



### **Offshore Oil Production Resumes Amid Ongoing Concerns Over Pipeline Safety and Oversight**

On Friday, March 13, 2026, the Trump Administration issued an order under the Defense Production Act directing Sable Offshore Corp. to restart offshore oil development along the Gaviota Coast using the same onshore pipeline system responsible for the devastating 2015 oil spill. This action is a direct attempt to sidestep California's environmental protections and the regulatory systems designed to ensure pipeline safety and prevent ecological disaster.

Within just 24 hours of the order, Sable resumed operations and began pumping oil through the pipeline that ruptured over a decade ago, causing one of the worst oil spills in California's history. State officials, including the Fire Marshal, had determined last fall that the pipeline required additional repairs before it could be safely returned to service.

Sable's actions to restart the corroded pipeline system have been marked by controversy and a track record of disregarding rules and orders. The company has conducted unpermitted work in violation of state-issued cease-and-desist orders, culminating in an unprecedented \$18 million fine from the California Coastal Commission. The Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office has brought multiple criminal charges against the company, including five felony counts, for violations of state environmental rules.

The restart of pipeline operations raises concerns about public safety, environmental protection, and potential economic impacts associated with a future spill. The Gaviota Coast is a largely undeveloped portion of California's shoreline and is environmentally sensitive.

The community has made its position clear. Time and again, Santa Barbara residents have shown up in large numbers to oppose renewed offshore drilling and the risks it brings.

On March 23, California State Attorney General Rob Bonta filed a lawsuit challenging the use of the Defense Production Act to order a restart of oil development off the Gaviota Coast. The lawsuit asserts the Defense Production Act does not provide the Trump Administration with authority to override state and federal environmental laws or to exempt private companies from compliance with existing regulations and court orders. It also claims that the order is a violation of the Separation of Powers between the executive and judicial branches because it attempts to override the consent decree that settled claims from the 2015 spill and established a process for restarting the offshore production at the Santa Ynez Unit off Gaviota Coast.

On March 14, California State Parks issued a letter demanding that Sable remove its pipeline from State Park property. The pipeline currently runs through four miles of Gaviota State Park, and the easement pertaining to the pipeline expired in 2017.

Additionally, the California State Lands Commission (CSLC), the agency that issues leases for the use of tidal and submerged public trust lands, held an emergency meeting on March 16, to authorize staff to pursue litigation if necessary to address Sable's reliance on the Defense Production Act. Channelkeeper joined other organizations in voicing support for this action at the CSLC meeting.

Channelkeeper continues to work alongside the Environmental Defense Center and other environmental organizations to mobilize, advocate, and pursue legal and regulatory avenues to halt offshore drilling operations along the Gaviota Coast.

What happens next will shape the future of the Gaviota Coast and potentially set a precedent for how environmental protections are upheld nationwide.

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### **California Department of Fish and Wildlife Releases Evaluations of MPA Petitions & Sets Regional Public MPA Petitions Meetings in Santa Barbara Area on May 5 & 6**

In 2023, the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC) received twenty petitions submitted by individuals, non-profit organizations, scientists, and fishermen that proposed changes to the state's successful and globally renowned Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network. Several petitions include changes to MPAs in the Santa Barbara Channel.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) divided the twenty petitions into two bins for review and evaluation. Bin 1 consisted of 5 petitions that CDFW evaluated and made recommendations on. These recommendations were approved by the FGC in 2025.

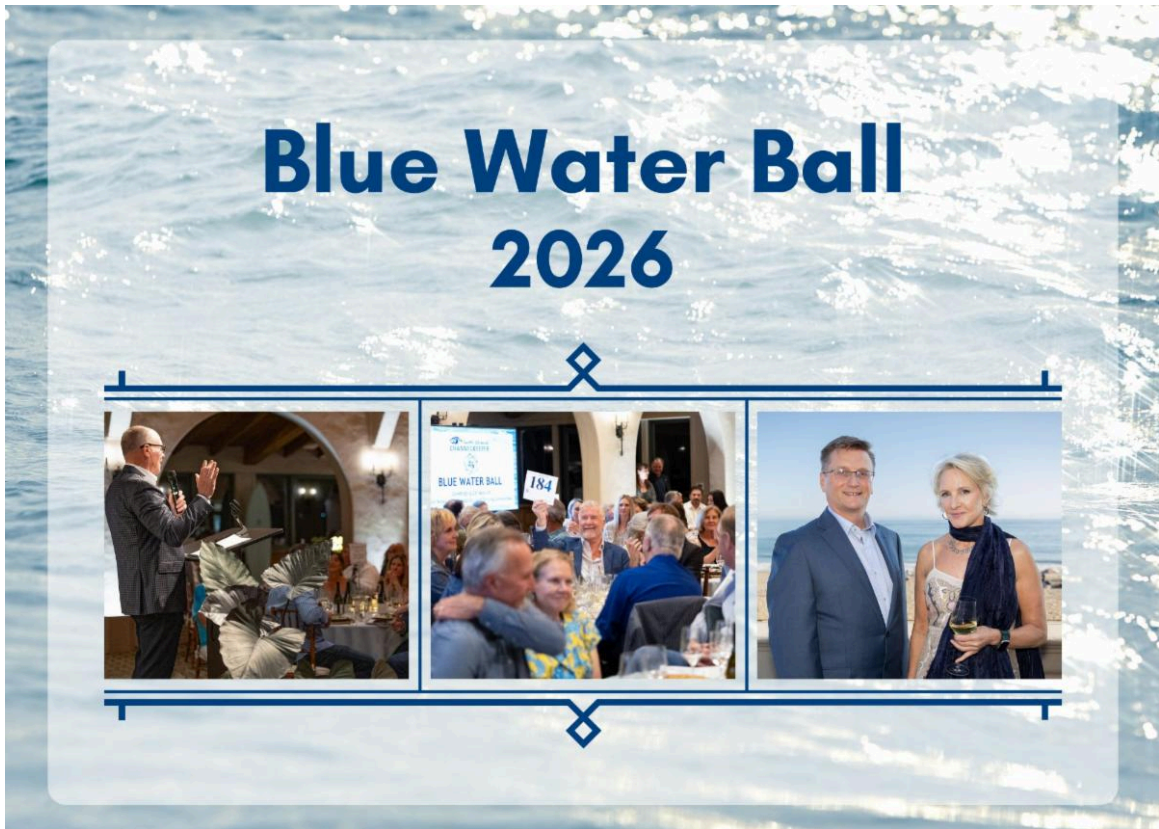
Bin 2 consisted of 15 petitions. On March 20, CDFW evaluations and recommendations for ten of the bin 2 petitions were released. The remaining five petitions are all tribally led and still undergoing review. CDFW will receive guidance from the FGC's Tribal Committee on these petitions at its April 14 meeting and then complete their evaluations. Information about all MPA petitions and the recently released evaluations can be found at the CDFW's MPA petition [StoryMap](#) website.

The FGC will receive the MPA petition evaluations at their next meeting on April 15-16 and there will be additional public meetings in late April and early May to discuss the MPA petitions.

The regional public Commission meetings for petitions in the Santa Barbara Channel and along our coast are scheduled for May 5 and 6 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Goleta.

The other regional MPA petition meetings will be held on April 21 in San Mateo and on May 19 in San Clemente. Meeting details can be found on [FGC's website](#).

Please consider attending a regional meeting to voice your support for a strong MPA Network.



### **Celebrating 25 Years of Impact at the 2026 Blue Water Ball**

We are profoundly grateful to everyone who joined us on March 14 to celebrate Channelkeeper's twenty-five years of protecting and restoring the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds. Blue Water Ball 2026 blended celebration with purpose, raising critical funds to support our ongoing environmental work.

The evening opened with a welcome song by Chumash leader Mia Lopez, followed by remarks from California Assemblymember Gregg Hart, who emphasized the importance of collaboration in advancing ocean protection. Guests enjoyed local wines, beer, live music by Tony Ybarra, and a lively auction led by emcee Geoff Green.

After dinner by Solera & Co., executive director Ted Morton reflected on Channelkeeper's legacy of science-based advocacy, education, fieldwork, and community engagement and our efforts to connect people with nature, science with action, and ideas with policies for a better future. The evening also highlighted Channelkeeper's efforts to protect the coast from expanded offshore oil drilling and other environmental threats.

The event raised more than \$190,000 to support key programs, including water quality monitoring, community cleanups, student education, and policy advocacy. We are grateful for support from partners like the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash

Indians Foundation and Montecito Bank & Trust, and the many individual sponsors and guests, who contributed to the successful, fun event and Channelkeeper's core work ahead.

The Blue Water Ball served as both a reflection on past achievements and a powerful reminder of what community-driven environmental action can accomplish.

Click below to view photos from the evening by [Emily Hart-Roberts](#).

## Photo Gallery



### **California Redirects Pollution Fines, Turning Penalties Into Solutions**

Water pollution in California has long followed a familiar pattern: communities bear the burden, regulators issue fines, and the money rarely makes its way back to the places that need it most. Today, a major shift is underway, and it could have positive impacts along the Central Coast.

This month, the State Water Board advanced a new funding program that will direct more than \$20 million in pollution penalties toward cleaning up waterways and investing in frontline communities. The funding comes from the state's Cleanup and Abatement Account and is made up of money collected through enforcement actions against polluters. Historically, these funds have not always been reinvested in the communities and ecosystems harmed by pollution. The new program changes that by prioritizing projects that restore water quality and support impacted areas. The plan allocates \$15 million for regional cleanup and water quality improvement projects, along with \$5 million specifically for disadvantaged and Tribal communities.

This progress builds on years of state-level advocacy led by the California Coastkeeper Alliance, a coalition of California Waterkeeper organizations that Channelkeeper is a part of, to ensure that pollution fines support the recovery of the people and places harmed.

For communities surrounding the Santa Barbara Channel, this could mean investments in projects like cleaning up contaminated creeks and coastal waters, improving access to safe and reliable drinking water, supporting community-based water monitoring, and empowering local organizations to lead solutions on the ground.



**Climate Fridays Santa Barbara:  
Advancing Marine Protection on the Central Coast  
Friday, April 3  
4:00 to 5:30 p.m.  
CEC's Environmental Hub  
1219 State St., Santa Barbara**

Join Community Environmental Council, the Society of Fearless Grandmothers Santa Barbara, and the Santa Barbara Sierra Club to learn about efforts to form a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Santa Barbara County. Panelists include: Azsha Hudson, the Environmental Defense Center's Marine Conservation Analyst and Program Manager; Bella Sullivan, The Natural Resources Defense Council's (NRDC) Next Wave Ocean Fellow; and Lennon Thomas, UC Santa Barbara Environmental Markets Lab Senior Project Scientist. They will highlight the critical role MPAs play in sustaining our ocean, assess the performance of California's MPA network, and discuss how we can expand it. Come learn, connect with your community, and discover ways to take action for the future of our ocean!

Climate Fridays Santa Barbara are monthly gatherings for activists, students, partners, and community members to learn about regional climate change issues,

take collective action, and collaborate to protect our planet.

[Register](#)



**Help Remove Beached Lobster Traps  
Saturday, April 11  
10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
Goleta Beach**

Attention, volunteers! Channelkeeper has identified an onshore lobster trap debris hotspot near Blackrock Beach in Goleta.

On April 11, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., your assistance is needed to dig out buried lobster traps and place them at collection points along the beach where they will be loaded onto a commercial fishing vessel and transported to the Santa Barbara Harbor for reuse or proper disposal.

This is the sixth year of shoreline cleanup collaborations with the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara!

In addition to cluttering up our beaches, derelict lobster traps can entangle marine wildlife, release microplastics, and create safety hazards for beachgoers. We hope you'll join us and help get these traps off of the beach!

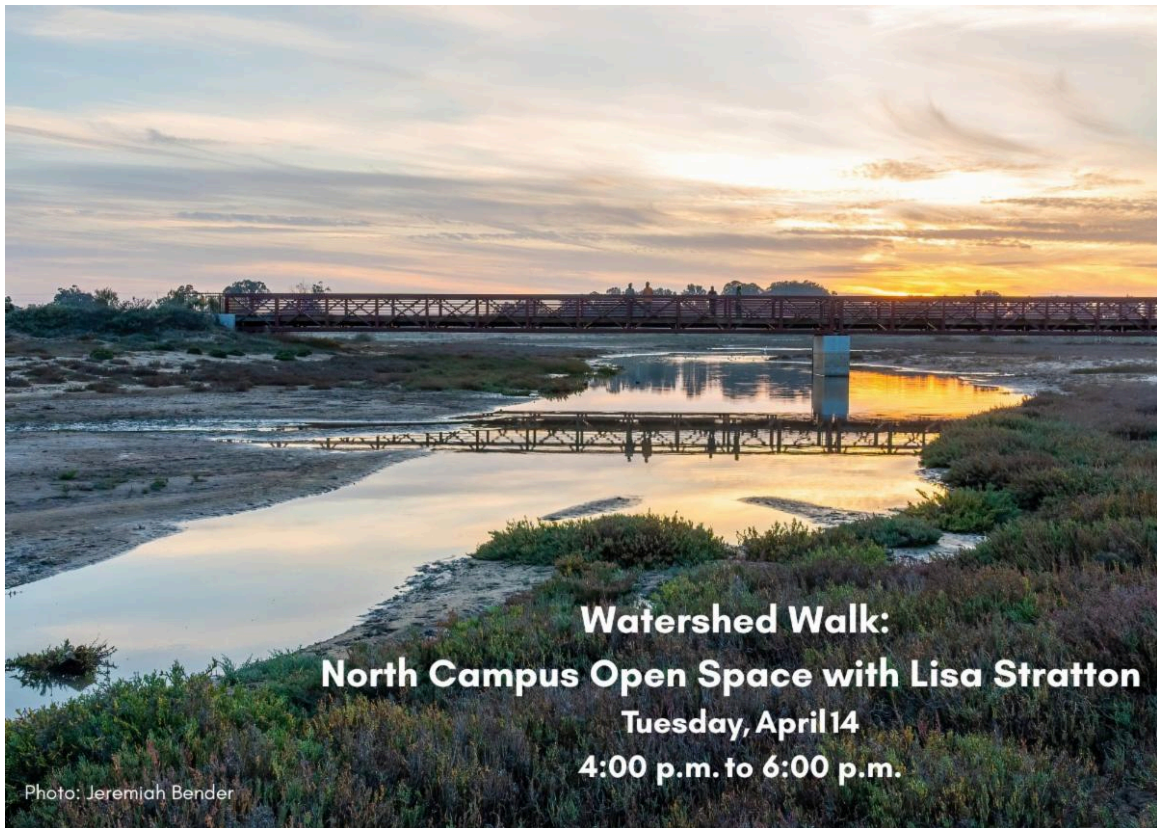
Volunteers will gather at Goleta Beach and will walk down the beach towards More Mesa to remove traps. Protective clothing and closed-toe shoes are required as traps can have sharp edges.

Volunteers will use shovels, bolt cutters, and pry bars to dig out buried traps, remove rocks and debris, and stage traps in piles for removal offshore to a

commercial fishing boat. The Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara will provide vessel support to load traps and transport them to the Santa Barbara Harbor.

We're excited to work together on this community event and we hope you'll join us! Sign up below!

[Sign Up](#)



**Watershed Walk: North Campus Open Space with Lisa Stratton, Ph.D.  
Tuesday, April 14, 2026  
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Join Lisa Stratton, Ph.D., Director of Ecosystem Management at the University of California Santa Barbara's Cheadle Center, for a walking tour of North Campus Open Space. Formerly Ocean Meadows Golf Course, North Campus Open Space features restored wetland habitat and more than two miles of trails. Enjoy the beauty of this area as you learn about the natural history of the Devereux Slough, sensitive species now thriving in this area, and the science and community engagement involved in restoration of this 136-acre wetland and upland habitat.

Free parking is available for the event at 6969 Whittier Drive. Please arrive early to find the meeting location and sign a participant waiver. We will begin promptly at 4:00 p.m. with introductions and then an easy/moderate walk around NCOS.

Participants should wear comfortable walking shoes, a hat and/or sunscreen, and layers in case it gets windy or chilly. Bring a water bottle and binoculars (if you have them!). Please leave your pets at home.

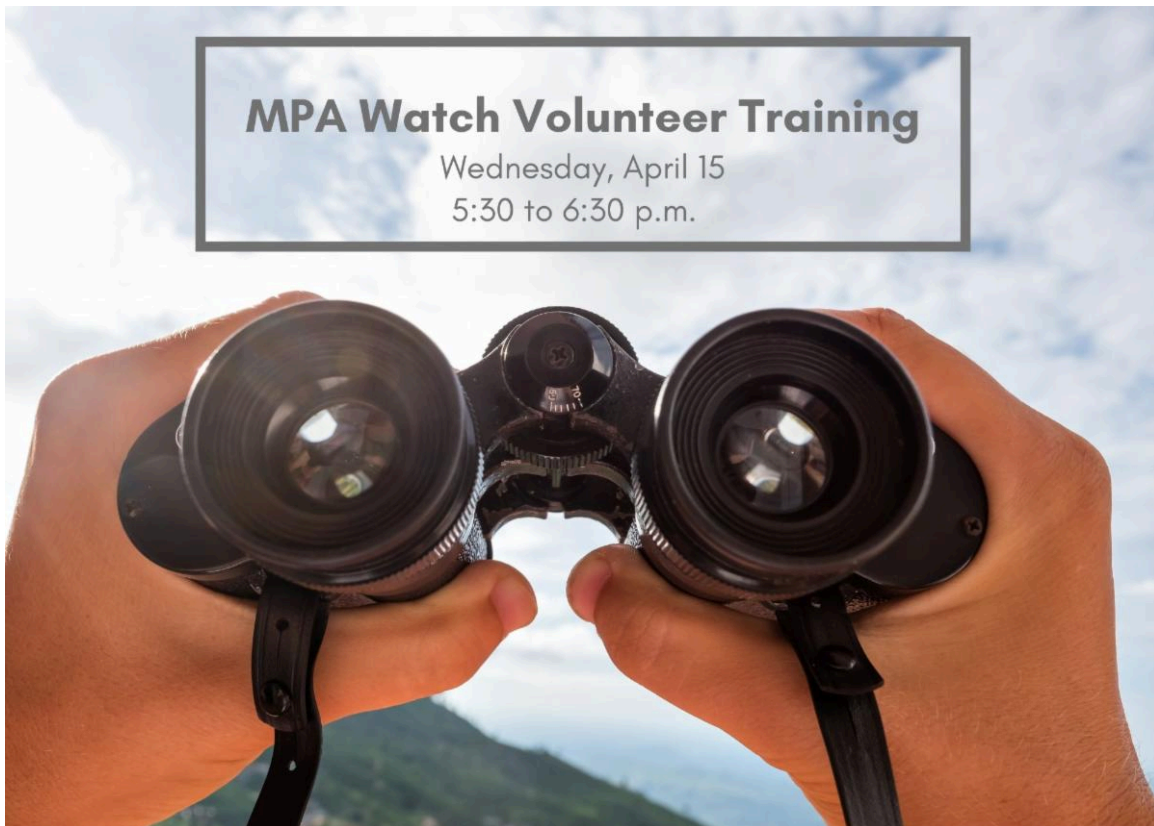
Please register for this free event below. Although registration is not required, we encourage you to sign up ahead of time to receive timely updates about the event.

Thank you to the **Cheadle Center** for hosting this event.

**Meeting Location:** North Campus Open Space. Meet at the Carlton-Duncan Visitor Plaza next to the parking area. (Google Maps)  
From the 101 Freeway driving north, exit at Stork Road, turn toward the ocean. Turn right on Whittier Drive and park at 6969. Then walk south to the Carlton-Duncan Visitor Plaza.

Parking is free. There are restrooms close to the meeting spot. In the event of rain, the event will be rescheduled.

[Register](#)



## **MPA Watch Volunteer Training**

Wednesday, April 15  
5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

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**5:30 to 6:30 p.m.**

Are you interested in becoming an MPA Watch volunteer? Sign up for Channelkeeper's Virtual Training on April 15th from 5:30 to 6:30 pm.

Channelkeeper's MPA Watch program conducts surveys of human use activities in our local marine protected areas (MPAs) at Campus Point MPA (IV/Goleta), Naples MPA, and Kashtayit MPA (Gaviota State Beach). The data collected helps to inform MPA monitoring and enforcement efforts. Surveys involve walking a designated transect along the beach at the MPAs mentioned above and recording all human use activities observed on the beach or just offshore. Volunteers are

asked to conduct three surveys per month and surveys are conducted independently.

The volunteer training workshop will take place virtually and will be followed on a later date by a one-hour field training session at Campus Point in the Campus Point MPA. Click below to sign up for the volunteer training workshop.

[Register](#)

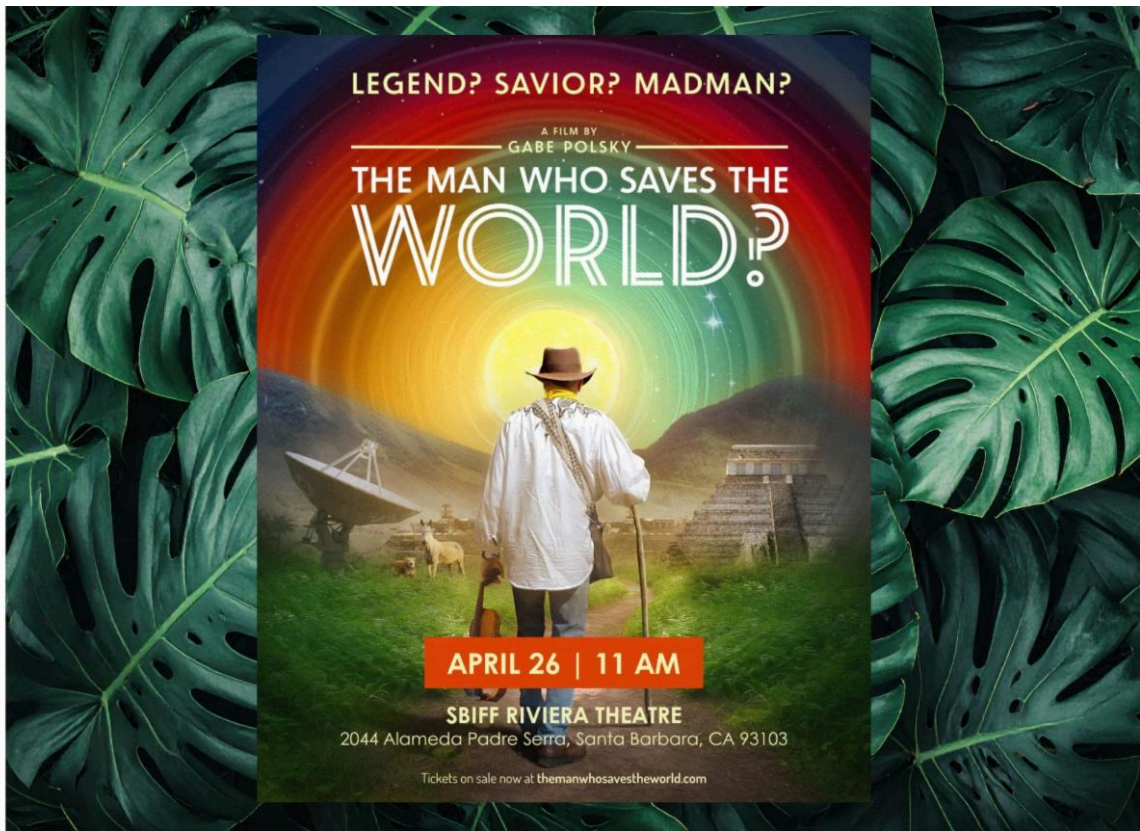


**Earth Day 2026  
Saturday and Sunday, April 25 & 26  
Alameda Park**

We're excited to participate in this year's Earth Day Festival hosted by the Community Environmental Council!

We hope you'll join us on April 25 and 26 in Alameda Park for two days of inspiring events focused on the environment, live music performances, great speakers, a green car show, and the Environmental Hero Awards presentation. Stop by Channelkeeper's booth to say hi, learn more about our programs, and spin the wheel to win prizes!

The 2026 theme is: Our Power, Our Planet, reminding us that environmental progress doesn't depend on any single administration or election. It's sustained by the daily actions of communities, educators, workers, and families protecting where they live and work.



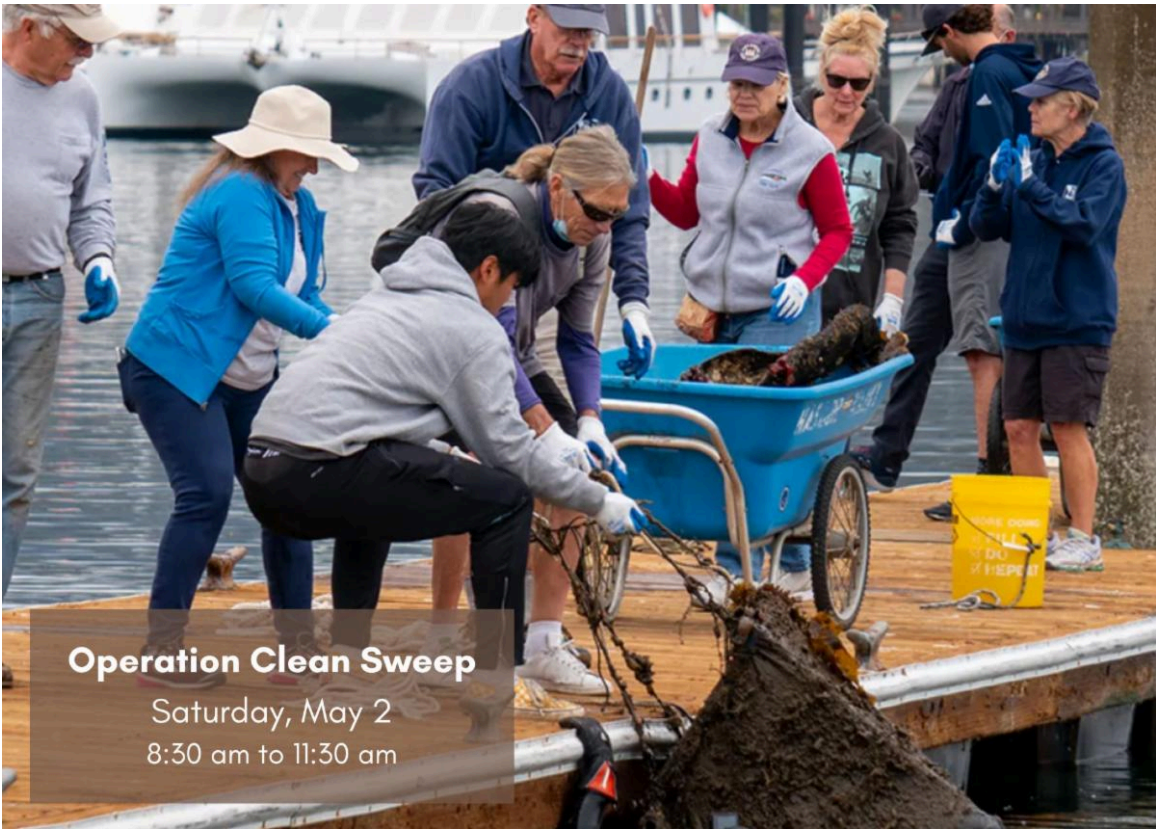
**Film Screening: The Man Who Saves the World?  
Sunday, April 26  
Riviera Theater**

This month, our friends at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival are hosting a special screening of a powerful and thought-provoking documentary. **The Man Who Saves the World?**, directed by Gabe Polsky, will premiere at the Riviera Theatre on April 26, 2026.

The evening will feature a special live Q&A with Polsky, moderated by Roger Durling, executive director of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival, offering attendees a chance to go deeper into the film's themes and behind-the-scenes journey.

The story follows Patrick McCollum, an unlikely hero drawn into an Indigenous prophecy that may hold implications for the future of the Amazon—and the planet. Both moving and unexpectedly funny, the film invites viewers to reflect on our connection to the Earth and to one another.

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## Operation Clean Sweep

Saturday, May 2  
8:30 am to 11:30 am

### **Volunteers Needed for Harbor Cleanup Saturday, May 2 8:00 a.m.**

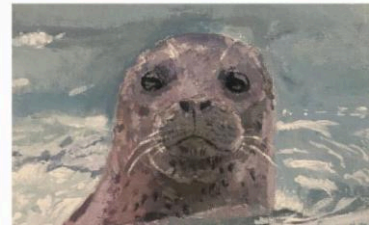
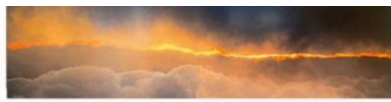
Santa Barbara Harbor's Operation Clean Sweep, a seafloor debris cleanup program, will hold its 15th annual event on Saturday, May 2. A team of volunteer divers, supported by volunteer dock workers, will remove junk from beneath the Marina. Divers will locate the junk and dock volunteers will cart it off for disposal.

During past events, volunteers removed over twenty tons of debris from Santa Barbara Harbor, including bicycles, plastic barrels, boat propellers, outboard engines, phones, and marine batteries.

The event begins at 8:00 am, with a briefing on the Travel Lift Pier beneath the Harbormaster's Office, complete with free coffee and donuts. It concludes with lunch at 11:30 am.

We always look forward to joining the City of Santa Barbara's Waterfront Department for this great event.

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**You're Invited to Celebrate Student Artists at Channelkeeper's Annual Student Art Show Reception  
Thursday, May 7  
5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

With its colorful array of shapes, textures, contours, and patterns, the artwork produced by local teens for Channelkeeper's Student Art Show honors the remarkable beauty and biodiversity of the Santa Barbara Channel, and it also inspires our community to protect it.

For over twenty years, high school students from Carpinteria to Lompoc have been invited to create and submit their interpretations of what the Santa Barbara Channel means to them. Their artwork is featured at an artists' reception in order to inspire our community to protect the Santa Barbara Channel.

We hope you'll join us in celebrating the artists and the show's twenty-year legacy at a student reception on Thursday, May 7, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Jodi House Gallery at 625 Chapala Street in Santa Barbara.

We would like to thank show sponsors Trillium Enterprise, Inc. and the City of Goleta Grant Program for their generous support.

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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!

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