

VISIT SANTA BARBARA

August 7, 2023

Harry Eckman
Chief Executive Officer
World Cetacean Alliance

Dear Mr. Eckman:

I am writing to voice my support and enthusiasm for the designation of the Santa Barbara Channel as an official Whale Heritage Area. The Santa Barbara Channel could not be a more perfect location to receive global recognition as a Whale Heritage Area: It is one of the more biologically productive ecosystems found on earth, supporting a high diversity of marine species including whales and dolphins; of the 90 or so different species of whales and dolphins found around the world, 27 different species have been documented in our local waters.

My organization, Visit Santa Barbara, is the official destination marketing group in charge of promoting the Santa Barbara South Coast for tourism. Our regional economy is highly dependent on tourism, and our natural environment and open spaces—on land and at sea—are a big part of Santa Barbara's appeal as a globally-renowned vacation destination. Whale watching excursions have long been popular with our visitors, and Visit Santa Barbara works closely with the local tour operators, adventure outfitters and cultural institutions that connect the public with these inspiring experiences through up-close encounters and education.

A World Cetacean Area distinguishes locations around the world that are sustainable travel destinations where whales and dolphins (cetaceans) are embraced in the local culture, economics, politics and social fabric of the community. Celebrating our Native American Chumash heritage and the tribe's close relationship to the sea, along with encouraging and facilitating responsible tourism, are of utmost importance in Visit Santa Barbara's work. We strive to preserve and renew our abundant natural treasures and resources for the benefit of residents and visitors alike—and for the enjoyment of future generations. This special designation would contribute to that mission.

Furthermore, Visit Santa Barbara can leverage the designation to shine a spotlight on the pressing challenges facing the health of whale populations. We will continue to encourage visitors to experience the joy and awe of witnessing the majestic creatures firsthand and would promote the designation on an ongoing basis through our various marketing channels, be it social media, public relations, group sales, travel trade education or e-newsletters.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kathy Janega-Dykes
President & CEO, Visit Santa Barbara