

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 San Diego Marine Protected Area Watch Program, organized and conducted by WILDCOAST and CA State Parks, engages community scientists in five MPAs in San Diego County, including Swami's SMCA, San Diego-Scripps Coastal SMCA, Matlahuayl SMR, South La Jolla SMR, and the Tijuana River Mouth SMCA.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- From January to December of 2023 in San Diego County, 115 land-based surveys were conducted by 10 volunteers over 74 survey-miles with 15 potential violations observed.
- While 13/15 potential violations occurred in the Swami's SMCA and 2/15 in the South La Jolla SMR, for shore-based surveys, the majority of potential violations for boat-based surveys occurred in South La Jolla SMR.
- Many observed consumptive activities fell under the category of "unknown fishing" this year, possibly skewing potential violation counts and highlighting the need for accurate documentation of consumptive activities, particularly in no-take reserves, to effectively monitor compliance and inform enforcement.

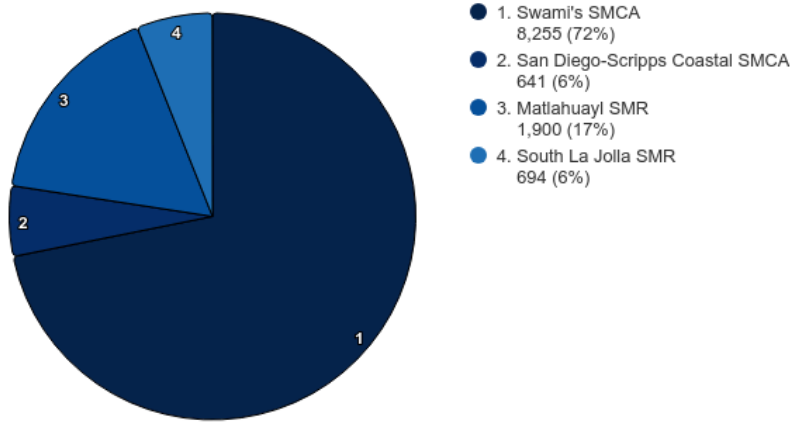
## HUMAN USE OF MPAS

January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

### OVERVIEW

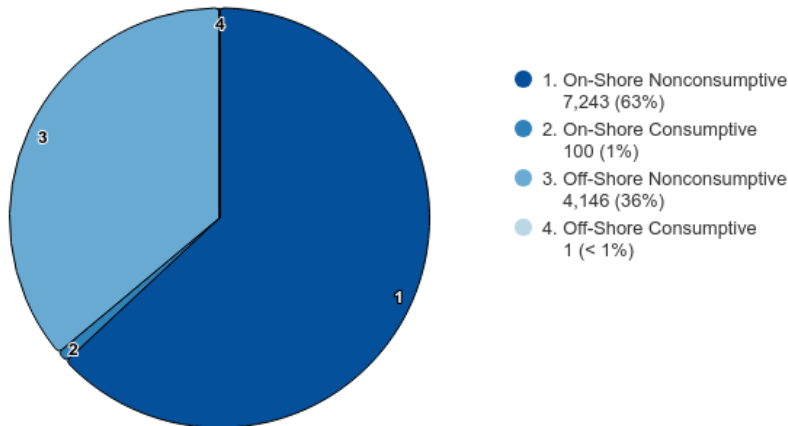
#### Top 4 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
11,490 total activity events



#### All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
11,490 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.

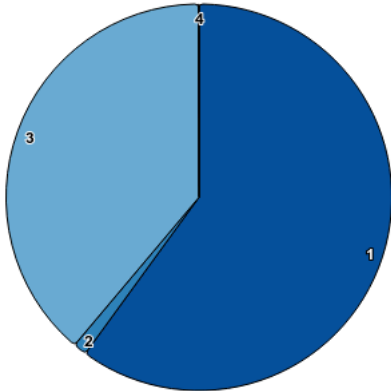
**Non-Consumptive** - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.



## ACTIVITY BY MPA

### Swami's SMCA

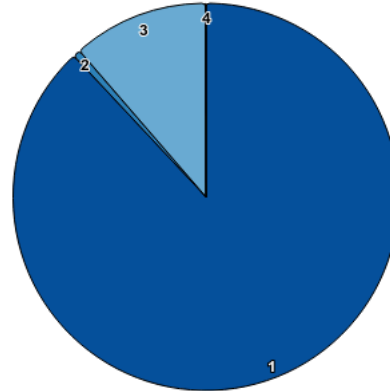
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
8,255 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
4,955 (60%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
94 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
3,205 (39%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
1 (< 1%)

### San Diego-Scripps Coastal SMCA

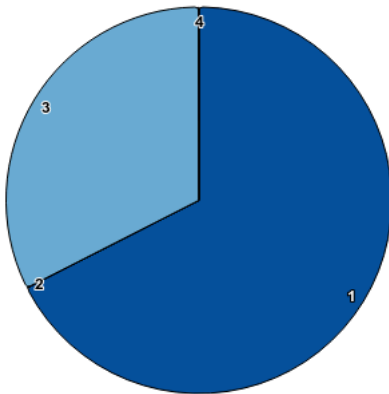
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
641 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
564 (88%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
4 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
73 (11%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

### Matlahuayl SMR

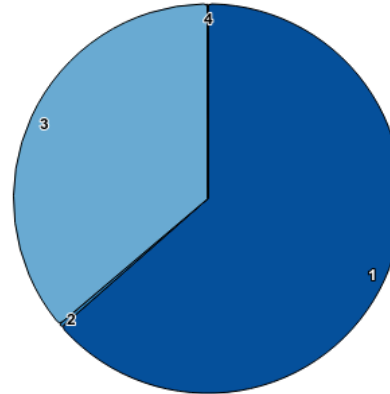
January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023  
1,900 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
1,283 (68%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
617 (32%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

### South La Jolla SMR

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

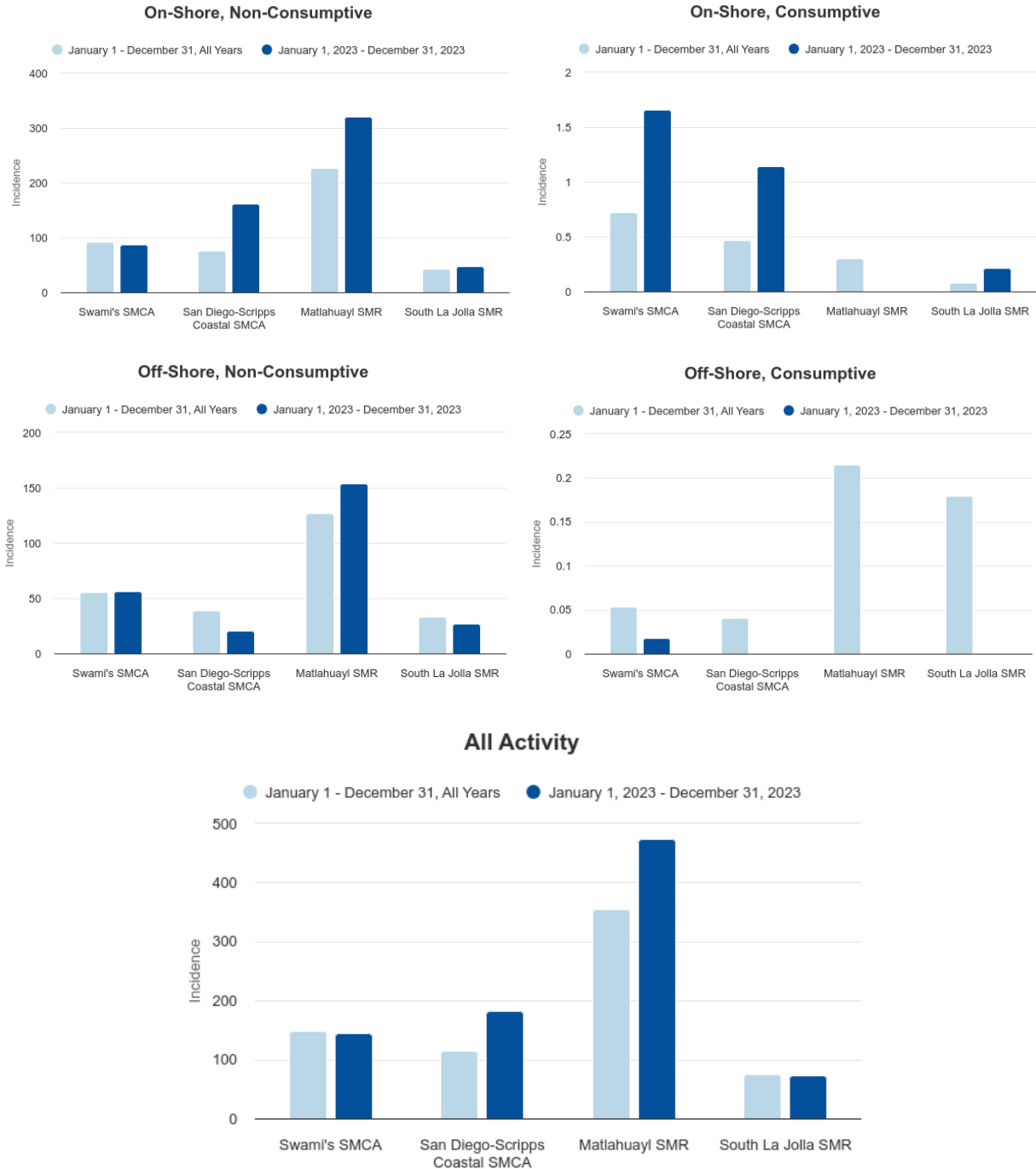


- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
441 (64%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
2 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
251 (36%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)



## ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

### INCIDENCE BAR CHARTS



The above charts show incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch in San Diego 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
	Swami's SMCA	91.9	87.2	0.7
San Diego-Scripps Coastal SMCA	75.7	161.1	0.5	1.1
Matlahuayl SMR	227.1	320.8	0.3	0.0
South La Jolla SMR	42.1	46.9	0.1	0.2
All MPAs Combined	80.2	98.3	0.9	1.4

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
	Swami's SMCA	55.6	56.4	0.1
San Diego-Scripps Coastal SMCA	38.9	20.9	0.0	0.0
Matlahuayl SMR	127.4	154.3	0.2	0.0
South La Jolla SMR	33.6	26.7	0.2	0.0
All MPAs Combined	42.4	56.3	0.2	0.0

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023
	Swami's SMCA	148.3
San Diego-Scripps Coastal SMCA	115.1	183.1
Matlahuayl SMR	355.0	475.0
South La Jolla SMR	75.9	73.8
All MPAs Combined	123.7	155.9

**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**

### **Swami's State Marine Conservation Area**

Between the months of January and December 2023, San Diego MPA Watch data shows a rate of 145.3 total use count per total miles surveyed in the Swami's SMCA. This is a 2.02% decrease compared to the rate calculated from the data collected by MPA Watch volunteers January – December in previous years.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities both on and off-shore, including beach recreation (54%), surfing (34%), paddleboarding (2%), and animals on leash (3%). These accounted for over 99% of the activities logged in MPA Watch surveys. The remaining 1% of human use consisted of on-shore and off-shore consumptive activities. The consumptive activities recorded were hook-and-line fishing from shore (rocky and sandy- allowed), hand collection of biota, and net fishing.

### **San Elijo State Marine Conservation Area**

Note from CA State Parks: Sea level rise and erosion is impacting access to the shoreline near the mouth of the San Elijo Lagoon. During high tides, what remains of the beach is completely covered and surfers have to jump off the rocks to get into the water. On-shore recreation does appear to be very limited for the south end of that transect, but the surfers are still getting in the water.

### **San Diego-Scripps Coastal State Marine Conservation Area**

Between the months of January and December 2023, San Diego MPA Watch data shows a rate of 183.1 total use count per total miles surveyed in the San Diego-Scripps Coastal SMCA. This is a 59.08% increase compared to the rate calculated from the data collected by MPA Watch volunteers January – December in previous years.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities both on and off-shore, including beach recreation (78% sandy, 2% rocky), surfing (10%), tidepooling (4%), and animals on leash (1%). These accounted for over 99% of the activities logged in MPA Watch surveys. The remaining 1% of human use consisted of on-shore consumptive activities. The only consumptive activities recorded were hook-and-line fishing from sandy shore.

### **Matlahuayl State Marine Reserve**

Between the months of January and December 2023, San Diego MPA Watch data shows a rate of 475.0 total use count per total miles surveyed in the Matlahuayl SMR. This is a 33.8% increase compared to the rate calculated from the data collected by MPA Watch volunteers January – December in previous years.

People observed in the MPA were only taking part in non-consumptive activities both on and off-shore, including beach recreation (65%), surfing (11%), kayaking (9%), and scuba diving (3%).

### **South La Jolla State Marine Reserve**

Between the months of January and December 2023, San Diego MPA Watch data shows a rate of 73.8 total use count per total miles surveyed in the South La Jolla SMR. This is a 2.76% decrease compared to the rate calculated from the data collected by MPA Watch volunteers January – December in previous years.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities both on and off-shore, including beach recreation (51% sandy, 11% rocky), surfing (235), and tidepooling (1%). These accounted for over 99% of the activities logged in MPA Watch surveys. The remaining 1% of human use consisted of on-shore consumptive activities. The consumptive activities recorded were hook-and-line fishing from sandy shore and hand collection of biota..

### **South La Jolla State Marine Conservation Area**

Between the months of January and December 2023, there were no land-based surveys conducted by San Diego MPA Watch in the South La Jolla SMCA.

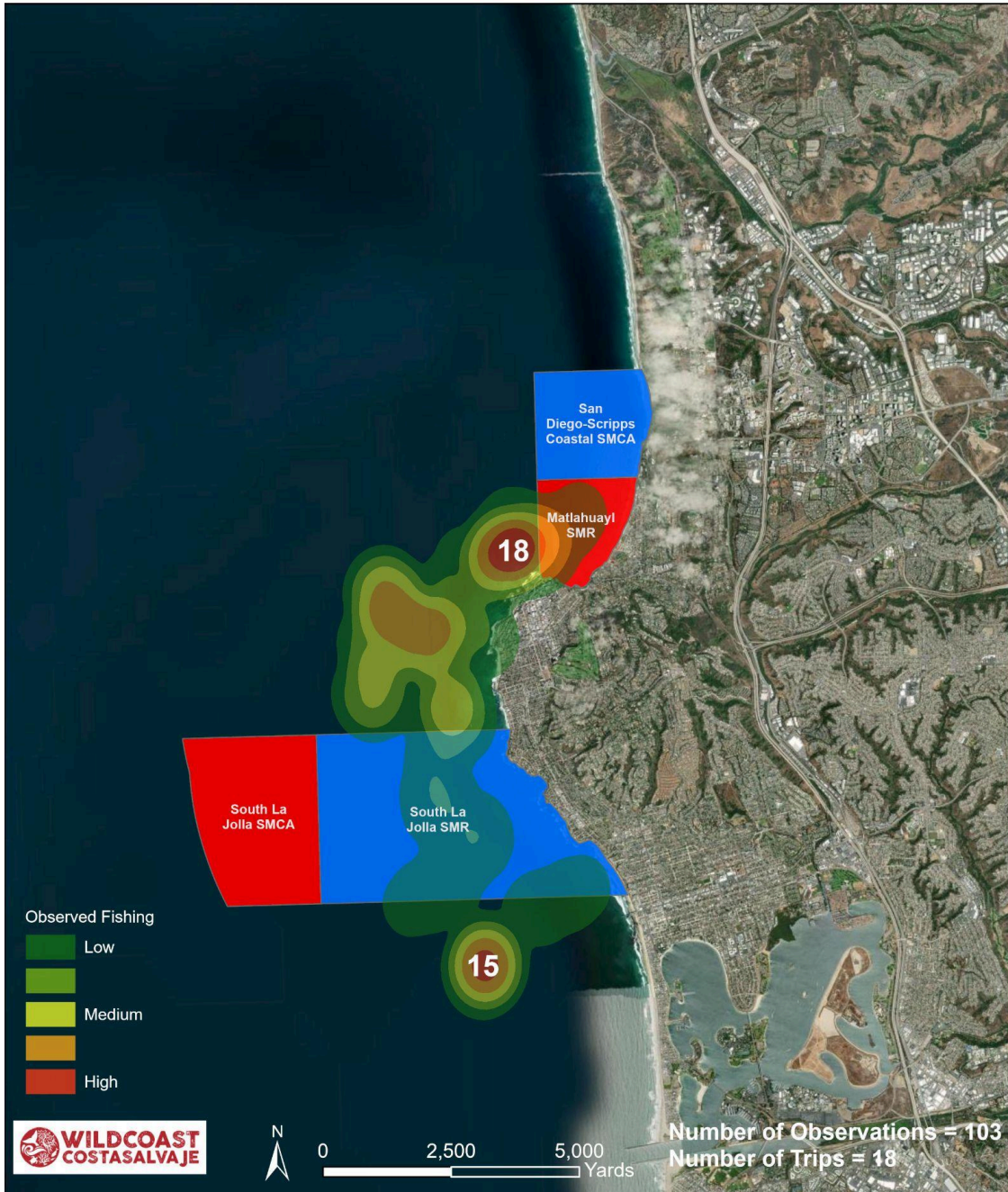
### **Tijuana River Mouth State Marine Conservation Area**

Between the months of January and December 2023, there were no land-based surveys conducted by San Diego MPA Watch in the Tijuana River Mouth SMCA. There have been recurring issues with beach closures at the Tijuana River Mouth SMCA due to poor water quality resulting from sewage contamination.

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY MPAs BOAT-BASED SURVEYS**

January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

**Jul - Dec 2023 Recreational Fishing Activity  
San Diego**

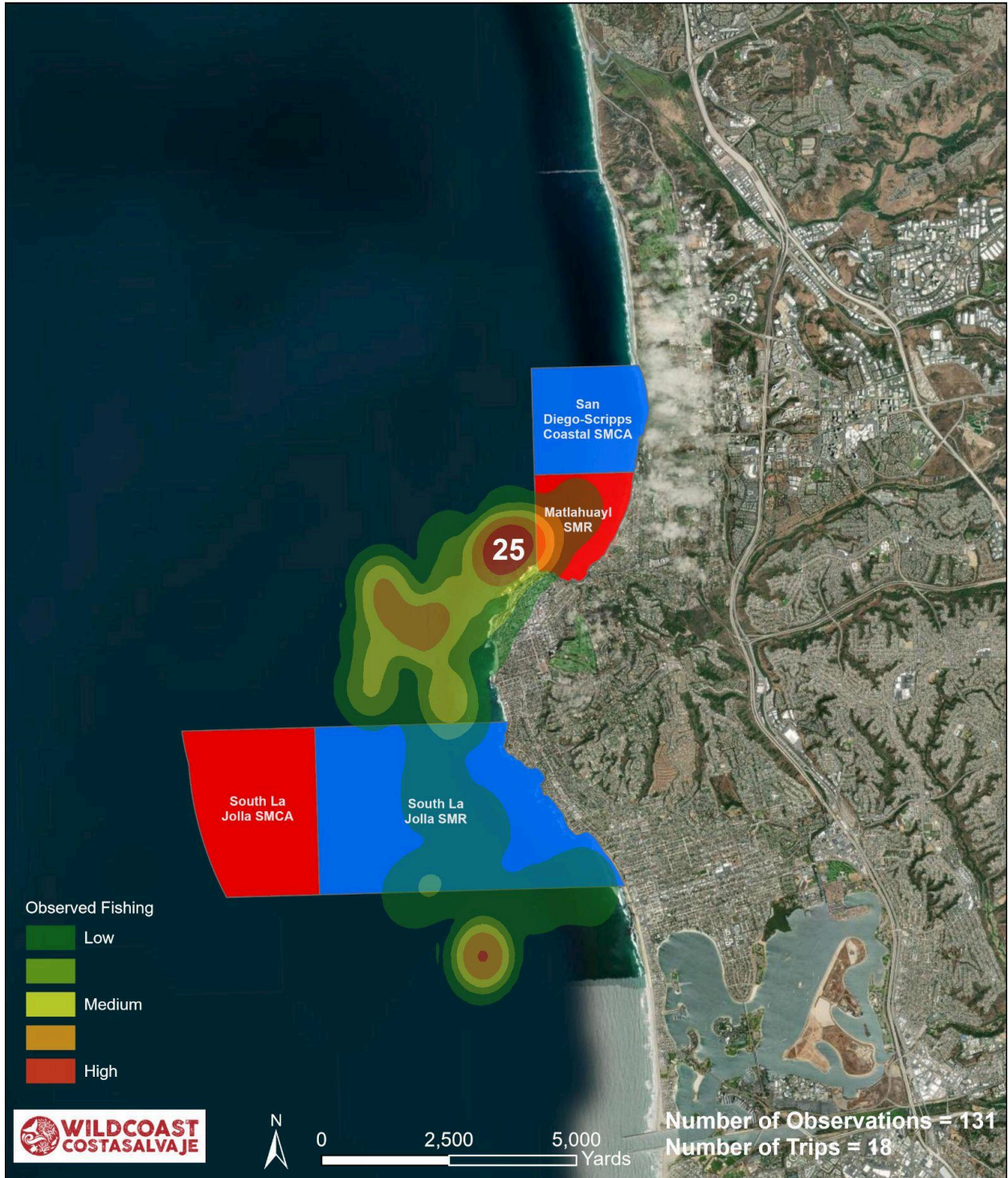




# Jul - Dec 2023 Commercial Fishing Activity San Diego



# Jul - Dec 2023 All Fishing Activity San Diego



# Jul - Dec 2023 Recreational Fishing Activity San Diego



## **POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS**

From shore-based surveys, 15 potential violations were observed. 13/15 occurred in the Swami's SMCA and 2/15 occurred in the South La Jolla SMR.

At Swami's SMCA, there were 81 recorded hook-and-line fishing incidents from shore (rocky and sandy), but not necessarily violations based on regulations of the SMCA. In addition, volunteers saw 7 hand collections of biota, 6 net fishing from rocky shore, and 1 fishing incidents (unknown- which is not counted in 13 total violations).

At Scripps SMCA, there were 4 recorded hook-and-line fishing incidents from shore (sandy), but not necessarily violations based on regulations of the SMCA.

At South La Jolla SMR, there was 1 recorded hand collection of biota (rocky) incident and 1 hook-and-line fishing from shore incident.

Boat-Based MPA Watch sees the most potential violations in the South La Jolla SMR, majority of which are recreational hook-and-line fishing with a handful of Commercial Party Fishing Vessels fishing by hook-and-line as well.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In San Diego County, WILD Coast is working to increase outreach for MPA Watch and increase the number of volunteers we have collecting human use data within our local MPAs, specifically through the help of interns.

WILD Coast has been conducting public outreach to spread awareness surrounding tide pools that fall under MPA protections. These efforts are focused primarily on the tide pools located within MPA boundaries located at San Diego-Scripps SMCA and Swami's SMCA.

MPA Watch intends to continue 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](http://mpawatch.org). Connect with MPA Watch on social media @MPAWatchOrn



For additional information regarding MPAs and regulations specific to the various classifications of MPAs please visit [wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs](https://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 WILD COAST does to conserve California's MPAs and other conservation projects please visit [wildcoast.org](https://wildcoast.org).

