



Major Developments in Sable's Push to Restart Offshore Drilling and Pipeline Use

September brought a wave of major developments in Sable Offshore Corp.'s ongoing attempt to restart oil production from the Santa Ynez Unit, a trio of aging oil platforms off the Gaviota Coast, and to resume use of the same pipeline responsible for the 2015 Plains All-American Oil Spill at Refugio State Beach. Ten years ago, more than 140,000 gallons of heavy crude oil spilled due to corroded pipelines and substantially damaged coastal and marine waters and habitats.

Below is a summary of a few of the key points from the past month.

On September 12, a federal judge issued a significant ruling rejecting Sable's demand for an automatic transfer of key operating permits. These permits, which Sable sought to have transferred from ExxonMobil, were not exchanged due to a deadlocked 2-2 vote by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in February. The judge ordered the Board to hold another public hearing and vote on the transfer within 60 days. If the upcoming hearing results in another tie vote, the Board must hold yet another hearing within 45 days. This decision followed a successful legal intervention by the Environmental Defense Center, which represented Channelkeeper and four conservation groups and was granted

permission to intervene in a legal action Sable brought against the County of Santa Barbara.

Just days later, on September 16, the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office announced that it filed 21 criminal charges against Sable, including five felony counts. The complaint alleges that Sable violated environmental laws by conducting unauthorized repair work along the pipeline route, including extensive excavations that knowingly discharged pollutants into state waterways.

On September 25, the spotlight turned to the California State Parks Commission meeting in West Sacramento, where Channelkeeper joined nearly thirty other speakers urging the state to reject Sable's attempt to secure a new easement through Gaviota State Park without undergoing a full environmental review. While the Commission itself does not have authority over the discretionary review process, the public testimony was a vital opportunity to raise the profile of this issue at the state level. California State Parks is still considering how to proceed with Sable's application, making public input especially critical at this stage.

The month closed with a dramatic shift by Sable. On September 29, the company announced it would seek federal approval to build an offshore oil storage and treatment facility in federal waters, beyond three miles off the California coast. By situating this proposed facility in federal jurisdiction, Sable is hoping it can bypass state and local regulatory oversight entirely and drop having to secure all approvals needed for the onshore pipelines.

As these events continue to unfold, they underscore just how much is at stake, not only for the Gaviota Coast's fragile ecosystem, but for public trust in the decision-making processes that govern our coastline.

Channelkeeper and its partners are encouraging members of the public to continue taking action.

First, we urge concerned community members to call and email State Parks Director Armando Quintero and Governor Newsom, demanding a thorough environmental review and a transparent public process before any easement is granted through Gaviota State Park. For those looking to take action, additional resources are available [here](#).

Second, we urge concerned community members to participate in the November 4, 2025, County Board of Supervisors meeting This meeting will include another public comment session on the transfer of operating permits from ExxonMobil to Sable, giving us a renewed opportunity to weigh in on this dangerous project. A large community turnout will be critical for this hearing. Be on the lookout for more information in the upcoming weeks.

Thank you to community members for your dedication and determination over the past year! With public hearings and regulatory decisions still in play, we still need enthusiastic, committed supporters to show up and speak out to protect the Gaviota Coast and Santa Barbara Channel.



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Selects Aquaculture Areas for Southern California

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released its Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) identifying large Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) in Southern California waters on September 19.

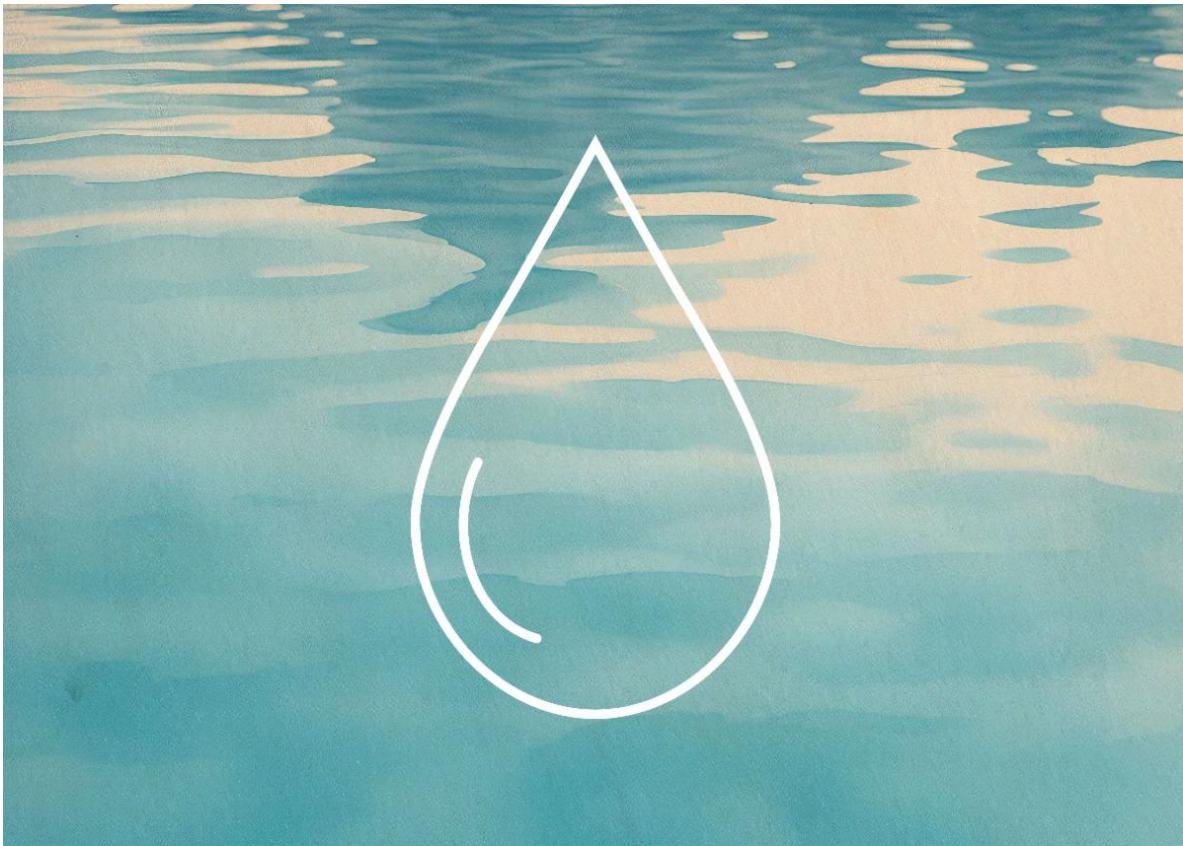
The agency selected the most expansive approach, designating ten AOAs for potential aquaculture development, including eight within the Santa Barbara Channel and two in Santa Monica Bay. NOAA deemed these areas suitable for all forms of offshore aquaculture, including finfish, shellfish, and kelp operations. If all identified sites are eventually developed, up to 15,000 acres of the Santa Barbara Channel would be involved, transforming large swaths of marine habitat and public trust waters into industrial aquaculture zones.

While NOAA's decision takes a significant step in favor of increased aquaculture operations in the Channel, it does not authorize any specific projects. Instead, it identifies zones where aquaculture operations could be proposed in the future. Any actual development would still require a thorough permitting process involving multiple state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NOAA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the California Coastal Commission.

NOAA identified a number of serious environmental risks associated with placing industrial aquaculture facilities in these waters. These include threats to water quality, the risk of marine mammal entanglement, the escape of non-native species into the wild, disease transmission to wild fish populations, marine debris, and potential conflicts with existing fisheries and public trust resources. However, the FPEIS defers specific protections and mitigation strategies to future project-level permitting.

Channelkeeper opposed the designation of AOAs in federal waters of the Channel in the comments we submitted during the public review process. We believe that the Channel's ecological richness, dynamic ocean conditions, and importance to migratory species and marine mammals make it an unsuitable location for large-scale industrial aquaculture, especially finfish operations. The lack of a clear, enforceable oversight framework to ensure adequate protections is a significant concern.

We are committed to advocating for comprehensive, site-specific environmental reviews for any proposed aquaculture projects in the region. Channelkeeper will push for robust permit conditions under federal and state laws, including the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the California Coastal Act, to protect the environment.



The PERMIT Act Threatens to Weaken the Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act is currently under attack. Congress is considering a piece of legislation called the PERMIT Act (H.R. 3898) that would dramatically weaken protections for coastal waters, rivers, wetlands, and drinking water sources. The bill would silence state, Tribal, and local voices in environmental decision-making, making it easier for industries to pollute and harder for communities to respond to pollution.

If the PERMIT Act becomes law, it could:

- Open the door to more toxic discharges in our creeks, rivers, wetlands, and ocean.
- Strip states and Tribes of the power to set and enforce their own water quality standards on federal projects like pipelines, dams, and other infrastructure.

- Remove accountability for polluters.
- Give authority to federal agencies to exclude waterways from Clean Water Act safeguards.

Since 1972, the Clean Water Act has served as a bedrock environmental law, ensuring that our waters are protected from pollution and irresponsible development. It has been critical to improving water quality across the nation and in the watersheds of the Santa Barbara Channel.

At a time when the Santa Barbara Channel and surrounding watersheds are increasingly vulnerable to drought, agricultural runoff, oil infrastructure, and coastal development, the PERMIT Act would make it harder to use the federal Clean Water Act's authorities to protect water quality.

The PERMIT Act has passed the relevant House committee, and a full floor vote in the U.S. House of Representatives may take place soon.

What You Can Do

- Help defend the Clean Water Act and the waters that sustain our communities.
- Email or call your U.S. Representative and ask him or her to oppose the PERMIT Act (H.R. 3898). Click [here](#) to find their contact info.



Help Shape the Future of California's Coastline - Take the Ocean Access Survey!

How do you connect with the ocean? Whether it is for recreation, cultural practices, fishing, or simply enjoying the view, your experiences matter and are wanted to inform a statewide survey.

California Ocean Access and MPAs Project is conducting a research survey to better understand how Californians use, value, and connect with the ocean and coast. Funded by the California Ocean Protection Council, this research will help inform state and federal agencies on how future decisions are made about coastal access, environmental protections, and the impacts of social and regulatory changes.

Share your thoughts and your vision for the future of California's coast.

[Take Survey](#)



Girls in Ocean Science Conference Inspires the Next Generation of Marine Leaders

On September 27 and 28, the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum hosted the 5th annual Girls in Ocean Science Conference, a powerful two-day event aimed at connecting young women with careers in ocean science and environmental stewardship. Penny Owens, Channelkeeper's Education and Outreach Director, served as the conference co-chair.

The conference welcomed middle school students on Saturday and high school students on Sunday, transforming the Santa Barbara Channel into a dynamic learning environment. Through hands-on lab activities, field research at sea aboard the Double Dolphin and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Shearwater, and one-on-one mentorship, participants explored career opportunities in marine biology, oceanography, shark ecology, and environmental science.

Each day featured rotating science stations led by professionals from Coast Lab, Dewey Lab, Whale Safe, SeaSketch, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, and Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, giving students a well-rounded

and inspiring view of what's possible in STEM fields.

The Girls in Ocean Science Conference continues to be a beacon for young women interested in science, inspiring them with powerful experiences and showing them that the ocean is theirs to explore.



Thank You for Joining Us for Coastal Cleanup Day!

Channelkeeper was proud to once again serve as the site captain at West Beach for this year's Coastal Cleanup Day, and we're thrilled to share the impact our community made together.

On September 20, forty amazing volunteers showed up with passion and purpose! Together, we removed sixty-two pounds of trash from the coastline. With kitchen strainers in hand, our volunteers worked hard to sift out these tiny but harmful pieces of pollution that threaten marine life and ecosystems. A huge focus this year was on microtrash, and we found plenty, including cigarette butts, plastic bottle caps, Mylar wrappers, and Styrofoam bits. We collected approximately 837 cigarette butts, fifty-one drinking straws and stirrers, and fifty-three plastic utensils.

Coastal Cleanup Day is a global effort spanning over one hundred countries. Our colleagues at Explore Ecology do an incredible job organizing local efforts, and we're proud to play our part at West Beach. In Santa Barbara County this year, 1,038 volunteers collected 3,611 pounds of trash and recycling from thirty-three cleanup sites along sixty-one miles of coastline.

Thank you to everyone who came out to protect our coast. Let's keep the momentum going! Every piece picked up makes a difference!

Climate Fridays

Friday, October 4
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
CEC's Environmental Hub
1219 State Street, Santa Barbara

Climate Fridays – Spotlight on a Proposed Marine Protected Area
Friday, October 4
3:30 to 5:00 pm
CEC's Environmental Hub

Join CEC, the Society of Fearless Grandmothers Santa Barbara, and the Santa Barbara Sierra Club on the first Friday of each month to gather with fellow climate activists, students, allies, community partners, and friends. These monthly gatherings facilitate inspired grassroots action to combat climate change in quantifiable ways. Learn about regional climate change issues and how to take collective action and collaborate to protect our planet.

October's gathering will focus on a proposed Marine Protected Area called the Mishopshno State Marine Conservation Area off the coast of Carpinteria that would extend from just north of Loon Point to partway through Carpinteria Reef and will allow for recreational fishing from shore. The MPA would be co-managed by members of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and would include the western portion of Carpinteria Reef and the juvenile white shark habitat along Santa Claus Lane and Padaro Lane.

The October event will feature marine science expert guest speakers Azsha Hudson from the Environmental Defense Center and Sandy Aylesworth at the National Resources Defense Council.

[Register Here](#)

Report Lobster Traps



Lobster Season is Here - Help Keep Our Beaches Clean

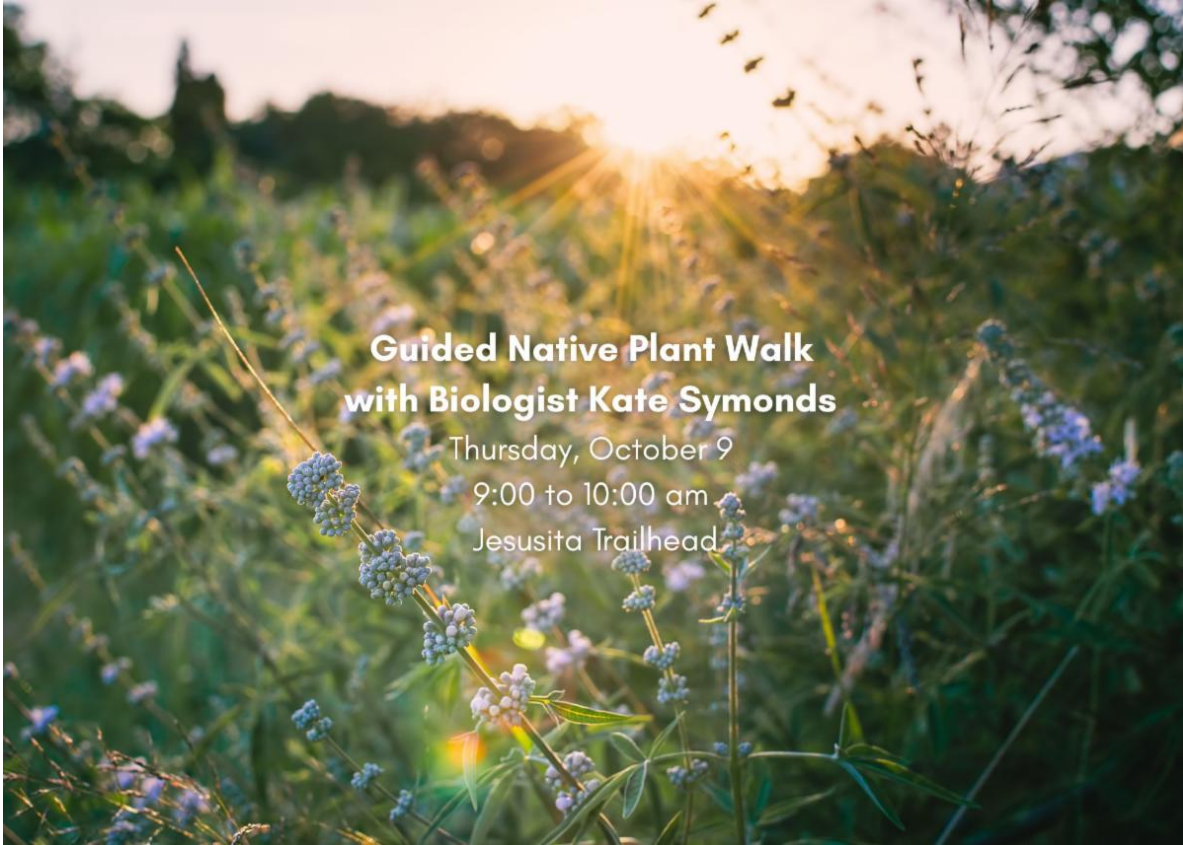
The California Spiny Lobster season opened in late September, kicking off lots of fishing activity along our coast. But along with the excitement comes the challenge of beached lobster traps.

Storms and heavy surf can wash these traps ashore, where they pose risks to wildlife and beachgoers. If you spot one, snap a photo of the trap's tag, note the location, and report it online [here](#).

Each tag includes information that identifies the trap's owner and the year it was set. Channelkeeper will share your report with the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife so the gear can be recovered and either responsibly disposed of or reused.

Your report helps gather important data and keep coastal ecosystems healthy.

[Report Traps](#)



**Guided Native Plant Walk
with Biologist Kate Symonds**

Thursday, October 9

9:00 to 10:00 am

Jesusita Trailhead

**Guided Native Plant Walk with Kate Symonds
Thursday, October 9
9:00 to 10:00 am**

Curious about the trees and shrubs that thrive in Santa Barbara's foothills? Join retired biologist Kate Symonds for a guided nature walk along the scenic Jesusita Trail, where we'll take a closer look at the native plants that call this region home.

Although many local species may look similar at first glance, they each have unique characteristics, ecological roles, and even traditional uses. During this slow-paced, 2–3 mile walk, you'll learn easy ways to identify common native trees and shrubs and gain a deeper appreciation for the biodiversity right in our backyard.

The group will start at the Cater Water Treatment plant at the north end of San Roque Road at 9:00 am and will walk along Jesusita Trail, which is relatively level with a few very short steep sections.

Parking is free but can be limited. It may be necessary to park down the hill and walk 1/4 mile up the paved road to the trailhead. Please add extra travel time for this possibility. Bring water, a hat, and sunscreen. And please, no dogs. The walk will be cancelled in the event of rain.

Come enjoy a peaceful morning outdoors, connect with nature, and sharpen your plant identification skills with fellow nature lovers!

Directions to the Jesusita Trailhead:

From Hwy 101 in Santa Barbara (coming from either direction), take exit 100 onto Las Positas Road.

Turn north (toward the mountains) onto Las Positas Road.

Take Las Positas Road toward the mountains for 1.9 miles. Note that about halfway there, you'll cross State Street, and Las Positas Road turns into Santa Roque Road. The Cater Water Treatment Plant and the Jesusita Trailhead will be

on the left.

This walk is part of Channelkeeper's Board Walk Series, which features events that set out to explore water from different perspectives and are designed for the community to understand humans' place in nature, especially with respect to life-giving water.



Santa Barbara Harbor and Seafood Festival

Saturday, October 18

10:00 am to 5:00 pm

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Harbor Way

Celebrate Santa Barbara Channel's bounty and engage with local commercial fishermen at the 22nd Annual Santa Barbara Harbor & Seafood Festival on Saturday, October 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Timed to coincide with the opening of lobster season, the festival showcases fresh, regional seafood along with live music, children's activities, vessel tours, and more.

The Harbor & Seafood Festival offers an interactive day for visitors and locals alike, reminding us that the Santa Barbara Harbor is a working harbor where more than 100 commercial fishermen land millions of pounds of seafood each year, adding \$30 million to the local economy and beyond.

Meet fishermen face-to-face. Visit specialty food booths for fish tacos, oysters, mussels, barbequed albacore, clam chowder, seafood paella, and more.

The Santa Barbara Harbor & Seafood Festival is presented by the City of Santa Barbara Waterfront Department, the Santa Barbara Harbor Merchants' Association, and the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara, along with various community partners and volunteers.



Mission Creek Cleanup
October 25th
9 am - 11 am

Mission Creek Cleanup
Saturday, October 25
9:00 am to 11 am
Oak Park

Mission Creek, which flows from the mountains through the heart of Santa Barbara, and empties into East Beach, is one of the city's most important urban waterways, and it needs our help. On October 25, the Watershed Brigade invites community members to roll up their sleeves and take action to protect our waterways.

Fall is the ideal time to clean our creeks. As rains return, trash that has built up in our neighborhoods and along creeks can be swept downstream, eventually polluting the ocean.

Volunteers will meet at Santa Barbara's Oak Park, near the stage, at 9:00 am. From there, the group will spread out along the creek to collect litter and debris. The terrain may be uneven, rocky, and damp, so we recommend sturdy shoes, long sleeves, and gloves. All ages are welcome, and this is a great opportunity for students, families, and nature lovers to make a visible impact in our community. Let's work together to keep our creeks clean and our ocean healthy.

[Sign Up](#)



Support Clean Water

Want to make a difference for the environment and your community? Making a tax-deductible contribution to Santa Barbara Channelkeeper today is an investment in clean beaches, healthy watersheds, and a more sustainable future.

Thank you for your support!

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