

Governing California's Marine Sanctuary: No Meaningful Role for Chumash Indians¹

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"Not much progress in opening up access to the Chumash Indians seems to have been made within the California Marine Sanctuary in the last year. A large coalition of academic, government, business and public interest groups still has not made room for formal participation of the local native peoples in the governance of the Chumash islands.

This coalition has members from a wide spectrum of organizations, but ironically does not even include a token representative from the Santa Ynez Reservation, much less representatives from the other Chumash groups who are eager to participate in governance of their ancestral islands.

It took three pages just to print out the list of participants, which include not only academics and government officials but groups such as the Ventura Yacht Club, Hornet Sport Fishing, Island Packers, Jordano's. Non-voting members include the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary, and a similar organization for the Farallones islands of northern California. Yet no representative for the Ventura, Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez, and other Chumash groups which have fundamental human rights claims to the islands and their governance...

A New Plan Without Chumash participation

The Sanctuary Advisory Council states that it was organized "in large part due to the Sanctuary's recognition of a vital need to work closely with the community to successfully build a new management plan. Now moving into their second year of working together, the Advisory Council has decided that a top priority will be to focus their efforts on advising and assisting the Sanctuary with the management plan revision." Apparently the local Indians are not considered part of the 'community' impacted, even though the islands were taken from their ancestors and cultural

1 This web commentary first appeared under the title "The Chumash Still Excluded From Formal participation: No Meaningful role for Local Indians in Governing California's marine Sanctuary". This Expage.com site (/page/noisland331) is no longer functional.

preservation is an acknowledged goal of the Advisory Council. How can it make serious progress in cultural preservation of the rich Chumash sites on the islands, by continuing to ignore their vital role in this process?

Whose role is it to take the lead in advocating immediate changes in the policies and procedures of the Marine Sanctuary? Though the public expects the college and university community to assume this role, it apparently has too many conflicting interests with the various Chumash groups to take the lead. Perhaps the Environmental Defense Center will step up now, or the Santa Cruz Island Foundation. Or if none of these groups will act quickly perhaps the US Navy at Point Mugu which controls the important Lulapin (Ventureno) Chumash seaports of *Muwu* and *Simomo*.

(John Anderson, June 9, 2000)

This web page represents the views of the author and does not necessarily represent the opinions of the Chumash Indians, either individually or in a group.

What Role Should The Chumash Play In Planning for The Gaviota Coast National Seashore?

2001

The Barbareno Chumash Council Paul Pommier, a member of the Barbareno Council, wrote to me confirming his advocacy of a homeland for the Santa Barbara Chumash on California's Gaviota Coast. The Barbareno Council will be meeting soon, and the seashore planning process will be on the agenda. Discussion will include the need for a general meeting of non-reservation Chumash to discuss this matter collectively.

[Email to J/ Anderson, May 28, 2001]

"This is a very important issue because these federal hearings will affect the remaining Chumash sites on the Gaviota Coast, where we have man burial sites. Developers must know that we oppose disturbing our ancestors, who lay to rest on this coast" [Email to J. Anderson, May 25, 2001]

The Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation The Coastal Band just contacted me to confirm that they want to participate in future federal hearings on the Gaviota Coast.

[Email to J. Anderson, June 7, 2001]

The San Luis Obispo Chumash Council Mark Vigil, spokesperson for the SLO Council [of the northwestern Chumash] contacted me today, to confirm its support for a coastal reservation for the Santa Barbara Chumash families. Note: Chumash families living in the San Luis Obispo County are also seeking a federally protected homeland of their own.

[Email to J. Anderson, May 28, 2001]

Sierra Club: San Luis Obispo County Tarren Collins, Chair of the SLO County Sierra Club chapter, wrote to confirm that preservation of the Gaviota Coast was a priority for her organization. She is fully sympathetic to the need to join together with the Santa Barbara Chumash families to discuss their role in any national seashore planning, including the issue of a homeland for these native peoples. "My concern is that the Chumash issues need to be in the forefront soon..."

[Email to J. Anderson, May 23, 2001]

Gaviota Coast Survey Bob Hazard of the board of directors the Conservancy wrote: "Protecting a home for original Americans within a National Seashore should be a consideration."

[Comment entered into the Gaviota Coast Discussion Board, May 27, 2001]

More Commentary

Paul Pommier "This area of the coast under study contains many Chumash heritage sites of great importance to the Barbareno Chumash Council, and to the other Santa Barbara Chumash who are not part of our council. This study area is our home where our ancestors were born [Paul is a descendant of a Dos Pueblos Chumash family].

If we could work with the non-Indians in a joint planning process, I believe we could come to an agreement that could protect the environment of the coastline while providing us with our first permanent land base. The Santa Barbara Chumash could then seek grants to put our people to work in various programs including educational outreach projects, and we would then have a means of providing low income housing for our people to live who cannot afford the high rent and mortgages of the nearby Santa Barbara, Golet, Montecito, etc.

[Email to John Anderson, May 28, 2001]

Mike Khus Mike, who was a past historian for the Coastal Band, wrote to say that he agreed with the goal of integrating a homeland for the Santa Barbara Chumash families into any future plans for the Gaviota Coast. He affirmed: "Tarren Collin's comments are quite valid..."

[Email to John Anderson, May 26, 2001]