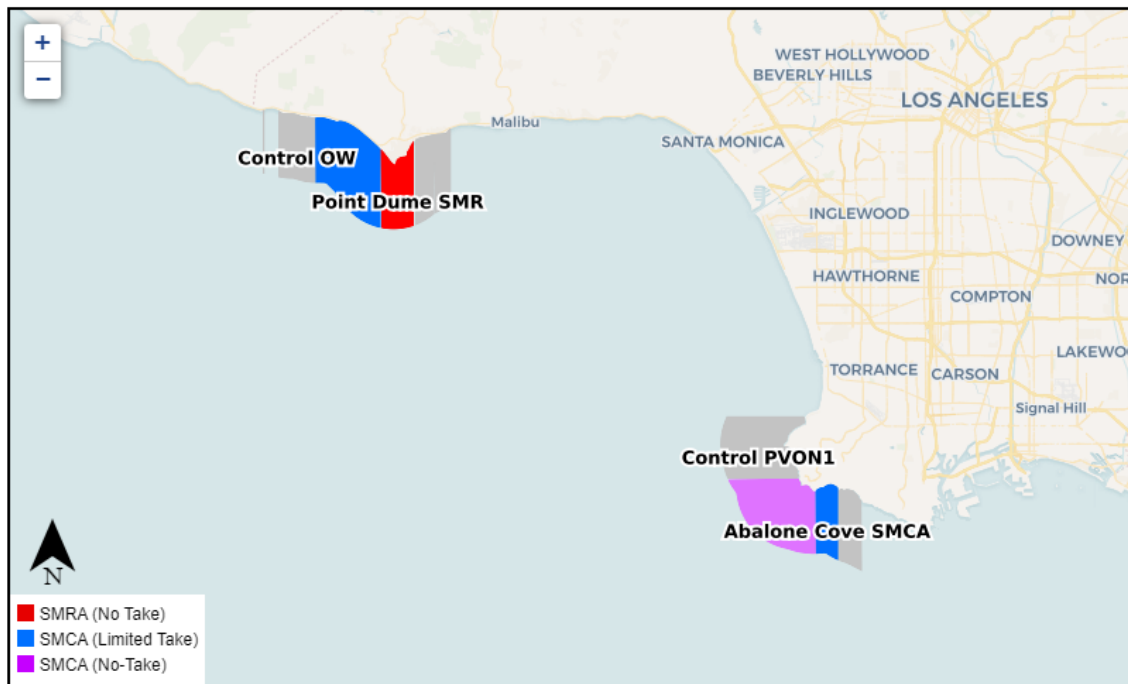**Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch**
Regional Report
LA County Shore-Based
January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

Heal the Bay

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.
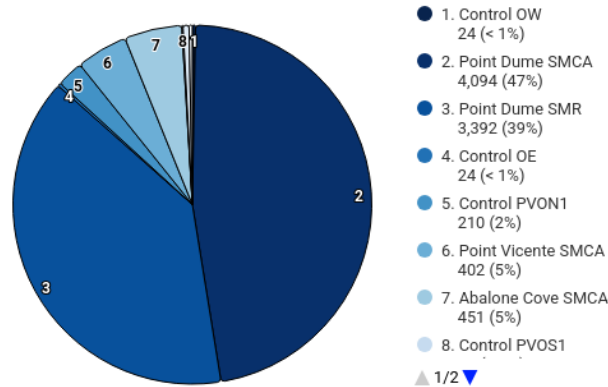
Executive Summary

- In 2024, 33 active MPA Watch surveyors conducted a total of 319 surveys across 173 total survey miles and recorded a total of 8,679 activities. Total survey count in 2024 has fallen from its peak in 2023.
- Consumptive activity continues to decrease in multiple MPAs in LA County as compared to 2021 and 2020 observed activities.
- 2024 marked record closures and natural disasters due to rock falls, mudslides, and wildfires. These events force us to consider how we will adapt the MPA Watch program to address the access barriers we see at present and will continue to see with our changing coastline.
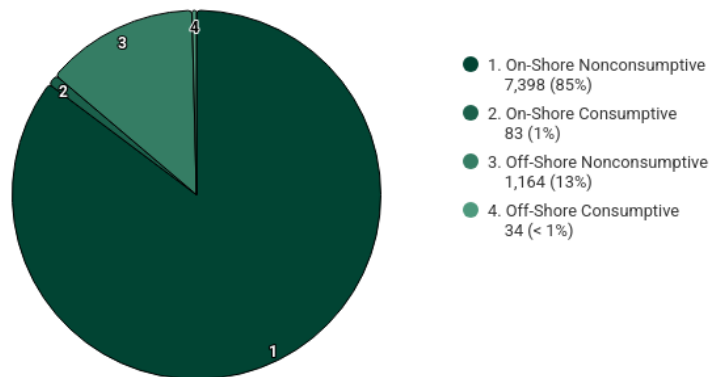
Human Use of MPAs January - December 2024

Top 10 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
8,679 total activity events

- 1. Control OW
  24 (< 1%)
- 2. Point Dume SMCA
  4,094 (47%)
- 3. Point Dume SMR
  3,392 (39%)
- 4. Control OE
  24 (< 1%)
- 5. Control PVON1
  210 (2%)
- 6. Point Vicente SMCA
  402 (5%)
- 7. Abalone Cove SMCA
  451 (5%)
- 8. Control PVOS1

▲ 1/2 ▼

All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
8,679 activity events

- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
  7,398 (85%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
  83 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
  1,164 (13%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
  34 (< 1%)

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.
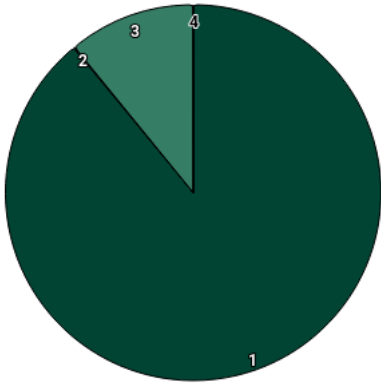**Consumptive -** An activity in which a natural resource (i.e. fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.
Non-Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.
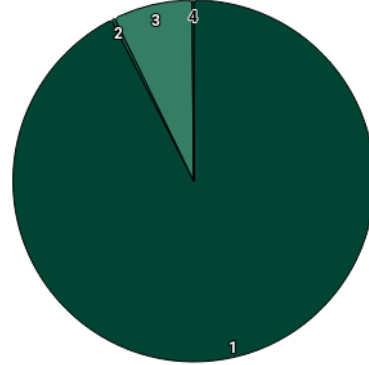
Activity by MPA

Point Dume SMCA

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
4,094 activity events

- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
  3,644 (89%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
  4 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
  446 (11%)
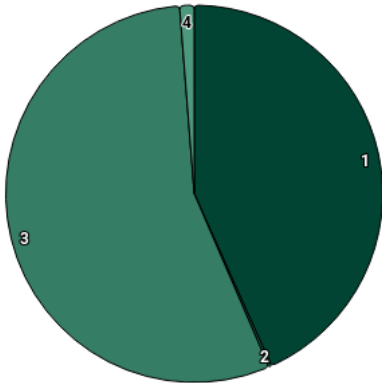- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
  0 (< 1%)

Point Dume SMR

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
3,392 activity events

- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
  3,137 (92%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
  11 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
  239 (7%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
  5 (< 1%)
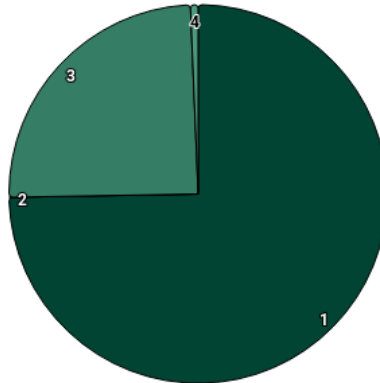
Point Vicente SMCA

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
402 activity events

- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
  174 (43%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
  1 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
  222 (55%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
  5 (1%)

Abalone Cove SMCA

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
451 activity events

- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
  337 (75%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
  0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
  111 (25%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
  3 (1%)

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

On-Shore, Non-Consumptive
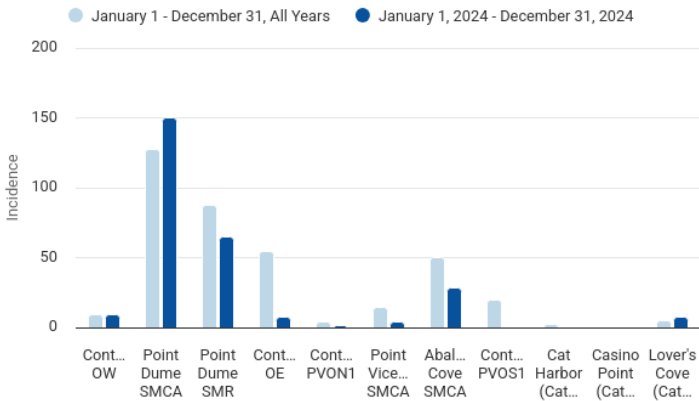
On-Shore, Consumptive
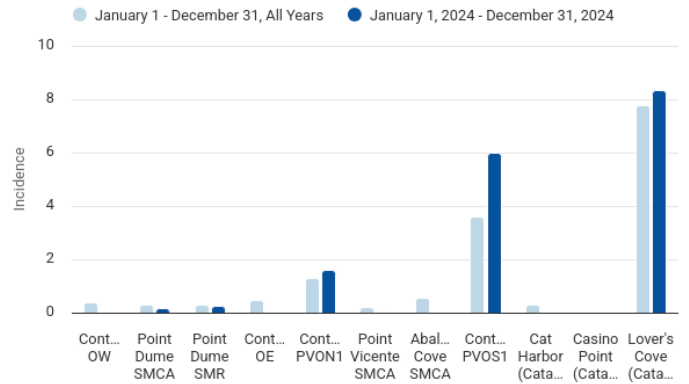

Off-Shore, Non-Consumptive
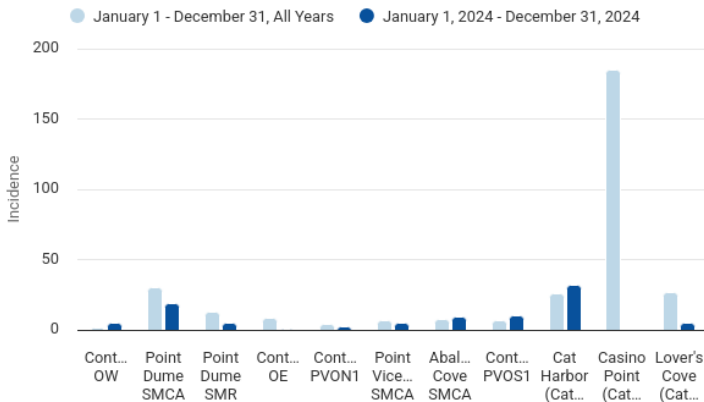
Off-Shore, Consumptive
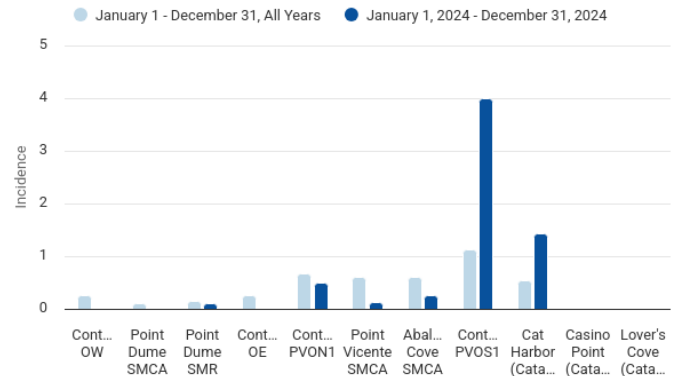
All Activity
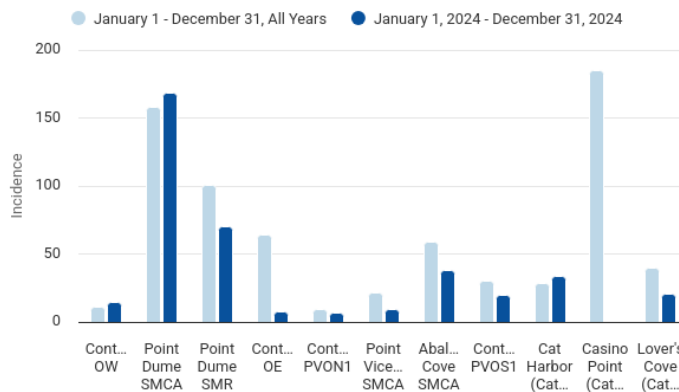
Figures 3a (onshore non-consumptive), 3b (onshore consumptive), 3c (offshore non-consumptive), 3d (offshore consumptive), and 3e (all activity) in order of left to right and top to bottom: activity rate bar charts for 2023 compared to all years since 2011. NOTE: Catalina Island MPAs are included in these charts but were not included in overall analysis. See Catalina Island MPAs section below for details.
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 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
Control OW	9.2	9.4	0.3	0.0
Point Dume SMCA	127.8	150.0	0.3	0.2
Point Dume SMR	87.7	64.8	0.3	0.2
Control OE	54.8	7.2	0.4	0.0
Control PVON1	3.8	1.7	1.3	1.6
Point Vicente SMCA	14.7	3.8	0.2	0.0
Abalone Cove SMCA	49.7	28.1	0.6	0.0
Control PVOS1	19.2	0.0	3.6	6.0
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	1.9	0.0	0.3	0.0
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	5.0	7.5	7.8	8.3
All MPAs Combined	64.7	42.8	0.5	0.5

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 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
Control OW	1.4	4.7	0.3	0.0
Point Dume SMCA	29.9	18.4	0.1	0.0
Point Dume SMR	12.7	4.9	0.1	0.1
Control OE	8.6	0.3	0.3	0.0
Control PVON1	3.7	2.4	0.7	0.5
Point Vicente SMCA	6.2	4.9	0.6	0.1
Abalone Cove SMCA	7.5	9.3	0.6	0.3
Control PVOS1	6.2	10.0	1.1	4.0
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	25.7	32.1	0.5	1.4
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	185.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	26.7	5.0	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	13.0	6.7	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 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
Control OW	11.2	14.1
Point Dume SMCA	158.1	168.5
Point Dume SMR	100.7	70.1
Control OE	64.1	7.5
Control PVON1	9.5	6.1
Point Vicente SMCA	21.7	8.8
Abalone Cove SMCA	58.3	37.6
Control PVOS1	30.1	20.0
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	28.4	33.6
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	185.0	0.0
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	39.4	20.8
All MPAs Combined	78.5	50.3

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 had a very successful year in 2024. Our hybrid training program remains effective. Heal the Bay has surpassed 1150 volunteers trained over the past twelve years and successfully used this system to train 35 new volunteers this year. This year did mark a decline in the volume of surveys completed, which fell to 319 submitted surveys. However, our volunteer email protocol for our quality assurance procedure has drastically increased volunteer email response rate and subsequent surveys submitted for approval. This drop in completed surveys showcases the importance of time spent engaging volunteers we have already trained to build a strong and dedicated volunteer base, rather than focusing solely on high recruitment rates. In particular, we have found anecdotal success in consistent communications directly after training until the completion of their first survey which helps to build relationships between volunteers and our organization.

Heal the Bay hired a new MPA Program Coordinator in October of 2024, which is the first time a full-time staff member has been dedicated to MPA Watch and related programming. Our team has struggled with capacity issues as MPA Watch was one program of many to juggle. This new hire, Zoë Collins, will be able to dedicate more time and attention to the program than ever before and will have a workload that allows more time to build individual relationships with volunteers and provides more time to work on projects that will strengthen the program.

We started using a Discord server as a volunteer communication tool, where we provide program announcements and encourage community building and connection across our program. The member list of this channel has doubled in the past year from 21 to 47 users, demonstrating our volunteer's excitement for engaging with our team and each other. We also continue to send out monthly MPA Watch newsletters, check-in with registered new volunteers on training prerequisites, and encourage volunteers to start surveying if they have not completed a survey within the last 3-5 months.

We also successfully continued our partnership with the Eagle Lab at UCLA this year to collect sea water samples in and around Malibu MPAs for environmental DNA (eDNA) scientific testing. We began hosting this second round of monthly eDNA water sampling events in April of 2023, where we train community scientists on sample collection protocols that will be used to analyze the quantification of biodiversity in a standardized way within a marine ecosystem. This has further increased stewardship of our Marine Protected Areas and we have noticed increased interest in our MPA Watch program from eDNA event participants. We had 74 volunteers participate at our eDNA sampling events in 2024. Our UCLA team partners are currently processing the collected samples and we hope to see preliminary results in 2025.

In 2024 during the our first biannual MPA Watch managers meeting during a discussion on survey protocol, Heal the Bay staff realized that we had incurred a significant protocol drift in our surveys. Since 2019 or earlier, our staff had been training our volunteers to survey using the mean high tide line (MHTL) as a shoreward boundary. Upon reflection and insight from other MPA Watch programs, our team realized that we had been trained incorrectly by previous

program leads. The shoreward boundary should have been the first human-made infrastructure or where the beach naturally ended e.g. a road, sidewalk, or bluff. This indicates a significant underrepresentation of shore-based recreation at a few of our sites and explains the continued lowered activity incidence rates for the past 5 years at sites like the Point Dume SMCA where large sandy beaches are prevalent. This discussion led statewide coordinators to realize other discrepancies in MPA Watch protocols, which must be addressed for our data to be relevant and meaningful. This has since prompted a series of meetings resulting in a deep dive of our program materials, and the development of a plan to re-train of all MPA Watch volunteers to take place in 2025. Ultimately, we are certain this protocol re-training will strengthen the scientific rigor and training materials of the program. Heal the Bay has been a leader in this effort and has taken addressing protocol drift in our program and across the MPA Watch network very seriously.

Finally, our team continues to track sea level rise around LA County MPAs through anecdotal observations, using our field observations from our MPA Watch surveys to provide useful information on the shoreline's changes where appropriate. We are currently working on updating the MPA Watch Field Guide to make sure field conditions are up to date and consistent with shoreline changes. For more information on these future projects, please see the "Next Steps" section on page twelve.

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]

After seeing a slight decrease in activity incidence in 2023 across all MPAs, including in the Point Dume SMR, activity incidence rose once again in 2024 (Table 3). Activity incidence across all types in this MPA stayed relatively consistent but increased by 5% from 2023 to 2024 (Tables 3). Offshore consumptive activity remained very low at 0.1 incidences per survey mile, the same as 2022 and 2023 (Table 2). However, the onshore consumptive activity increased

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[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

very slightly from 0.1 in 2023 to 0.2 in 2024 (Table 1). Consumptive activities, while only making up less than 1% of all activity in this MPA, included sandy beach hand collection of biota, unknown fishing, rocky beach hand collection of biota, and sandy and rocky beach hook and line fishing. It is notable that there was a large decrease in sandy beach hand collection of biota from 10 observations in 2023 to 5 in 2024. The most common activities in this MPA in 2024 were sandy beach recreation (59%), rocky beach recreation (19%), rocky beach wildlife viewing (8%), surfing (3%), and sandy beach wildlife viewing (3%). These activity trends were quite different than those seen in 2023; surveys observed a notable decrease in sandy beach recreation from 75% in 2023, a large increase in rocky beach recreation from 6% in 2023, and a decrease in incidences of animals off leash on a sandy beach.

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.

In keeping with previous years and the all-year trend, Point Dume SMCA had the most recorded activity of all survey sites in LA County in 2024 with 47% of recorded activities (Figure 1a). Also similar to previous years and the all-year average, in 2024 this MPA had the highest activity incidence rate across all activities (168.5 activities observed per mile surveyed) of all four MPAs and control sites, indicating it is the most heavily trafficked site (Table 3). Consistent with the trends observed in Point Dume SMR, we observed a large 65% increase in activity incidence rates from 2023 to 2024 (Table 3). This increase is most likely due to an adjusted shoreward boundary consistent with the rest of the statewide program (as discussed in the Program Updates section above) and we predict will remain at a rate more consistent with the all-year average going forward due to this protocol correction. The same trend can be observed for the onshore non-consumptive activity incidence rate which also increased from 2023 rates of 70.8 to 150 activities observed per survey mile in 2024 (Table 1). Offshore non-consumptive activity incidence, however, had a notable decrease from 30.8 in 2023 to 18.4 instances observed per survey mile in 2024 (Table 2). Onshore consumptive activity incidence remained at 0.2 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 accounted for less than 1% of all recorded activities in 2024 (Figure 2a). These consumptive activities only included rocky and sandy beach hand collection of biota, unlike 2023 which included sandy and rocky beach hook and line fishing and recreational line fishing from a boat. The most common activities in this MPA in 2024 were largely unchanged from previous years and included sandy beach recreation (87%), offshore recreation (6%), surfing (4%), and rocky beach recreation (1%). It is notable that we observed a large increase in the observations of sandy beach recreation, which can probably be accredited to the aforementioned correction to our training protocol in 2024. As with Point Dume SMR, the number of surveys conducted in this MPA decreased this year with 28 total surveys conducted.

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 in 2024 with a total of 121 surveys, making up 38% of the total number of surveys conducted, but only 5% of the total activities observed (Figure 1a). Consistent with trends from recent years and the all-year totals, Point Vicente SMCA had more observed offshore activity than any other LA MPA in 2024, making up 56% of the total observed activity (Figure 2c), up from 45% in 2023 and 34% in 2022. From 2021 to 2023, consumptive activity accounted for the highest percentage of consumptive activity of all LA County. This year, consumptive activity rates decreased from 5% in 2023 to 1% (Figure 2c). Total activity incidence decreased slightly in this MPA from 15.9 observations per survey mile in 2023 to 8.8 observations per survey mile in 2024 (Table 3).

Onshore consumptive activity decreased slightly from 0.1 to 0 activities observed per survey mile (Table 1). Offshore consumptive activity also decreased from 0.7 activities per survey mile in 2023 to 0.1 activities per survey mile in 2024 (Table 2). This is notable because Point Vicente SMCA has consistently the highest offshore consumptive activity rate of all the MPAs in the LA region, which this year has been superseded by Abalone Cove SMCA. The vast majority of the consumptive activity recorded in this MPA was unknown fishing (1% of total activity) with one count of rocky beach hook and line fishing and one observation of commercial net fishing. Across all activity types, the most common activities remain relatively unchanged in this MPA and included sandy and rocky wildlife viewing (18%), rocky beach recreation (17%), power boating (17%), and work boating (12%), with a notable increase in wildlife viewing and work boat observations.

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.

2024 marked a remarkably long period of closure in the Abalone Cove SMCA due to landslides in Rancho Palos Verdes. After a winter season with heavy rains, several rock falls and mudslides rendered multiple sites unsafe to survey and were closed by the city. This closure has been in effect for nine months and remains closed at the time of writing; such a long period without surveys will certainly impact the data and activity incidence rates for this area. In particular, the Abalone Cove transect is known for its beautiful tidepools that are now inaccessible. However, on a larger scale, it is important to note that access barriers (which are often related to consequences of climate change) will continue to be a large concern for our programming and for the ability to collect data to understand and monitor these sites.

From 2020 to 2023, we noticed a consistent decline in consumptive activity; in 2024, however, there was a slight increase from 0.3% to 1% of all observed activities. Onshore consumptive activity remained consistent at zero observations (Table 1) with no tidepool collection activities being observed for a third year in a row, a stark contrast to the elevated tidepool collection activity observed in 2020. Offshore consumptive activity rose from 0.1 observations per survey mile in 2023 to 0.3 (Table 2). Total activity in this MPA is below the all-year average across all activity types (down to 37.6 from 58.3 observations per survey mile) but increased from last year by 29% (Table 3). The limited consumptive activity in this MPA included unknown fishing and one count of commercial trap fishing. The most common activities observed in Abalone Cove in 2023 were rocky and sandy beach recreation (35% and 33% respectively), kayaking (9%), power boating (4%), and rocky beach wildlife viewing (3%).

Catalina Island: Lover's Cove SMCA and Casino Point No-Take 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, although these transects were not included in the February 2024 manual update. 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 any take of any kind, including all fishing activities. This MPA does allow, however, 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 of fish for marine life viewing, similarly to Casino Point, is allowed.

Each of these MPAs contains one MPA Watch transect and, over the course of this program, have only been surveyed a few times. Therefore, we have elected not to include any summary of this data as there is insufficient data to analyze. We are currently working with the non-profit Bleu World and members of the Catalina MPA Collaborative to re-launch MPA Watch training on the island and re-define transects that have been lost to time. We hope to include analyses of this data in future reports.

Potential Violations

While some consumptive activities are permitted in LA County MPAs, this 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 LA MPAs surveyed by MPA Watch remains relatively low in LA County main-shore MPAs, consistent with previous reporting. Consumptive activities accounted for only 1% of total activities in these MPAs in 2024, equivalent to 2023 and 2022 and down from 2% in both 2021 and 2020. The highest rates of consumptive activity in mainland LA County occurred at control site PVON1 and PVOS1, located at the northern boundary of Point Vicente SMCA and the southern boundary of Abalone Cove SMCA respectively. At these control sites, consumptive activity is permitted within the greater confines of CDFW fishery regulations.

Other than Abalone Cove SMCA, consumptive activity incidence rates were below 0.2 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 MPAs of Casino Point SMCA and Lover's Cove SMCA.

MPA	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
Control OW	0	0
Point Dume SMCA	432	4
Point Dume SMR	579	8
Control OE	0	0
Control PVON1	0	0
Point Vicente SMCA	386	2
Abalone Cove SMCA	320	1
Control PVOS1	0	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	1,739	15

Table 4: Raw counts of observed potential violations by MPA Watch volunteers for all years of MPA Watch compared to 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, 15 observations were deemed violations, or about 0.2% of total observations, the same percentage as 2022 and 2023. Violations were observed in all of the 4 mainland MPAs monitored by MPA Watch in LA County (Table 4). Observations of violations were made across 8 surveys, accounting for 2.5% of total surveys conducted, slightly down from 4% of surveys in 2023 and 3% in 2022, consistent with the downward trend from violations observed in 6% of total surveys in 2021 and 8.5% of surveys in 2020.

It is important to note that this count of violations excludes nearly all of the consumptive activity observed in the Point Vicente no-take SMCA as most of these 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, in that MPA, absolutely no take is allowed and therefore even unknown fishing could be a violation. If unknown fishing counts are added back into the totals for the no-take MPAs in LA County (Point Vicente SMCA and Point Dume SMR), then the total counts become 6 observations for Point Vicente SMCA and 13 observations for Point Dume SMR, making the new total count of possible violations 24 observations, or 0.3% of all activities observed. This is an important distinction, and the high counts of unknown fishing as compared to known fishing or other take activity reported this year from volunteers indicate a possible need for better boat identification skills to ensure as much information as possible about potential noncompliance in our MPAs is being collected.

Of the potential 15 violation observations made in 2024, 5 of them were formally reported to CalTIP, which is an improvement from 2023. One of these violations was addressed by a lifeguard on-site in real time and thus did not require a CalTIP call. Previous years had marked a decrease in the amount of reported potential violations, so we are excited to see these numbers rising. This year we launched a new CalTIP resource to encourage volunteers to report violations. This resource was incorporated into the Fall 2024 training and has been included in training kits and our monthly newsletter. This resource, which provides volunteers with a "mad-lib" style call script where volunteers can write in information about the violation they are observing in real time to reference when calling, has been very well received by our volunteers and is attached for reference to this report. During our Fall 2024 training, the group observed two fishing violations and called CalTIP, which was an excellent training moment. We have implemented multiple 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 hope to brainstorm with the broader MPA Watch community to develop additional tools and conduct 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.

Next Steps

Looking forward to 2025, Heal the Bay's MPA Watch team will host 4 public training sessions and 1 private training using our permanently-adopted hybrid training model. We plan to

strategize methods and tools to make volunteers more prepared to report observed violations, as noted above, to increase our CalTIP call rates.

Our team plans to take what we learned this year and continue to focus a good amount of energy on strengthening our volunteer relationships, engagement and retention. We will continue to use our Discord server as a communication tool and provide our volunteers with more opportunities to engage. We will continue our MPA Watch internship program this year and utilize interns to support our research and outreach efforts. Heal the Bay's MPA Watch Internship continued this year with 2 successful cohorts of 4 interns total, which has historically played a large role in conducting research projects and participating in the larger MPA Watch network. We plan to continue to promote our MPA Watch program to more inland and diverse communities and not just coastal neighborhoods by working with clubs at different high schools and community colleges to provide them with research and field opportunities.

As sea level rise changes our coastline, we plan to update our field guide annually. Rising seas present a unique challenge to monitoring MPAs from the shore and we will need to regularly update our training information to ensure accuracy and volunteer safety. This year has seen unprecedented land movement in Rancho Palos Verdes as well as widespread wildfires in Malibu, forcing us to consider how our program will evolve to fit the needs of a changing coastline. These disasters underscore the importance for community engagement and high-quality community science. We will be releasing an updated manual in 2025 that will contain transect specific updates, including updated photos, corrected shoreline boundaries, and more. We will continue to share our observations with the Malibu Coastal Vulnerability project team to ensure that sea level rise mitigation is made a priority and that community science and MPA monitoring impacts are considered along with broader impact analysis.

Another significant portion of our work in 2025 will be synchronizing data collection protocols with the entire network and helping to create and release updated unified training materials. Moreover, because of the aforementioned shift in training procedures related to transect shoreline boundaries during 2024, we will need to closely analyze our data to ensure it is accurate and meaningful. Our input will also be required to analyze statewide data across different collection protocol epochs. Standardizing our training protocols and re-training current MPA Watch volunteers will be a significant challenge in 2025 that will strengthen the relevance of the MPA Watch data and involve volunteers in data analysis happening in real time.

Additionally, we are partnering with the 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 a participant in multiple statewide MPA management pillars. We are working with SPI to complete an "Indigenization" of our MPA Watch program, including our training materials and public communication. 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 in 2025.

In 2025, Bleu World will re-establish the MPA Watch Program on Catalina Island by training a community of volunteers and collecting a robust dataset on coastal and offshore human use of marine protected areas surrounding the island. With this program, we will maintain land-based transects in the MPA Watch manual and MPA Watch database for Casino Point Dive Park, Lover's Cove, Cat Harbor, and Blue Caverns Onshore. We will conduct regular monitoring of all four protected areas, thus establishing a reliable and consistent MPA Watch land-based dataset for Catalina Island. Additionally, we will launch a training program for community members to become on-island volunteers for MPA Watch and we will implement programs that facilitate the collection of coastal use data through land-based surveys with these volunteers.

The MPA Collaborative is interested in better understanding the seasonal use of MPAs around Catalina Island so that they can increase awareness and education among the boating community and improve compliance across the whole island. As changes to MPA permits, rules, and regulations come up for discussion, our work with the MPA Watch Program on Catalina will help inform the decision making process by providing a consistent and reliable dataset. Our team is invested in the longevity of this program and we will ensure there is MPA Watch data on Catalina Island for years to come in order to help with compliance and management of these protected areas.

Finally, we look forward to continuing our third year collaborating 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 until the grant funding expires in June of 2025. 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 Engagements: Left – February 2024 training; Middle - Point Dume, November 2024; Right – eDNA sample collection at Westward Beach