigation and management that incorporate Indigenous, user groups, and local community perspectives.

You can learn more about the Waste Free Waves Bren Group Project Team [here](#).



Cal Poly Pier, Avila, CA
Photo: Bill Douros/NOAA

The Designation Timeline

