



CHANNELKEEPER ADVOCATES FOR EFFECTIVE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO MUD DUMPING

Santa Barbara County Flood Control District maintains a network of debris basins that help reduce the risk of flooding during rain events. These debris basins fill with mud, silt, and rock and require ongoing clearing to function properly.

Historically, the County disposed of excess material cleared from the basins in upland locations. However, following the 2018 Montecito debris flows, it began dumping this material in the surf zone at Carpinteria and Goleta Beaches under emergency permits. The use of emergency permitting means that the County does not have to perform as comprehensive a program to monitor, avoid, and mitigate potential ecological effects as may typically be required for these activities.

In January, following several major storms, the County began clearing the debris basins and using heavy equipment to dump the mud and debris material onto Carpinteria and Goleta Beaches utilizing similar emergency permits to the ones received in the aftermath of the 2018 Montecito debris flows.

These disposal activities impair water quality and impact fish, wildlife, and

other biological resources by increasing turbidity and siltation in nearshore waters and by potentially introducing toxic chemicals like ammonia nitrogen, which is a natural product of decomposition in soils. The intensity and prolonged nature of consecutive daily dumping activity are producing negative impacts.

Channelkeeper finds the continued reliance on emergency permitting for debris basin clearing a significant concern. Moreover, the likely future need for basin clearing after storms makes it important for the County to find a better solution, one that minimizes damage to important habitats and waters, such as beaches and intertidal ecosystems.

With public safety and ecosystem protections in mind, Channelkeeper is advocating for an effective, long-term solution and calling on County leaders to evaluate and determine an alternative disposal method.



LEVERAGING THE LAW TO PROTECT THE CHANNEL

Areas of the Santa Barbara Channel are the focus of future aquaculture development, including harmful finfish aquaculture projects. Channelkeeper recently joined the Center for Food Safety, fishermen organizations, other nonprofits, and the Quinault Indian Nation in suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over its issuance of Nationwide Permit 56, which authorizes the development of offshore finfish farming structures. We are claiming that the federal agency issued the permit without a thorough analysis of its potential impacts on our ocean ecosystems, water quality, public health, fishing communities, and endangered and threatened species.

Certain types of aquaculture projects, such as those for shellfish and seaweed,

may produce benefits that outweigh the drawbacks. However, offshore finfish aquaculture operations that produce species like tuna or tilapia in offshore nets, pods, and cages present more significant risks to the environment.

Potential impacts to the marine ecosystem include water quality impairment from fish feed, dead fish, fecal waste, chemicals, antibiotics, and marine debris; the spread of diseases that can affect populations of wild fish; the escape of farmed fish into the natural environment, risking the genetic integrity of wild populations; and the depletion of small fish populations that are used as feed for farmed fish and therefore, less available for wild fish, birds, and marine life. In addition, there is currently no adequate permit program in place to regulate aquaculture operations in federal waters or strong standards to protect the marine environment from the impacts of finfish aquaculture.

By joining this lawsuit, Channelkeeper hopes to ensure that all appropriate precautions are taken and measures are in place to protect the Santa Barbara Channel from the potentially destructive impacts of industrial offshore finfish aquaculture. Find more information on our blog.

[Read Blog](#)



CHANNELKEEPER WEIGHS IN ON PLATFORM DECOMMISSIONING OPTIONS

In January, Channelkeeper submitted a comment letter to the U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement’s (BSEE) draft programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for Oil and Gas Decommissioning Activities on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The PEIS provides an analysis of four decommissioning options for the twenty-three oil and gas platforms off the California Coast: complete removal of platforms, partial platform removal and onshore disposal, partial platform removal and placement in an artificial reef, and no action. It also evaluates the use of non-

explosive and explosive severance during the decommissioning process.

Channelkeeper also signed onto a group letter written by the Environmental Defense Center. In our comments, we requested clarification on a number of issues, further analysis of the impacts on marine fish and essential fish habitat when multiple platforms are removed, and additional analysis of environmental impacts for infrastructure disposal. BSEE will review and respond to comments received and update the draft PEIS accordingly. The next step in this process is the release of a final PEIS, which is anticipated sometime this summer.

Our team has carefully reviewed and drafted comments with the recognition that the PEIS will support future federal review of and action on decommissioning applications and will provide a basis for future, site-specific analyses.



CHANNELKEEPER HELPS IDENTIFY AND TRACK LOST LOBSTER TRAPS

This winter, huge surf and tidal surges brought many more lobster traps onshore than we see in a typical season. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife initiated a trap tag program in 2016 that helps track fishing gear. The tags attached to every trap contain information that identifies the owner and the year the trap was set.

With the help of volunteers, Channelkeeper monitors trap activity and alerts the California Department of Fish and Wildlife of gear that has washed ashore so that traps can be recovered by their owners for reuse or disposal and removed from the beach. Channelkeeper has also been in touch with a number of fishermen and anticipates collaborating on a cleanup at a local "hotspot" this spring, following the season closure in March.

If you see a lobster trap on the beach, please take a photo of the tag and [complete this form](#) with detailed information about the location (beach name with latitude and longitude details). Our staff will report the tag to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and will track it to see if it has been removed from the beach.

[Report A Trap](#)



MITIGATING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, YARD BY YARD

The Santa Barbara Channel is vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate, including warming water temperatures, ocean acidification, changing oceanographic processes, and sea level rise. In a recent blog post, we discuss how yards and landscaped areas throughout our community can help protect the Santa Barbara Channel.

By making a few key changes in our own yards such as conserving water and managing runoff, focusing on soil health, and reducing emissions from lawn care equipment, each of us can lessen our yard's climate impact while conserving resources and enhancing habitat. Read our blog post to get started.

[Learn More](#)

JOIN US!

MPA DAY: MANAGEMENT REVIEW FORUM

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE STATE'S REVIEW OF CALIFORNIA'S MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) NETWORK?

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with the California Ocean Protection Council and California Fish and Game Commission, is hosting a forum to share the findings of the [first MPA Decadal Management Review report](#).
Come with questions!

PLEASE REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 15, 2023 - SPACE IS LIMITED



Photo credit: Ken Oda, Elkhorn Slough SMR



Photo credit: Kevin Joe, Salt Point SMCA



Photo credit: Amanda Van Diggelen, South Point SMR

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2023

9AM- 5PM

POSTER RECEPTION FROM 5-6PM

Monterey County Fair and Event Center
2004 Fairground Road, Monterey, CA 93940



For more info, please visit the [MPA Decadal Management Review Webpage](#) or email [CDFW's MPA Team](#)



MPA DECADAL MANAGEMENT REVIEW UPDATE

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife released the first Marine Protected Area (MPA) Decadal Management Review report in January. This report provides an overview of the last ten years of management activities and the effectiveness of the MPA Network in meeting Marine Life Protection Act goals. The report was presented to the Fish and Game Commission on February 9th.

On March 15th, the public is invited to learn more about the State's review of our MPA Network at a public forum hosted in Monterey by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Ocean Protection Council, and the California Fish and Game Commission. The in-person and virtual event will provide an opportunity to share findings, answer questions, and engage in thoughtful conversations about the review and management of the MPA Network. Channelkeeper will be in attendance at this forum to share information about our work to build MPA stewardship and the MPA Watch program. Participants are asked to register [here](#) in advance.

A Marine Resources Committee meeting dedicated to discussing the decadal review will also take place on March 16. Channelkeeper will attend and provide testimony at this meeting. While there will not be a livestream of the event, the presentations will be recorded and made available online after the forum for those who cannot attend in person.



PENNY OWENS REAPPOINTED TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Channelkeeper is pleased to announce that Penny Owens, our Education and Outreach Director, was recently reappointed to serve a third term on Santa Barbara's Creeks Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Program Citizen Advisory Committee. The committee assists and advises the City staff, the Park and Recreation Commission, and the City Council on matters pertaining to the City's creek restoration and water quality improvement programs.

Penny is honored to join the dedicated group and offer her support for the important creek restoration, water quality improvement, education, and outreach efforts of the Creeks Division.



SANTA BARBARA CREEKS DIVISION VOLUNTEER PLANTING EVENT February 18

Join the Santa Barbara Creeks Division for a native planting event at the Arroyo Burro Open Space on Saturday, February 18, from 10 am to 12 pm. Volunteers will help install native plants at the site of the recently completed creek restoration project.

Santa Barbara Creeks Division will provide tools and gloves, but volunteers are welcome to bring their own. Sturdy shoes are recommended along with water and sun protection.

Volunteers will park at the end of Alan Road and walk into the park, or bike/walk on the Las Positas/Modoc Road Multiuse Path and enter the park at the footbridge across from Jerry Harwin Parkway. Contact [Liz Smith](#) with any questions.



BLUE WATER BALL

May 7, 2023

NEW DATE FOR THE 2023 BLUE WATER BALL

The Blue Water Ball is Channelkeeper's premier event, raising critical funds that enable us to protect our precious beaches, creeks, and coast, and defend your right to clean water and healthy habitats.

This year's Blue Water Ball will take place on Sunday, May 7th from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm. We hope you'll join us to celebrate the impressive environmental impact we've made together for over two decades and discover our plans for the future.



MOVING ON TO NEW ADVENTURES

Ben Pitterle, Channelkeeper's Science and Policy Director is moving on to a new professional role after 17 years of outstanding contribution to our mission and work. We have been inspired by Ben's drive to do good in the world—to take a stand on important issues and speak up for vulnerable people, places, and organisms.

He leaves behind a legacy of powerful environmental work. He has fought for stronger ocean protections, helped develop policies to address harmful agricultural pollution, championed Channelkeeper's work to improve flows in the Ventura River, advocated for limitations on cruise ship visits, and created a thriving volunteer cleanup corps called the Watershed Brigade. We thank him for putting his heart and soul into these projects that will benefit our communities for decades to come.

Although we are sorry to see him go, we take solace in the fact that Ben will continue to do important science and policy work in our backyard.

KEEPING WATCH FOR CLEAN WATER
SINCE 1999



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