



The Gaviota Coast National Seashore

(Commentary by Dr John Anderson)

What Role Should the Chumash Indians of California Play in Planning for the Proposed Seashore?

Have the Feds Fail to Adequately Assess the Chumash Factor?

John M. Anderson

2001

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A primary topic of consideration in this study is a proposed national seashore. I remain an advocate of this seashore proposal as long as it includes setting aside a large part of this land for a long-overdue home for the Santa Barbara Indians.

"People closely following these hearings recently contacted me, asking if I could provide them with current information about the role of the Santa Barbara Chumash in this study.

Do they want a reservation on this coast, and are the local Chumash willing to work closely with environmental groups to establish policies that would guarantee environmental protection of resources and wildlife for any land agreement they might sign? I could not immediately answer these questions. And I am concerned that these hearings have progressed to date without adequately exploring the coastal reservation option.

I maintain a large number of web pages on the Chumash, including many that describe sacred sites in this study area, propose returning island lands to the Chumash, as well as advocate setting aside lands for a religious sanctuary for the Chumash at Point Conception. But as important as these issues are, they pale in comparison to the imperative of acting now to set aside coastal lands for a federal reservation for the Santa Barbara Chumash.

The study area for the National Parks Service contains the last best hope for the native peoples of the Santa Barbara coast to obtain a homeland. Yet this option is not even on the agenda, as far as I can determine, though protection of the sacred areas near Point Conception does appear to be a serious agenda item.

It remains my impression that little progress has been made over the last few years to expand the federal government's consulting base, to fully incorporate non-reservation Chumash. [See [Jonjonata](#) for related discussion].

It is encouraging to see that the Coastal Band is actively pursuing federal recognition at this time. But the political reality is that the federal government continues to deny them legal recognition, as it denies legal recognition to various other local Chumash groups such as the Barbareno Council which has not yet initiated federal recognition procedures. The process of legal recognition is time consuming, expensive, and frustrating. It takes years to complete [decades would be more accurate]. In the meantime, the feasibility study moves forward for the Gaviota Coast. Will the federal government lock up its options without seriously addressing the reservation issue, nor inviting any of the Santa Barbara Indian factions as serious players at to the bargaining table?"

[John Anderson, May 18, 2001]

For a map of the Gaviota Coast Study area see: [Map](#)

Who Sits At the Planning Table?

"One issue underlying the public debate over the future of the Gaviota Coast is the difficult question of *who* is morally responsible for seeing that the various factions of the Santa Barbara Chumash get a fair deal in these hearings?

Should the Santa Barbara City Council take initiative, for example, if the federal and state governments fail to include all of the local Chumash groups as major participants in this dialogue? Surely the city of Santa Barbara has a special moral responsibility, since it played a key role in selling off the *Kashwa* reservation lands, thereby throwing the local Chumash literally out of their homes at *Cieneguitas* [Hope Ranch].

And if the city council failed to act, should the County Commissioners intervene? And if they failed to act, should the local churches not intervene? Surely, the Catholic church has a unique role in this potentially disastrous federal hearing process which could lock up ownership of the Gaviota Coast, denying a coastal land base for the local Indians. And should environmental groups join together and insist with one voice that higher priority be given the Indian homeland option, if the churches remained silent about *the native issue*?

The labyrinthine relationship between the Chumash and the above groups, and local, state, and federal agencies has developed over generations. The Chumash themselves do not even agree on all issues. Reservation and non-reservation Chumash are at odds on many issues. Unfortunately many people in Santa Barbara county have put aside Chumash issues as beyond understanding, involving irreconcilable dilemmas and constant guilt feelings. But continued avoidance only masks an unjust situation. The need is stronger than ever for acting to rectify the absence of federally protected land for these native families.

One Chumash group, the Coastal Band, actually owns a small piece of land in the study area and therefore should be stake holders in any dialogue about their ancestral lands. But what about the other Santa Barbara families, who have chosen to affiliate with a different Chumash council or to stay independent of any organization: are they to be ignored because they lack a land base? And what about the San Luis Obispo and Tejon Chumash councils, whose members also lack federal recognition and a land base.? What role should they play, especially in the discussions over protections for Point Conception as a sacred site?

There is still time to open up the federal hearing process to these and other Chumash issues. Local, state, and federal governments need to reconsider their policies toward the non-reservation Chumash. It will not be enough to turn to the Santa Ynez Chumash Reservation for consultation. Clearly the Santa Barbara coast is a distinct cultural area from the Santa Ynez valley where the only federally recognized land base is located. A separate reservation

is needed for these unique people of the Santa Barbara coast, who do not want to be part of the existing reservation in the Santa Ynez valley.

An effective alliance between environmental groups and the non reservation Chumash is still a possibility. If this cooperation grows into an articulate voice advocating a meaningful role for native Americans in managing natural resources on the Gaviota coast, then I think the public will gain a much better education on Chumash related issues.

The next step will be to bring in leaders of regional churches, whose moral weight could prove pivotal in the months to come."

[John Anderson, May 26, 2001).

For responses to this commentary, see [UPDATE](#)

You can find the official National Park Service web page on the planning process at [National Seashore](#) You can learn more about the Gaviota Coast Conservancy a [Conservancy](#)

This web page represents the views of the author, and does not necessarily represent the views of the Chumash Indians, either individually or in a group. Specifically, my comments make no claim to represent the views of the Santa Ynez Reservation Chumash whose participation in the National Seashore debate or advocacy for a separate reservation for the Santa Barbara Chumash is unclear to me at this time. (May 18, 2001)

[Earth Island Journal: Article on the Vandenberg Spaceport Within the Study Area](#)

Chumash Homeland on Coast

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Coastal Band Responds To National Seashore Study

To: Ray Murray, Planning and Partnerships Team Leader,

Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study

1 See my webpage on [Jonjonata](#) for related discussion.

January 28, 2001.

"Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation (CBCN), I am requesting that the tribe be included as a key stakeholder in planning for the proposed national seashore park along the coastal area from Goleta to the northern boundary of Vandenberg AFB.

The CBCN and its members have worked to preserve the cultural and natural resources of this region for many years, sometimes with the cooperation of other interested groups and state and local governments. There are many significant prehistorical archaeological sites as well as cultural-use sites in this area. The tribe also owns a 60-acre parcel of land near Gaviota, which is used for cultural, social and ceremonial purposes. One of the most well known sacred sites of the Chumash Nation is Humqaq or Point Conception. Therefore, we remain keenly interested in any significant changes or plans for this region. (both the CBCN and the Barbareno bands include members with Purisimto Chumash ancestry and should be consulted in the future when Vandenberg AFB sites are impacted; unfortunately, such consultation has been rare in the past).

The CBCN wants Humqaq (Pt. Conception) to be made into a cultural/religious sanctuary with absolute protection for the benefit of all the Chumash Nation. We also want some portion of the region to be returned to the Chumash people, namely members of the CBCN and Barbareno bands to compensate the original owners of these lands for use by the United States government and the American people. All options in the feasibility study should include these elements.

Please keep us advised of the progress of your feasibility study for the national seashore park, future public hearings and all other activities concerning the status of this proposal. Thank you." ²

Michael A. Khus-Zarate ³

Barbareno Council Asks the National Park Service To Support A Chumash Homeland On the Santa Barbara Coast⁴

In the last years of the twentieth century, the federal government funded a feasibility

² Khus' letter was sent to Ray Murray's office at: PGSO-Planning and Partnerships Team, 1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700 Oakland, CA .

³ Mike Khus is a representative for the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation

⁴ Year is 2001.

study to determine the best use of the last surviving open space on the Southern California coast. This study area is located west of the town of Santa Barbara.

Prior to the invasion of California by the Spanish military in the late eighteenth century, this coastline belonged to the Tsmuwich and Purisimento divisions of the Chumash Indians. In the 1850's, American troops seized the Chumash lands, along with the territory of all other native peoples of California.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty first century, the American government is studying the benefits of classifying this huge coastal area as a federal seashore. Unfortunately, this federal reclassification has the potential of eliminating local Chumash land claims, unless the federal government changes its long standing policy of denying Chumash claimants legal status so they can defend their land claims in federal courts.

On December 28, 2001, Paul Pommier sent the following letter to the National Parks Service. It proposed legal designation for 20,000 acres of the contested coastline for a Chumash homeland.

[John Anderson, January 10, 2002]

"The Barbareno Chumash Council is an organization representing many native California families whose ancestors lived for thousands of years in an area of the California coast in and near the town of Santa Barbara. This coastline is often referred to as the Santa Barbara Channel.

The National Park Service is completing a three-year study to determine the feasibility of adding part of this coastline to the National Park system as a National Seashore. I am writing this letter to make certain that the religious views and land-use goals of the Barbareno Chumash Council are appropriately integrated into your planning process.

The term used by the National Park Service for the area currently under study is Goleta. It includes approximately 76 miles of California coastline and 200,000 acres of land which lie within the aboriginal territory of the Barbareno and Purisimento Indians. One of the expressed goals of the feasibility study is to identify and encourage the participation of "key stakeholders" in the planning process. As we have discussed in previous conversation, the Barbareno Chumash are key stakeholders. Yet it was not until very late in the planning process that our Council became aware of your activities.

We do not attempt to speak about the spirituality and land-use goals of Barbareno Chumash families that belong to the Coastal Band or other organizations with Barbareno Chumash members. But we can speak for our participating families, who seek a permanent land base on the coastline under study.

We have consulted with the Coastal Band and have attended meetings of the Gaviota Coastal Conservancy in an effort to broaden our contacts with other key stakeholders and to educate our membership about the many issues under discussion. We have talked to regional church leaders, large landowners, environmental groups, developers, and staff members of the National Park Service. After assessing these and other sources of information, the Barbareno Chumash Council has decided to endorse the following basic goals:

1. To put aside 10% of the land under study for a "homeland" for the descendants of the Barbareno Chumash Indians. This 20,000 acres should be located on the coast, from Dos Pueblos Canyon west to Refugio Canyon. The Barbareno Council has drawn up preliminary plans for a Tribal Administrative center, Elders' Health Care Facility, Drug and Alcohol Prevention Center, housing for Barbareno families, a Tribal Library, and a Demonstration Village for tourists.
2. To protect the archaeological, historical, and economic use sites of the Barbareno and Purismento Chumash, which lie within the 200,000-acre feasibility study area.
3. To protect the religious sites of the Barbareno and Purismento Chumash that lie within the study area. To facilitate this goal, a tribal religious sanctuary should be set aside at Point Conception, which is one of the most important spiritual sites in the aboriginal Chumash territory.
4. To facilitate federal recognition for the non-reservation descendants of the Barbareno Chumash, as well as other divisions of the non-reservation Chumash. Lack of federal recognition has hindered generations of Barbareno Chumash, who are a distinct division of the Chumash people. They consider themselves separate from the Samala Chumash, who have federal recognition and the only existing reservation.

I hope this short list of objectives will help your staff focus on these issues of pressing importance to the Barbareno Chumash Council. It is our expectation that the Barbareno Chumash will be respected as "key stakeholders" in your draft feasibility study. We expect that the goals addressed will appear in each of your "management alternatives" which will appear in the publication scheduled to be available soon for public review.

The descendants of the Barbareno Chumash have been systematically excluded from public policy for generations, as a result of the refusal of the federal government to legally recognize our existence as a people and thereby denying us a land base where we could preserve our culture. For thousands of years, our ancestors were a coastal people. The Gaviota Coast, with its extensive open lands, is our best hope for gaining title to an

unspoiled section of our ancestral coastal land. Please help us at this critical time of our history.

We welcome an ongoing dialogue in the months ahead, and will do everything in our power to cooperate with local, state, and federal agencies responsible for the protection and administration of public facilities on the Gaviota Coast.”

[Paul Pommier] ⁵

Pommier Letter

Paul Pommier, a member of the Barbareno Council, wrote me confirming this 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 John 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 many burial sites and historical villages. The various non-reservation councils need to join together to try to stop the desecration of our ancestral sites. Developers must know that we oppose disturbing our ancestors, who lay to rest on this coast." (Email to John 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 [the northwestern-most Chumash] contacted me today, to confirm its support for a coastal reservation for the Santa Barbara Chumash families.⁶ (Email to John Anderson, May 28, 2001)

Sierra Club: The San Luis Obispo County

⁵ Pommier served as an Elder, Representing the Barbareno Chumash Council. This letter was sent December 28, 2001, to Director Ray Murray, Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study. National Park Service headquarters in San Francisco.

⁶ The Chumash families living in San Luis Obispo County are also seeking a federally protected homeland of their own.

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..."⁷

(Email to John Anderson, May 23, 2001)

Gaviota Coast Conservancy

Bob Hazard of the board of directors of the Conservancy wrote: "Protecting a home for original Americans within a National Seashore should be a consideration".⁸ [Comment entered into the Gaviota Coast Discussion Board, May 27, 2001]

More Commentary

Paul Pommier

"This area of the coast under study is 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."⁹

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, Gaviota, Montecito, etc.

The Santa Barbara Chumash are prepared to work hard to move from the poverty of the past. Some of us have hopes of building a senior care home for our people, which is badly needed. I am willing to do all I can to work with others so that we may improve our way of living. "

(Email to John Anderson: May 28, 2001).

⁷ For related information on Tarren Collins, see: [Chumash Law](#)

⁸ You can read associated discussions at Coast Discussion Readers can read about the environmental advocacy efforts of the Conservancy at Conservancy

⁹ Paul is a descendant of a Dos Pueblos Chumash family whose members held civic office in the era of the Spanish invasion.

See [HOMELAND PRESERVATION](#) for the official statement of the Barbareno council on a Gaviota Coast homeland.

Mike Khus

Mike 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. "Tarren Collins' comments are quite valid..." (Email to John Anderson, May 26, 2001)

[Newspaper Article On Competing Factions In Gaviota Coast Study](#)

Reparations for the Chumash and Other Native Californians?

Reparation means 'a repairing or restoration'. Its Latin root means 'to repair'. It has the connotation of making amends (root means 'to mend') as in the payment of compensation for injury done. *Restitution* implies the returning of something that has been wrongfully taken away

The Gaviota Coast Debate

A fascinating source of viewpoints about the Gaviota Coast federal hearings can be found at [Bulletin](#).

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Email: jandersonlibrary@gmail.com

