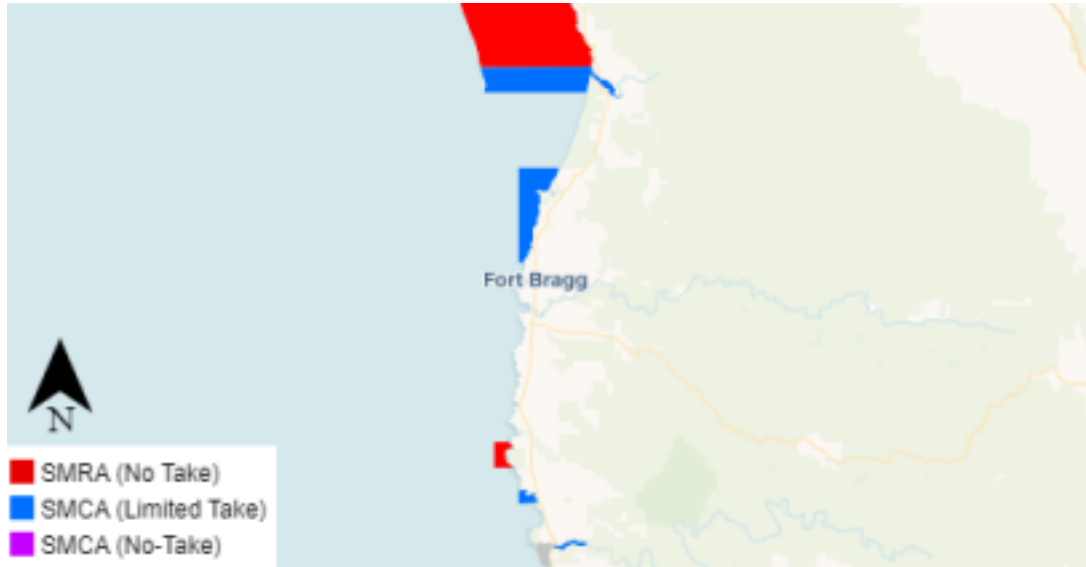




**Marine Protected Area (MPA)  
Watch Regional Report**  
Mendocino County  
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024



Statewide, coastal State Parks staff and volunteers continue to be trained in MPA Watch protocol and collect data from transects and control sites along the length of the coast. State Parks is the only partner collecting and contributing MPA Watch Data in Mendocino County.

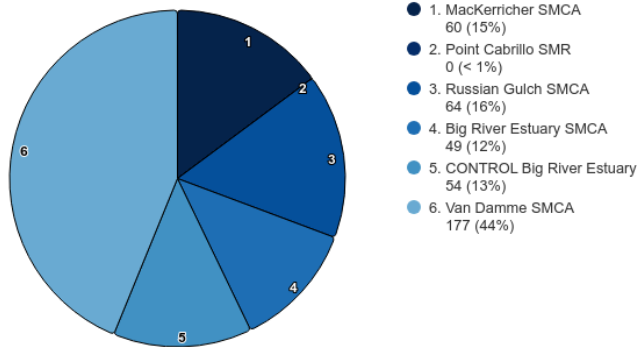
## Executive Summary

- 32 surveys were collected by three State Parks employees during this reporting period.
- 6 transects were studied within 5 MPAs and a control transect at Big River Estuary.
- Two violations were reported at MacKerricher SMCA and Van Damme SMCA during this reporting period.

## HUMAN USE OF MPAS January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

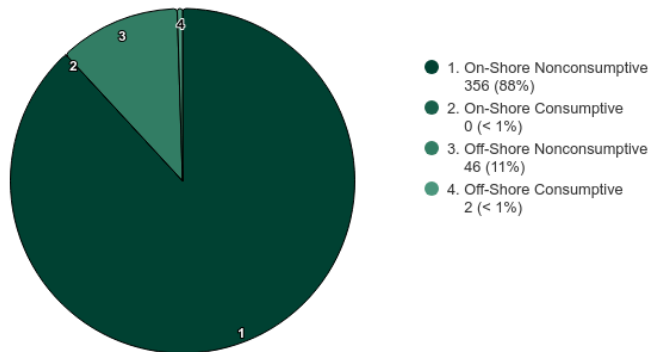
### Top 6 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
404 total activity events



### All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
404 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.

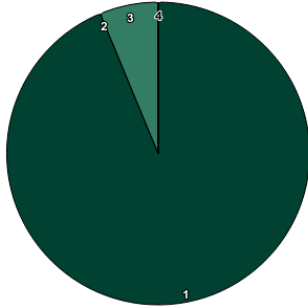
**Consumptive** - An activity in which a natural resource (i.e. fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.

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

## ACTIVITY BY MPA

### Russian Gulch SMCA

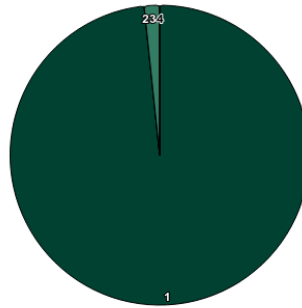
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
64 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
60 (94%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
4 (6%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

### MacKerricher SMCA

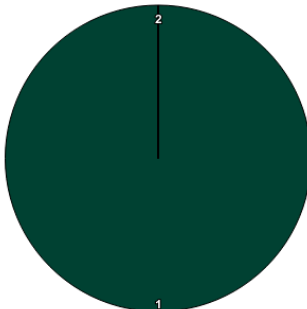
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
60 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
59 (98%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
1 (2%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

### Big River Estuary SMCA

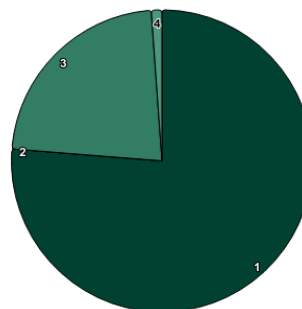
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
49 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
49 (100%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

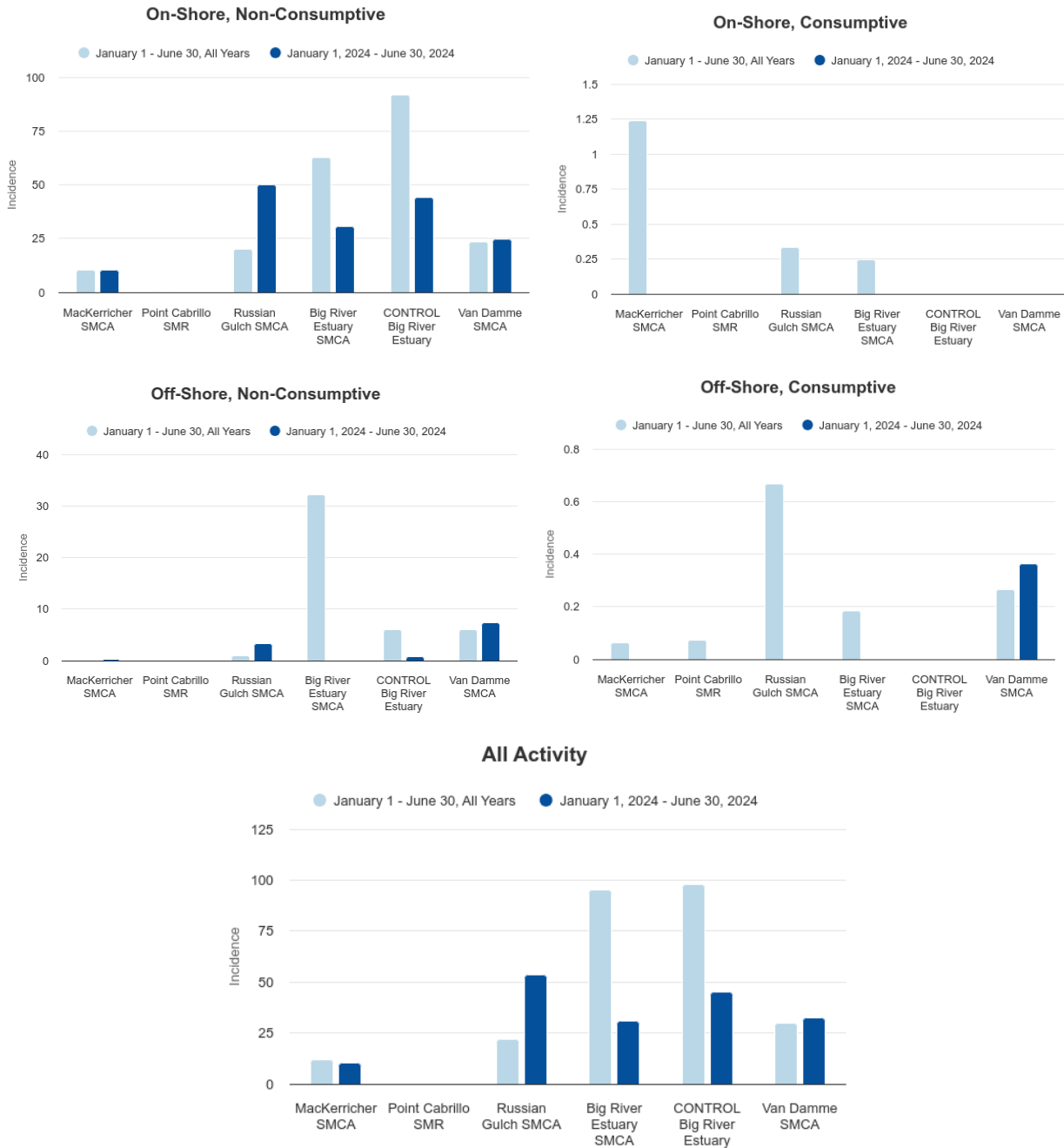
### Van Damme SMCA

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



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
135 (76%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
40 (23%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
2 (1%)

## ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA



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.**



## ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

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
MacKerricher SMCA	10.2	10.4	1.2	0.0
Point Cabrillo SMR	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Russian Gulch SMCA	20.0	50.0	0.3	0.0
Big River Estuary SMCA	62.6	30.6	0.2	0.0
CONTROL Big River Estuary	91.8	44.2	0.0	0.0
Van Damme SMCA	23.3	24.5	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	35.7	22.4	0.4	0.0

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
MacKerricher SMCA	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Point Cabrillo SMR	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Russian Gulch SMCA	1.0	3.3	0.7	0.0
Big River Estuary SMCA	32.1	0.0	0.2	0.0
CONTROL Big River Estuary	6.0	0.8	0.0	0.0
Van Damme SMCA	6.0	7.3	0.3	0.4
All MPAs Combined	9.0	2.9	0.2	0.1

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
	MacKerricher SMCA	11.6
Point Cabrillo SMR	0.4	0.0
Russian Gulch SMCA	22.0	53.3
Big River Estuary SMCA	95.1	30.6
CONTROL Big River Estuary	97.8	45.0
Van Damme SMCA	29.6	32.2
All MPAs Combined	45.2	25.4

### 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

### MacKerricher SMCA

This long stretch of beach includes a harbor seal rookery, gently sloping sand, and tide pool areas. The most popular is Glass Beach, which is a part of this MPA, though not included in a MPA Watch transect. MacKerricher is a highly visited park through the summer months with visitors accessing the beach with no day use fees. Spring always brings large numbers of school field trips down to the tide pool areas and rookery. Fall and winter seasons typically slow down around the park and beach because of yearly coastal flooding keeping visitors from driving to the closest beach parking area. Many families host parties on the beach while private buses filled with visitors often drop off at the Laguna Point boardwalk. There are also local science summer camps in session and beach clean up groups frequent this MPA through fair weather seasons.

### Van Damme SMCA

This horseshoe-shaped beach is a popular stop for campers in Van Damme State Park, visitors cruising along Highway 1, tourists staying in Mendocino, and locals. This beach is a rocky area that features calm waters for kayaking, some tidepooling, and prime urchin diving conditions in the summer. This area is subject to flooding in the rainy winter season and is very affected by the yearly king tides. During these times, the parking will flood and cover the only beach parking lot. The flooding can extend onto Hwy 1 during more intense storms during the winter. This area is also used by some universities as a practice area for diving courses.

### Big River Estuary SMCA

This estuary is a very popular day excursion spot for locals and visitors alike. This long sweeping beach is a great place for families because the ocean waves only crash at the mouth of the river. Families with young kids prefer to set up their beach day or picnic toward the calm waters of the river on the east side of the beach. This is also a popular river for swimming, kayaking, throwing small parties, and dog walking. Cell phone connection near the river is strong enough for virtual parks programming and streaming videos.

There is ample parking both in town, near the staircase that leads down to the ocean side, and down by the river. The lower parking lot is subject to winter flooding and storm surge often makes the west side of the beach unusable.

### Point Cabrillo SMR

This MPA is adjacent to the Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. Many visitors enjoy this area by looking down into the water, whale watching, bird watching, and admiring seals from the cliffs surrounding the lighthouse. This area is also a cultural site due to its location to the historic Frolic shipwreck, which can be learned about inside the lighthouse visitor center. There is no beach

access to this MPA, but it is still a highly visited and utilized area. The walk from the main parking area is close to a mile long, but there is ADA parking closer to the visitor center and trail heads. This area has, in the past, been very affected by high waves and now the park is closed during severe ocean conditions to protect visitors from waves that may top the cliffs.

## **Russian Gulch SMCA**

This small, enclosed beach is nestled below a large concrete bridge making for a scenic day at the sea. This small area is popular with campers in the park, kayakers, and divers. The protected waters are ideal for fishing by kayak and a relaxing day at the beach. There is a small river that runs through the beach, which makes this a popular splashing spot for young kids. This beach allows for dogs on leash and grilling. There is limited parking so many visitors walk to the beach from their camping sites. With the limited parking and narrow park roads, this is not a suitable location for buses with field trips but is visited as an end point for groups that enjoy hiking the long trail down from the top of the park.

## **POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS**

### **MacKerricher SMCA**

One violation was recorded at this site with dog off leash on sandy beach. This is a violation for State Parks but not for this MPA. In previous years illegal collecting in the tide pools, feeding wildlife, disturbing harbor seals, and dogs off leash along the beach are the four most common violations along this MPA. Lifeguards and Rangers regularly walk the area to talk with violators about the impact of these actions and occasionally write tickets for repeat offenders.

### **Van Damme SMCA**

One violation was recorded at this site with dog off leash on sandy beach. This is a violation for State Parks but not for this MPA. Anecdotally, this area is less patrolled than other highly trafficked parks, resulting in few instances of tickets being given to violators. This beach has seen its fair share of dogs off leash and is a previously documented prime area for abalone poaching because of the calm diving conditions and close parking lot.

### **Big River Estuary SMCA**

No violations were recorded at this MPA. Historically, this area is highly patrolled by both Rangers and Lifeguards. The most common violations are dog off leash and illegal crabbing in the river. There is some local confusion about an area of the beach being permitted for off-leash dog activity, staff hope with additional signage and public education we can help shift that belief.

## Point Cabrillo SMR

No violations were recorded at this MPA. This area is run almost entirely by the Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association, a volunteer docent group, that helps take surveys and call in violations to Rangers and Lifeguards. The only violations that I know of are dog off-leash violations with hikers on the cliff top.

## Russian Gulch SMCA

No violations were recorded at this MPA. This beach is isolated in the state park, so the Rangers and Lifeguards are the main patrols of the area. Since this is a calm diving area, there is potential for abalone poaching. This area also sees dogs off leash and beach litter brought in by the campground.

## NEXT STEPS

Staff hope to involve more volunteers to help with data collection at all transects. Two new State Parks Staff members were trained in the spring, and they will be relocating from Sonoma to the Mendocino area in the fall of 2024. This will help increase number of surveys in less studied transects including Point Cabrillo, Van Damme, and Russian Gulch.

## 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.

California State Parks' involvement is funded by a Once-Through Cooling grant from the Ocean Protection Council which supports a team of MPA interpreters working across nine State Parks districts along the California coast.