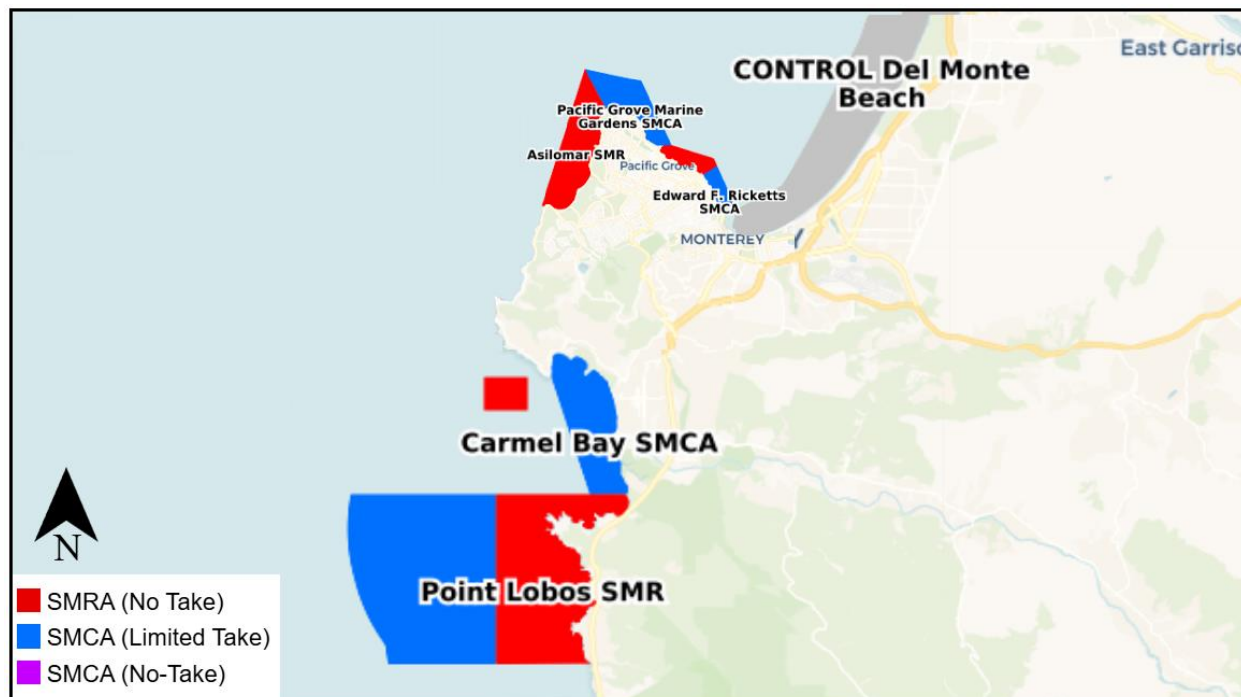


Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report

Monterey County

January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

Map of Region's MPAs



MPA Watch is a statewide collaborative effort to monitor human use, both commercially and recreationally, of our protected coastlines and waters. This community science program provides valuable data, empowers stewardship, and educates California communities about ocean ecosystem. The Monterey County MPA Watch program is implemented through a joint effort among WILDCOAST, the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History (monitors 4 MPAs along the Monterey Peninsula) and California State Parks (Point Lobos SMR and Point Lobos SMCA).

Executive Summary

- Trails that were closed in 2023 due to storm damage were re-opened, allowing for greater collection of data, especially at Asilomar SMR and Point Lobos SMR.
- The MPA Watch incident reports of 2024 mirror previous years – however, there were (outside of MPA Watch data) increased wildlife disturbances, especially in the Ed Ricketts SMCA region.

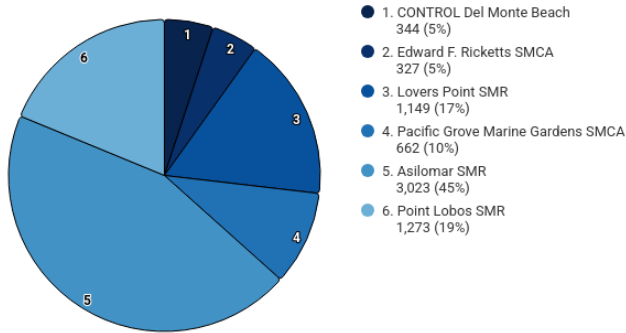


HUMAN USE OF MPAS JAN 1, 2024 – DEC 31, 2024

OVERVIEW

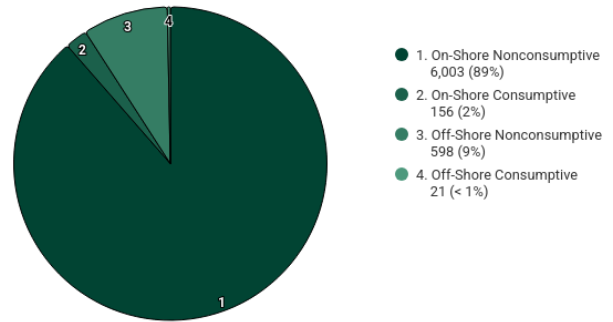
Top 6 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
6,778 total activity events



All MPAs Combined

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
6,778 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.

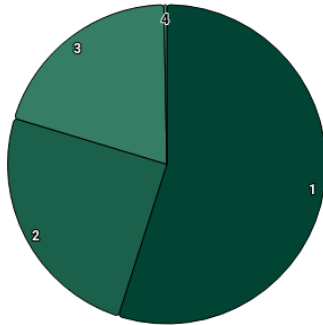
Non-Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.



ACTIVITY BY MPA

CONTROL Del Monte Beach

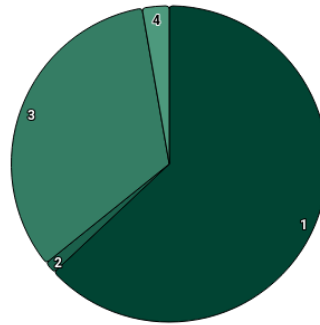
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
344 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
189 (55%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
85 (25%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
69 (20%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
1 (< 1%)

Edward F. Ricketts SMCA

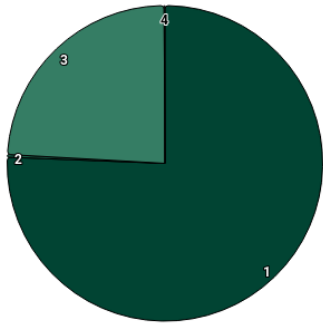
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
327 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
206 (63%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
4 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
108 (33%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
9 (3%)

Lovers Point SMR

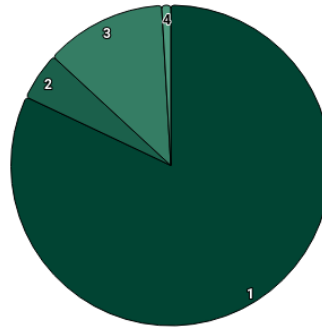
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
1,149 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
869 (76%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
3 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
276 (24%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
1 (< 1%)

Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA

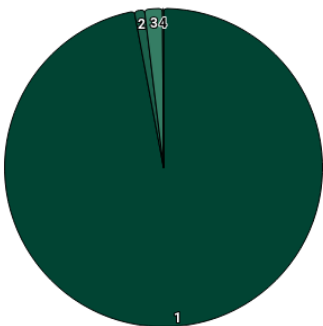
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
662 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
543 (82%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
32 (5%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
81 (12%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
6 (1%)

Asilomar SMR

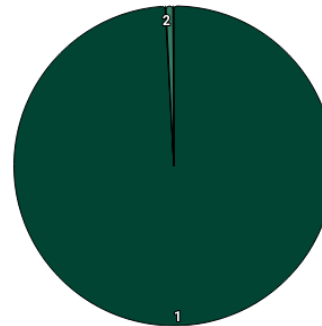
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
3,023 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
2,934 (97%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
31 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
55 (2%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
3 (< 1%)

Point Lobos SMR

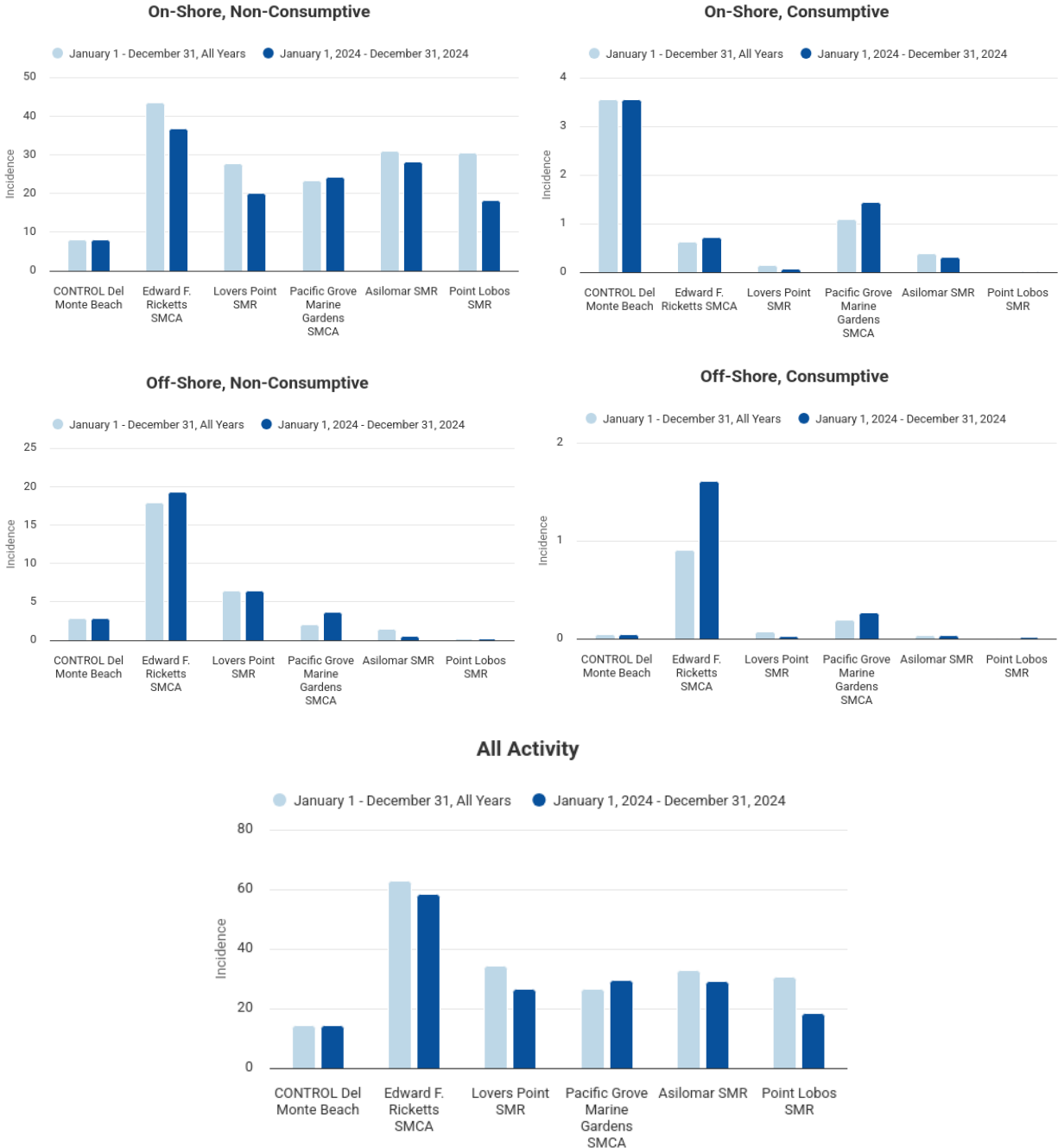
January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024
1,273 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive
1,262 (99%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive
1 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive
9 (1%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive
1 (< 1%)



ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA



The above charts show incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch in Monterey County. Incidence is calculated as number of activities recorded divided by total survey-miles.



Incidence Tables

MPA	On-Shore				MPA	Off-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive			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		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 Del Monte Beach	7.9	7.9	3.5	3.5	CONTROL Del Monte Beach	2.9	2.9	0.0	0.0
Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	43.4	36.8	0.6	0.7	Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	17.8	19.3	0.9	1.6
Lovers Point SMR	27.6	20.1	0.1	0.1	Lovers Point SMR	6.4	6.4	0.1	0.0
Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	23.4	24.2	1.1	1.4	Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	2.0	3.6	0.2	0.3
Asilomar SMR	30.9	28.1	0.4	0.3	Asilomar SMR	1.4	0.5	0.0	0.0
Point Lobos SMR	30.3	18.2	0.0	0.0	Point Lobos SMR	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	28.6	22.3	0.3	0.6	All MPAs Combined	2.5	2.2	0.1	0.1

Total

MPA	Combined	
	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
CONTROL Del Monte Beach	14.3	14.3
Edward F. Ricketts SMCA	62.8	58.4
Lovers Point SMR	34.2	26.6
Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	26.7	29.6
Asilomar SMR	32.7	29.0
Point Lobos SMR	30.5	18.4
All MPAs Combined	31.4	25.2

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

Asilomar SMR

Breakdown: Asilomar SMR experienced higher visitation in the summer and fall. The coastal trail is popular and used by locals and visitors alike. Most parts of the coastal trail, and the coastal access points, were reopened. The beach next to the gazebo continues to be closed due to shorebird nesting. Like Point Lobos, beach recreation-whether on sandy or rocky shores-and tidepooling continue to be the most popular activities. Asilomar does have significantly more violations occurring than Point Lobos, most often being the hand collection of biota and dogs that are off leash.

Potential Violations: Asilomar's lengthy coastline and many coastal access points provide many places to explore, but many opportunities to collect. The hand collection of shells and rocks is the most common violation; this is often spotted near Point Pinos, or on the pocket beaches. While not specifically a violation, damage to the tidepools frequently occurs during low tide events. Visitors will handle tidepool life and put animals like hermit crabs into buckets. Some collection of animals occurred during the November King Tides. Visitors having dogs off leash is also very common in both rocky and sandy areas.

Del Monte Beach Control Site

Breakdown: This control site was created in 2024. It covers the southernmost part of Del Monte Beach, one of the most popular sandy shore beaches in Monterey County, plus Municipal Wharf 2, a commercial wharf popular for recreational shore hook-and-line fishing. We confirmed that recreational fishing occurs more frequently here than along the MPA-protected peninsula. Sandy shore beach recreation, hook-and-line fishing, boating (kayaks and power boats), and dogs off-leash are the most popular activities.

Edward F. Ricketts SMCA

Breakdown: The Ed Ricketts SMCA covers Cannery Row, one of the most popular tourist areas in Monterey. It's a series of jetties, wharfs, and small, sandy beaches. Mild weather made for frequent off-shore recreation, especially kayaking. 2024's activity incidence mirrors previous years. From August – Sept 2024, part of the SMCA, San Carlos Beach, was closed due to hundreds of California sea lions beaching ([news article here](#)). Sandy beach recreation, scuba diving, and kayaking are the most popular activities on this site.

Potential violations: Few MPA violations. It would be beneficial to record the number of Marine Mammal Act violations, especially with the hundreds of stranded and beached CA sea lions. Human harassment of these sea lions was common, but could not be reported through MPA Watch. We can expect more sea lion beaches and increased human harassment of marine wildlife – the Marine Mammal Center reported that in 2023, 30% of their marine mammal patients experienced some form of human or dog disturbance ([article linked here](#)). Outside of

sea lion beachings, sea otter harassment is common with kayakers, especially in the Ed Ricketts SMCA region.

Lovers Point SMR

Breakdown: Lovers Point continues to be a popular place for on-shore recreation. It gets high visitation, especially during weekends and summer months. Its activity for 2024 is about the same as it gets every year: sandy beach recreation, rocky shore recreation, and off-shore recreation (swimming) are the most popular activities.

Potential violations: There is always some hand-collection of biota (4 instances recorded in 2024). Most visitors (including locals) don't realize that any collecting, including shells or rocks, is prohibited. We know signage is ineffective at raising awareness, so the Pacific Grove is engaging in greater outreach to educate the public about MPAs. Part of Lovers Point SMR includes Hopkins Beach, the most populated harbor seal pupping site. While this beach is closed to the public, people are known to trespass and disturb the seals. This is another site that would benefit from recording of Marine Mammal Act violations.

Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA

Breakdown: Pacific Grove Marine Gardens is mostly rocky shore and is a popular place for tidepooling. Hook-and-line fishing is permitted here and is regularly observed, but not with the same frequency at the Del Monte control site. Rocky shore recreation, sandy shore recreation, and tidepooling are the most frequent activities at this site.

Potential violations: No violations have been reported at this site, both in 2024 and since the integration of this site into the MPA Watch program. Because this site is mostly rocky shore, there is less potential for hand collection of biota here than at other sites.

Point Lobos SMR

Breakdown: Point Lobos SNR continues to see high visitation especially during the weekends. The most popular activities continue to be on-shore recreation, both on sandy beaches and the rocky shore. Having the addition of a CSUMB service learner has helped increase the number of surveys being conducted. Currently, there are 5 volunteers and three staff members collecting data.

Potential Violations: There were no potential violations reported between July and December. However, there is still the possibility of hand collecting biota at Weston Beach, a popular tidepooling spot. While not a direct violation of the MPA rules, Gibson Beach remains closed due to winter storm damage and there has been an instance of visitors ignoring the closure signs going down to the beach.

POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS

We need a greater understanding of the trends of human impact along our coastlines and protected waters, especially if we want MPA Watch data to move away from hypothetical uses and into actual studies. In Monterey County specifically, we have seen climate change impacting our coastlines as follows:

1. Increased numbers of visitors seeking shelter in our cool climate from unprecedented summer heat waves, fires, and other natural disasters.
2. Increased marine mammal harassment from humans and dogs, as climate change is altering the behaviors of natural marine mammal predators.
3. Storm damage closing recreation trails and altering habitats.
4. Rising ocean waters leading to increased competition for resources with coastal shorebirds and tidepool creatures.

Yet our MPA Watch reports do not capture this – looking at the 2024 MPA Watch report, 2024 is a normal year with no unusual behavior or particular increases in MPA violations at any site. Thus, our MPA Watch surveys are not an accurate reflection of how human impact along our coastlines is changing over time.

NEXT STEPS

Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History: I trained our usual cohort of CSUMB service learning students for the Jan – June semester. In fall 2024, CSUMB changed the parameters of its service learning criteria, making MPA Watch less of an option for these students. I'll work to see how we can continue to integrate MPA Watch with our college students. I want to see what I can do to make MPA Watch's data better for understanding how human impact is impacting our protected coastlines. It may be that I juxtapose MPA Watch surveys with a separate tally of Marine Mammal Act violations or other wildlife disturbances.

State Parks for Monterey District: For the last half of 2024, Isabella and Ashley of CA State Parks trained a Park Interpretive Specialist and a CSUMB service learner to collect data at Asilomar and Point Lobos! This has really helped them capture more data. The service learner plans to stay on as a volunteer in the spring. Ashley and I plan to offer a training course for Point Lobos docents in February, and ramp up outreach to the current volunteers in the program.

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. 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. If you see an activity that violates MPA regulations, please call CalTip to report the violation at (888) 334-2258.

For more information regarding the MPA Watch Program at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History, visit www.pgmuseum.org/volunteer or contact:

Natalie Johnston | Volunteer & Community Science Coordinator
Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History
johnston@pgmuseum.org
(831) 648-5716 ext 24

NOTES ON CALCULATING INCIDENCE

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Many thanks to our fantastic volunteers and their continued dedication to community science.

