

Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report from Beach Watch

Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Cruz Counties
January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023



MPA Watch is a statewide collaborative effort to collect critical human use data to enhance the management and conservation of marine protected areas (MPAs). MPA Watch data informs the management, enforcement, and science of California's MPAs and allows us insight on how human uses are changing as a result of MPA implementation. By involving local communities in this important work, MPA Watch programs inspire and empower stewardship, and educate California communities about ocean ecosystems. MPA Watch trains volunteers to observe and collect unbiased data on coastal and marine resource use. The North-central Coast Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Program, organized by Greater Farallones Association's Beach Watch program, engages 150 community scientists in 10 MPAs, spanning 5 counties. California State Parks has also collected MPA Watch data in two MPAs in the North-central Coast region that have been included in this report.

Executive Summary

- The human activity surge observed at all sites during the pandemic leveled off in 2022 and decreased further in 2023. One notable exception, visitation to Fitzgerald Marine Reserve has resumed following the long closure there with 395% increase even with some closures this winter due to storm damage limiting access.
- Point Reyes closed beach access due to wildlife closures until June 2023.
- Shore-based recreational activities account for 96% (n=1,148) of observed activities. Offshore recreational activities account for 2% (n=27) of observed activities. Shore-based consumptive activities account for 1% (n=6) of observed activities. Offshore consumptive activities account for 1% (n=12) of observed activities.
- Potential MPA violations have increased in several MPAs: Russian River, Bodega Head, Limantour primarily driven by shore-based line fishing.

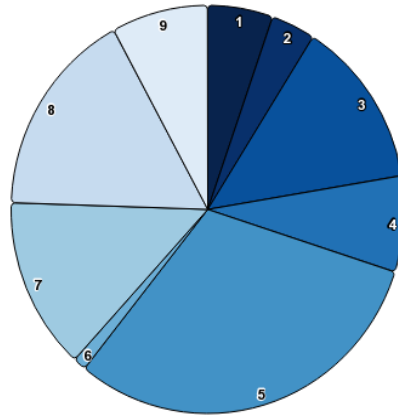


HUMAN USE OF MPAS JANUARY - JUNE 2023

Overview

Top 9 MPAs by All Activity

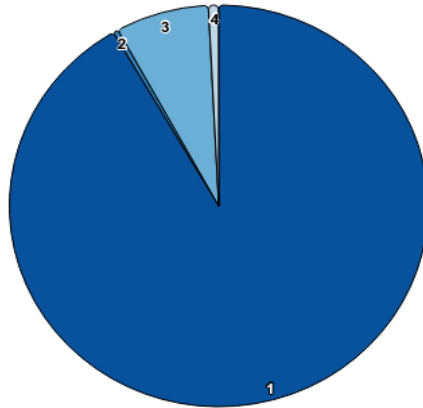
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
1,512 total activity events



- 1. Sea Lion Cove SMCA
81 (5%)
- 2. Del Mar Landing SMR
55 (4%)
- 3. Russian River SMCA
202 (13%)
- 4. Russian River SMRMA
115 (8%)
- 5. Bodega Head SMR
466 (31%)
- 6. Estero de Limantour SMR
16 (1%)
- 7. Montara SMR
207 (14%)
- 8. Año Nuevo SMCA
250 (17%)
- 9. Natural Bridges SMR
120 (8%)

All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
1,512 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
1,385 (92%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
6 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
109 (7%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
12 (1%)

ACTIVITY CLASSIFICATIONS

On-Shore - Activities that take place on a sandy or rocky beach. Excludes bluffs, trails, sea walls, parking lots, or other man-made structures. Includes recreation, tidepooling, shore-based fishing, etc.

Off-Shore - Activities that take place offshore, typically in knee-deep water or deeper. Includes surfing, SCUBA diving, kayaking, boat fishing, etc.

Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource (i.e. fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.

Non-Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.

ACTIVITY BY MPA

Sea Lion Cove SMCA

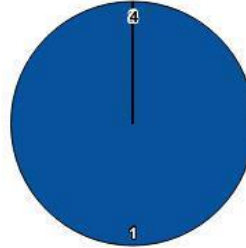
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
81 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
80 (99%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
1 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Del Mar Landing SMR

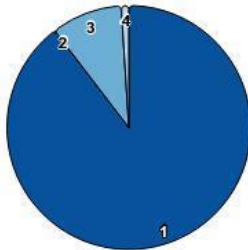
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
55 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
55 (100%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Russian River SMCA

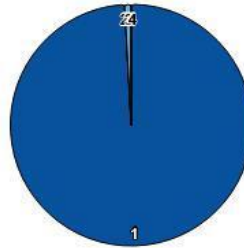
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
202 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
181 (90%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
19 (9%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
2 (1%)

Russian River SMRMA

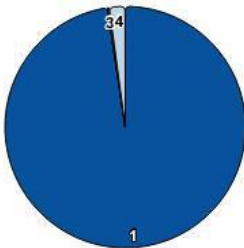
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
115 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
114 (99%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
1 (1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Bodega Head SMR

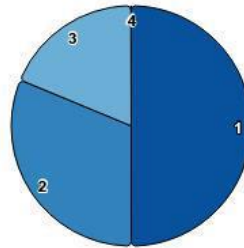
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
466 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
455 (98%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
1 (< 1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
10 (2%)

Estero de Limantour SMR

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
16 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
8 (50%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
5 (31%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
3 (19%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Montara SMR

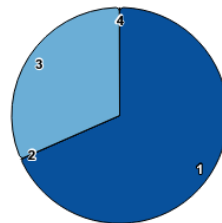
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
207 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
205 (99%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
2 (1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Año Nuevo SMCA

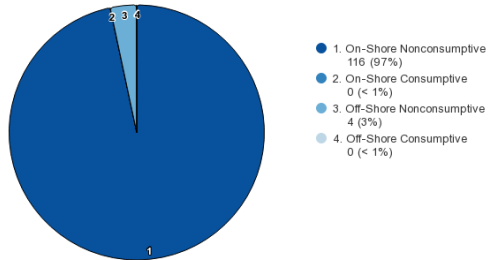
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
250 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
171 (68%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
79 (32%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

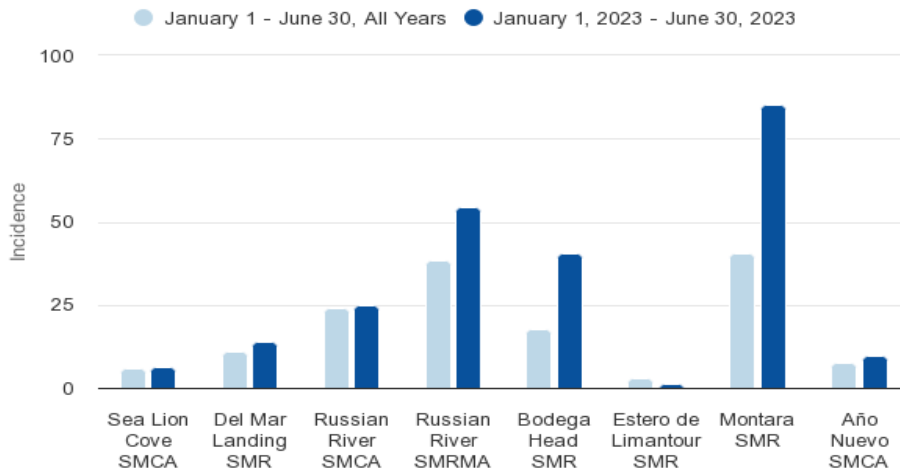
Natural Bridges SMR

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
120 activity events

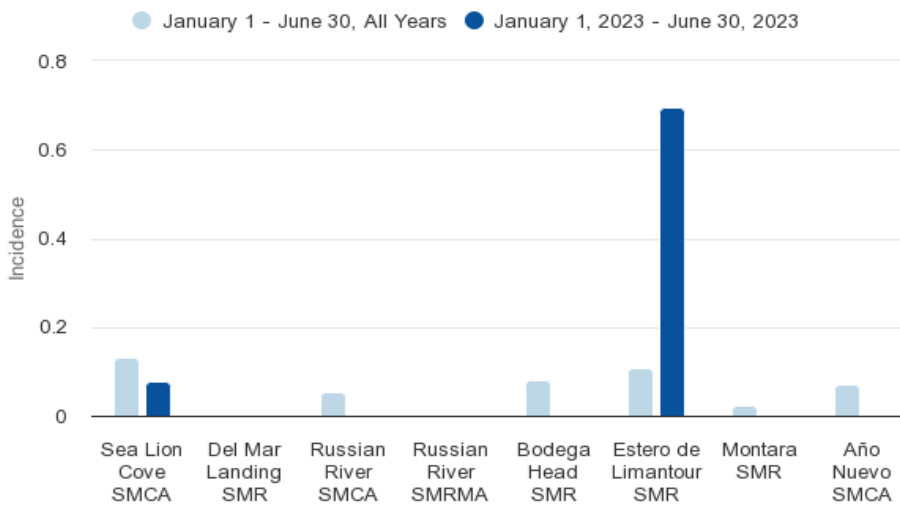


Activity Incidence by MPA

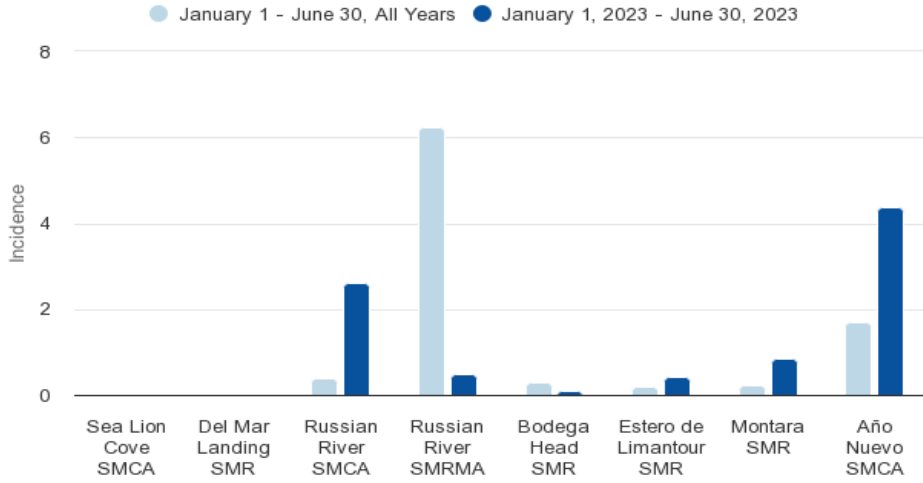
On-Shore, Non-Consumptive



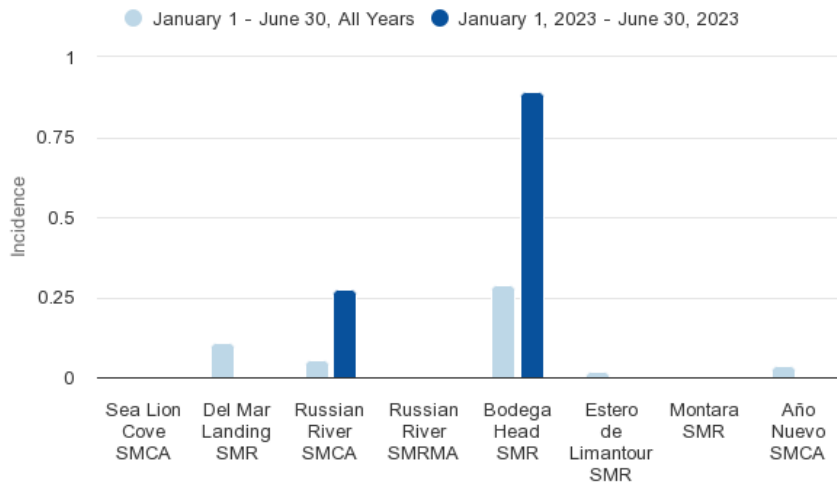
On-Shore, Consumptive



Off-Shore, Non-Consumptive



Off-Shore, Consumptive



The charts above show incidence values for each MPA monitored by Greater Farallones Association Beach Watch program. **Incidence is calculated as number of activities recorded divided by total survey-miles.**

ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

MPA	On-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023
Sea Lion Cove SMCA	5.9	6.3	0.1	0.1
Del Mar Landing SMR	11.2	13.8	0.0	0.0
Russian River SMCA	24.1	24.8	0.1	0.0
Russian River SMRMA	38.4	54.3	0.0	0.0
Bodega Head SMR	17.8	40.6	0.1	0.0
Estero de Limantour SMR	3.2	1.1	0.1	0.7
Montara SMR	40.6	85.4	0.0	0.0
Año Nuevo SMCA	7.5	9.5	0.1	0.0
Natural Bridges SMR	64.4	64.4	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	15.6	20.7	0.1	0.1

MPA	Off-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023
Sea Lion Cove SMCA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Del Mar Landing SMR	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Russian River SMCA	0.4	2.6	0.1	0.3
Russian River SMRMA	6.2	0.5	0.0	0.0
Bodega Head SMR	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.9
Estero de Limantour SMR	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0
Montara SMR	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.0
Año Nuevo SMCA	1.7	4.4	0.0	0.0
Natural Bridges SMR	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	1.0	1.6	0.1	0.2

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023
	Sea Lion Cove SMCA	6.0
Del Mar Landing SMR	11.3	13.8
Russian River SMCA	24.6	27.7
Russian River SMRMA	44.6	54.8
Bodega Head SMR	18.5	41.6
Estero de Limantour SMR	3.5	2.2
Montara SMR	40.8	86.3
Año Nuevo SMCA	9.3	13.9
Natural Bridges SMR	66.7	66.7
All MPAs Combined	16.8	22.6

NOTES ON CALCULATING INCIDENCE

The baseline rate for the reporting period was calculated by summing the total use count for each category during the same period from each previous year and dividing this value by the transect miles surveyed at each site. The miles surveyed were calculated by first identifying the length of each transect for all the MPAs in question and multiplying the length of the transect by the number of surveys that had been taken along that transect during the same time period. For MPAs with multiple transects, the total distance traveled for each transect within the MPA were summed together to get the total miles surveyed within that MPA.

Potential Violations by MPA

MPA	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023
Sea Lion Cove SMCA	0	0
Del Mar Landing SMR	80	7
Russian River SMCA	69	6
Russian River SMRMA	8	0
Bodega Head SMR	556	148
Estero de Limantour SMR	45	6
Montara SMR	272	0
Año Nuevo SMCA	81	7
Natural Bridges SMR	0	0
All MPAs Combined	1,274	174

BREAKDOWN BY MPA

Sea Lion Cove State Marine Conservation Area

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 6.3 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is an -18% decrease compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities on-shore, such as beach recreation, wildlife viewing, and on leash animal use. Onshore recreation accounted for 99% of the activities logged in the MPA Watch surveys. Less than 1% of human use was comprised of onshore consumptive activities, no change from 2022.

Del Mar Landing State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 13.8 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is an 40% decrease compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. 100% of people observed in the MPA were taking part in non-consumptive activities onshore, such as beach recreation, wildlife watching, and dogs on leash. No consumptive activities were observed.

Russian River State Marine Conservation Area

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 27.7 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is an 22% increase compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. 90% of people observed in the MPA were taking part in non-consumptive activities on-shore, such as beach recreation and wildlife viewing and 9% of activities were offshore non-consumptive. Consumptive

activities accounted for 1% of activities observed including boat-based commercial and recreational line fishing.

Russian River State Marine Recreational Management Area

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 54.8 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is an 3.4% decrease compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. 99% of people observed in the MPA were taking part in shore-based non-consumptive activities such as beach recreation, wildlife watching, and 1% offshore recreation kayaking. No consumptive activities were observed.

Bodega Head State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 41.6 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities onshore recreation, such as beach recreation and wildlife watching. This accounted for almost 98% of the activities logged in the MPA Watch surveys. Offshore Consumptive activities accounted for 2% of activities observed.

Estero de Limantour State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 2.2 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is a 48% decrease compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. 50% of people observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities such as beach recreation, wildlife watching, dog off leash, and surfing. 31% of human use was comprised of hook and line fishing a notable increase.

Point Reyes State Marine Reserve

No surveys completed during the report period due to wildlife closure.

Montara State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 86.3 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is a 393% increase compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. 99% of people observed in the MPA taking part in non-consumptive shore-based activities such as beach recreation, wildlife watching and tide-pooling. No consumptive activities were observed.

Año Nuevo State Marine Conservation Area

Between the months of January and June 2023, GFA's MPA Watch data suggests a rate of 4.4 total uses per mile surveyed in this MPA. This is a 30% decrease compared to the January-June 2022 data rate. 100% of people observed in the MPA were taking part in non-consumptive activities onshore and offshore recreation such as wildlife watching and beach recreation, off leash dogs, and surfing. No consumptive recreation was observed.

California State Parks MPA Watch is picking back up this spring after inconsistent surveys during the elephant seal breeding season. Two new volunteers were recently trained to help with keeping surveying consistent at Waddell Beach. The most common activities recorded at Waddell were people recreating on the beach, surfing, and kite/wind surfing. The same violation of dogs on the beach keeps coming up even though there are two signs to indicate they aren't allowed. CA State Parks staff and volunteers have reminded people of that rule.

Natural Bridges State Marine Reserve

Our MPA Watch program finally started back up as well. After a long period of close to zero surveys being submitted and confusion on protocols and accuracy, we have a new team enthusiastically entering several surveys a month! We hope to keep it up! We are still routinely running into people with dogs on the beaches, and occasionally fishing in the MPA, though folks usually comply once reminded of the rules.

Our beach (Natural Bridges CONTROL) has been getting very high traffic this summer. We've had several bright sunny weekend days with upwards of 500 people packed onto the beach like sardines. Most people are on-shore recreating, though we do get the occasional surfer. We do routinely see people climbing the rocks above the beach in our protected seabird nesting area to watch the sunset over the ocean. We are able to keep them away sometimes, but if they're staying past when staff members have gone home, there's no way to stop them. Dogs are the other most common violation we see on the beach. Lifeguards have apparently been instructed to not ask people to remove their dogs, so the only ones enforcing the rule is the interpretive team. It's particularly hard to enforce on those high traffic days when people put up closed tents. This is, unfortunately, the same problem we have been having for years now. We are missing several park rules signs that were lost during winter storms, so this makes it especially hard to keep people following the correct rules. A new problem that we have not had much of before but recently have had semi-frequently is fires on the beach. We have had several instances of bonfires happening during the day, or finding remains of them the morning after they've happened. Because no one is patrolling the park at night, again, we have a hard time enforcing this.

On our tidepool shelf (Natural Bridges SMR 1) most people abide by the MPA rules and collecting and fishing is infrequent. However, we do routinely have to tell people to remove their dogs from both the protected beach which is connected to the De Anza Mobile Home Park, and from the tidepool shelf itself. There are a few residents of the mobile home park who we have repeatedly reminded of the rules and they have repeatedly ignored us and continued to let their dogs run off leash in the tidepools and protected beach. It seems that many people in the mobile home park view the protected beach as part of their mobile home park, rather than a part of Natural Bridges State Park. We hope that by replacing our MPA signs that were lost during the storms, we can prevent people from accidentally breaking the rules, though it is difficult to enforce the rules on those who purposefully break them time and time again.

NEXT STEPS

Greater Farallones Association continues to maintain its roughly 150 volunteers through training new volunteers and continuing education for experienced volunteers. MPA Watch intends to collaborate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to distribute MPA Watch reports to regional managers in order to improve the management and enforcement of MPAs. MPA Watch is also looking to expand its network of partner organizations to enhance the scale and scope of MPA monitoring across California. MPA Watch will be making our human use data available on our website to make it accessible to partners, resource agencies, municipalities, and other interested parties. One of the hopes of MPA Watch is that volunteers and community members help spread knowledge and awareness of MPAs to the communities that surround them, inspiring marine stewardship in our populations.

Additional Information

For additional information on MPA Watch, including survey sites, participating organizations, protocols and datasheets, media kit, and how to get involved, please visit mpawatch.org. Connect with MPA Watch on social media @MPAWatchOrg.

For additional information regarding MPAs and regulations specific to the various classifications of MPAs please visit wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs. If you see an activity that violates MPA regulations, please call CalTip to report the violation at (888)-334-2258.

For more information about the work the Greater Farallones Association does to conserve California's Federal and California MPAs and other conservation projects please visit farallones.org.