



**Marine Protected Area (MPA)
Watch Regional Report**
Santa Cruz 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 Santa Cruz County.

Executive Summary

- 26 surveys were conducted by one State Park employee and two volunteers during this reporting period.
- One transect was studied within the Natural Bridges SMR and two other transects in control sites in Natural Bridges SMR (outside State Parks boundary) and at Seacliff State Beach.
- 6 potential violations were observed at Natural Bridges SMR during this reporting period.

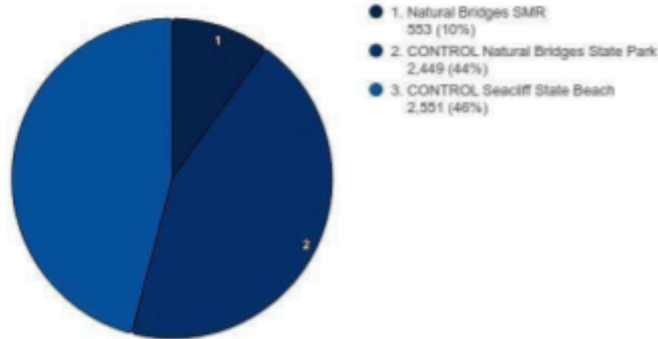
MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) WATCH REGIONAL REPORT

HUMAN USE OF MPAS

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

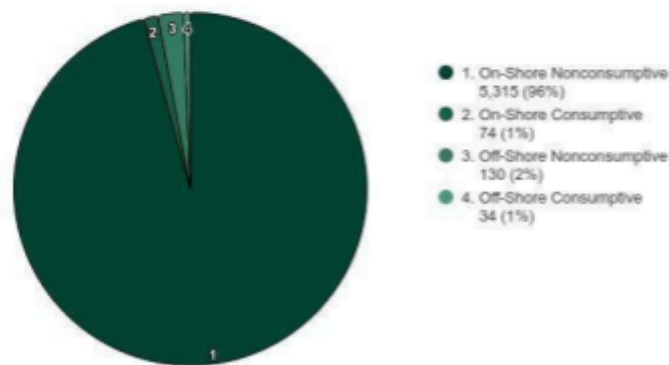
Top 3 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
5,553 total activity events



All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
5,553 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.

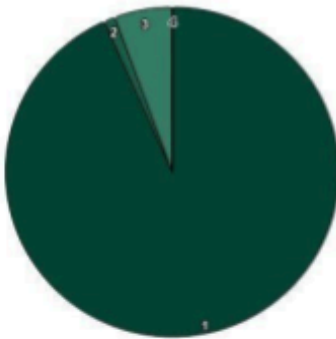
Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource (i.e. fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.

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

ACTIVITY BY MPA

Natural Bridges SMR

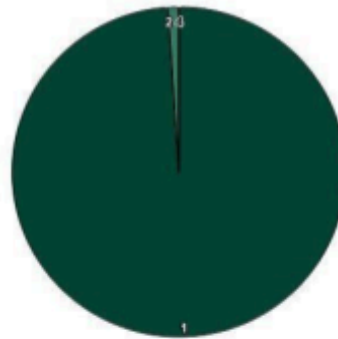
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
553 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
516 (93%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
6 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
31 (6%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

CONTROL Natural Bridges State Park

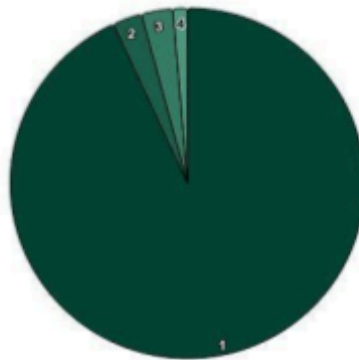
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
2,449 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
2,423 (99%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
26 (1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
0 (< 1%)

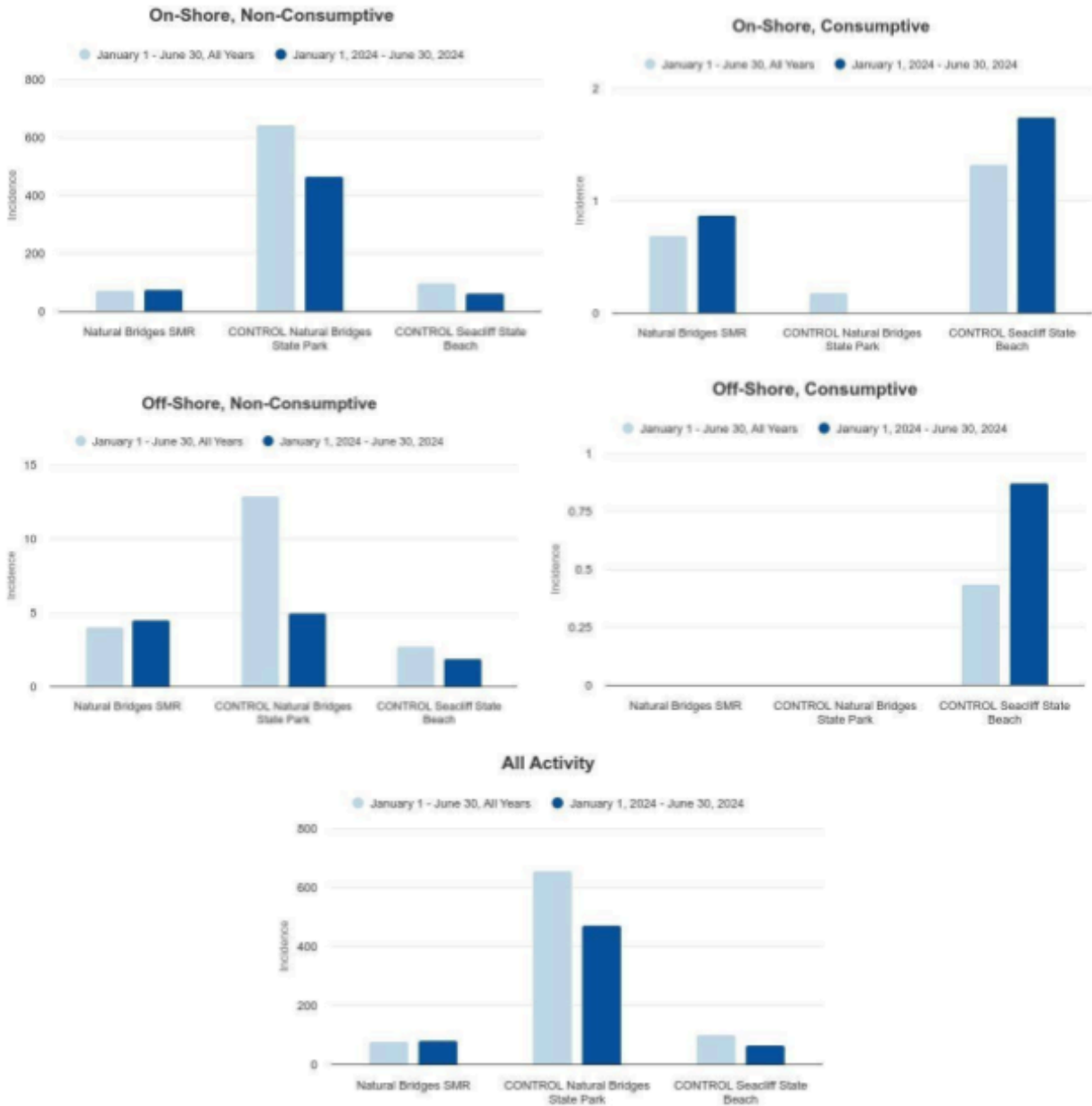
CONTROL Seacliff State Beach

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024
2,551 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
2,376 (93%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
68 (3%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
73 (3%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
34 (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.**



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Incidence Tables

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
Natural Bridges SMR	72.6	74.8	0.7	0.9
CONTROL Natural Bridges State Park	643.0	466.0	0.2	0.0
CONTROL Seacliff State Beach	95.5	60.9	1.3	1.7
All MPAs Combined	127.8	104.0	1.2	1.4

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
Natural Bridges SMR	4.0	4.5	0.0	0.0
CONTROL Natural Bridges State Park	12.9	5.0	0.0	0.0
CONTROL Seacliff State Beach	2.7	1.9	0.4	0.9
All MPAs Combined	3.4	2.5	0.4	0.7

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Natural Bridges SMR	77.4	80.1
CONTROL Natural Bridges State Park	656.1	471.0
CONTROL Seacliff State Beach	100.0	65.4
All MPAs Combined	132.8	108.7

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

Natural Bridges SMR

Typically, the beach and tidepool areas (during low tides) are always extremely crowded on summer weekend days. Due to the morphology of the coastline in Santa Cruz with large steep bluffs and sloping outcroppings it can be very difficult to do surveys when the park is crowded. Staff report when they start their surveys down to the control transect (just east of the SMR) on the sandy beach, they can only see about halfway down the transect because there are so many bodies and tents obscuring their view to make accurate counts and observations. Staff have experimented with conducting their surveys from the bluff to the east of the beach, looking down and across the beach to the west. Additionally, we are considering taking photos of the beach and then counting activity on the photos.

POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS

There was an increase in poaching in the tidepools observed during this reporting period with a total of 6 violations recorded. One was shore-based hand collection of biota (rocky) and 2 violations of shore-based hook and line fishing (rocky). This is likely due to the fact that there is currently no signage letting visitors know they are in an MPA. All of the MPA signage was destroyed during the January 2024 storms. Park staff have recently received new signs from the MPA Collaborative; however, maintenance has not been able to put them up yet. Visitors who have interacted with law enforcement and given a citation claimed they didn't know it was an MPA.

Surveyors have consistently observed dogs on the beach. Many visitors bring their dogs to Natural Bridges State Beach and don't read the signs that say they are not allowed. MPA regulations do not limit dogs, but State Parks rules do.

NEXT STEPS

Historically at Natural Bridges State beach, park staff has found it challenging to spark interest in docents in to participate in MPA Watch surveys. Docents have expressed not being comfortable with entering the data online, and especially with uploading photos of their data sheets. Park staff will continue to offer MPA Watch training opportunities for docents and volunteer who are interested. Staff will also continue their efforts in recruiting new volunteers. As previously stated during the summer months conducted surveys can be difficult with hundreds of visitors at the tidepools having more volunteers to partner up during surveys would provide more accurate data collection of observations. Staff are also exploring the option of taking photos of the beach, then counting the activities captured in the photo. Moving forward, staff hope to increase volunteer participation.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

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.