

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 22, 2024

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

We write in strong support of the proposed designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. Finalizing the designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would fulfill many of our mutual ecological and economic priorities to continue to protect our treasured natural resources for generations to come, while advancing renewable energy and maintaining sustainable access for commercial and recreational fishing. As you move towards final designation in 2024, we encourage you to select the initial Boundary Alternative with the Gaviota Coast Extension and to clarify that transmission cables needed for future offshore wind development may be permitted within the sanctuary and to continue to be inclusive in engaging all stakeholders. We specifically urge you to ensure that the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary serves as a model of co-stewardship with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and advisory panel engagement with others that identify with indigenous culture.


Our oceans and coasts face unprecedented challenges due to the current climate crisis. From warming ocean waters to threats of new offshore oil drilling, it is clear we need to act now to protect these valuable resources that support our quality of life and cultural values and also help grow our economy. The Biden Administration has been clear in setting goals to meet these continued and emerging challenges. In the *Readout of White House America the Beautiful Interagency Working Group*, members of the federal interagency working group expressed the goals for President Biden's initiative to conserve and restore at least 30 percent of our nation's lands and waters by 2030. NOAA's Assistant Administrator Nicole LeBeouf stated, "NOAA's continuing efforts [also] include expanding the National Marine Sanctuary System, with a focus on designating new sanctuaries that align with the Administration's goals to address nature loss, climate change, and equity, including through enhanced engagement with underserved and tribal communities." The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary meets all of the Administration's goals.

Growing our blue economy and being good stewards of our natural resources are not mutually exclusive. We believe that carefully planned and sited offshore wind development can be compatible with environmental protection. In the case of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, we recommend selection of the Initial Boundary Alternative with the understanding that future offshore wind developments will likely require allowing transmission lines through Sanctuary waters and that care should be taken to avoid, reduce, or mitigate environmental impacts to ocean resources associated with this development.

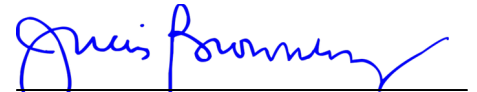
The Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is the first sanctuary to be nominated by an indigenous organization. Indigenous communities have always been a part of this ecosystem, and the Chumash people should be key partners in stewarding the new sanctuary into the future. Advancing this designation would also protect submerged historical and cultural resources, including 40 known historic shipwrecks in the region. The area contains the Navy's worst peacetime loss shipwrecks, the gold-laden steamship S.S. Yankee Blade and the oil tanker S.S. Montebello. The creation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary would ensure we preserve these distinctive natural artifacts that are of special historic, cultural, and archaeological significance.

Thank you for your leadership in helping us add the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary to our nation's existing sanctuary system. We hope that you give our comments serious consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us or have your staff reach out to ours should you have any questions. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this and many other issues that continue to tackle the climate crisis, build renewable energy and grow our economy.

Sincerely,



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress