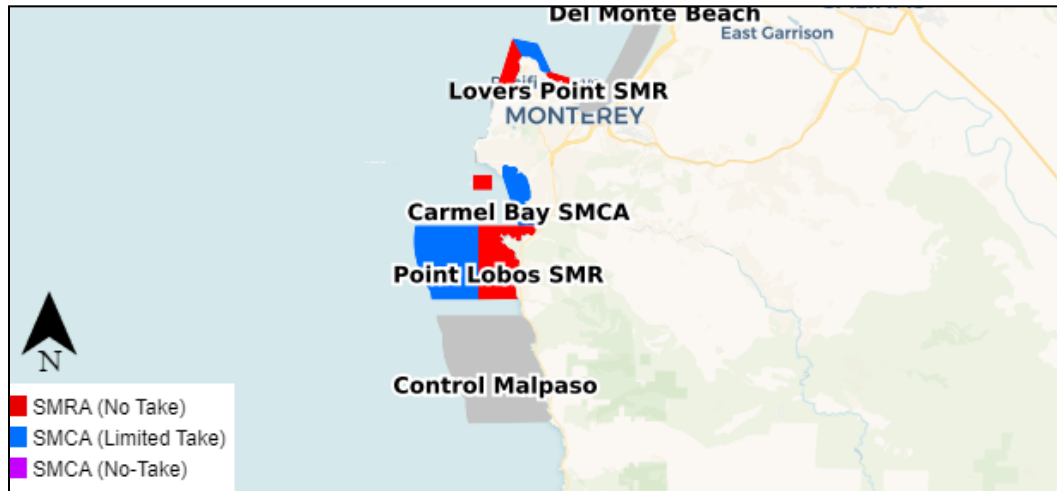




**Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch**  
**Regional Report**  
Monterey County  
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

PACIFIC GROVE  
MUSEUM  
of NATURAL  
HISTORY



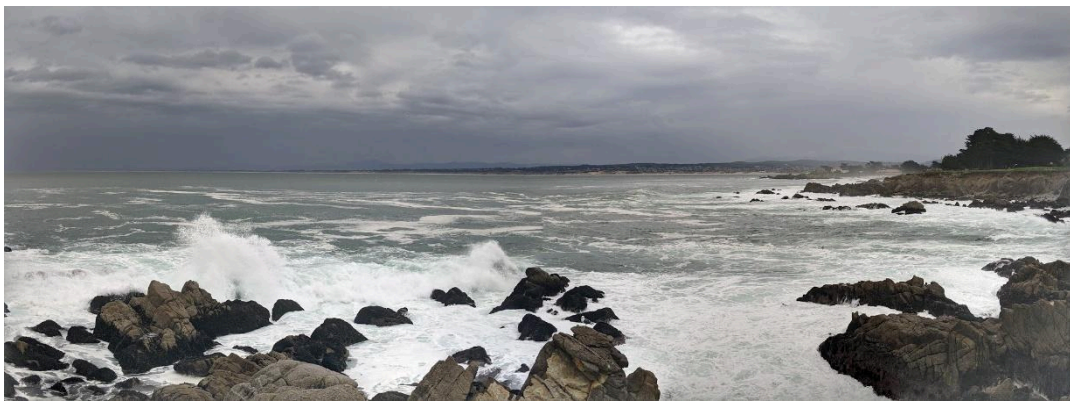
MPA Watch is a statewide collaborative effort to monitor human use, both commercially and recreationally, of our protected coastlines and waters. This community science program provides valuable data, empowers stewardship, and educates California communities about ocean ecosystems. The Monterey County MPA Watch program is implemented through a joint effort among WILD Coast, the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History (monitors 3 MPAs along the Monterey Peninsula) and California State Parks (Point Lobos SMR and Asilomar SMR).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Heavy storms caused some site closures, like at Asilomar SMR.
- Point Lobos was hit hard by storms. Both Point Lobos transects remained closed until mid-May 2023.
- General recreation continues to be the most popular activity in Monterey County MPAs with low violations. Most common violation is hand collection of biota (usually shells).



The Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History's high school volunteer program lead a group-wide MPA Watch survey in September 2023. (Photo credit: PGMNH)



Heavy storms at the beginning of 2023 impacted some sites, but still made for beautiful photography. (Photo credit: PGMNH – Lovers Point SMR, February 2023)



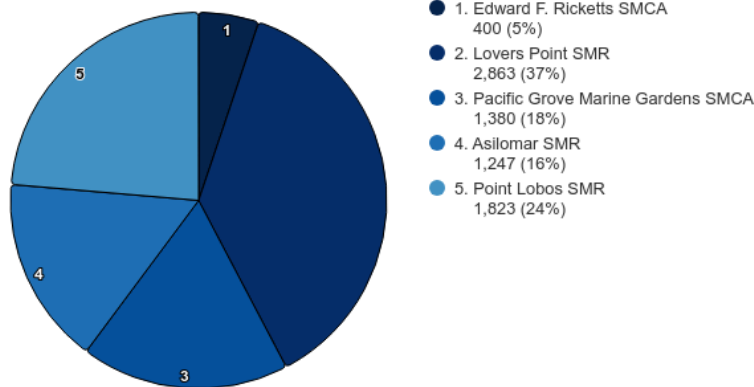
## HUMAN USE OF MPAS

January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

### OVERVIEW

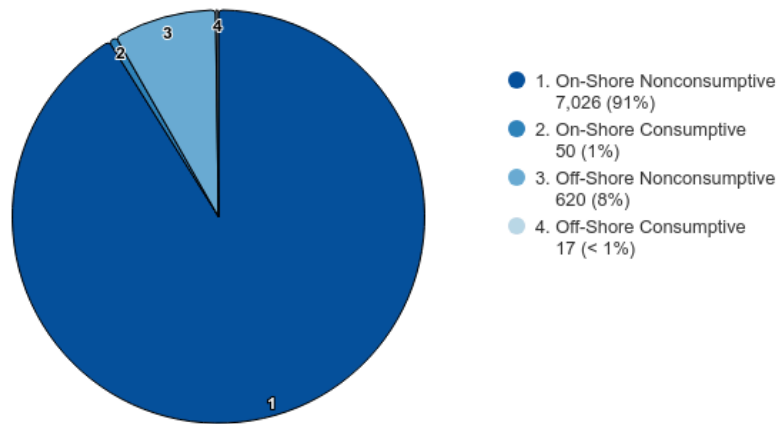
#### Top 5 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
7,713 total activity events



#### All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
7,713 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.

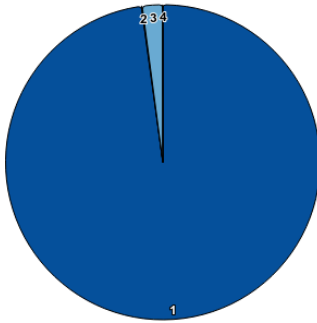
**Non-Consumptive** - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.



## ACTIVITY BY MPA

### Asilomar SMR

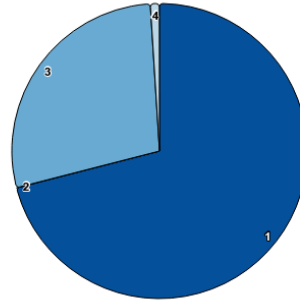
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
1,247 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
1,220 (98%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
1 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
26 (2%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

### Edward F. Ricketts SMCA

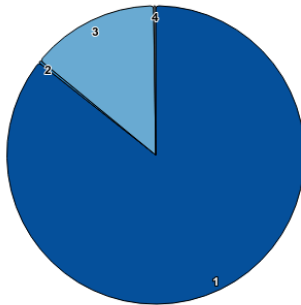
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
400 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
284 (71%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
112 (28%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
4 (1%)

### Lovers Point SMR

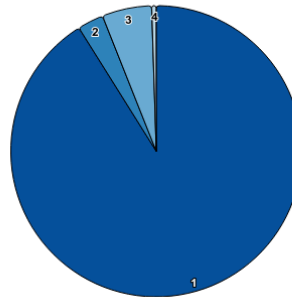
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
2,863 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
2,452 (86%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
8 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
397 (14%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
6 (< 1%)

### Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA

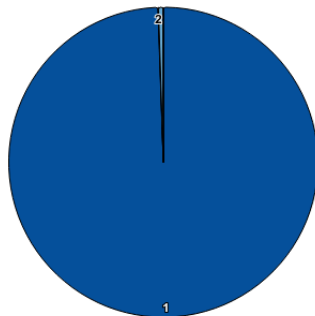
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
1,380 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
1,257 (91%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
40 (3%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
76 (6%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
7 (1%)

### Point Lobos SMR

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
1,823 activity events



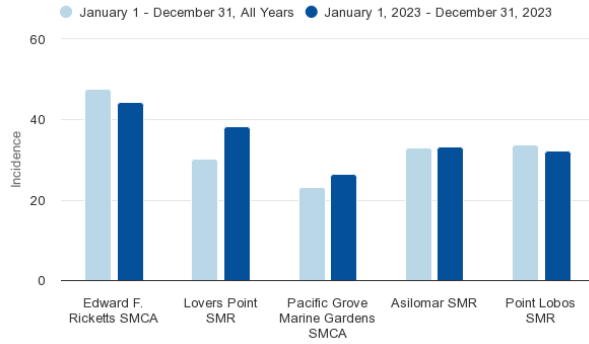
- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
1,813 (99%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
1 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
9 (< 1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)



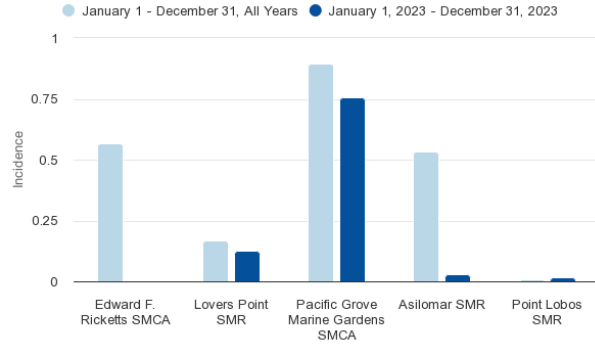
## ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

### INCIDENCE BAR CHARTS

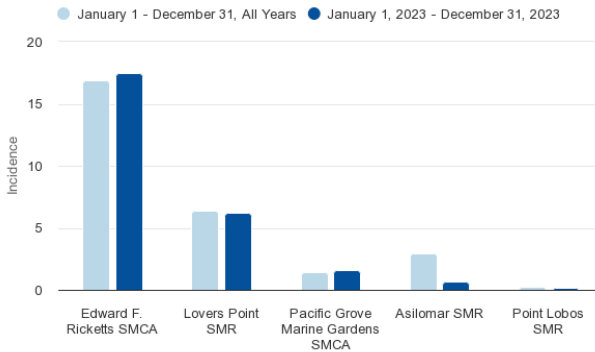
On-Shore, Non-Consumptive



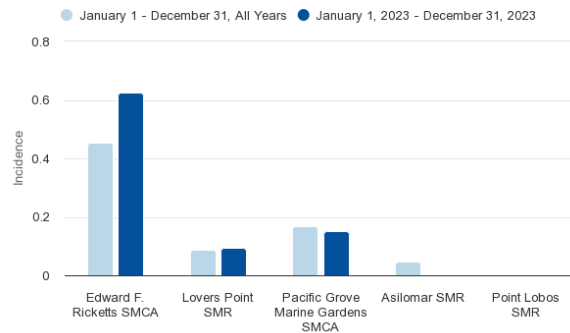
On-Shore, Consumptive



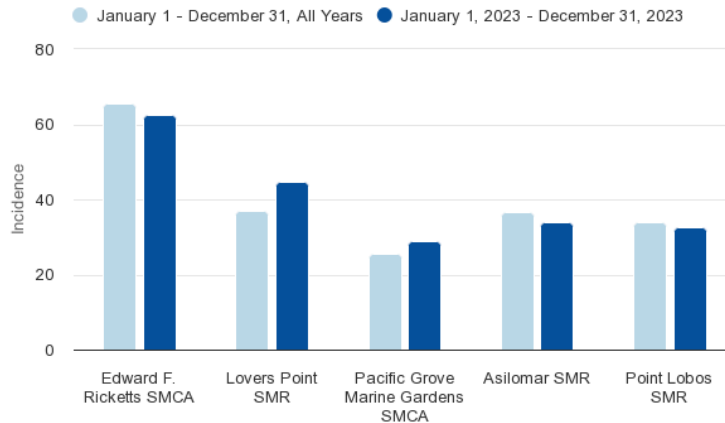
Off-Shore, Non-Consumptive



Off-Shore, Consumptive



All Activity



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



**INCIDENCE TABLES**

MPA	On-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023
Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	47.6	44.4	0.6	0.0
Lovers Point SMR	30.0	38.3	0.2	0.1
Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	23.0	26.2	1.0	0.8
Asilomar SMR	33.2	33.3	0.5	0.0
Point Lobos SMR	33.1	32.2	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	31.2	33.3	0.2	0.2

MPA	Off-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023
Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	16.9	17.5	0.5	0.6
Lovers Point SMR	6.4	6.2	0.1	0.1
Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	1.4	1.6	0.2	0.1
Asilomar SMR	2.9	0.7	0.0	0.0
Point Lobos SMR	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	2.5	2.9	0.1	0.1

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023
	Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	65.6
Lovers Point SMR	36.6	44.7
Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	25.6	28.8
Asilomar SMR	36.6	34.1
Point Lobos SMR	33.3	32.4
All MPAs Combined	34.1	36.5

**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.





## **BREAKDOWN BY MPA**

### **Asilomar SMR**

- This site is surveyed both by PGMNH and CA State Parks volunteers. CA State Parks will train more staff and volunteers in the following year to provide more data.
- For the first half of 2023, surveying the transects in Point Lobos and Asilomar was not possible. Both parks experienced trail closures due to storm damage earlier this year.
- Very low violations. Only 1 hand collection of biota.
- Dogs off leash (not an MPA violation but a State Parks violation) was observed at Asilomar.
- Beach recreation and tide pooling were the most popular non-consumptive activities at Point Lobos and Asilomar.

### **Edward Ricketts SMCA**

- Consumptive activities recorded: recreational boats fishing by hook-and-line offshore (2) and unknown fishing (2). Litter and Marine Mammal violations (not MPA violations) observed. This site is observed by PG Museum volunteers.

### **Lovers Point SMR**

- Consumptive activities recorded: 14 potential violations observed: hand collection of biota (3 sandy, 2 rocky), unknown fishing (6), hook-and-line fishing from rocky shore (3). While unconfirmable, I think this is not because the activity has increased in 2023. Instead, I think it's a reflection on volunteer awareness of what to look for.
- This is surveyed by PG Museum volunteers and is the Museum's most popular survey site (40 surveys this year out of 86 since the program was created – 48% in 2023 alone!).

### **Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA**

- Consumptive activities recorded: hook-and-line fishing (29 rocky, 4 by boat, 2 sandy), hand collection of biota (4 rocky, 3 sandy). This site is surveyed by PG Museum volunteers. This site did not – nor Ed Ricketts or Lovers Point – experience any storm-related site closures.

### **Point Lobos SMR**

- Point Lobos is surveyed by CA State Parks with multiple docents and staff members trained in MPA Watch.
- For the first half of 2023, surveying the transects in Point Lobos and Asilomar was not possible. Both parks experienced trail closures due to storm damage earlier this year. The staircase Gibson Beach, along the Bird Island transect, was closed until May or June; the Weston Beach transect was closed until May.
- From the data collected, there were extremely low amounts of violations. Hand collection of biota was only recorded once at Point Lobos!

## **POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS**

- The data from this year, taken at its face value, indicates that MPA violations (hand-collection of biota) have increased in 2023 – 25 violations this year compared to 86 of all years combined. 14 of these violations were observed at Lovers Point SMR, the PG Museum’s most popularly surveyed site.
- However, I believe this is not due to a spike in violations, but reflects heightened volunteer awareness. Both the general public and new volunteers are amazed that even collection of rocks or driftwood is prohibited in a Monterey County SMR.
- I believe that future reports of potential violations will match 2023, rather than past years. We’ll see if my hypothesis is correct!

## **NEXT STEPS**

The PG Museum has a new control site at Del Monte Beach, a non-MPA site. I intend to promote this for a greater understanding of public behavior at MPAs versus non-MPAs. I also would like to create a survey site along the Carmel Bay SMCA’s most popular “dog beach” to better reflect MPA usage in Monterey County.

## **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](http://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](http://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 regarding the MPA Watch Program at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, visit [www.pgmuseum.org/volunteer](http://www.pgmuseum.org/volunteer) or contact:

Natalie Johnston | Volunteer & Community Science Coordinator  
Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History  
[johnston@pgmuseum.org](mailto:johnston@pgmuseum.org)  
(831) 648-5716 ext 24

Many thanks to the amazing volunteers of the PG Museum and CA State Parks, who conducted an incredible 191 surveys in 2023. Thank you to everything you do to support marine protected areas and the rest of the natural world.