

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 21, 2026

The Honorable Neil Jacobs
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Administrator Jacobs:

We write to express our strong opposition to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) out-of-cycle performance evaluation of the California Coastal Management Program (CCMP) undertaken just one year after the previous evaluation was completed. This unprecedented review threatens to disrupt 48 years of successful coordination between the State of California and the federal government to protect California's coast. The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) relies on a robust, voluntary partnership between federal and state governments to ensure that all coastal development projects are carried out thoughtfully, prudently, and in alignment with both the state's priorities and the goals of the law. This extraordinary federal review which singles out California is based upon a thinly veiled and non-evidential argument. It is an attempt to curb our state's federally approved authority to evaluate offshore energy, infrastructure, and commercial activities. We ask that if you proceed with this review, you commit to respecting states' rights and cooperative federalism as is consistent with the CZMA.

The purpose of the CZMA is to require collaboration between participating coastal states and the federal government to further both preservation and development goals and "to achieve wise use of the land and water resources of the coastal zone." (16 USC 1452(2)). California has advanced this purpose by carefully reviewing, seeking to improve where appropriate, and ultimately approving the vast majority of projects impacting its coastal zone.

For this reason, it is strange that in a letter from Commerce Secretary Lutnick to the National Economic Council, the Secretary inexplicably claims that "California has repeatedly obstructed spaceport development in bad faith" without any evidence in support of this and that California has a "long record of obstructing technological innovation, economic development, and related Federal efforts in the name of environmental extremism."¹ Both of these statements can be easily contradicted with facts.

The record of California's regulatory decisions over the past few decades shows the State disapproved of only one desalination project out of several dozen, objected to just two space launch activities out of 135, and disapproved of exactly zero undersea cable and pipeline repair and maintenance projects. In fact, of the 3,700 projects the California Coastal Commission has reviewed under the CZMA since 1978, fully 96% of them have been approved by the Commission either outright or with environmentally beneficial modifications that advanced the Act's twin goals of preservation and development. This reality plainly contradicts Secretary Lutnick's allegation of obstructionism.

California has a long history of approving space launch projects and, as mentioned above, has only rejected two of 135 space launch and aerospace projects under its review since 1980.² The Coastal Commission attributed its decision-making in these two cases to noise pollution, the potential for sonic booms, disruption of wildlife, and

¹ <https://x.com/CommerceGov/status/2057623061382209583>

² https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/NewsRoom/Educational-Portal/CZMA-Federal-Review.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

the fact that the applicant, SpaceX, provided insufficient information about its proposed Falcon 9 launches from Vandenberg Space Force Base.³ Thus, California's objections were not "unfounded," as Secretary Lutnick's press statement claimed.⁴

Moreover, it is important to note that the CZMA does not grant a participating state veto power to block a federal project. If a state objects, the CZMA offers the Secretary of Commerce the opportunity to override a state's objection when appropriate. In the case of the only two spaceport projects to which California objected, despite California's clear explanation of its concerns, the federal government proceeded with the projects anyway without working through the issues California raised. As both the State and federal government acted within their rights in accordance with the law, this again calls the review of California's program into question.

Complementing this strong record is the reality that California is the world's fourth largest economy,⁵ home to Silicon Valley, 400 unicorn startups,⁶ unmatched high-tech enterprise, world-renowned research institutions. California's global leadership in research and innovation supports a coastal economy⁷ that attracts visitors and entrepreneurs from all over the world and positions us as the nation's leading agricultural state.⁸ California contributes nearly \$700 billion to the federal government, which is \$83 billion more than it receives.⁹ Each dollar invested in California's coastal management creates important returns for the rest of the United States. Simply put, far from obstructing innovation and economic development, California's success subsidizes the success of the nation.

Secretary Lutnick's threat to revoke California's program approval and Federal funding for failure to obediently comply with the Department's prioritization of its favorite projects is contrary to 50 years of cooperative state and Federal relationships – and blatantly illegal. Even the first Trump Administration's NOAA plainly stated in 2019 that NOAA lacks the authority to revoke a state program approval for failing to implement newly imposed Federal policies. The first Trump Administration acknowledged:

NOAA does not have authority to require a state to make a change to state law or its coastal management program, except in limited circumstances if a state is not adhering to its NOAA-approved coastal management program. [NOAA Coastal Zone Management Act Program Change Procedures Final Rule, *Federal Register* at 38120-38121 (August 6, 2019)].

California's compliance with its own program is what NOAA can review – not whether California is complying with the current President's Executive Orders or the current Secretary of Commerce's insistence on his two favorite projects.

Secretary Lutnick's letter misses this point that the CZMA as established by Congress, which is "to preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, to restore or enhance, the resources of the Nation's coastal zone for this and succeeding generations." (16 USC 1452(1)). The CZMA is not about rushing through specific development projects. Instead, it exists to establish a coherent framework to both protect and develop the coast, preserving its essential nature "for this and succeeding generations."

³ <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/california-coastal-commission-opposes-spacex-launch-expansion-west-coast-again-2025-08-15/>

⁴ <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2026/05/commerce-department-initiates-review-california-coastal-management>

⁵ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/04/23/california-is-now-the-4th-largest-economy-in-the-world/>

⁶ <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2026-04-17/la-fi-california-business-relocations>

⁷ <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/coastalact50/>

⁸ <https://plantingseedsblog.cd.ca.gov/index.php/2025/09/10/value-of-california-ag-production-tops-60-billion-for-first-time/>

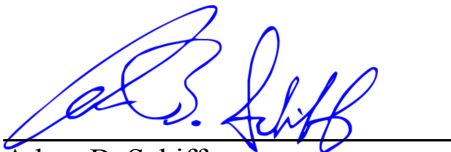
⁹ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/06/06/californians-pay-trumps-bills/>

California has fully complied with the CZMA's goals by coherent planning of preservation and development activities that have built up a "blue economy" valued at \$51 billion¹⁰ of tourism, fishing and aquaculture, shipping and coastal recreation. We Californians cherish our magnificent coast, and the robust economic activity it generates depends upon advancing developments that will enhance rather than damage the coast's value. As part of the coherent management of our coastal resources, for decades Californians have consistently opposed new oil and gas drilling, because just one oil spill could destroy our vibrant \$51 billion coastal economy. Our position on new offshore drilling is in no way inconsistent with the CZMA. Quite to the contrary, it is part and parcel of the coherent regulatory framework that CZMA demands to both preserve and develop the state's coastal economy in a manner that benefits this and future generations.

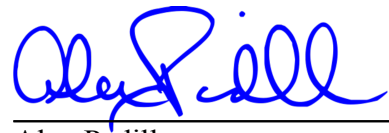
Fundamental to the CZMA is the understanding that the country's interests are best served when the federal government works in collaboration, rather than in direct conflict, with state coastal management programs. If NOAA chooses to proceed with its review under these patently misinformed and unreasonable circumstances and decides California should no longer manage a coastal zone program, the State will lose the ability to collaborate with the federal government on effective and responsible project development, to offer meaningful mitigation measures for coastal development projects, or to access federal financial opportunities that support the protection and security of America's Pacific Coast.

For all the reasons above, we express our strong opposition to decertification of California's coastal program or withholding of financial assistance. Both California and NOAA should share a strong interest in ensuring federal projects in America's coastal areas have minimal impacts on the environment and fisheries, promote responsible economic development, and guarantee national security. We must work together to accomplish these objectives. In this spirit, we thank you for your consideration of this letter and ask that if you decide to proceed that you fairly review California's coastal zone management program based on its full record of regulatory approvals and in accordance with the CZMA's mandate for consistent implementation of a state's chosen management program to achieve wise use of its coastal resources.

Sincerely,



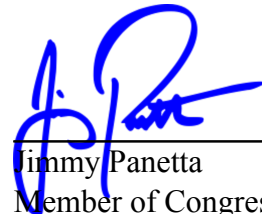
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on
Natural Resources

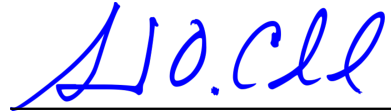


Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

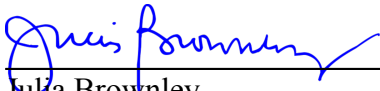
¹⁰ <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/coastalact50/>



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



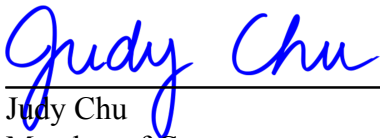
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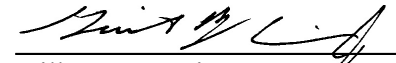
Sara Jacobs
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Juan Vargas
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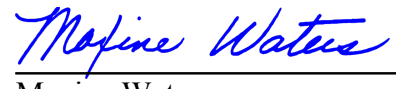
Mike Thompson
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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
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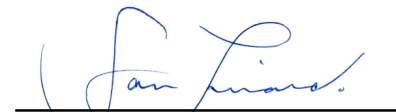
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Maxine Waters
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Sam T. Liccardo
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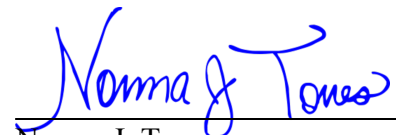
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



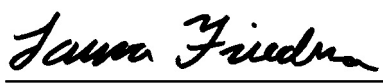
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