

# NOAA CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

## **Advisory Council Meeting**

Friday, March 21, 2025

9:00 a.m.-12:45 p.m. PT

Hybrid Session: Ventura College and Google Meet

## **Draft Key Outcomes**

*This hybrid public Advisory Council meeting was not video or audio recorded.*

*Please contact Sandra Traverso (sandra.traverso@noaa.gov) to request a copy of any presentation slides.*

### **Welcome, Technical Check-in, Administrative Business, and Remembrance of Roberta Cordero**

- Council Chair Michael Cohen (Tourism) called the Advisory Council meeting to order and provided opening remarks.
- Bella Rose (Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) staff) oriented attendees to the online meeting technology and practices for effective participation.
- Rose confirmed in-person and online attendance, counting the presence of 25 voting seat council members representing 17 out of 21 voting seats (Appendix A). In addition to Council members, 13 members of the public and sanctuary staff were in attendance both in-person and online.
- Mike Murray (CINMS staff) shared some kind words about Roberta Cordero, a former council member and beloved Chumash elder who passed away recently.
- Phyllis Grifman (Research) shared how important Roberta was as a friend and Grifman's involvement in the council.
- Eva Pagaling (Chumash Heritage) shared how Roberta was a trailblazer in the Chumash community and encouraged her to participate in the Tomol crossing as a paddler.

### **January 24, 2025 Advisory Council Meeting Draft Key Outcomes**

- The council approved draft key outcomes for the January 24, 2025 Advisory Council meeting. There were no abstentions from the motion.
- A copy of the key outcomes can be requested from the staff member listed on the [Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting Notes web page](#).

### **Council Member Announcements**

Council members provided a variety of announcements:

- David Lopez (Recreational Fishing) shared a flyer for a March 23rd beach cleanup at Santa Barbara Landing, to include a free BBQ, raffles, and giveaways. They are planning

on routinely repeating these events and inviting others to join. Lopez also expressed concern about *Sargassum*, an invasive algal species.

- Jaime Diamond (Business) shared that business is starting to ramp up after a long cold winter. Diamond highlighted their floating classroom program that has been running since the late 90s, giving students access to high quality marine programs and exposing them to all things marine science. Diamond highlighted that the *Condor Express* and other harbor businesses are getting going with lots of community events.
- Pike Spector (Ocean Protection Council (OPC)) highlighted recent investments OPC has made to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Spector showcased at several public engagement sessions for the decadal review for MPAs and a public listening session for artificial reefs. Spector expressed OPC is on track for planning in regards to kelp forest concerns.
- Kevin Brannon (Recreational Fishing) highlighted a Pacific Coast Sportfishing event, and expressed the momentum building behind this event. Brannon shared an upcoming Community fishing for kids event at the Port Hueneme pier, the event is for all because “there’s a kid in all of us”.
- Molly Troup (Non-Consumptive Recreation) shared two upcoming island cleanups on May 5, and September 8. Troup highlighted a big clean up event on April 19th engaging Santa Barbara lobster fisherman to assist in cleaning up discarded traps.
- Kaia Kababik (Non- Consumptive Recreation) shared that her business has many education programs on the horizon, like a science-based expedition to the islands. Kababik explained she was recently at a UCLA education event about the Channel Islands.
- Michael Cohen (Tourism) expressed that the latest quarter was down for tourism. Cohen expressed that tariffs and uncertainty at the federal level have been challenging for business. Cohen’s business, Santa Barbara Adventure Company, was voted number 3 Best Kayak Tour in the nation. Cohen expresses concern over budget cuts and the impacts it may have to the sanctuary, but noted that communities are coming together to perform cleanups and support each other during these challenging times.

### ***Sanctuary Superintendent’s Report***

CINMS Superintendent, Chris Mobley, welcomed attendees to the Advisory Council meeting and shared the following updates:

- Mobley provided updates regarding the transition to a new federal administration.
- Mobley welcomed CINMS intern, Wes Noble, who is helping with the Channel Islands Biosphere Region project.
- Mobley wished Todd Jacobs well on his March 31st retirement and thanked him for his 36 years of service to NOAA.
- Mobley updated the council that the most recent SAC recruitment period has now closed and that the review and selection process is underway.

- Mobley shared that the R/V *Shearwater* and R/V *Minke* accomplished 150 days at sea in 2024, and the first trips of the season have been a success. The crew and staff recently had a magical experience with orcas.
- Mobley provided updates for the LiMPETS program (Long-Term Monitoring Program and Experiential Training for Students) and highlighted that CINMS LiMPETS coordinators facilitated 4 surveys this past month and engaged over 80 students.
- Mobley shared that March 20 was the annual volunteer recognition event for Channel Islands National Park and CINMS volunteers. He shared that Eva Pagaling and Jaime Diamond were recognized and given a Sanctuary Advisory Council Bridge Builder Award for excelling at collaborating and communicating. He also shared that the coveted Blue Whale Award for outstanding performance with the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps went to Nancy Herron.
- Mobley announced CINMS Staff member Bella Rose will be leaving after her contract expires in mid-April. Mobley provided a high recommendation to Bella and wished her well.
- Bella Rose (CINMS staff) reflected on her year of service to the council.

#### ***National Marine Sanctuaries Priority Messaging***

CINMS Superintendent Chris Mobley characterized a set of draft priority message points about the role of national marine sanctuaries, as currently being updated by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Council member questions and discussion included the following:

- Michael Cohen (tourism) commented on a recent SAC Chairs online meeting across the National Marine Sanctuary System, at which participants learned about hardships expected due to budget cuts, and discussed how now is a crucial moment to highlight the value of sanctuaries to local communities.
- Phylis Grifman (research) explained that there is a clear protocol for writing a letter to ONMS leadership, and noted that a letter addressed to local representatives may not have a huge impact, because they are already supportive of sanctuaries. Grifman suggested that contacting other legislators may have more influence.
- Ken Owen (public at large) emphasized the importance of messaging about the return of investment the sanctuary brings, and that there is more benefit than just our tax dollars provide. He also shared how 35 students were set to volunteer on the Islands, but the trip was unfortunately cancelled due to staffing limitations with the National Park Service. Owens continues to emphasize the importance of sharing stories about what the sanctuary is and the benefit of it.
- Kaia Kababik (non-consumptive recreation) expressed that other communities outside of those represented on the SAC may not be aware of the issues the

sanctuary is facing. Kababik conveyed the opportunity to bring this news to the public and the communities that SAC members are involved in.

- Stuart Kasdin (research) posed the question about who is making policy surrounding proposed budget cuts to federal agencies and suggested that it does not seem to be driven by members of Congress.
- Chris Mobley (CINMS superintendent) responded that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have marching orders and agendas that CINMS is not privy to. Mobley explained that while individuals can write letters to whomever they wish, the advisory council's letters cannot be addressed to members of Congress.
- Sam Franz (conservation) expressed that regardless of one's political views, all could have a voice within a letter from the council about the value and importance of the sanctuary.
- Jaimie Diamond (business) emphasized the importance of the tone of the letter, and explained how a confrontational tone will likely not go over well and be at odds with the overall intent.
- Kevin Brannon (recreational fishing) encouraged a proactive approach to this messaging, and commented on the value of the sanctuaries.
- David Lopez (recreational fishing) echoed that the tone of the letter is important. Lopez highlighted focusing on the values of the community.
- The council voted to approve creation of a subcommittee asked to draft a proposed council letter about the benefits of CINMS. In response to the voice vote, two agency seats abstained: CDR Ariel Berrios (US Coast Guard) and Daniel Studt (National Marine Fisheries Service).

### ***Blue and humpback whales in the Southern California Bight: New Abundance Estimates and Anthropogenic Impacts***

A presentation was given by John Calambokidis (Cascadia Research Collective Senior Research Biologist) on his recent surveys, photo-ID studies, and tag deployments on humpback and blue whales in the CINMS region.

Council member questions and discussion included the following:

- Councilmember Phylis Grifman (research) gave praise to John for his important work, and also the related the success of the Blue Whales Blue Skies program.
- Molly Troupe (non-consumptive recreation) highlighted the importance of special fishing gear to reduce chances of entanglement, such as ropeless gear and acoustic release gear. Troupe explained that ropeless gear is in high demand and that acoustic release gear can be expensive, but these types of solutions are of interest to managers and organizations like Oceana, and gear testing is important. Troupe also asked speaker John Calambokidis if there is any evidence of the impact of increased sonic booms from SpaceX

deployments. Calambokidis responded that he is unaware of any evidence or impact deeper in the water column, but there are no target studies looking at this.

- Blake Thomas (public at large) asked how the whales are tagged. Calambokidis explained that their team uses small crafts to deploy suction cup tags.
- Eva Pagaling (Chumash community) expressed interest in connecting with John Calambokidis to get students in the Chumash community involved with these efforts.

### ***Buena High School NOAA Ocean Guardians Project***

A presentation was provided by NOAA Ocean Guardian Youth Ambassadors from Buena High School: Rey Brookes, Harper Thorn, Milla Peterson, and Lily Coffin (mentored by their teacher, Education seat, Michael Yorke). The students described their project relating to ocean conservation and stewardship. Council members gave praise to the students and congratulated them on their successful work and bright futures.

### ***Seagrass Bed Monitoring around the Northern Channel Islands***

Lizzie Duncan (CINMS Research Ecologist) gave a presentation on an ongoing research project that aims to monitor the existing seagrass beds in the sanctuary using various field methods including deployment of an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV).

Council member questions and discussion included the following:

- Pike Spector (OPC) conveyed OPC's interest in restoring eelgrass and asked for information regarding candidate sites.
- Kaia Kababik (non-consumptive recreation) conveyed to CINMS researchers that the *Sunfish* frequents Anacapa and that there is a potential for collaboration with the crew of the *Sunfish*.

### ***Marine Observer Infrared Camera Technology***

Presentation by Christina Tombach Wright (Conservation Seat) on Toyon Research Corporation's Marine Observer Infrared Camera Technology and its relevance to CINMS, and associated programs such as the Vessel Speed Reduction Program and Blue Whales, Blue Skies. Slides available by request to Christina via CINMS staff.

### ***Close Out and Next Steps***

Chair Cohen provided closing remarks and reminded attendees about the upcoming 2025 Advisory Council meetings:

- Friday, May 16 (Santa Barbara Zoo)
- Friday, July 18 (Ventura College)
- Friday, September 19 (Santa Barbara Zoo)
- Friday, November 14 (Port of Hueneme)

**Appendix A. Advisory Council hybrid meeting attendance, March 21, 2025**

Name	Advisory Council Seat	Attendance
<b>Michael Cohen</b>	Tourism member	y
<b>Amanda Allen</b>	Tourism alternate	y
<b>Kaia Kababik</b>	Non-Consumptive Recreation member	y
<b>Molly Troup</b>	Non-Consumptive Recreation alternate	y
<b>Giles Pettifor</b>	Business member	n
<b>Jaime Diamond</b>	Business alternate	y
<b>Sam Macks Franz</b>	Conservation member	y
<b>Christina Tombach Wright</b>	Conservation alternate	y
<b>Mike Nelson</b>	Commercial Fishing member	n
<b>John Hoadley</b>	Commercial Fishing alternate	n
<b>David Lopez</b>	Recreational Fishing member	y
<b>Kevin Brannon</b>	Recreational Fishing alternate	y
<b>Michael Yorke</b>	Education member	y
<b>Andrea Mills</b>	Education alternate	n
<b>Phyllis Grifman</b>	Research member	y
<b>Robert Miller, Ph.D.</b>	Research alternate	y
<b>Ken Owen</b>	Public-At-Large member	y
<b>Chris Ragland</b>	Public At-Large alternate	y
<b>Stuart Kasdin, Ph.D.</b>	Public-At-Large member	y
<b>Blake Thomas</b>	Public At-Large alternate	y
<vacant>	Chumash Community member	-
<b>Eva Pagaling</b>	Chumash Community alternate	y
<b>Daniel Studt</b>	NOAA Fisheries member	y
<vacant>	NOAA Fisheries alternate	
<b>Ken Convery</b>	National Park Service member	n
<b>Mark Hnat</b>	National Park Service alternate	n
<b>CDR Ariel Berrios</b>	U.S. Coast Guard member	y
<b>CWO Paul Ricketson</b>	U.S. Coast Guard alternate	y
<b>Donna Schroeder</b>	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management member	n
<b>Jeremy Potter</b>	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management alternate	n
<b>Adam Melerski</b>	Dept. of Defense member	n
<b>Steve Duboyce</b>	Dept. of Defense alternate	n
<b>Armand Barilotti</b>	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife member	y
<vacant>	CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife alternate	-
<b>Jenn Eckerle</b>	CA Natural Resources Agency member	n
<b>Pike Spector</b>	CA Natural Resources Agency alternate	y
<b>Cassidy Teufel</b>	CA Coastal Commission member	y
<b>Jacqueline Phelps</b>	CA Coastal Commission alternate	n
<b>Errin Briggs</b>	County of Santa Barbara member	y
<b>David Villalobos</b>	County of Santa Barbara alternate	y
<b>Jed Chernabaeff</b>	County of Ventura member	y
<vacant>	County of Ventura alternate	-
<b>Lisa Wooninck</b>	Monterey Bay Nat'l Marine Sanctuary member (non-voting)	n

<b>Karen Grimmer</b>	Monterey Bay Nat'l Marine Sanctuary alternate (non-voting)	n
<b>Maria Brown</b>	Greater Farallones Nat'l Marine Sanctuary member (non-voting)	n
<b>Brian Johnson</b>	Greater Farallones Nat'l Marine Sanctuary alternate (non-voting)	n
<b>Chris Mobley</b>	Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary member (non-voting)	y
<b>Mike Murray</b>	Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary alternate (non-voting)	y
	Total number of individual SAC members (voting seats only)	28

*Appendix B. Written Council member announcements, submitted as of March 21, 2025*

**Name:** Daniel Studt

**Seat:** NOAA Fisheries

**Announcement:** [NOAA Fisheries annual California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment's report released](#)

**Narrative:** NOAA Fisheries' released the annual report which provides a snapshot of ocean conditions, fish population abundance and habitat, and fisheries landings and fishing communities' conditions. It gives short-term forecasts and longer term projections of how conditions across the ecosystem may evolve in 2025 and beyond. Links to [webstory](#), [highlights](#), [full report](#), and other [CCIEA Dashboard](#).

**Announcement:** [Funding Opportunity: Fishing in the Sanctuaries Clinics](#)

**Narrative:** The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, in cooperation with NOAA Sanctuaries and NOAA Fisheries, is seeking a contractor that will plan, coordinate, and carry out up to five one-day fishing outings within or near national marine sanctuaries. The events should focus on engaging families of communities, particularly those identified in the EXPLORE Act (Public Law No. 118-234), local to national marine sanctuaries in recreational fishing, supporting education about resource protection and conservation, and encouraging future stewardship of sanctuaries. Applications are due by May 31st. [Learn more here](#).

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**Name:** Armand Barilotti

**Seat:** California Department of Fish and Wildlife

**Announcement:** Marine Region by the Numbers Report

**Narrative:** [The CDFW Marine Region by the Numbers Report](#) is now available. The Santa Barbara Port Area (includes SB, Ventura, and surrounding ports) remains the most important in the State, with more than 81,000 pounds of fish landed at an ex-vessel value of nearly \$65 million.

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**Name:** Pike Spector

**Seat:** California Natural Resources Agency / Ocean Protection Council

**Announcement:** Los Angeles Wildfires

**Narrative:** Given the unprecedented nature of the wildfires in Southern California fires and the proximity of burned areas to the coastline, OPC has worked closely with state and local partners and provided emergency funding to the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, in

partnership with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board to support post-wildfire water quality monitoring.

This has included sampling over 200 locations of post-wildfire sampling and will support an ongoing region-wide network to monitor wildfire impacts on aquatic habitats. A public-facing map is in the process of being developed to evaluate and report the results for all sites tested.

OPC is grateful for the opportunity to support this work and is committed to continued collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies to address ongoing post-fire issues such as beach closures, debris removal, ecosystem recovery and restoration, and water quality.

**Name:** Pike Spector

**Seat:** California Natural Resources Agency / Ocean Protection Council

**Announcement:** Recent MPA Investments

**Narrative:** At the March 2025 OPC meeting, [Council approved the disbursement of \\$4.6 million dollars across six projects to advance adaptive management of the California MPA network.](#)

Two of the six projects focus on ecological monitoring, and will fill critical gaps in MPA monitoring through 2027. Four of the six projects will scale out and continue successful human-centered research, monitoring, and engagement projects. These projects will provide a better understanding of ocean access and activities, in and around MPAs, how they vary across California coastal communities, and how they are influenced by environmental change.

This funding will also foster effective coordination among law enforcement partners and advance programs to enhance participation of underrepresented communities in MPA management activities. These investments are critical to continue foundational ecological monitoring, and to better understand the social, cultural, and economic outcomes and benefits of the MPA Network on coastal communities.

Dr. Staci Lewis, OPC's MPA program manager, presented the updated [SeaSketch California platform](#) for evaluating DMR petitions alongside its developers, the McClintock Lab at UCSB, at last week's Marine Resources Committee meeting.

**Name:** Pike Spector

**Seat:** California Natural Resources Agency / Ocean Protection Council

**Announcement:** 30x30

**Narrative:** At the end of last year, OPC staff concluded an extensive public comment and tribal consultation period on the Draft Decision-Making Framework for 30x30 in Coastal Waters and presented a brief update on the Framework, and progress toward 30x30 more broadly, at OPC's December council meeting.

As OPC staff have worked to meaningfully integrate feedback into a final Decision-Making Framework, a need for additional time to further engage and consult with tribes and coastal stakeholders has emerged.

The final Decision-Making Framework and updated calculation of conserved acres in coastal waters will be presented to OPC for consideration and **possible adoption at the June 2025 Council meeting**. We also anticipate releasing a \$10 million request for proposals to advance 30x30 in coastal waters following adoption of the final framework in June.

**Name:** Pike Spector

**Seat:** California Natural Resources Agency / Ocean Protection Council

**Announcement:** Fisheries

**Narrative:** Also at our March meeting, OPC approved the disbursement of \$2.4 million dollars for two projects to modernize data collection to advance climate-ready fisheries management. As Craig and Todd highlighted earlier, OPC staff will work closely with CDFW, Resources Legacy Fund, and the fishing community to conduct an electronic monitoring and electronic pilot project for 4 fisheries and to implement electronic data collection for the California Recreational Fisheries Survey. Taken together, these two investments will increase data accessibility, improve data accuracy, better align data collection with management objectives, and reduce the time needed to record, transmit, and review data.

OPC is soliciting nominations for 4 non-commercial representatives to the Dungeness Crab Task Force: 1 voting and 1 non-voting member representing sport fishing interests, 1 voting member representing crab processing interests, and 1 voting member representing nongovernmental organization interests. OPC and CDFW are also conducting elections for commercial fishing representatives to the Dungeness Crab Task Force based in Crescent City, Fort Bragg, San Francisco, and South of Half Moon Bay.

Fishery permit holders should receive election materials by mail. Nominations for all representatives are due on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Please see the [Dungeness Crab Task Force website](#) for more information.

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**Name:** David N Lopez

**Seat:** Recreational Fishing

**Announcement:**

