

Introducing Our New Chapter Coordinator: Gianna Patchen

By Gianna Patchen, Santa Lucia Chapter Coordinator



Hello to the Santa Lucia Sierra Club members and community! I'm delighted to introduce myself as the new Chapter Coordinator for the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. It is an honor to step into the office of the wonderful and longstanding Chapter Director, Andrew Christie. A huge thank you to Andrew for his decades of hard work at the chapter and for his mentorship to myself and many others. These are big shoes to fill!

I'm likely a new face to many of you, though some may recognize me as a past Santa Lucia Chapter intern and a former Executive Committee member. I'm eager to step into this new role and spend my days supporting the essential work being done by our communities here on the Central Coast. I am deeply passionate about uplifting accessible environmental justice communication and mobilization.

This position is such an exciting opportunity to do so, alongside you all.

The Sierra Club has been an instrumental part of my education and involvement in Central Coast environmental issues. In 2020, I began as a Santa Lucia Sierra Club chapter intern, broadly supporting the chapter's work, including a big highlight of supporting the People for the Dunes campaign right before the Spring 2021 Coastal Commission decision to phase out OHVs.

Following my graduation from Cal Poly SLO, I spent the last two and half years working on the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Campaign. My initial sanctuary outreach internship evolved into being the executive assistant to the Northern Chumash Tribal Council (NCTC) Chairwoman Violet Sage Walker. Then I stepped into the campaign manager position for the Chumash Sanctuary, supporting the campaign along with NCTC's intersectional work.

This experience was life changing. I worked alongside and learned from the outstanding NCTC team, Central Coast community members, policymakers, and NGO organizations to help the Sanctuary approach the finish line. Together we helped garner over 110,000 comments to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with over 99% supporting sanctuary designation – a huge success that brought together communities across the central coast, state, nation and even globe! The Sierra Club has been a close partner and key ally for over 10 years of the sanctuary campaign. I am excited to transition to Chapter Coordinator at the Sierra Club, where I can continue to support the Chumash Sanctuary campaign and dive further into SLO County's intersectional environmental and social justice issues.

As I dive into this new position, I'm spending my first weeks like a sponge, ready to listen and absorb the knowledge from my predecessor, the amazing Executive Committee, and of course all of you. I'm looking forward to uplifting community building and collaboration, within the Sierra Club Santa Lucia Chapter and the greater Central Coast community. It is truly special to work alongside you all as we fight to protect people and the planet here on the Central Coast and beyond. Thank you for your hard work and support of the Sierra Club, we couldn't do it without you.

And of course, a big thank you to the Santa Lucia Chapter for giving me this opportunity. I'm thrilled to embark on this next chapter together!