

Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report

Orange County

January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023



Orange County Coastkeeper (Coastkeeper) is a nonprofit clean water organization that serves as a proactive steward of our fresh- and saltwater ecosystems. We work collaboratively with diverse groups in the public and private sectors to achieve healthy, accessible, and sustainable water resources for the region. We implement innovative, effective programs in education, advocacy, restoration, research, enforcement, and conservation.

The Orange County Marine Protected Area (OCMPA) Watch Program enlists volunteers, community groups, and local government to monitor human activity in the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve and Conservation Areas (SMRs & SMCAs), Crystal Cove, Dana Point, and Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCAs). MPA Watch is a statewide program with the Orange County component run by Orange County Coastkeeper (OCCK). This report also includes MPA Watch data collected by California State Parks at Crystal Cove State Park. The goal of MPA Watch is to provide information to enhance the management and performance of Marine Protected Areas.

Executive Summary

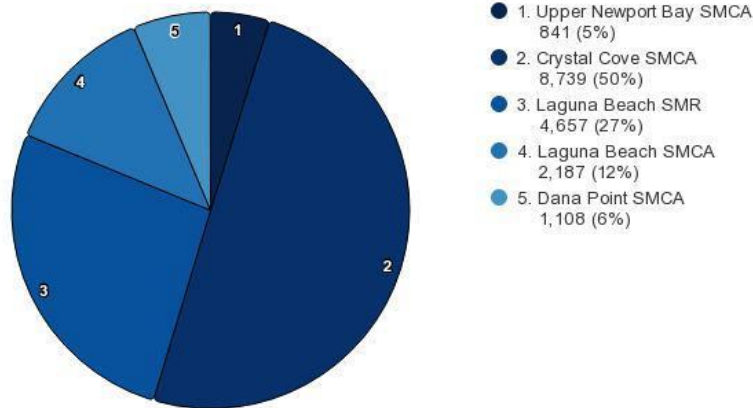
- During this period, 368 surveys were completed at 29 MPA survey sites by 21 volunteers.
- There were fourteen potential violations observed out of 17,532 total activities documented. Thirteen of those potential violations were reported to enforcement agencies
- This report period saw a decrease in the rate of use vs. the long term baseline.

HUMAN USE OF MPAS JANUARY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2023

Overview

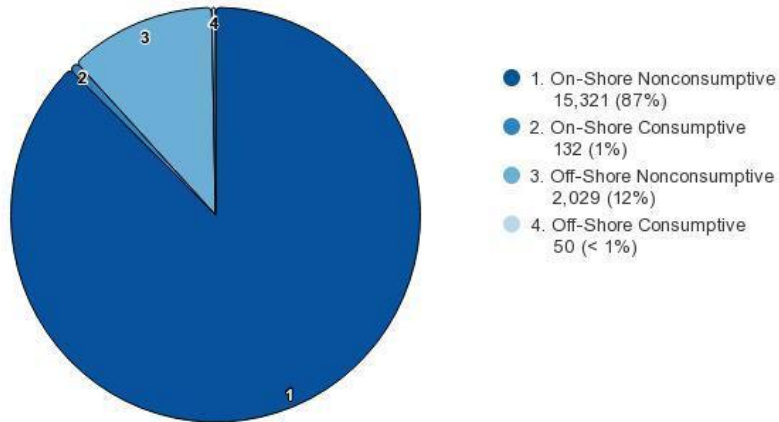
Top 5 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
17,532 total activity events



All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
17,532 activity events



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.

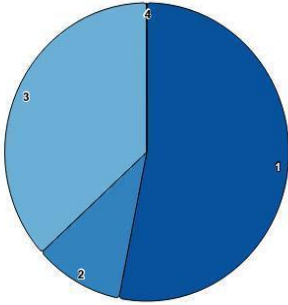
Non-Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected



ACTIVITY BY MPA

Upper Newport Bay SMCA

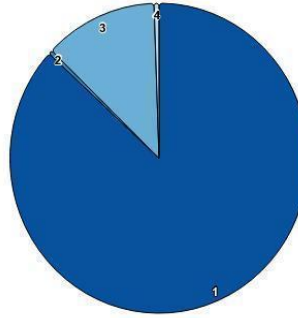
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
841 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
447 (53%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
85 (10%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
309 (37%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Crystal Cove SMCA

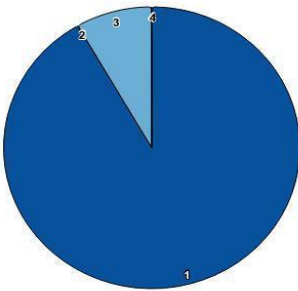
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
8,739 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
7,586 (87%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
36 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
1,070 (12%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
47 (1%)

Laguna Beach SMR

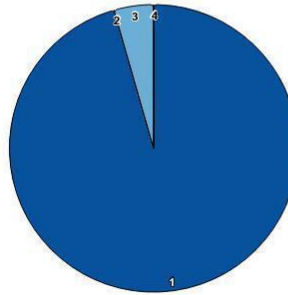
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
4,657 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
4,269 (92%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
1 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
387 (8%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Laguna Beach SMCA

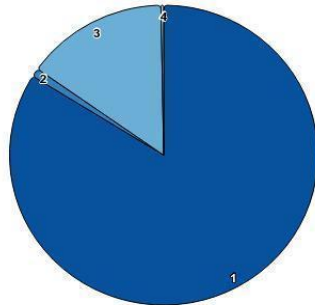
January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
2,187 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
2,090 (96%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
97 (4%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Dana Point SMCA

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023
1,108 activity events

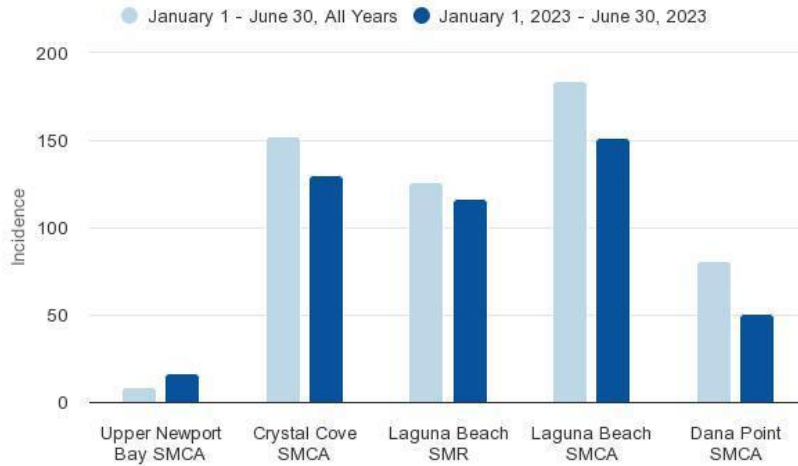


- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
929 (84%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
10 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
166 (15%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
3 (< 1%)

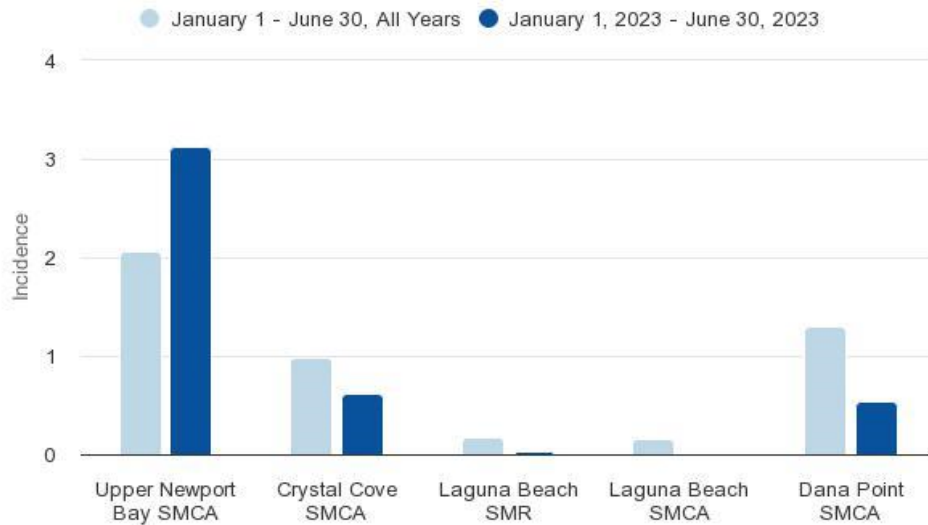


ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

On-Shore, Non-Consumptive



On-Shore, Consumptive

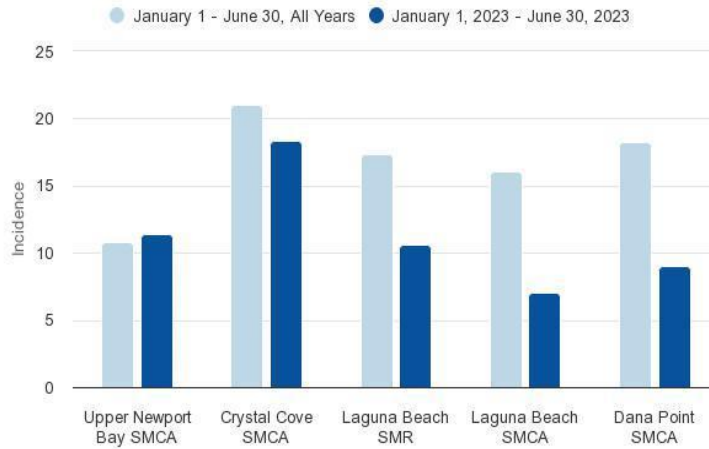


The above charts show incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch in Orange County. **Incidence is calculated as number of activities recorded divided by total survey-miles.**

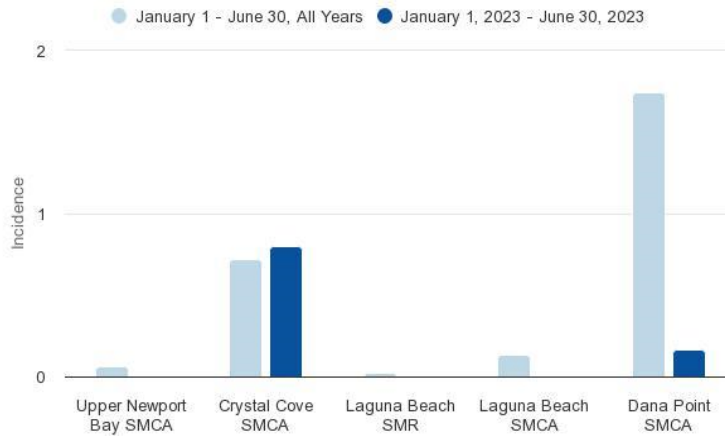


ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

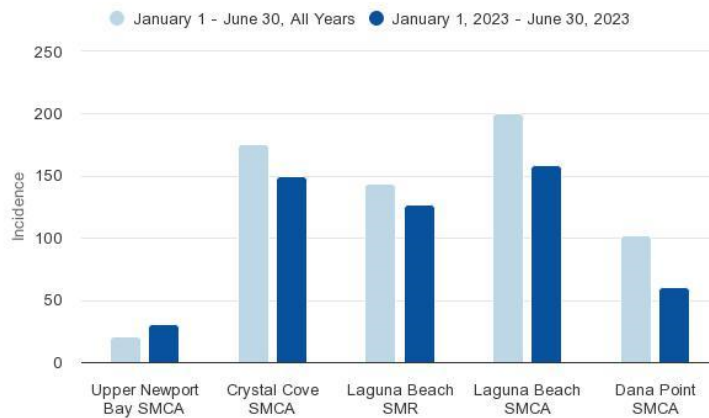
Off-Shore, Non-Consumptive



Off-Shore, Consumptive



All Activity



The above charts show incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch in Orange County. **Incidence is calculated as number of activities recorded divided by total survey-miles.**



ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

On-Shore				
MPA	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
	Upper Newport Bay SMCA	8.4	16.4	2.1
Crystal Cove SMCA	152.4	129.9	1.0	0.6
Laguna Beach SMR	125.8	116.6	0.2	0.0
Laguna Beach SMCA	184.0	151.4	0.2	0.0
Dana Point SMCA	80.6	50.8	1.3	0.5
All MPAs Combined	113.7	99.3	0.9	0.9

Off-Shore				
MPA	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
	Upper Newport Bay SMCA	10.8	11.4	0.1
Crystal Cove SMCA	21.0	18.3	0.7	0.8
Laguna Beach SMR	17.3	10.6	0.0	0.0
Laguna Beach SMCA	16.1	7.0	0.1	0.0
Dana Point SMCA	18.3	9.1	1.7	0.2
All MPAs Combined	17.6	13.1	0.6	0.3

Total Combined		
MPA	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2023
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	21.3	30.9
Crystal Cove SMCA	175.1	149.6
Laguna Beach SMR	143.4	127.2
Laguna Beach SMCA	200.4	158.5
Dana Point SMCA	101.9	60.5
All MPAs Combined	132.8	113.6

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.



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS DATA

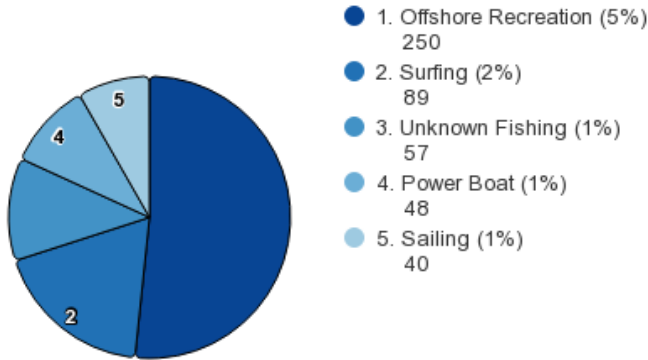
Crystal Cove State Park-Los Trancos Transect

Offshore Activities

Crystal Cove SMCA

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

Top offshore activity, 484 (10%) of all 4,629 observations

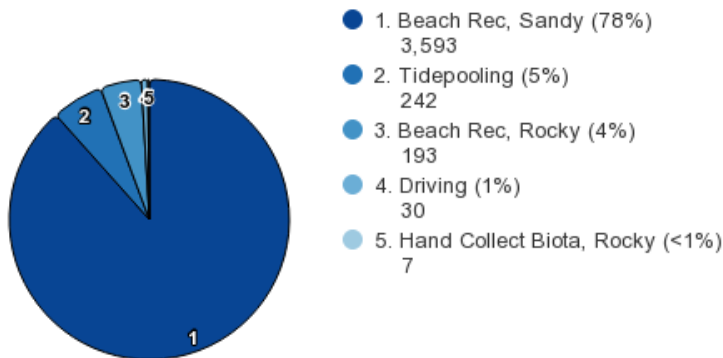


Onshore Activities

Crystal Cove SMCA

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

Top onshore activity, 4,065 (88%) of all 4,629 observations



Activities Rate

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
Crystal Cove SMCA	14.4	12.7	1.3	1.6
All MPAs Combined	14.4	12.7	1.3	1.6

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
Crystal Cove SMCA	121.8	108.0	0.3	0.5
All MPAs Combined	121.8	108.0	0.3	0.5

BREAKDOWN BY MPA

Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Area

For the months January through June 2023 there were 64 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data showed a rate of 30.9 total use surveyed in Orange County.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in beach recreational activities (46.0%), hook fishing (sandy and rocky) 10%, and animal off-leash (sandy) 2%. Offshore activities comprised 6.0% of the total activities in the MPA. Surfing, paddle boarding, and other boating accounted for 4.0% of total activities.

During this reporting period we did not observe any potential MPA violations in the Upper Newport Bay SMCA. The recreational take of finfish by hook and line is allowed from shore only.

Crystal Cove State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2023, there were 129 surveys submitted to Orange County MPA Watch. This data showed a rate of 149.6 total use count.

People in the MPA were primarily taking part in tidepooling (3.0%) and beach recreational activities (82.0%), in addition to animal on-leash (1%) activities. Offshore recreation activities accounted for 8.0% of total activities.

During this reporting period we observed thirteen potential MPA violations: twelve at Little Corona Del Mar Beach, and one at the Reef Point MPA Watch survey areas.

According to volunteers, illegal hand collection from tidepools is commonly observed. Regulations do not allow any taking from tidepools in the Crystal Cove State Marine Conservation Area.



Crystal Cove State Park – Los Trancos Transect

For the months of January through June 2023, there were 29 Los Trancos surveys submitted by California State Parks MPA Watch. The Los Trancos MPA Watch transect, and the greater shoreline of Crystal Cove State Park sees a very high volume of onshore non-consumptive recreational activity all year long. However, these numbers typically increase during holidays like Spring Break and the onset of summer. Onshore non-consumptive activity remains our highest number when entering data for MPA Watch surveys and with an increase of onshore non-consumptive activity we do see an increase in potential MPA violations in the intertidal zone. These potential violations are not enforced, but rather State Parks staff and volunteers use education to alter visitor behavior, and all visitors have consequently complied with MPA tidepool rules. We haven't yet had any resistance from visitors necessitating enforcement staff. The potential violation we see almost on a daily basis is hand collection of biota. This is the number one issue we face throughout the year. Visitors want to collect, take home shells as souvenirs, and they want to put animals in beach buckets for play. The other potential violation we see very often is dogs on the beach. Once we let dog owners know that dogs are not allowed on the beach they usually say that their dog is a service dog. Looking at the reports comparing last year with this year I see a rise in off-shore consumptive activity. The MPA allow for recreational and some commercial fishing.

Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January through June 2023, there were 104 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows a total of 127.2 activities.

People in the MPA were taking part in beach recreational activities (87.0%), tidepooling (2%), and animals on-leash (1.0%). Offshore activities comprised 6.0% of the total activities in the MPA.

During this reporting period we observed one potential MPA violation (Hand Collect Biota; Rocky) at the Bluebird survey area.

Regulations do not allow any taking in the Laguna Beach SMR.

Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2023, there were 51 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows a rate of 158.5 total use within the MPA Watch area.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in beach recreational activities (90.0%), tidepooling (2%), and animal on-leash activities (1.0%). Offshore activities only comprised 2% of the total activities in the MPA.

During this reporting period we did not observe any potential MPA violation in the Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area.

Taking of beach resources is not allowed from the Laguna Beach No-Take SMCA.

Dana Point State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2023, there were 20 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows a rate of 60.5 total use count per total miles surveyed.

71.0% of the Dana Point coastal uses surveyed are beach recreational activities. The most popular coastal activities in Dana Point are tidepooling (8.0%), hook and line fishing - rocky (1%), and surfing (7%). During this reporting period we did not observe any potential MPA violation in the Dana Point SMCA.

Regulations do not allow any taking from tidepools in the Dana Point SMCA.

POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS

The rate of consumptive activities observed remains relatively low in all MPAs surveyed, accounting for less than 1% (0.10) of all observations recorded.

According to volunteers there were no MPA potential violations observed during surveys in the Upper Newport Bay SMCA during this reporting period. In this SMCA, the recreational take of finfish by hook and line is allowed from shore only in designated areas.

During this period we observed thirteen potential MPA violations in the Crystal Cove SMCA: Twelve at Little Corona Del Mar Beach and one at the Reef Point MPA Watch survey area. The recreational take of finfish by hook and line or by spearfishing is allowed in this SMCA; no take is allowed from tidepools. According to volunteers, recurring issues with the illegal take and disturbance of tide pool organisms continue to be a problem during low tides.

During this reporting period we observed one potential MPA violation in the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve, at the Bluebird Survey area/ No take is allowed in the Laguna Beach SMR. According to volunteers there are occasional take violations in the reserve including the collection of biota.

Volunteers observed no potential violations in the Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area. No take is allowed from the Laguna Beach No-Take SMCA.

NEXT STEPS

MPA Watch collaborates with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) along with local agencies, NGOs and the public to improve the management and enforcement of MPAs statewide. Orange County MPA Watch partners with local organizations including the Ocean Institute and Monarch Beach Club to enhance the scale and scope of our MPA monitoring. MPA Watch makes our human use data available on our website so it is accessible to partners, resource agencies, municipalities, and other interested parties. One of the goals of MPA Watch is that our volunteers 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](https://twitter.com/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 OC Coastkeeper does to conserve California's MPAs and other conservation projects, please visit coastkeeper.org.

