

# Staff Report 51

## APPLICANT:

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

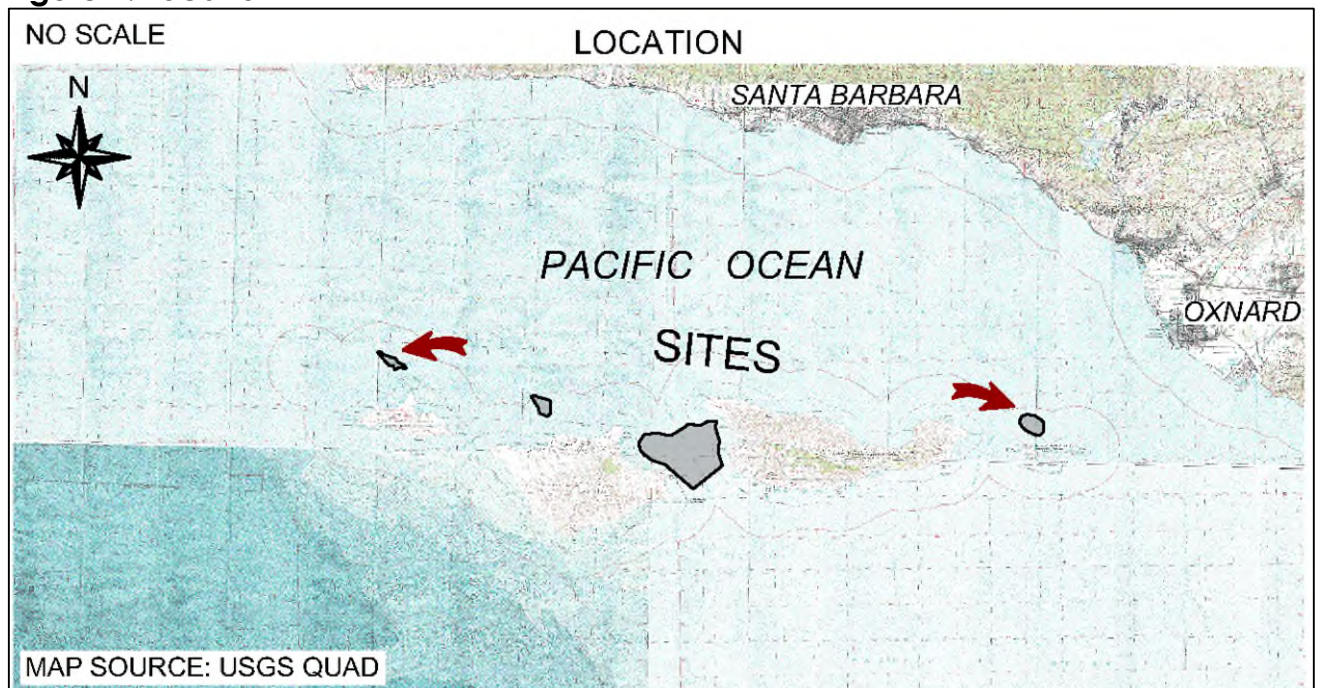
## PROPOSED ACTION:

Issuance of a Non-Exclusive Geological Survey Permit.

## AREA, LAND TYPE, AND LOCATION:

Sovereign land in four predetermined offshore survey areas in Southern California, including North of Anacapa Island, Northwest of San Miguel Island, North of Santa Rosa Island, and within the Santa Cruz Passage between Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties (as shown in Figure 1).

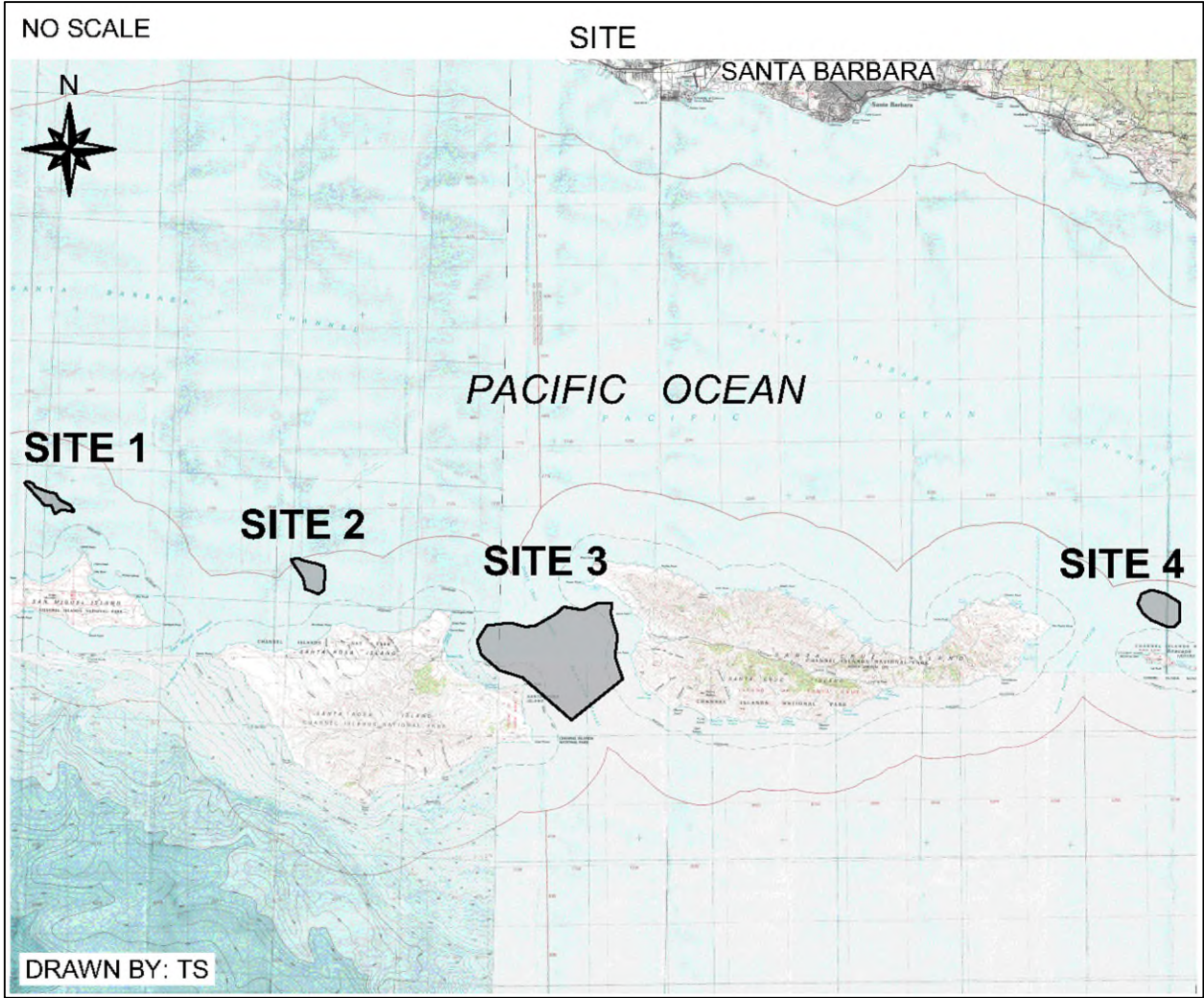
**Figure 1. Location**



**AUTHORIZED USE:**

Collection of geological data by vibracore, boxcore, multicore, and scoop methods (as shown in Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Site Map**



NOTE: This depiction of the lease premises is based on unverified information provided by the Applicant or other parties and is not a waiver or limitation of any State interest in the subject or any other property.

**TERM:**

1 year, beginning October 14, 2025.

**SPECIFIC PERMIT PROVISIONS:**

The general terms of this Geological Survey Permit require the permittee to provide staff with advance notification of operations and the specifications of the equipment to be employed. Staff may obtain copies of all geological data derived from any and all surveys under this permit upon request.

**STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:**

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**AUTHORITY:**

Public Resources Code sections 6005, 6212.2, 6216, and 6301.

**PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County applied for a 1-year Geological Survey Permit to collect geological and geotechnical data from sovereign land in 30 locations within four predetermined offshore survey areas in Southern California, including North of Anacapa Island, Northwest of San Miguel Island, North of Santa Rosa Island, and within the Santa Cruz Passage between Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands. The permit will enable the collection of vibracores, boxcores, multicores, and scoop samples. Vibracores will be 4-inch diameter and up to 20-feet long. Boxcores will be 50 centimeters by 50 centimeters by 1 meter long. Multicores include 8 tubes of 3-inch diameter and 1 meter long. Any scoop samples will be obtained by using the arm on the remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and samples will be small, less than 1 liter. The Applicant, working with San Diego State University and the University of California, San Diego, plan to collect vibracores at the 30 locations across the four regions. Boxcores and multicores may be attempted in muddy sediment. Of the 30 locations, only five or less locations are currently expected to meet this criterion. Geophysical surveying may also be conducted to identify coring locations. A geophysical permit was issued to the University of California, San Diego on December 17, 2024 ([Item 50, December 17, 2024](#)).

The geological sampling covered under this permit supports the collection of data to reconstruct the geological and environmental history of the Channel Islands continental shelf over the last 20,000 years.

The proposed locations are within or near the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park, Anacapa Island State Marine Conservation Area and Anacapa Island State Marine Reserve, Harris Point State



Marine Reserves, Harris Point Federal Marine Reserve, Carrington Point State Marine Reserve, and Skunk Point State Marine Reserves, and may extend onto Anacapa Island Federal Marine Reserves.

The Applicant has obtained a Scientific Collecting Permit from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Permit. The Applicant has reached out and received the support of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.

The research cruise is currently scheduled from November 26 to December 2, 2025, which includes transit days to and from San Diego. Sampling activities are expected to take a total of 5 days with 24-hour operations.

California courts have recognized the collection of data for scientific study on lands subject to the Public Trust as a use consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine. (See, e.g., *Marks v. Whitney* (1971) 6 Cal.3d 251, 259-260.) Additionally, California Public Resources Code section 6212.2 expressly permits the Commission to issue permits for the taking of cores or other samples for the purpose of obtaining geological information so long as the activity is not for the purpose of commercial exploration or exploitation.

The proposed permit contains restrictions to safeguard public rights and environmental resources. Furthermore, all work must be conducted in an environmentally conscientious manner. The drilling contractor will take all necessary precautions to minimize environmental impacts, including but not limited to disposing of all drilling fluids and cuttings in a safe and legal manner. In addition, the permit grants non-exclusive use of the permit area to the permittee, and the defined work must be completed within 1 year.

For all the reasons above, staff believe that approving the permit application does not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values and is in the best interests of the State. Staff recommend approval of this Non-Exclusive Geological Survey Permit application.

#### **TRIBAL CONSULTATION:**

The Commission recognizes the unique burdens and equity challenges faced by Tribal Communities. In addition to its 2016 Tribal Consultation Policy, which sets forth a framework for effective communication and consultation with tribal governments, the Commission's Environmental Justice Policy contains several principles and commitments aimed at honoring the importance of ancestral homelands and the

state's unique relationship with tribes and tribal communities. The applicant included a letter of support from the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians indicating their collaboration and partnership on the project. Commission staff reached out to the Tribe to confirm their collaboration and partnership with the Applicant. As of the posting of this staff report, staff has not received a response from the Tribe.

## **OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

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1. Approval or denial of the application is a discretionary action by the Commission. Each time the Commission approves or rejects the use of sovereign land, it exercises legislatively delegated authority and responsibility as trustee of the State's Public Trust lands as authorized by law. If the Commission denies the application, the Applicant will not be authorized to conduct geological surveys on sovereign land. Upon expiration or prior termination of the permit, the applicant has no right to a new permit or to renewal of any previous permit.
2. This action is consistent with the "Meeting Evolving Public Trust Needs" Strategic Focus Area of the Commission's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
3. Staff recommends that the Commission find that this activity is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 6, Information Collection; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15306.

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061.

## **APPROVALS OBTAINED:**

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- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

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It is recommended that the Commission:

**CEQA FINDING:**

Find that the activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061 as a categorically exempt project, Class 6, Information Collection; California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15306.

**PUBLIC TRUST AND STATE'S BEST INTERESTS:**

Find that proposed Permit will not substantially interfere with Public Trust needs and values; is consistent with the common law Public Trust Doctrine; and is in the best interests of the State.

**AUTHORIZATION:**

Authorize issuance of a Non-Exclusive Geological Survey Permit to the Applicant to conduct geological surveys for one year, beginning October 14, 2025, to gather geological data by conducting core sampling as described in the Permit.