



Photo California State Lands Commission

## **Platform Holly Decommissioning Plan Moves Forward**

The decommissioning of Platform Holly, the offshore oil platform located in state waters off the coast of Goleta, has reached a long anticipated new phase. On January 22, 2026, the California State Lands Commission, acting as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), released a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Platform Holly Decommissioning Project. Over the next few weeks, the Commission will gather public comments from community members, Tribes, and agencies about the issues and impacts that should be studied. This is the first of several opportunities for public input on the decommissioning process.

The Draft EIR that will be developed will evaluate the potential environmental impacts of decommissioning activities and identify measures to avoid or reduce harm to coastal and marine resources. Public participation is critical to ensuring strong environmental protections as this long-awaited decommissioning process moves forward. The public comment period is open until March 6, 2026. Two hybrid scoping meetings will be held on February 19, 2026, at Goleta City Hall, with sessions at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Zoom links will be posted at least two weeks in advance.

Channelkeeper will be providing comments on Platform Holly's decommissioning.



### **Sediment Dumping Resumes at Goleta Beach**

In late January, Santa Barbara County began closing a large portion of the east end of Goleta Beach County Park to allow large trucks to dump sediment in beach waters. The sediment was removed from creeks and channels near the Goleta Slough following intense storms between December 23, 2025, and January 3, 2026. These storms led the County to declare a local emergency on January 9, 2026.

Sediment hauling and beach dumping are expected to begin February 2. Operations may continue five days a week, up to 12 hours a day, through March depending on weather conditions. While this work is being conducted under existing maintenance permits, Channelkeeper is concerned that it reflects a reactive, storm-by-storm approach rather than a proactive strategy that anticipates increasingly frequent and intense storms our region will likely be subject to due to climate change.

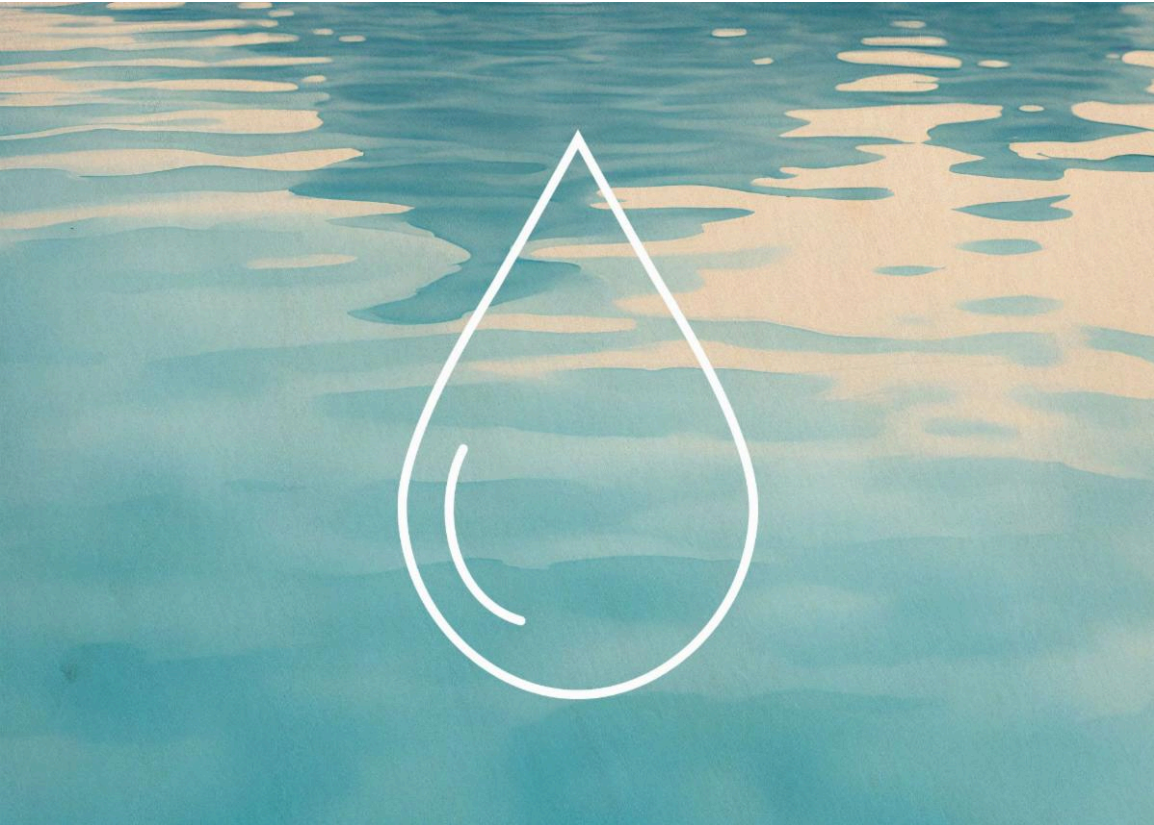
Sediment must move through our watersheds and ultimately reach the beach. However, in the lower Goleta Slough watershed, channelized streams, hardened infrastructure, and an airport built on the historic Goleta Slough floodplain have severely limited natural sediment movement. Flood control operations are tasked with removing sand, gravel, cobbles, wood debris, and organic matter from channels after storms for public safety. However, current practices to remove sediment and redeposit it on local beaches, stockpile it, or send it to the landfill are unsustainable and can be detrimental to stream ecosystems, wildlife, and beach water quality.

Channelkeeper has supported the County's Beach Sediment and Resilience Tactics (Beach SMART) initiative to help shift sediment management beyond

emergency response towards a more holistic, watershed-based approach that works with natural processes and better incorporates increasingly intense storms into long term planning and permitting. We continue to advocate for robust, long-term environmental monitoring, so the immediate and cumulative impacts of sediment removal and beach dumping are clearly understood.

As climate change accelerates storm intensity, improved planning approaches are needed to protect public safety and beach access while strengthening watershed health, coastal resilience and our shared natural resources.

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### **Stand Up for the Clean Water Act**

On January 13, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a proposed rule that would dramatically weaken Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, a critical provision that allows states and Tribes a role in protecting their rivers, wetlands, and coastal waters from pollution caused by federally permitted projects. Section 401 ensures that before a federal license or permit is issued for pipelines, dams, power plants, or other infrastructure projects, states and Tribes have an ability to review the project and ensure it complies with water quality standards.

The proposed rollback of Clean Water Act protections closely mirrors a Trump Administration rule finalized in 2020, which sharply limited state authority under Section 401. That rule was widely criticized, challenged in court, and ultimately withdrawn. In 2023, the Biden EPA restored longstanding state and Tribal protections under Section 401, consistent with decades of Clean Water Act implementation. Now, just two years later, EPA is once again proposing to roll those protections back.

The proposed rule would significantly constrain State and Tribal authority by:

- Limiting the scope of review, making it harder to address cumulative and long-term water quality impacts.
- Restricting states and Tribes' ability to impose conditions that projects must meet to protect local waters.
- Preventing states from requesting additional information needed to fully understand a project's impacts.
- Forcing rigid timelines that favor speed over sound science and public input.

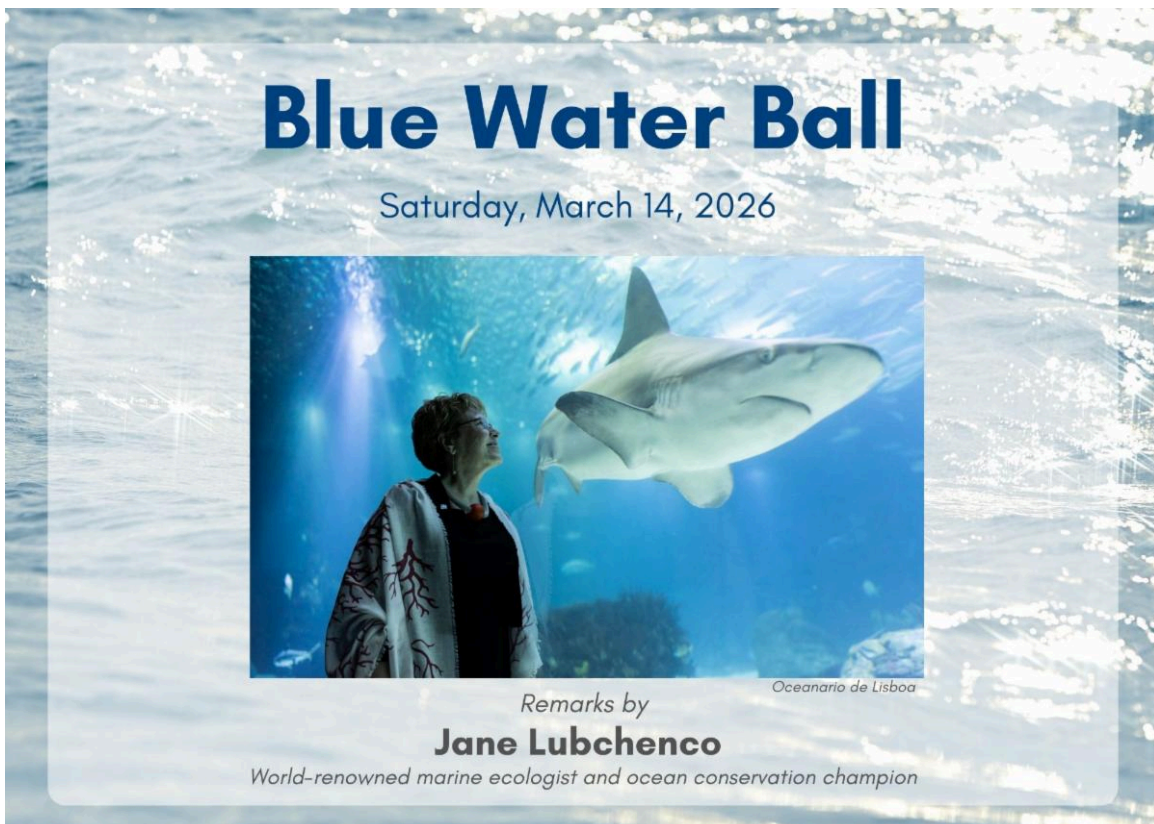
For coastal states like California, Section 401 has been an effective tool to prevent harmful projects from degrading waterways, wetlands, and nearshore marine ecosystems. It empowers states to consider the full range of water quality impacts beyond immediate discharges when evaluating projects that could affect drinking water, fisheries, wildlife habitat, and coastal resilience.

Weakening Section 401 would make it harder for California to protect the rivers and creeks that flow into the Santa Barbara Channel, as well as the wetlands and coastal waters that support fisheries, recreation, and marine biodiversity.

Public input is critical. Channelkeeper strongly opposes this proposed rollback and urges our supporters to submit comments and make their voices heard.

Click below to learn about engagement opportunities and how to submit written comments before the 30-day comment period closes on February 17.

[Submit Comments](#)



**Blue Water Ball**  
Saturday, March 14, 2026

Remarks by  
**Jane Lubchenco**  
*World-renowned marine ecologist and ocean conservation champion*

Oceanario de Lisboa

**Blue Water Ball**  
**Saturday, March 14**  
**5:00 PM - 9:00 pm**

## Cabrillo Pavilion

Channelkeeper is thrilled to host the Blue Water Ball on Saturday, March 14, 2026 at the seaside Cabrillo Pavilion. We hope you will join us for an evening of celebration for our 25th anniversary, with remarks by The Honorable Jane Lubchenco, world-renowned marine ecologist and one of the most influential ocean leaders of our time.

The event will be emceed by non-profit community leader Geoff Green and will include a special welcome from Chumash representative Mia Lopez. The evening will also include a multicourse dinner, local wines and brews, live music, raffle, and exciting auctions for art, gear, outdoor adventures, and more.

The Blue Water Ball raises critical funds that make it possible for Channelkeeper to protect our beaches, creeks, and coast, and defend your right to clean water and healthy habitats.

Channelkeeper's annual fundraiser and premier social gathering brings together ocean enthusiasts, community activists, civic leaders, business owners, and public officials for a lively and memorable evening. This year's event will celebrate our 25 years of clean water, healthy habitats, abundant wildlife, and thriving communities. Raise a glass with us to all that we've accomplished together, and to the exciting initiatives Channelkeeper has on the horizon.

We are honored to have Dr. Lubchenco join us. She was the first woman to lead the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration from 2009 to 2013, where she introduced science-based policies to help restore U.S. fisheries, guided the nation through major environmental crises, and shaped the first U.S. National Ocean Policy.

We have already sold half of the available tickets, so get your tickets or table sponsorship now before we sell out the event!

[Tickets](#)

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### **Students Explore Watershed Science with Channelkeeper**

In January, Channelkeeper led students from Adams Elementary School's Ocean Guardians Program for a hands-on watershed adventure that brought science, curiosity, and stewardship together in the field.

Our excursion began at Adams School with students exploring the bioswale around their field that drains into Arroyo Burro Creek. We then stopped at Arroyo Burro Open Space, where students learned about water quality and the important role of healthy creeks in our watersheds. Equipped with monitoring tools and guided by Channelkeeper staff, they collected creek water and tested it for pH, temperature, and salinity, learning how these indicators help tell the story of a healthy or imperiled waterway. Students asked thoughtful questions, shared observations, and discovered that science is fun!

From there, we followed the water's path downstream, tracing the journey from creek to coast. Our final stop was the estuary at Hendry's Beach, where students compared their upstream data with measurements taken where freshwater meets the ocean. Students were able to see firsthand how land, creeks, wetlands, and the Santa Barbara Channel are connected.

Experiences like this are at the heart of Channelkeeper's watershed education work. When young people learn by doing—testing water quality, making observations, and exploring nature—they build a deeper understanding of their local environment and identify ways they can help protect it. Acting as researchers and problem-solvers helps students see themselves as people who can care for the places they love.

That connection between knowledge, place, and personal responsibility is what turns curiosity into stewardship. It empowers students to recognize that clean water, healthy habitats, and thriving oceans depend on informed and engaged communities, and that they are already part of the solution.

We are proud to support and inspire the next generation of ocean stewards, and we're grateful to the Adams School Ocean Guardians for spending the day exploring, learning, and protecting this watershed with us.



### **Sherry Madsen Steps Away from Channelkeeper Board**

After more than 20 years of steadfast leadership, Channelkeeper bids a heartfelt thank you to board member Sherry Madsen, whose service helped shape the organization's clean water work and community impact.

Sherry's tenure on Channelkeeper's board of directors spans more than two decades of support and strategic guidance. She first joined the Channelkeeper board in the early years of the organization's history, contributing to the evolution of its mission to protect and restore the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds. Sherry served as Channelkeeper's Board President for several years, including during a critical time when the organization was successfully advocating for significant improvements to the City's aging sewer system to reduce sewage spills and reduce beach closures. Throughout her board service, Sherry was known for her thoughtful approach, deep commitment, and devotion to environmental causes.

Sherry brought professional expertise and a passion for service to the board. Her perspective as the former Vice President of Development for Planned Parenthood enriched Channelkeeper's ability to connect with donors, partners, and supporters, enabling the organization to sustain and grow its impact across Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

Through the years, Sherry played a role in guiding Channelkeeper through major milestones, from local advocacy victories and watershed protection initiatives to community education and volunteer mobilization. Whether she was advising on development initiatives or celebrating the organization's accomplishments, Sherry's presence on the board helped translate community energy into tangible outcomes for clean water. Though she will step away from the board, her legacy and influence will continue to be felt throughout the organization.

"Sherry's contributions to Channelkeeper's growth as a local conservation leader are significant and unmatched," said Ted Morton, Executive Director. "We have been so fortunate to have Sherry's passion and expertise guide us."

In acknowledging her departure, the board and staff extend deep gratitude for her longstanding commitment and leadership. Thank you, Sherry, for more than two decades of service, partnership, and unwavering advocacy for the Santa Barbara Channel.



Kathleen Knight



Dr. José Castro-Sotomayor

***Welcome Aboard!***



## **Dr. José Castro-Sotomayor and Kathleen Knight Join Channelkeeper Board**

As our organization continues to grow and evolve, we are thrilled to welcome two new board members to the Channelkeeper community. Their arrival strengthens our board with fresh ideas and diverse experience at a pivotal moment for clean water and coastal protection. Please join us in welcoming Dr. José Castro-Sotomayor and Kathleen Knight.

Dr. José Castro-Sotomayor is an Associate Professor of Environmental Communication at California State University Channel Islands. He is a research practitioner interested in environmental and intercultural dynamics of policy development and community outreach.

Kathleen Knight is an environmental and social activist focusing her efforts on Central Coast nonprofits. She currently serves as the Capacity Building Manager

for The Fund for Santa Barbara.

We look forward to the leadership and dedication they will bring as we continue working to safeguard the Santa Barbara Channel for generations to come.

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## An Evening with Captain Charles Moore

First Observer of the  
Great Pacific Garbage Patch



**An Evening with Captain Charles Moore**  
**Friday, February 20**  
**6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**  
**CEC Environmental Hub**

Join CEC and Channelkeeper for An Evening with Captain Charles Moore. The event will kick off with a short 2019 documentary by the Korean Broadcasting System exposing the devastation of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and featuring Captain Charles Moore, who first observed the garbage patch in 1997.

Moore is the founder of the Algalita Marine Research and Education and the Moore Institute for Plastic Pollution Research. His landmark study on microplastics in the North Pacific Gyre, showing that for every kilogram of plankton there are 6 kilograms of plastics, has been widely read and cited throughout science publications and the media. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Captain Moore. Please RSVP to join.

[RSVP](#)

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**West Beach Cleanup  
February 21  
9 am - 11 am**



**West Beach Cleanup  
Saturday, February 21  
9:00 am to 11:00 am**

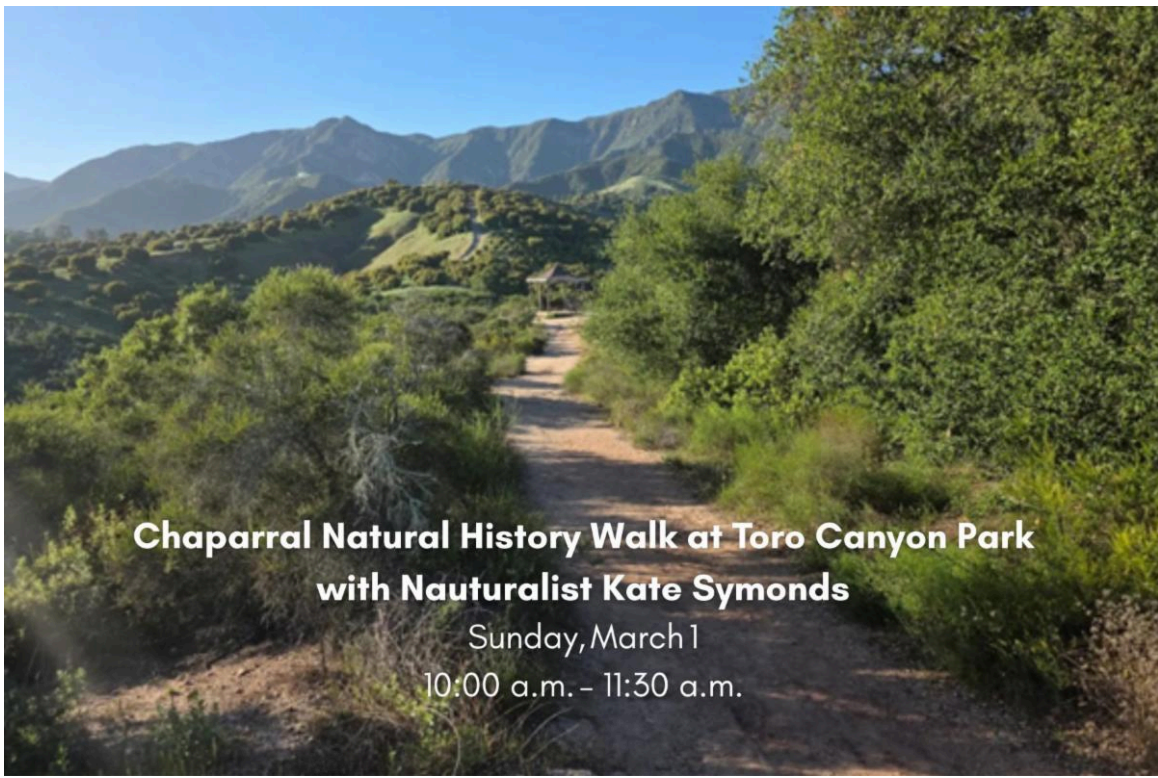
Join Channelkeeper's Watershed Brigade on Saturday, February 21 for a community beach cleanup focused on removing harmful trash and microplastics from the shoreline.

Microplastics—tiny fragments from broken-down plastics—accumulate on West Beach and pose a serious threat to marine life. Fish, birds, and invertebrates can mistake these particles for food, leading to injury, toxic exposure, and disruptions throughout the food web. By removing debris before it breaks down further, volunteers help protect ocean ecosystems and keep our coastline healthy.

Come lend a hand, meet fellow ocean-lovers, and help us care for West Beach. Every piece of trash removed makes a difference!

[Sign Up](#)

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**Chaparral Natural History Walk at Toro Canyon Park  
with Nauturalist Kate Symonds**

Sunday, March 1  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Channelkeeper Watershed Walk  
Chaparral Natural History Walk at Toro Canyon Park with Kate Symonds  
Sunday, March 1, 2026  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

Join Channelkeeper for an educational, guided/interpretive nature walk led by biologist/botanist Kate Symonds. We will explore Toro Canyon Park and learn about the native chaparral.

Toro Canyon Park is a beautiful 74-acre park tucked in the foothills between Summerland and Carpinteria. The park features a typical example of the native chaparral plant community, which consists of hardy, drought-tolerant shrubs. Although common in Southern California, chaparral is often under appreciated.

Please arrive early to find the meeting location and sign the participant waiver (no pre-sign up necessary). We will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. on a slow-paced walk for about one mile on a wide unpaved foot path, with 300 feet total elevation gain.

Participants should wear sturdy shoes and bring water and sunscreen. A hat and layers are recommended. Please leave your pets at home. In the event of light rain, the event will be rescheduled. Parking is free. There are restrooms close to the meeting spot. Cell service may be spotty to nonexistent.

**Meeting Location:** [Toro Canyon Park](#), Santa Barbara, CA 93108

From the 101 Freeway exit at Padaro Lane, turn toward the mountains. Turn right on Via Real. After 1/2 a mile, turn left on Toro Canyon Road. After 1.3 miles, turn right on Toro Canyon Park Road just after the large Toro Canyon Park sign. The actual park entrance is about one mile up this road on your left. There is no roadside sign indicating that you have arrived at the parking lot, so it is easy to miss and dead end at a private estate. We will meet at the upper end of the parking area near the large sandstone rock.

# OCEAN FORESTS

## Our Coastal Communities

January 24, 2026 - July 20, 2026



California Nature  
Art Museum

### Channelkeeper Featured in Ocean Forests Exhibit

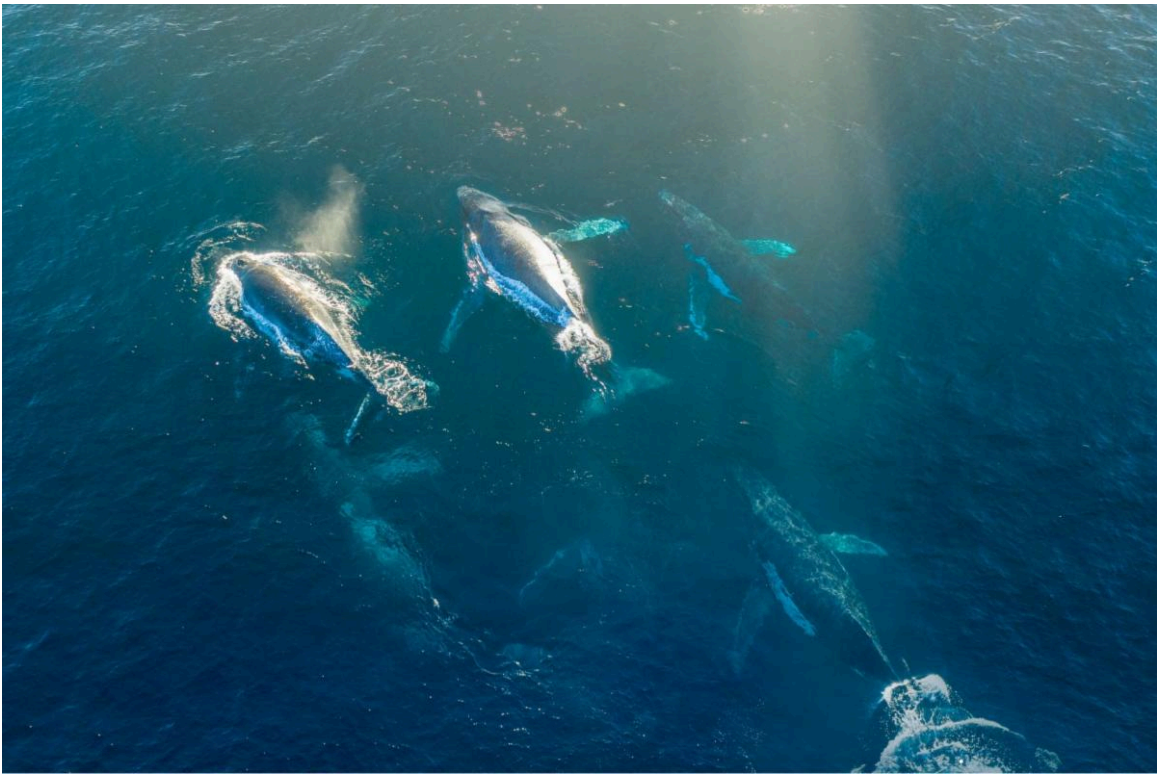
We're excited to share that Channelkeeper is being featured in a group exhibition at the California Nature Art Museum called [\*Ocean Forests: Our Coastal Communities\*](#), a celebration of the vital role kelp forests play along California's coast.

The exhibit highlights kelp forests through photography, block printing, and textile arts, with four celebrated artists sharing powerful stories of life woven through kelp ecosystems.

Often considered the rainforests of the sea, kelp forests are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems on the planet, and a cornerstone of a healthy Santa Barbara Channel. By blending art, science, and storytelling, *Ocean Forests* inspires deeper appreciation and advocacy for our coastal waters.

We are honored to be part of this creative effort to protect and celebrate our ocean forests and invite our supporters to visit the [California Nature Art Museum](#) in Solvang to enjoy the exhibit.

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### 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!

[Donate](#)





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