



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MPA Watch helps celebrate California Underwater Parks Day this January

MONTEREY, CA. (Jan. 15, 2019) – STATEWIDE – California Underwater Parks Day arrives Saturday through Monday, January 19-21.

The annual event represents a special statewide celebration of a stunningly beautiful—and richly diverse—network of 124 marine protected areas (MPAs) that includes gems like Point Reyes State Marine Reserve, Elkhorn Slough State Marine Reserve and Swami’s State Marine Conservation Area.

MPAs have helped conserve and protect the ocean along the legendary West Coast—and that means defending fuzzy otters and spotted harbor seals, electric orange nudibranchs and garibaldi, regal egrets and gorgeous grey whales, as well as protecting the ecosystems that support them.

It also means preserving famous views, areas of cultural significance to indigenous communities, and boosting local economies with the power of the tourist dollar.

As outlets including the BBC and PBS reported in 2015, the recovery of over-taxed ecosystems like Monterey Bay has translated to billions in tourism.

BBC series producer Adam White called Monterey Bay’s recovery “one of the greatest wildlife conservation success stories on the planet...and all of this is happening between San Francisco and Los Angeles—two of the largest cities in the world. If it can work here, it should inspire the rest of the world to take care of their ocean.”

That would not have happened without MPA Watch, which helps defend 58 different MPAs statewide.

The MPA Watch story is one of community heroism and tons of data. Legion volunteers use standardized methods to collect endless information on California’s beaches and bluffs inside and outside MPAs, recording all offshore and onshore coastal activities, from swimming and surfing to fishing and harvesting.

All data collected by volunteers undergo rigorous quality assurance before being accepted and shared with users like state coastal managers and environmental researchers.

Those authorities then use that information to target the most important places for enhanced education and outreach, signage, and law enforcement. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) leads the management and enforcement of MPA regulations.

All told MPA Watch heroes monitor 187,917 acres of marine protected areas. They submitted 3,164 surveys in 2018.

With warming oceans, oil companies hoping to drill in all sorts of places, poachers and other bad actors all threatening the health of California’s coast, continuing to protect the state’s ocean ecosystems now—and for generations to come—is a perpetual priority.

It also makes California Underwater Parks Day an important holiday and a major public benefit.

There are many ways for everyday people to get involved, including 1) completing simple surveys on the MPA Watch website, 2) volunteering to help monitor the coast’s MPAs, 3) donating to local MPA Watch organizations, and 4) visiting MPAs to enjoy their beauty!

More information awaits at www.mpawatch.org.