

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

Sacred Waters Film

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The Chumash Indians have continuously occupied the central coast of California for over 13,000 years. Their name translates to “shell people,” deemed so because of their deep ties to their coastal environments. The lifestyles led by the 13 groups that make up the Chumash were largely dependent on the sea for survival, providing them with grounds for hunting, gathering, and transportation. Initially the tribe resided in approximately 150 separate camps along the California coast between Los Angeles and Big Sur (History of the Chumash 2016). Many of their historic sites are now submerged in the Pacific Ocean as a result of changing sea levels. Based on the sunken sites and historic value of the marine ecosystems to their ways of life, the Chumash have submitted a proposal to have the region that spans 90 miles of coast between Santa Barbara, specifically Gaviota Creek and Cambria, CA; designated as a (NMS) National Marine Sanctuary (Chumash Sanctuary 2009). This designation is highly controversial. While it is likely to have positive impacts on marine biodiversity, an NMS would impose restrictions on commercial agriculture and any new oil development, potentially impacting the local economy. These industries make up considerable proportions of the income in the area, and many have expressed concern that an NMS designation would do more harm than good. The uncertainty surrounding the designation of a sanctuary is a primary reason that the proposal has been held up for 25 years.

On October 11, 2015, the Chumash NMS proposal was formally nominated by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as one of three regions in the country to be designated. The executive branch of the U.S. government, under the influence of public comment, will ultimately determine if the region will be protected (Chumash Sanctuary 2009).

If the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary is designated, it will link the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to the north and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary to the south, effectively preserving a majority of the central coast of California as sanctuary waters.

As an avid outdoorsman that was raised on the Central Coast (the region up for sanctuary designation) I have a strong concern for the environmental well-being and preservation of my home. Also I am involved in the environmental community and have emerged as a local leader on multiple environmental reforms giving me the inclination to stay proactive and do my part to ensure others are informed. In addition to the impact the decision to reject or designate the Chumash NMS could have on my home, this story appeals to me because it addresses a very controversial issue that has implications on ethical, economic, and ecological levels. It combines human interest with conservation and policy, which are subjects I intend to contribute to for the remainder of my life.

Therefore, in an effort to educate my community on the ramifications of this significant decision I have collaborated with Courtney Gerard; a master's student at the University of Montana in Missoula, to produce a film with a non-biased journalistic frame titled *Sacred Waters*. She had laid the foundation for this project with her research and outreach by the time I became involved, but she was in need of my help and I was excited to step in and aide her in the areas of funding, video contribution, social media campaigns, and general outreach. Courtney also shares a local heritage which has allowed her to build a rapport with a tribe that has not historically welcomed many outsiders to tell their stories. She has been in contact with biologists from the University of Santa Barbara, elected officials, Commercial Fishing

Associations, the Coastal Commission of San Luis Obispo and conservationists in the region, all of which were excited for the opportunity to present their stories.

I have also been able to personally meet with local mayors, non-profit leaders, port directors, and have attended community forums on the issue. As someone who is actively involved in the local environmental community, my awareness of the Chumash National Marine Sanctuary was absent until January of 2015, when I learned about the effort while at a community forum organizing against local oil train infrastructure. From there I attended a sanctuary hearing where I was able to observe representatives from NOAA eloquently sell the benefits of an NMS, but their pitch was falling on a room filled with 200 skeptical fishermen who felt that a designation may threaten their livelihood. It would have been easy to write off their fears as irrational, but that would have been foolish without further research. Given my involvement in the environmental community, my lack of awareness caught my concern, for I knew my ignorance on the issue would be reflective of my demographic for the entire region.

Six months later I reached out the local Sierra Club Chapter to discuss promotional content for the sanctuary as they were the most accessible entity that was invested in the effort to designate the sanctuary. Contacts, as well as letters of support and opposition were provided to me and from there I began to seek out local stakeholders. After meeting with mayors and port directors who opposed the project, and did so with rational reasoning while also communicating a high value on environmental conservation, I was internally vexed if I should pursue the production of a promotional piece for the sanctuary. My search for perspective led me to the conclusion that a non-biased journalistic approach would be the best

route to inform the public on this issue. In that quest I found Courtney, who was well down the path I intended to pursue and Sacred Waters became a team project.

Becoming involved in this film has helped me develop a better understanding as to why people are in opposition to an effort that at face value seems to be an issue with no compelling evidence against it. NOAA is a federal entity that brings another layer of regulation to marine activity and their past behavior specifically with the stakeholders of the Monterey Sanctuary has created a loss of trust that will be difficult to regain. Morro Bay Commercial fisherman Tom Roff wrote about the steps that led to disharmonious relationship. The Monterey Sanctuary had been rejected multiple times due to opposition from the fishing community. In an effort to gain their support, NOAA developed a designation document that did not list fishing as an activity subject to regulation or future regulation and it was understood that if adjustments were to be made that the fishing community would be able to contribute to any policy being implemented. The fishermen themselves believed in sustainable harvesting and understood the need for Marine Protected areas (MPA's) and were not opposed to the concept entirely. When it came time to discuss the implementation of MPA's, which technically breached the agreement of the initial designation document, fishermen organized to contribute to the discussion, but their involvement was minimal and NOAA spearheaded MPA's to the disdain of the entire fishing community and the City of Monterey (Roff 2008). Given this history, the City of Morro Bay, Port SLO, and all local fishing associations are in opposition to the designation of the Chumash Sanctuary being well aware that their opposition is the most significant obstacle to designation.

As a community member who has faith in the guidance of local leaders, the Sanctuary began to lose my support, but the vulnerabilities of our coast without designation began to emerge. The San Luis Obispo *TRIBUNE* reported that big oil has routinely shot down efforts by the state legislature to close loopholes that leave our coast at risk for oil drilling. Furthermore, it reports, “The only current measure with clout in state and federal waters is a temporary offshore moratorium imposed by the Obama administration. It expires in 2017” (Sanchez, Rivera 2015). There has never been an adjustment of law that has overturned a ban on oil drilling in a NMS. Another article in the SLO *TRIBUNE* conveys that commercial fishing may become subject to more regulation, but both Channel Islands and Monterey Sanctuaries have profitable fishing ports averaging above \$25 million in annual yields. In addition, a sanctuary will open the door for new grants and funding for Cal Poly, U.C. Santa Barbara, and Cuesta College expanding educational opportunities and research of our region’s marine ecosystem (Wilson 2015). Given the contrasting elements that call one to both support and be skeptical of additional bureaucracy, producing a journalistic short on the opportunity cost of a NMS designation for our region is beyond appropriate to inform the public. *Sacred Waters* will aide citizens in making a decision rooted in their own values by offering insights from the largest stakeholders on both sides of the debate.

The initial intent was to film a documentary to air on Public Broadcasting Service or a local affiliate network in March of 2017, but PBS at a very similar time scheduled a showcase of the Channel Islands Sanctuary. For this reason, they had a concern for releasing both projects at the same time and asked for a later release. The designation will heavily impact the area, both positively and negatively, and media coverage in video format has so far been minimal. As well

the political shifts that took place at the federal level with the election of Donald Trump shifted the entire climate in which the possibility for sanctuary designation lived. Therefore, we have decided to go independent; this allows us to release the film in a tight window before the conclusion of the Obama administration on January 20, 2017. The film will still fulfill its role by informing the community on the implications of a designation. Our adjustment for the release of *Sacred Waters* will also help a federal government that is ideologically responsive to environmental conservation; either move forward with or decide against the designation once there is enough public support for a direction. Courtney has already filmed all of the interviews that will be used for the film's dialogue. Therefore, her primary task over the course of the Fall, 2016 quarter has been sifting through 1500 minutes of audio and refining that down into a non-biased presentation that addresses the realities that would stem from sanctuary designation. As this senior project concludes, Courtney is an estimated 2 weeks away from being done with the final cut of the film.

While she has experience in journalism and with videography, Courtney, unlike many others of the millennial generation, has stayed relatively removed from the world of social media and was not well versed on strategies she could implement to generate attention for the film. The challenge to meet success through social media has become even larger with the decision to go independent, because all traffic will be generated through web-based media platforms. In contrast to Courtney, the foundation of my company *One With Nature* has been built on the success of social media outreach and I have already built up a considerable network of over 6,000 people who are all fans of the outdoors and share values that align with conservation. For the film's release I will utilize my existing platforms for promotion and I have

developed both an Instagram and Facebook page under the title of “Sacred Waters Film.” Both of us have collaborated on gathering content that has and will continue to be released through those pages. I have made all of the posts through these platforms and aim to expand the frequency to daily posts over the final three weeks leading into the film’s release. I have begun and will continue to leverage our personal networks to call attention to the film’s approaching release. I have also started to leverage my connections to Patagonia (a company who publically endorsed the sanctuary), along with local companies and leaders who will want to have this issue be known to the public. I’m extremely confident there will be some significant sharing that takes place expanding the project’s organic reach considerably.

Aside from the natural traffic, we want to ensure that this production reaches a large audience, therefore, we will also be utilizing sponsored ads that will boost the post on social media and we are aiming to break a minimum of 25,000 views. To achieve that traffic I will need to raise \$1,000 which will give us around 26,000 post clicks. Reiterating that our minimum is 25,000 views, I adopt the attitude that it is better to aim high and come up short, than to aim low and hit; therefore, over the final three weeks leading into the release of *Sacred Waters* I will be soliciting sponsorships from local businesses to help hit our ideal goal of \$5,000 that would give us over 100,000 post clicks (Adds Manager 2016).

Given the significance of the potential designation and my business which has established a strong local presence through the content we release on social media, our signage on local trailheads, our apparel, and the environmental reforms that we have spearheaded, I am confident I have the leverage necessary to hit my goal of \$5,000. In addition to the effort I

will be pushing on the ground over these last few weeks, I have launched a crowdfunding campaign on Generosity.com explaining our reasoning for producing the film, our need for funds to distribute the project to the broadest audience we can possibly reach, and to showcase our trailer that offers insights into the direction of *Sacred Waters* while providing the timeframe for its release. The campaign at this point has raised \$295 and has received 42 shares on Facebook.

While Courtney has a background in videography, the skillset and equipment of my company's team members is better and our video work has added to the quality of the film's visual elements. She was also back and forth between Montana where she is finishing up her Master's and Colorado where she is working for *Backpacker Magazine*, so it was essential for my team to gather all remaining b-roll content that needed to be incorporated into the film. My role in all productions that *One With Nature* releases is that of Producer. I have and will continue to fulfill that role in this project through my ability to fund the project's promotion and by determining what shots we had to capture to provide a complete feel to the film by not neglecting any stretch of coast aside from the waters off of Vandenberg Air Force base which is a stretch we were not permitted to shoot.

Steps Taken

Social Media

In an effort to build a network through social media platforms that can be utilized to promote and distribute our production I took the initiative to build out our Facebook and Instagram pages. Both pages are titled under, *Sacred Waters Film* and have the following

description as the first visible piece of written info describing the project. "*Sacred Waters* is a documentary film project following the stakeholders in the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary off the Central Coast of California." As well I have packaged content to be released through both platforms for the remainder of the year. For the final few weeks leading into the release, I will tap my relationships with local environmental non-profits, for example, Surfrider, EcoSLO, and the Sierra Club in an effort to attain their social media cross promotion and drive more traffic to the film's pages as we prepare to share it with the public. My goal is to spend no money in the promotion of this film until the week of its release. An article in *Business Strategy Review*, written by accredited Entrepreneur and Professor of marketing Rajesh Chandy, affirms this social media strategy: "When executed well, it can create an enormous buzz that saves marketing dollars." Later, in the same article, paralleling my plan to receive cross promotion from other key groups, he states, "Target the influencers before the masses. Social media is not about amassing the greatest number of likes and followers; it is about reaching influencers and key opinion leaders who will promote your product" (Chandy 2014). The core focus of our film is an issue that many local leaders are interested in and I am confident we will receive the support of many in the promotion of *Sacred Waters*. I have already gained the word of a SLO County supervisor, the mayor of SLO, along with multiple city council members and candidates to share our project upon its release. This will help us reach a larger network faster and do it with external validation.

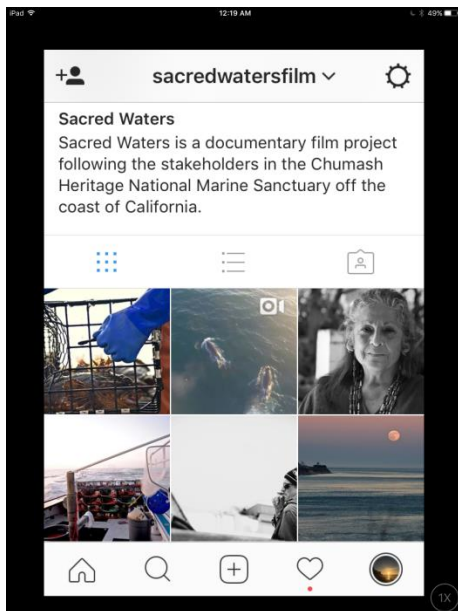
Appendix

Sacred Waters Social Media URL's

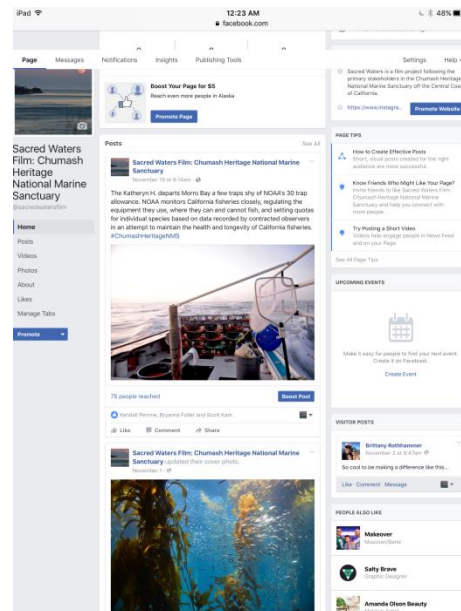
Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/sacredwatersfilm>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/sacredwatersfilm>

Instagram



Facebook



Social Media Captions:

Below are examples of some of the captions that will be associated with a variety of photos.

- Aquarium-** Connecting communities to marine ecosystems is one of the few unanimous agreements among all of the stake holders in great debate over the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary designation. The attention the Monterey Bay Aquarium brings to marine ecosystems is unquestionably one of the most successful feats of marine education in the world.

- **Baiting-** 18 year-old Second Generation fisherman Ben Hafer stuffs a near shore trap with chopped frozen squid.

Ben Hafer baiting: Photo by Courtney Gerard



- **Batstar-** Every year NOAA contracts hundreds of observers to accompany fisherman on commercial vessels on the western seaboard. They measure and record every organism that is brought on board no matter how small they are. A bat star patiently waits its turn on the scale before being thrown back into the sea.
- **Boat Sunrise-** The Kathryn H. departs Morro Bay a few traps shy of NOAA's 30-trap allowance. NOAA fisheries monitors California's fisheries closely, regulating the equipment they use, where they can and cannot fish, and setting quotas for individual species based on data recorded by contracted observers in an attempt to maintain the health and longevity of California's fisheries.
- **Chumash Bowl-** Reminders of the Chumash's historical presence in the area are found all over the California's coastline from Malibu to Cambria. Although these historical

artifacts are what most commonly make headlines, it cannot be overlooked that there are still thousands of Chumash living in the area, unrecognized by the federal government.

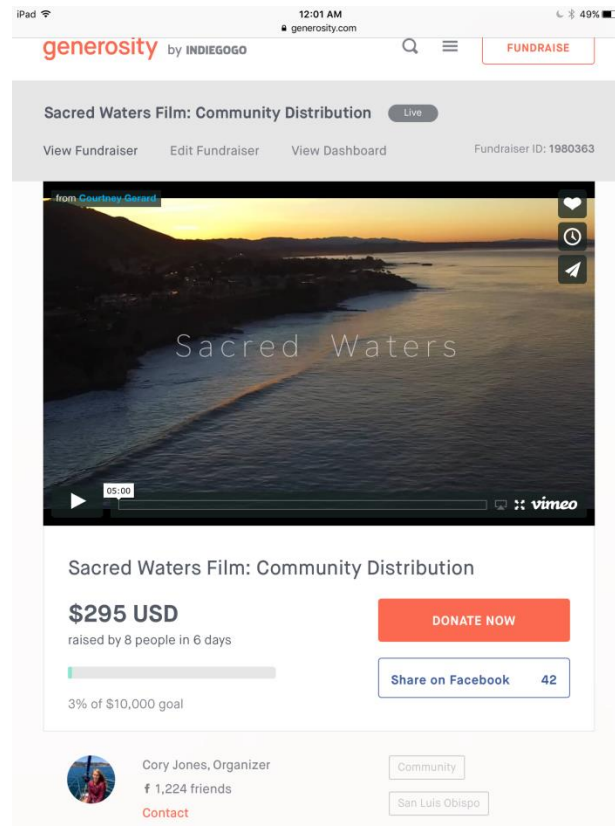
- **Fred Strawberries** What we know as “the Chumash” are actually 13 tribes that have coexisted for thousands of years. The Northern Chumash have decided not to pursue federal recognition due to the high cost and decades of work that it entails. They have instead turned to agriculture, cultivating thousands of pounds of strawberries yearly as a revenue source to repurchase their land.
- **Fred Strawberries 2** Fred Collins walks through his vertical, hydroponic strawberry field. All of the water in this meticulously designed system is re-circulated, eliminating runoff and conserving the valuable resource as California undergoes one of the most devastating droughts since his tribe set foot here over 14,000 years ago.
- **Fred Strawberries 3** “Native, All Natural,” reads a sign in Fred Collins’ greenhouse. The leader of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council initiated the designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary last year in an attempt to keep the seas off of the Central Coast just that, native and natural, void of oil exploitation and habitat degradation.
- **Hafer Helm** Tom Hafer keeps a watchful eye on his son Ben from the helm of the Katheryn H. He hopes to one day turn the wheel over to his son Ben so he can make a living. As the holder of one of only 17 commercial shrimp permits in the state, Hafer’s operation is highly lucrative.

- **Hafer Morning Light** “1974 was my first commercial fishing trip. My girlfriend’s dad bought a tuna boat and he said ‘jump in, we’re leavin’...’ We were gone for 4 months, and I didn’t have a girlfriend when I got back.... Ever since then I have been fishing.”
- **Measuring Fish-** NOAA fisheries regulates both quotas (the number of pounds a fisherman can take per month, per species), and the size of the fish they can take. As soon as the fish hit the deck, they are carefully measured, and every fish that doesn’t meet the minimum size limit is thrown overboard.
- **Monterey Cannery Row-** It’s true that the Marine Sanctuary system does not regulate commercial fishing, but their historical involvement influencing NOAA fisheries in their designation of no-take zones also known as Marine Protected Areas, has left many fishermen wary of their motivations.
- **Roberta Cordero-** When you meet Roberta Cordero, you will find her looking back at you with eyes that hold the enlightenment of thousands of years’ worth of stories and wisdom. The Chumash elder is the holder of some of the tribe’s most intimate secrets, but isn’t afraid to share the few that she thinks we can all learn from. “Talking about people apart from nature is just not the way it is... People knew not to take everything. And they knew how to trim plants and take cuttings so they helped them flourish rather than to harm them. Everything is done in reciprocity and generosity.”

Crowdfund:

Web Link: <https://www.generosity.com/profiles/15633325/edit#/fundraisers>

Generosity



Campaign Synopsis-

In an effort to bring attention to the potential designation of the *Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary*, Courtney Gerard, a science educator turned journalist is taking on the challenge of educating the public on the controversial proposal through film.

For the Central Coast of California, this decision has legitimate implications for the cultural preservation of Chumash heritage, the health of our local economy, and the quality of coastal resources. If designated, sanctuary policy will have effects on the future of offshore oil

drilling, tourism, commercial fishing, scientific research, and the management of our marine ecosystems.

This project, entitled '*Sacred Waters*' offers a platform for stakeholders in the designation to voice their concerns, opposition, and support for the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. Featuring the voices of integral federal and local management, as well as community members that have yet to weigh in on the issue in the local media, this powerful film brings a new level of understanding that has yet to be established in other outlets.

Understanding that there are impacts, both positive and negative for all stakeholders, the most important thing we believe we can do is provide a well-rounded, non-biased platform for local industry and community members to be heard. It is our hope that *Sacred Waters* will equip community members with the knowledge they need to determine their own stance on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Sanctuary program. With a well-informed standpoint, community members can make a decision that reflects their own values.

Sacred Waters will be released independently in **January of 2017**, through social platforms. We want to ensure that we get as many relevant eyes on this project as we can.

We are reaching out for sponsored advertisement dollars, to make sure that as much of the public has access to this valuable information as possible. We believe this project will receive plenty of traffic on its own, but raising around **\$7,500** will allow us to distribute the film in channels and volumes that we can't reach on our own.

Every contribution will be received with gratitude and will fund the distribution of *Sacred Waters*.

Video Trailer

I uploaded the Sacred Waters Trailer to the Generosity Page to give more clarity on what our project entails and why we are in need of funds for its distribution on social platforms.

Trailer Link: <https://vimeo.com/192410776>

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