



Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary



Lighthouse at Point Conception. Point Conception is a sacred place for Chumash Peoples and an important feature in California's long maritime history. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



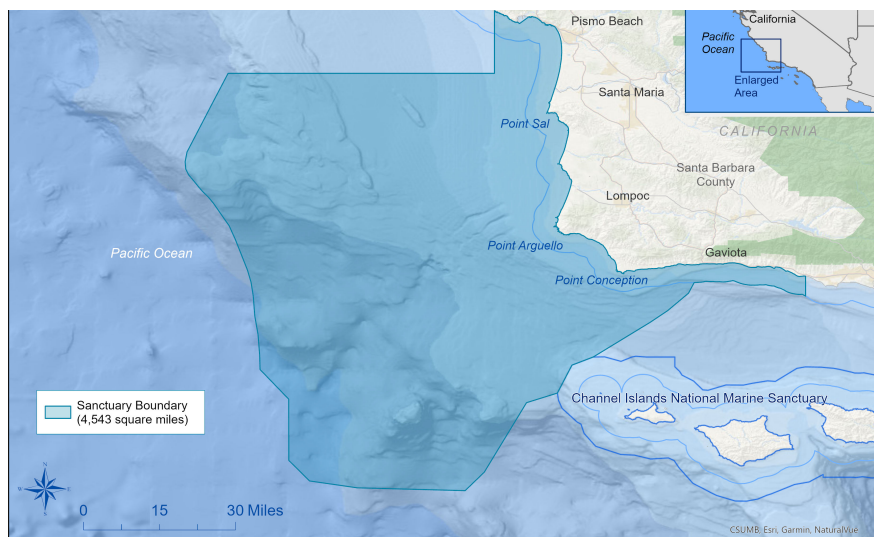
Humpback whales swim through the sanctuary. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



Gosford shipwreck rests at the Cojo Anchorage, near Point Conception, California. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is America's 17th national marine sanctuary and the 6th on the U.S. West Coast. The sanctuary encompasses 4,543 square miles of central California's coastal and ocean waters. Reaching up to 60 miles offshore, the sanctuary spans 116 miles along the coast from San Luis Obispo County to the Gaviota Coast in Santa Barbara County. Within the sanctuary, nationally significant natural, biological, cultural, and historical resources will receive protection and comprehensive management attention, all based on an understanding of marine ecosystems, the engagement of local communities, and with respectful involvement of Tribes and Indigenous communities. Sanctuary programs will provide new opportunities for research, education, recreation, and sustainable tourism in local coastal communities.

The region has remained home to coastal, ocean-going Indigenous Peoples for time immemorial, and as such its lands and waters hold significant Indigenous cultural, spiritual, and historical significance. Special geologic features, such as Rodriguez Seamount, shape the area's unique ecology. The sanctuary's internationally significant meeting point of warm and cold ocean environments combined with upwelling from the California Current supports dense aggregations of marine life, including many threatened or endangered species, such as blue whales, snowy plovers, black abalone, and leatherback sea turtles. Over 200 shipwrecks are documented in the region, including the *Yankee Blade* and USCG Cutter *McCulloch*, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 4,543 square miles of central California's coastal and ocean waters. Photo: NOAA

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Location

California, Central Coast

Protected Area

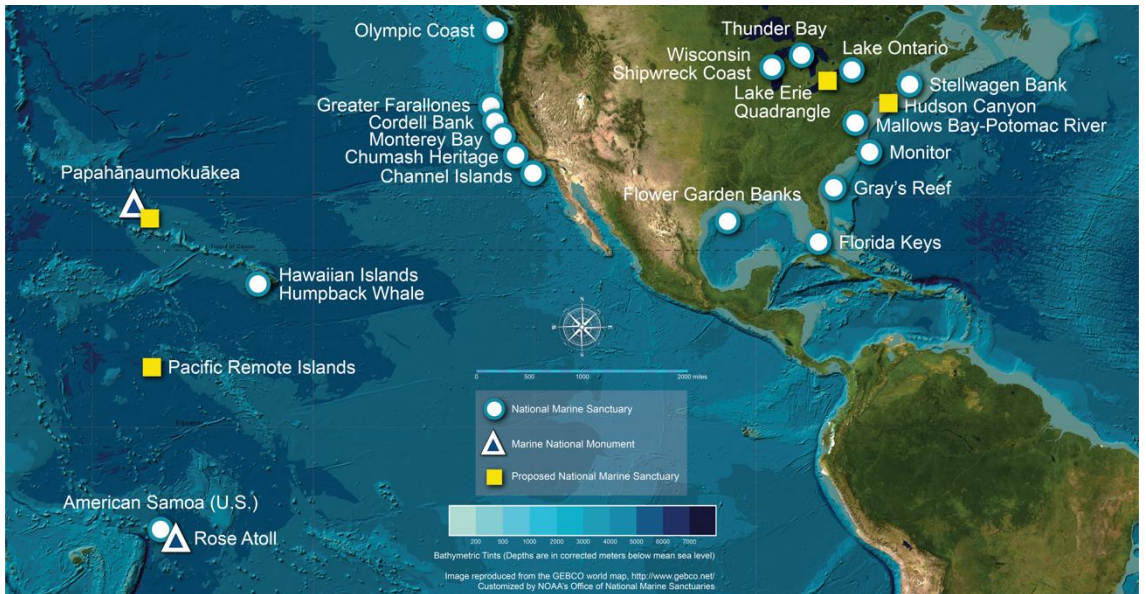
4,543 square miles

Designation

Fall 2024

By the Numbers

400+ fish species
4 sea turtle species
6 pinniped species
33 cetacean species
200+ reported ship and air wrecks

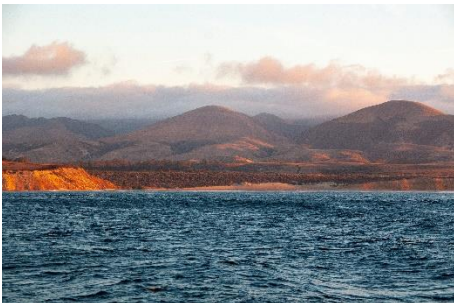


Indigenous Collaborative Co-Stewardship

The sanctuary recognizes and celebrates Indigenous Peoples' modern day and historical cultural connections to the region. Management of the sanctuary will include the respectful invitation and active involvement of Tribes and Indigenous communities to participate in collaborative co-stewardship; to be inclusive of Indigenous values, knowledge, and traditions; and to provide opportunities to engage in and help guide cultural programming. NOAA envisions an Indigenous Collaborative Co-Stewardship Framework that includes creation of an Intergovernmental Policy Council, establishment of a new Sanctuary Advisory Council with Indigenous Knowledge representation, and the anticipated formation of an Indigenous Cultures Advisory Panel. All Sanctuary Advisory Council meetings will be open to the public and NOAA welcomes and encourages active public participation and equal access. With guidance from Indigenous partners, the sanctuary will aid in raising public awareness of Indigenous heritage, incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into resource management, and ensure future generations can learn about and respect this valuable wisdom.

Contact

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Sun sets on the hills over Cojo Beach. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



Red anemone is attached to rocks. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA



Seabird Rock is near Pismo Beach. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA