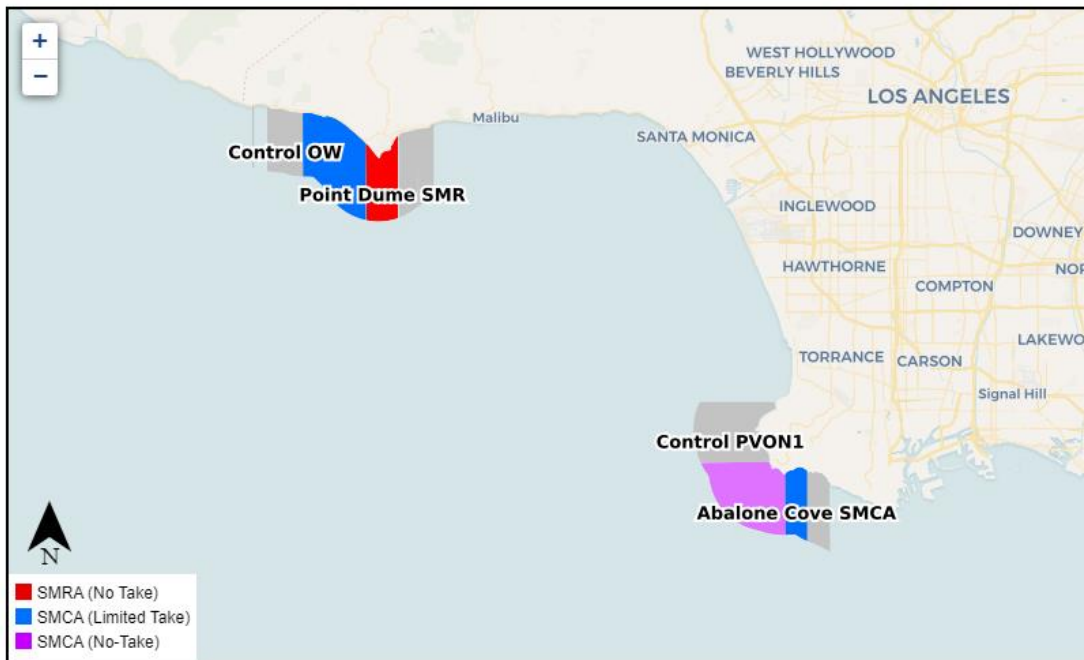




**Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch
Regional Report
LA County Shore-Based
January 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024**

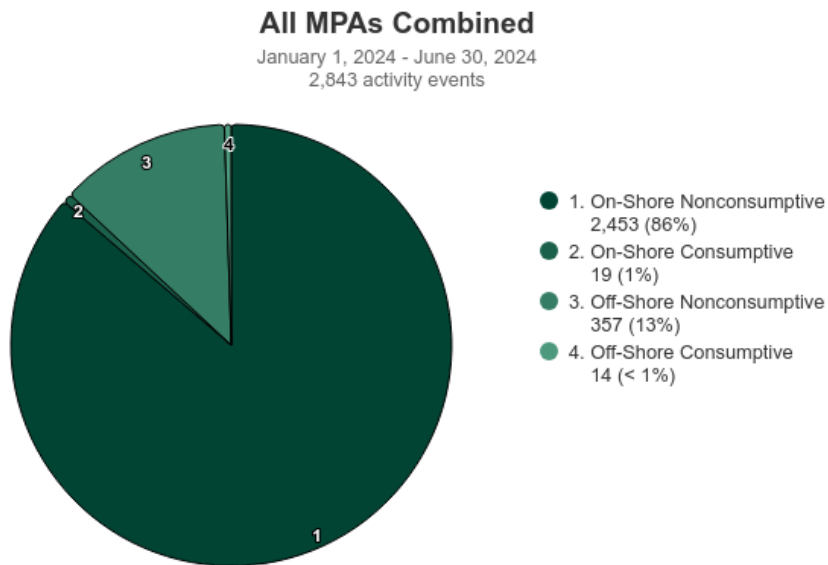
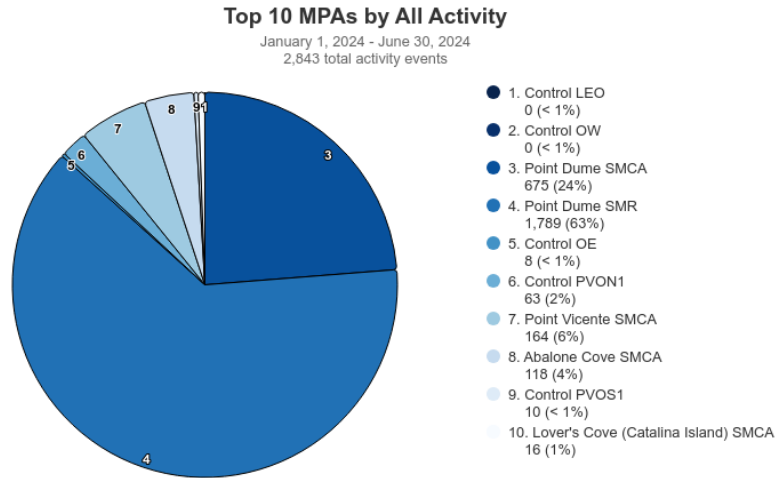


California’s network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) was established by the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) of 1999 to safeguard our marine resources and ecosystems. To ensure success and to inform adaptive management, long-term monitoring of these protected areas must be conducted. Developed in 2011, MPA Watch was designed as a community science program to collect data on the human use of MPAs. In Los Angeles County, the non-profit organization Heal the Bay manages MPA Watch shore-based data collection. Heal the Bay volunteers monitor four MPAs: Abalone Cove State Marine Conservation Area, Point Vicente No-Take State Marine Conservation Area, Point Dume State Marine Conservation Area, and Point Dume State Marine Reserve. This report also includes surveys conducted by California State Parks.

Executive Summary

- Thus far in 2024, 19 active surveyors conducted a total of 155 MPA Watch surveys across 87 total survey miles and recorded a total of 2,843 activities. Total survey count is lower than the same survey period last year, but includes 11 additional surveys from new State Parks surveyors in the Point Dume area for the first time.
- Consumptive activity remains low in LA County mainland MPAs and observed potential violations were also low, indicating good compliance.
- MPA Watch team leaders discovered a drift in survey protocol that has impacted recorded observation rates of onshore activity, particularly onshore recreation. The drift will need to be corrected under the guidance of the statewide management team.
- Heal the Bay continues to assist in expanding MPA Watch surveys on Catalina Island.

Human Use of MPAs January - June 2024



Figures 1a and 1b: Pie charts of human activity by MPA or Control site.

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.

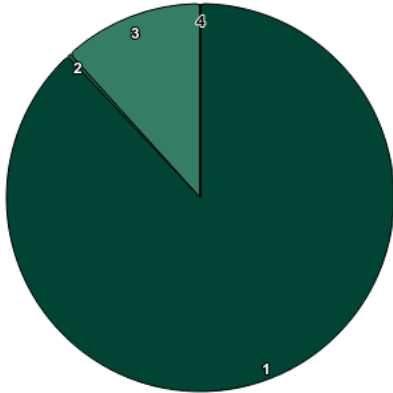
Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource (i.e. fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.

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

Activity by MPA

Point Dume SMCA

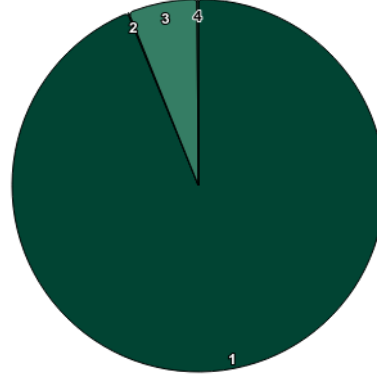
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
675 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
594 (88%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
2 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
79 (12%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

Point Dume SMR

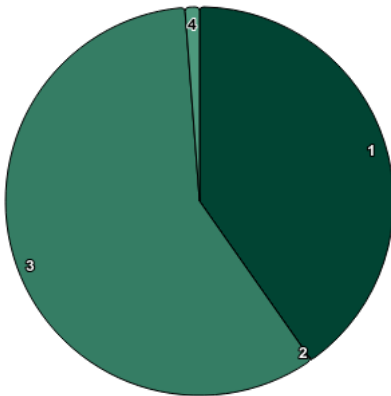
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
1,789 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
1,678 (94%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
2 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
107 (6%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
2 (< 1%)

Point Vicente SMCA

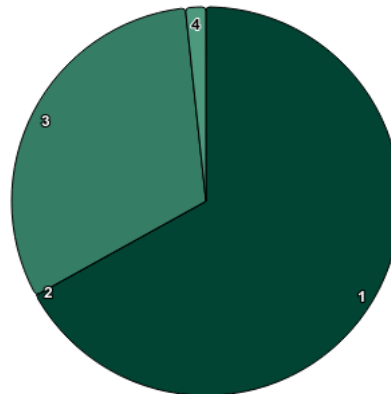
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
164 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
66 (40%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
96 (59%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
2 (1%)

Abalone Cove SMCA

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
118 activity events

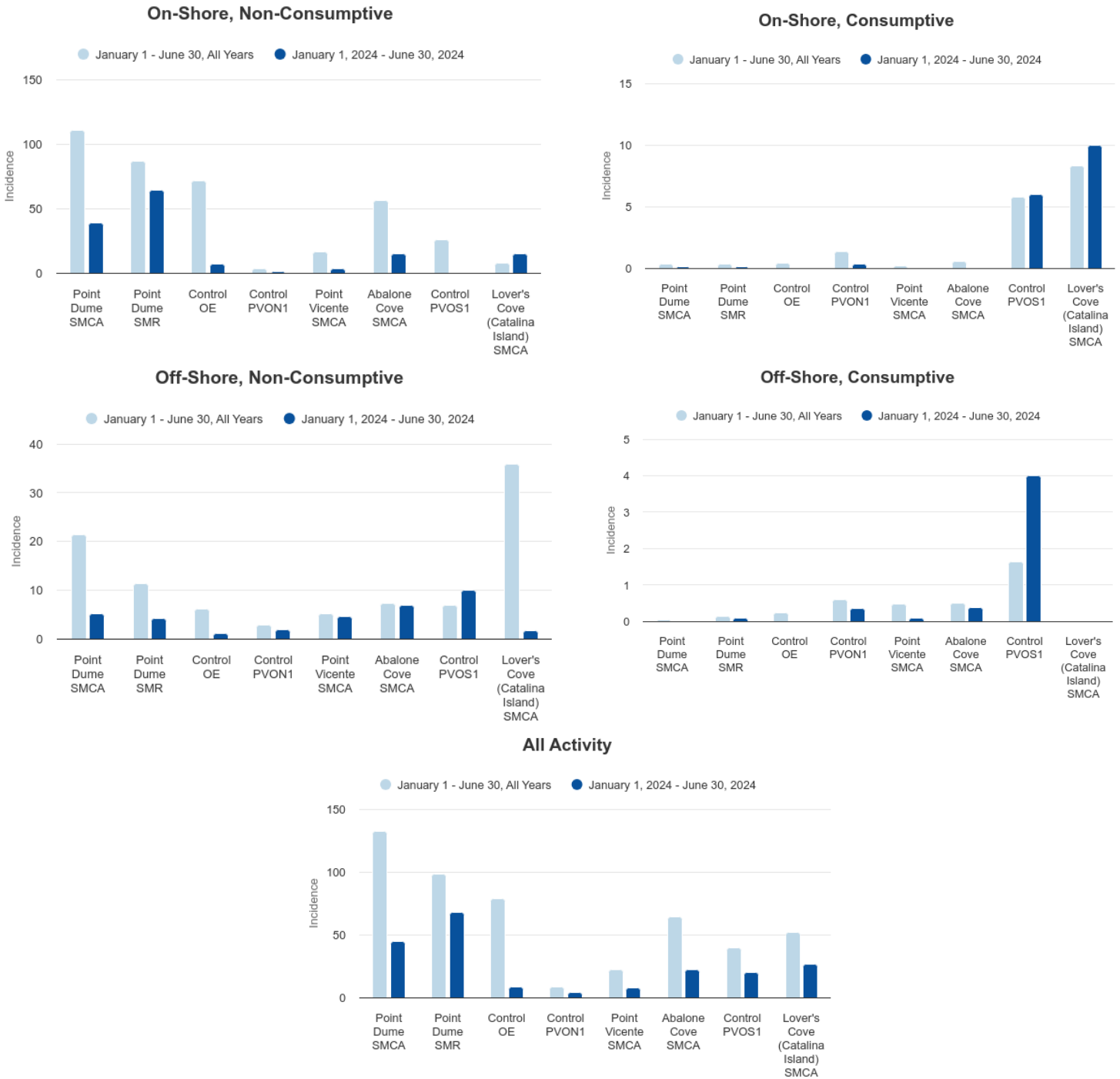


- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
79 (67%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
37 (31%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
2 (2%)

Figures 2a) Point Dume SMCA, 2b) Point Dume SMR, 2c) Point Vicente SMCA, and 2d) Abalone Cove SMCA in order of left to right and top to bottom show pie charts of activity type by MPA or Control site.

Figures 1 and 2 show raw number of activities observed by the MPA Watch Program in Los Angeles County and are not standardized for the number of surveys performed.

Activity Incidence by Site



Figures 3a (onshore non-consumptive), 3b (onshore consumptive), 3c (offshore non-consumptive), 3d (offshore consumptive), and 3e (all activity) in order of left to right and top to bottom: activity rate bar charts for 2024 compared to all years since 2011. NOTE: Some Catalina Island MPAs are included in these charts but were not included in overall analysis. See Catalina Island MPAs section below for details. These charts do not include survey areas they were not surveyed at all during the survey period. **Incidence is calculated as the number of activities recorded divided by total survey miles.**

Activity Incidence by Site

MPA	On-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Control LEO	487.7	nan	5.4	nan
Control OW	7.4	nan	0.4	nan
Point Dume SMCA	110.3	39.1	0.3	0.1
Point Dume SMR	86.3	63.8	0.3	0.1
Control OE	71.7	7.0	0.4	0.0
Control PVON1	3.4	1.2	1.3	0.4
Point Vicente SMCA	16.1	3.2	0.2	0.0
Abalone Cove SMCA	55.8	14.6	0.6	0.0
Control PVOS1	25.4	0.0	5.8	6.0
Blue Cavern (Catalina Island) SMCA	0.0	nan	0.0	nan
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	inf	nan	inf	nan
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	0.0	nan	0.0	nan
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	7.5	15.0	8.3	10.0
All MPAs Combined	63.9	28.3	0.5	0.2

Table 1: Onshore activity incidence rate by MPA or Control site. Incidence is calculated as the number of activities recorded divided by total survey miles.

MPA	Off-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Control LEO	47.4	nan	0.3	nan
Control OW	0.8	nan	0.1	nan
Point Dume SMCA	21.3	5.2	0.0	0.0
Point Dume SMR	11.3	4.1	0.1	0.1
Control OE	6.1	1.0	0.2	0.0
Control PVON1	2.8	1.8	0.6	0.4
Point Vicente SMCA	5.2	4.6	0.5	0.1
Abalone Cove SMCA	7.3	6.9	0.5	0.4
Control PVOS1	6.8	10.0	1.6	4.0
Blue Cavern (Catalina Island) SMCA	3.4	nan	0.6	nan
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	inf	nan	inf	nan
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	370.0	nan	0.0	nan
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	35.8	1.7	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	10.5	4.1	0.3	0.2

Table 2: Offshore activity incidence rate by MPA or Control site. Incidence is calculated as the number of activities recorded divided by total survey miles.

MPA	Total	
	Combined	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Control LEO	540.9	nan
Control OW	8.8	nan
Point Dume SMCA	131.9	44.4
Point Dume SMR	98.0	68.0
Control OE	78.5	8.0
Control PVON1	8.1	3.7
Point Vicente SMCA	21.9	7.9
Abalone Cove SMCA	64.2	21.9
Control PVOS1	39.5	20.0
Blue Cavern (Catalina Island) SMCA	4.1	nan
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	inf	nan
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	370.0	nan
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	51.7	26.7
All MPAs Combined	75.1	32.8

Table 3: Total activity incidence rate by MPA or Control site. Incidence is calculated as the number of activities recorded divided by total survey miles. NOTE: Catalina Island MPAs are included in Tables 1-3 but were not included in overall analysis. See Catalina Island MPAs section below for details.

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.

Program Status and Updates

Heal the Bay's MPA Watch Program has had a successful year so far in 2024. Our hybrid training program remains effective. Heal the Bay has surpassed 1100 volunteers trained over the past twelve years and successfully used this system to train 16 new volunteers thus far in 2024 through our winter and spring public trainings. Heal the Bay volunteers have now surveyed over 7800 transects since the inception of the program. Although the number of newly trained volunteers and active volunteers is lower than this time last year, we plan to host private trainings with partners to increase our volunteer engagement and recruitment efforts later this summer. Our current MPA Watch Senior Coordinator, Crystal Barajas, will be starting graduate school in late September and will be leaving Heal the Bay. We will be looking to recruit a new coordinator to add to our team.

Heal the Bay is continuing to participate in the Marine Protected Network Decadal Management Review (DMR) and is engaging in the ongoing MPA Petition process. We attended the Fish and Game Commission Marine Resources Committee (MRC) meeting in San Clemente in March 2024 and Santa Rosa in July 2024 where we provided public comment on the MPA petition evaluation process and binning outcomes. We will continue to follow the MPA petition process to ensure the MPA network is not weakened.

Our team attended the MPA Watch Manager's Meeting in March and discovered a protocol drift in our surveying methodology. We learned that the other MPA Watch programs along the state have been recording onshore beach recreational activity from a designated shoreward boundary marked by manmade infrastructure to 3 nautical miles (nm) into the MPA, however, we had shifted to surveying onshore beach recreational activity from the Mean High Tide Line (MHTL) to 3nm into the MPA. This shift happened around 2018 – 2019 when there was staff transition in our MPA Watch program manager role. Not all of our transects were affected by this protocol shift since some of our transects' MHTLs extend to the shoreward boundary or are conducted entirely on bluff trails. A total of 14 of our 19 transects are affected by this protocol drift and the data underrepresents the amount of onshore beach activity observed. We are in the process of updating our training materials and protocol to straighten out the shift and correct our data collection going forward. This report, along with all others dating back to 2018, reflects this underrepresentation, which should be taken into consideration when interpreting our data analysis results in the Breakdown by MPA section below.

Our team has started some exciting partnerships this year. We began working with Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples (SPI), an Indigenous-led, community-based organization located in the ancestral homelands of the Tongva People in Los Angeles and Bleu World, a community science collaborative on Catalina Island. We began meeting with SPI to complete an "Indigenization" of our MPA Watch program, including our training materials and public communication. Our MPA team is also working on updating our manual with transect specific updates, including updated photos, transect directions, accessibility ratings, and more. Additionally, we have partnered with Kayla Fearheller, founder of Bleu World, to relaunch surveying of our Catalina Island MPA transects. We visited Two Harbors and Avalon on

Catalina Island and gathered coordinates, photos, and field notes to get transects BCSMCA1 (Blue Cavern) and CHSMCA1 (Cat Harbor) surveyed. We also visited Avalon to make sure our manual was up to date with any field changes.

Heal the Bay's MPA Watch program is continuing our partnership with the Eagle Lab at UCLA this year to collect sea water samples in Malibu MPAs for environmental DNA (eDNA) scientific testing. We have trained community scientists on sample collection protocols that will be used to analyze the quantification of biodiversity in a standardized way within the marine ecosystem. This has further increased stewardship of our MPAs and we have noticed increased interest in our MPA Watch program from eDNA event participants. We have had 49 volunteers participate at our eDNA sampling events in 2024 so far. We are still waiting to hear from our UCLA partners on findings from the first 2-year study and expect results to be available soon.

Heal the Bay's MPA Watch program is continuing to participate in the MPA Watch intercept survey working group with other MPA Watch Statewide Network members to contribute to the understanding of human dimensions within and around MPAs. We meet monthly to provide feedback on the ongoing intercept survey pilot project.

Finally, Heal the Bay's MPA Watch Intern Program has started its fourteenth year and we have thus far had two successful cohorts of four interns total. This past spring, our intern was able to attend our MPA Watch Managers meeting and learned how different programs along the state run their MPA Watch program. She also continued a prior intern's project by partnering with local rangers in Ranchos Palos Verdes to organize and analyze MPA violation observance data. For more information on future projects, please see the "Next Steps" section on page 11.

Breakdown by MPA

Point Dume State Marine Reserve

Point Dume became a State Marine Reserve (SMR) in 2012 as part of the third phase of the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). Point Dume SMR is located at Point Dume in Malibu, California, and encompasses a total of 7.53 square miles. Classified as an SMR, all take is strictly prohibited in this MPA. With panoramic views and miles of visibility down the Malibu coast, Point Dume is known today as an ideal location for hiking, rock climbing, and beach recreation.

Centuries before the settlement of Spanish missionaries in the area, the Indigenous Chumash tribe inhabited Point Dume. Living closely in relation to their natural environment, the Chumash treated Point Dume as a sacred place and a sun shrine. Point Dume's significance relates directly to its position, as it juts out into the Pacific Ocean. Chumash people used the top of Point Dume as a lookout to observe seasonal migrations of marine mammals, schools of fish, and movements of people along the coastline.¹

¹ Robinson, T., Draft Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration - Point Dume Natural Preserve (2003). Retrieved from [https://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/980/files/Point Dume MND_ Draft2.pdf](https://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/980/files/Point_Dume_MND_Draft2.pdf)

A departure from previous years, Point Dume SMR had the most recorded activity of all survey sites in LA County thus far in 2024 with 63% of all recorded activities (Figure 1a). This MPA also had the highest activity incidence rate across all activities (68 activities observed per mile surveyed) of all four MPAs and control sites, indicating it is the most heavily trafficked site (Table 3). This is also a departure from previous years; in years past both the highest percentage of recorded activity and highest rates of activity incidences were in Point Dume SMCA. When looking specifically at consumptive activity rates, the onshore rate was 0.1 observations per survey mile, compared to all-year rate of 0.3 and down from this time last year, which was 0.2 observations per survey mile (Tables 1). The offshore consumptive activity rate was also 0.1 observations per survey mile, consistent with both last year's rate and the all-year rate. Consumptive activities, while only making up 0.2% of all activity in this MPA thus far in 2024 (a total of only 4 observations), included sandy beach hand collection of biota (2 observations) and unknown fishing (2 observations).

The most common activities in Point Dume SMR thus far in 2024 were sandy beach recreation (68%), rocky beach recreation (14%), rocky and sandy beach wildlife viewing (7%), and surfing (3%). Wildlife viewing, a new addition from last year to the top 5 activities in this MPA, was observed much more often in the Point Dume SMR than any other LA County survey site thus far in 2024. A total of 74 counts of wildlife viewing on both rocky and sandy beaches were recorded in this MPA out of 120 counts of wildlife viewing across all MPAs, accounting for 62% of all wildlife viewing activity observations thus far in 2024 across the mainland LA MPAs and control sites.

Consistent with both biannual data reports in 2023, tidepooling was more common in Point Dume SMR than in any other MPA surveyed thus far in 2024, a departure from previous years' trends where Abalone Cove SMCA had the highest numbers of observed tidepoolers. These changes are most likely due to both the reopening of transect SMR2a, which includes Dume Cove and has tidepool habitat, along with the continuous closure of transect ACSMCA2 (Abalone Cove) which has popular tidepool habitat. The closure of this transect and the effect it had on 2024 MPA Watch data is detailed further in the Abalone Cove section below.

This year, the California State Park's team began conducting MPA Watch surveys along with the Heal the Bay volunteers, interns, and staff in the Point Dume SMR. That data is reflected in all tables and figures in this report. MPA Interpreter Hannah Eaton conducted 11 MPA Watch surveys at transects SMR1 (Westward Beach) SMR2a (Point Dume to Little Dume), and SMR2b (Wooden Staircase to Little Dume) from January-June 2024. During this time, there were no reports of infractions but there has been a mandatory increase of Peace Officers patrolling onsite at Point Dume. They have been monitoring the Nature Preserve and the Beach Access of the MPA within the State Beach jurisdiction. Most of the citations are not MPA related and are for individuals off trail or visitors with dogs on beaches or trails.

Point Dume had been receiving many complaints from the community regarding the intertidal zones and the public's disruptions of the ecosystem. This led to a State Parks Interpreter partnering with their local MPA Collaborative to evaluate the best location for regulatory signage

for visitors. While waiting for the new MPA regulatory signs, temporary signs were posted at entrances of the MPAs with signs for No Dogs on the Beach, and Tide Pool Etiquette. In May 2024 three regulatory signs were mounted at each lookout and the base of the wooden staircase going down to the beach. This has increased awareness of the MPA and re-established regulation with the new access point. An MPA interpretive sign with new Indigenous translations will be arriving at Point Dume in the next few months.

Point Dume State Marine Conservation Area

Located adjacent to the Point Dume State Marine Reserve, Point Dume SMCA encompasses 15.92 square miles and runs along Zuma and El Matador beaches in Malibu, CA to the northwest of Point Dume. Adopted in 2012 along with Point Dume SMR during phase three of the MLPA adoption process, this MPA was chosen as the location for an SMCA due to diverse habitats, high species diversity, and monitoring & research opportunities. Similar to the Point Dume SMR, this site plays a significant role in Chumash maritime culture and is well suited for tribal co-management, maritime cultural preservation, and education and outreach.

As a conservation area, Point Dume SMCA does allow for some consumptive activity. The recreational take by spearfishing of white seabass and pelagic finfish is permitted, along with the commercial take of swordfish by harpoon and coastal pelagic species by round haul net, brail gear, and light boat. There is an incidental take limit of no more than 5% by commercial fishing activity, and take pursuant to beach nourishment and sediment management practices is also permissible.

Like in previous years, total activity incidence rate in the Point Dume SMCA was much lower during the first half of 2024 than the all-year rate (Table 3). As noted above, this is most likely due to protocol drift in our MPA surveys that has resulted in a smaller onshore area being observed. We suspect this protocol drift will have a greater impact on sites like the Point Dume SCMA which contains multiple transects with wide sandy beaches that are very popular to beachgoers. The rate of onshore nonconsumptive activity in this MPA, for example, was only 39.1 observations per survey mile thus far in 2024, compared to the all-year rate of 110.3 observations per survey mile. This pattern of lower activity incidence as compared to the all-year rate in this and other MPAs seems to have begun around 2018/2019, when the protocol drift is suspected to have begun. We predict that, as we readjust our protocol to include the entire beach up to a shoreline boundary of infrastructure rather than only including activity between the MHTL and the water, this gap will close, particularly for onshore non-consumptive activity like sandy and rocky beach recreation.

Other rates of activity incidence in this MPA are also lower than the same survey period in 2023. Offshore non-consumptive activity incidence dropped from 14.3 observations per survey mile last year to only 5.2 for this year for the months of January-June (Table 2). For consumptive activity, onshore activity incidence decreased slightly from this time last year from 0.2 to 0.1 observations per survey mile (Table 1) while offshore consumptive activity incidence remained at zero (Table 2). Consumptive activity remains very low in this MPA and accounts for only 0.3%

of all recorded activities in January-June of 2024 (Figure 2a). These consumptive activities only included sandy hook-and-line fishing.

The most common activities in the Point Dume SMCA thus far in 2024 were largely unchanged from previous years and included sandy beach recreation (77%), surfing (9%), rocky beach recreation (7%), offshore recreation (2%), and animals on leash (1%). These five activities comprised 97% of all 675 total observations of activity thus far in 2024 in this MPA. Surfing was observed in this MPA more than any other survey site in LA County, with a total of 62 observations, accounting for just over half of the 120 total observations thus far in 2024.

Point Vicente No-Take State Marine Conservation Area

Point Vicente State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) is a no-take MPA established in 2012. This MPA protects key habitats and covers fifteen square miles. Home to the Point Vicente Lighthouse and 3.7 miles of scenic shoreline, Point Vicente attracts many tourists. Beach access in this MPA is limited which makes beach recreation and other activities less common, however, tourists can still enjoy the views and occasional wildlife viewing from the bluff trails. As a no-take SMCA, no recreational or commercial take is permitted within its boundaries. Specially permitted incidental take for infrastructure maintenance is legally permissible.

As with the last few years, volunteers surveyed Point Vicente SMCA the most out of all the MPAs and control sites thus far in 2024 with a total of 57 surveys, making up 37% of the total number of surveys conducted, but only 6% of the total activities observed (Figure 1a). Consistent with trends from recent years and the all-year rates, Point Vicente SMCA had more observed offshore activity than any other LA MPA thus far in 2024, making up 60% of the total observed activity, up from 36% for January-June 2023 (Figure 2c). Consumptive activity in this MPA was not the highest percentage of consumptive activity of all LA County MPAs thus far in 2024, a major departure from the trend of the previous few years. Consumptive activity only accounted for 1% of all observations in the Point Vicente SMCA (Figure 2c). Total activity incidence decreased in this MPA from 16.1 observations per survey mile January-June of 2023 to only 7.9 observations per survey mile January-June 2024 (Table 3).

Onshore consumptive activity remained at 0, the same as this survey period in 2023 (Table 1). Offshore consumptive activity decreased slightly from 0.3 activities per survey mile this time last year to 0.1 activities per survey mile thus far in 2024 (Table 2). This MPA normally has the highest offshore consumptive activity rate of all the MPAs in the LA region, however that is not the case thus far in 2024. All consumptive activity recorded in this MPA thus far in 2024 was unknown fishing. Just like last year, which also showed mostly unknown fishing for consumptive activity in this MPA, these consumptive activities were not recorded as potential violations, an important caveat to the further information provided in the “Potential Violations” section on page 12. Across all activity types, the most common activities in this MPA were wildlife viewing (22%), power boating (15%), work boat (14%), and rocky beach recreation (10%).

Abalone Cove State Marine Conservation Area

Located adjacent to Point Vicente SMCA, Abalone Cove SMCA spans just 1.2 miles of shoreline and encompasses only 4.7 square miles. The smallest of the MPAs in LA County, this protected area is located south of the Palos Verdes Peninsula. It was adopted in 2012 and along with Point Vicente SMCA, includes the only south-facing headland in the entire region. The shoreline of this MPA is known for its rocky intertidal habitat. As an SMCA, Abalone Cove SMCA does allow some take of marine organisms. Within the MPA boundaries, the recreational take by spearfishing of white seabass and pelagic finfish; and market squid by hand-held dip net is permitted. The commercial take of swordfish by harpoon; and coastal pelagic species and Pacific bonito by round haul net, brail gear, and light boat are also permitted. Additionally, like Point Vicente SMCA, Abalone Cove SMCA partially contains a superfund site, and therefore take pursuant to the mitigation actions of the superfund site is permitted.

So far in 2024, surveys in Abalone Cove SMCA have been mostly limited to just one of the two transects due to continued beach closures in the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Due to land movement and unstable bluffs, the trails leading to transect ACSMCA2 or Abalone Cove have been closed for much of the year. This has led to changes in the makeup of activities observed in this MPA. Unlike previous years, where tidepooling was often observed as one of the most common activities in this MPA, zero counts of tidepooling were observed so far in 2024, most likely due to the closure of the Abalone Cove trails which lead to an intertidal zone popular among tidepoolers.

During the first half of 2024, total activity incidence rate in Abalone Cove SMCA slightly decreased from 25.1 to 21.9 observations per survey mile compared to this time last year. Total activity rate in this MPA is below the all-year rate across all activity types (21.9 compared to 64.2) as is consistent with other MPAs and expected with the protocol drift outlined earlier in this report (Table 3).

Consumptive activity made up 2% (2 out of 118 total observations) of observed activities in this MPA compared with only 0.2% (1 out of 407 observations) this time last year, a slight increase (Figure 2d). Onshore consumptive activity incidence rate remained at 0 observations per survey mile (Table 1) while offshore consumptive activity incidence rate increased from 0.1 observations per survey mile this time last year to 0.4 observations per survey mile thus far in 2024 (Table 2). The 2 counts of consumptive activity in this MPA were both recorded as unknown fishing and therefore, similar to Point Vicente SMCA, no potential violations were recorded for this MPA. The most common activities observed in Abalone Cove during the survey period were rocky and sandy beach recreation (49% and 8% respectively), power boating (10%), sandy beach wildlife viewing (7%), and kayaking (7%). This is the only MPA with kayaking regularly appearing in the top 5 most common activities in LA County.

Catalina Island: Lover's Cove SMCA, Casino Point No-Take SMCA, Blue Cavern Onshore (No-Take) SMCA and Offshore SMCA, and Cat Harbor SMCA

Catalina Island hosts nine of the state's MPAs, protecting around 22 square miles of coastal and marine habitat. At this time, select Heal the Bay volunteers and interns have access to four MPA

Watch transects on Catalina: Blue Cavern, Cat Harbor, Lover's Cove, and Casino Point. Casino Point, the state's smallest MPA at just 0.01 square miles, is located in Avalon. This MPA is a "no-take" state marine conservation area or SMCA and does not allow for take of any kind, including all fishing activities. This MPA does, however, allow the feeding of fish, an included regulation unique to the island. Lover's Cove SMCA, also located in Avalon, is also a small MPA at only 0.06 square miles. This SMCA prohibits all take except for recreational hook and line fishing from Cabrillo Mole. Feeding fish for marine life viewing, similarly to Casino Point, is also allowed.

The other two MPAs surveyed on Catalina Island are in the Two Harbors area. The Blue Cavern Onshore No-Take SMCA covers 2.61 square miles and does not allow take of any kind. The Blue Cavern Offshore SMCA, however, which runs adjacent to the onshore MPA and covers 7.7 square miles, allows for the recreational take of market squid by handheld dip net, pelagic finfish by hook-and-line or spearfishing, and white seabass by spearfishing. Commercial take of pelagic finfish by hook-and-line and of swordfish by harpoon is also permitted. These two MPAs have been part of a protected area for longer than their current designation within the California MPA network and were once the Catalina Marine Science Center Marine Life Refuge, which was recognized 30 years earlier than the network's designation.

The Cat Harbor SMCA is much smaller, covering only 0.26 square miles and spanning just 0.4 miles of shoreline. This MPA, which is within an all-weather harbor that has calm waters and includes sandy and rocky beaches and tidal flats, allows the recreational take of lobster and sea urchin, squid by hook-and-line, and finfish by hook-and-line or spearfishing. Commercial take of sea cucumber by diving only, and of lobster and sea urchin is also permitted.

Each of these Catalina MPAs (combining the two Blue Cavern MPAs into one) contains one MPA Watch transect and, over the course of this program, have only been surveyed a few times. Only one transect was conducted thus far in 2024 so, therefore, we have elected not to include any summary of this data as there is insufficient data to analyze. We hope to include analyses of this data in future reports.

Potential Violations

While some consumptive activities are permitted in LA County MPAs, the consumptive activity metric is a good place to start when looking at compliance and possible violations in MPAs, particularly state marine reserves and no-take state marine conservation areas. The rate of consumptive activities across all MPAs surveyed by MPA Watch remains relatively low in LA County mainland MPAs, consistent with previous reporting. Only 10 counts of consumptive activity were observed inside MPAs, accounting for only 0.4% of total activities in 2024. An additional 20 counts of consumptive activity were observed in control sites. The highest rates of consumptive activity in mainland LA County occurred at control site PVON1, located at the northern boundary of Point Vicente SMCA and PVOS1, located at the southern boundary of Abalone Cove SMCA, where this activity is permitted. Consumptive activity rates are consistently higher outside of MPAs, possibly indicating good compliance in our MPAs.

Other than at Abalone Cove SMCA, consumptive activity incidence rates were below 0.1 observations per survey mile both onshore and offshore in LA County MPAs, a good indication of compliance in our protected areas. This reporting does not include the activity rates for the Catalina Island MPAs. Due to low surveying in Catalina from MPA Watch interns and volunteers, our program’s data shows a high incidence rate of onshore consumptive activity for the Lover’s Cove SMCA, with a rate of 10 incidences per survey mile of onshore consumptive activity. As noted in previous reports, this data came from a single survey taken at this site and should not be considered on its own as evidence of abnormally high consumptive activity in this area and is being otherwise excluded from the analysis in this report. Observations consisted of hook-and-line fishing, a permitted activity in parts of this MPA and not a recorded potential violation.

MPA	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Control LEO	0	0
Control OW	0	0
Point Dume SMCA	199	2
Point Dume SMR	294	0
Control OE	0	0
Control PVON1	0	0
Point Vicente SMCA	174	0
Abalone Cove SMCA	139	0
Control PVOS1	0	0
Blue Cavern (Catalina Island) SMCA	4	0
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	1	0
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	0	0
Lover’s Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	0	0
All MPAs Combined	811	2

Table 4: Raw counts of observed potential violations by MPA Watch volunteers for all years of MPA Watch compared to the first half of 2024. These do NOT include observed “unknown fishing” as these cannot be deemed potential violations without further information.

Of the observed consumptive activities across all LA County MPAs, only 2 observations were deemed violations, or about 0.07% of total observations. Violations were observed in only 1 of the 4 mainland MPAs monitored by MPA Watch in LA County (Table 4). Observations of a violation were made on only 1 survey, accounting for 0.6% of total surveys conducted, much lower than 3.5% of surveys that had observed violations this time last year.

It is important to note, however, that this count of violations excludes some of the consumptive activity observed in the Point Vicente no-take SMCA and Abalone Cove SMCA as some observations were marked as “unknown fishing” and not included in the total potential violation count due to lack of further information. This may be an underestimate of the total observations of violations as one of these MPAs is a no-take MPA and the other has limited take exemptions. It should also be noted that Table 4 does not include 2 observations of sandy beach hand collection of biota observed in the Point Dume SMR. It is unclear why these consumptive activity observations were not included by the MPA Watch database in the potential violation count as

collection of biota in this no-take marine reserve is not permitted. This is perhaps an error in the system and our team will be working with the MPA Watch statewide network to address this potential reporting issue. If these two activity types are added back into the potential violation count, then a total of 10 potential violations were observed by MPA Watch volunteers thus far in 2024 across 4 surveys, accounting for 0.4% of activities observed and 2.6% of surveys.

Of the potential violation observations made during the survey period, none were reported to CalTIP. We continue to implement measures in an effort to increase CalTIP reports for observed violations by our volunteers, including practice calls during trainings and sample call scripts for volunteers. We will brainstorm with the broader MPA Watch community to develop additional tools and are continuing to experiment with direct outreach to volunteers who observe but do not report violations to better understand why the calls are not being made and offer resources to encourage the additional reporting. We plan to launch a new CalTIP reporting tool for our volunteers later this year so that they have support in the field when making calls and to also teach volunteers how to use CalTIP texting and the CalTIP app as alternatives to calling to increase reporting rates.

Next Steps

Looking forward to the rest of 2024, Heal the Bay's MPA Watch team will host two more public training sessions, a refresher course training and at least one private training with the National Charity League using our permanently adopted hybrid training model. Our team plans to strengthen our volunteer relationships, increase engagement and retention by reaching out to other potential partners such as clubs at different high schools and community colleges to provide them with research and field opportunities. We will begin recruiting a new member to our team to ensure a smooth transition within our program before Crystal leaves us in late September.

Our team is passionate about strengthening our relationship with our partners from SPI. We will be meeting with SPI to complete the "Indigenization" of our MPA Watch program and were honored to be invited to participate in a South Coastal Tribal Listening Session in July of 2024. We are looking forward to the final products of this partnership, including an updated manual that will contain information on the Indigenous nations whose land and coastal waters we survey, updated training slides, and other new inclusions to our overall program to be finalized for use in 2025. Additionally, we are working on releasing updated training materials with the correct surveying methodology. A new classroom training video, refresher course, and manual are coming late summer. We plan to include two new transects from Two Harbors on Catalina Island in our most updated version of our MPA Watch manual and hope this new partnership with Bleu World will increase our MPA Watch monitoring on Catalina Island.

Finally, we look forward to continuing collaboration with UCLA to monitor the biodiversity of our Malibu MPAs. We plan to continue our monthly environmental DNA (eDNA) events with PhD candidate Moriah Byrd. We hope to publish some preliminary results that we will share widely with the public, MPA managers, and partner organizations.

Additional Information

LA County MPA Watch is part of a larger statewide MPA Watch effort. For more information about this program, please visit www.mpawatch.org. If you are interested in joining the Heal the Bay MPA Watch volunteer team, please attend one of our volunteer orientations for more information. Volunteer orientations are held bimonthly and are a prerequisite to attending one of our quarterly MPA Watch trainings.

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.

To learn more about Heal the Bay's MPA Watch Program and to register for an orientation or training, please visit healthebay.org/mpa. For information on California's network of marine protected areas, please visit californiampas.org. For details on the rules, regulations, and management of California's MPAs, please visit wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs.

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MPA Watch Volunteer Trainings: Left – Point Dume, May 2024; Middle - Catalina Island, June 2024; Right – Westward Beach, June 2024