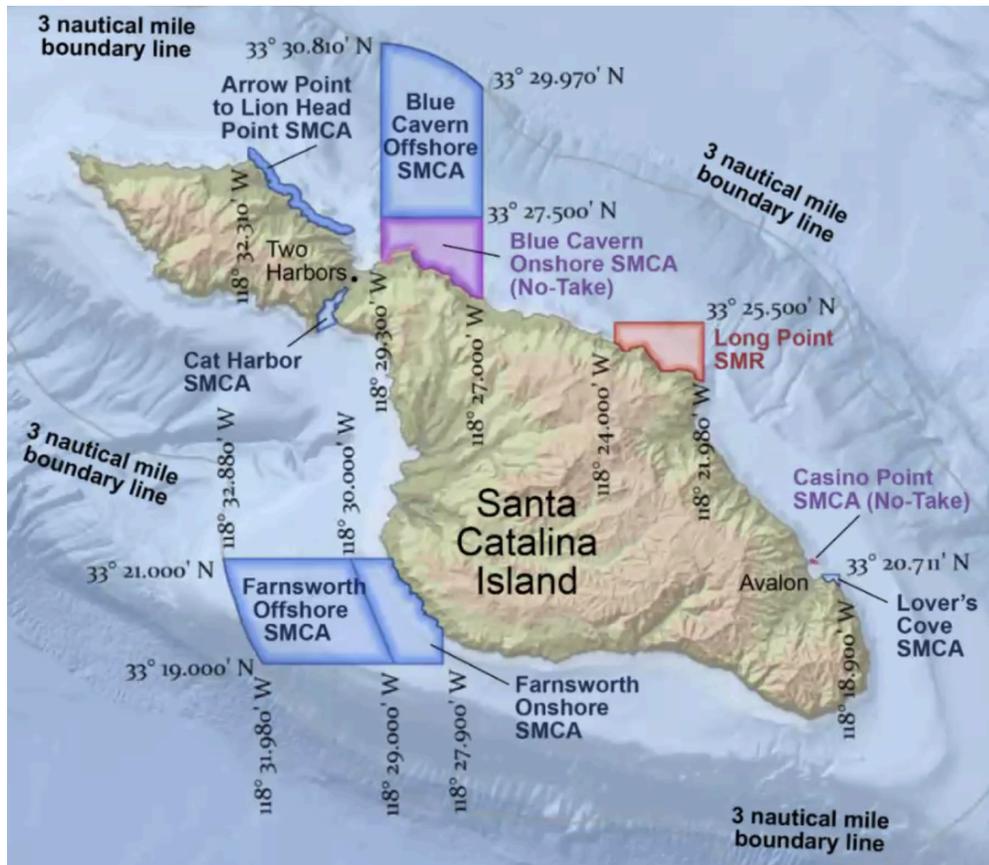


# Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report

Catalina Island, Los Angeles County  
January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025

## Map of Region's MPAs



The Catalina Island MPA Watch program is run by Bleu World out of Avalon, CA. There are 9 MPAs on the island, most with limited land access. These MPAs include: Casino Point SMCA (No-Take), Lover's Cove SMCA, Cat Harbor SMCA, Blue Cavern Onshore SMCA (No Take), Blue Cavern Offshore SMCA, Arrow Point to Lion Head Point SMCA, Long Point SMR, Farnsworth Onshore SMCA, and Farnsworth Offshore SMCA. This MPA Watch program has established four land-based transects (two in Avalon and two in Two Harbors) with monitoring occurring primarily in Avalon due to limited Two Harbors access. Catalina MPA Watch volunteers include two groups: Avalon residents and seasonal visitors. Training and survey days are scheduled on a seasonal basis in order to understand the impacts of the heavy increase in tourism and boating on the island in the summer months.

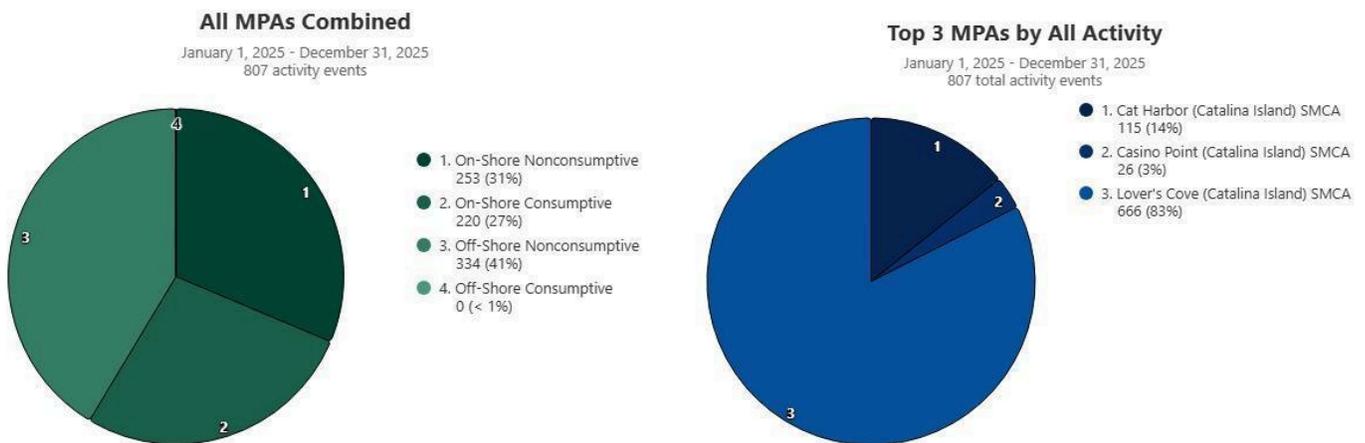


## Executive Summary

- Launching a new MPA Watch site in a remote setting like Catalina Island requires both flexibility and deep collaboration. Logistics, volunteer recruitment, and seasonality all play significant roles in the program's success.
- As our surveys expanded across multiple seasons, we observed how strongly seasonal patterns influence our data particularly in areas affected by tour boat activity, fishing vessels, and fluctuating shoreline use.
- Complete survey coverage of all land-based transects on the island requires training volunteers in Two Harbors to support consistent data collection at these remote sites.
- There is strong local enthusiasm for the program overall; numerous community members have expressed interest in additional training days and in participating in group survey events. This interest highlights a growing foundation for long-term community engagement and program growth.

## HUMAN USE OF MPAS JAN 1-DEC 31 2025

### OVERVIEW



### 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.

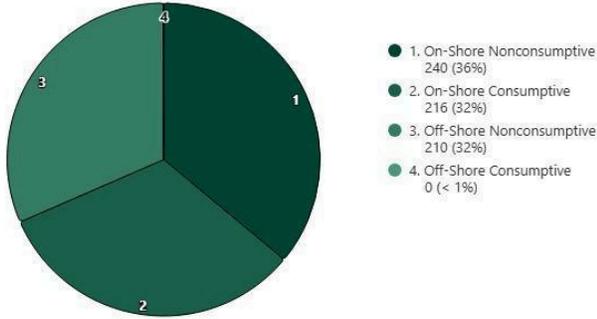
**Non-Consumptive** - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.



## ACTIVITY BY MPA

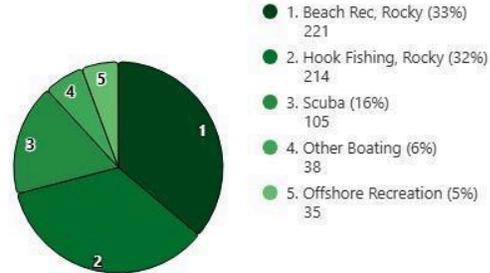
### Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025  
666 activity events



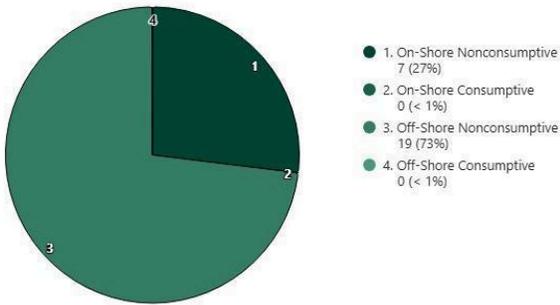
### Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025  
Top activity, 613 (92%) of all 666 observations



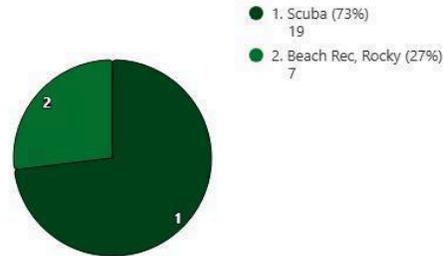
### Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025  
26 activity events



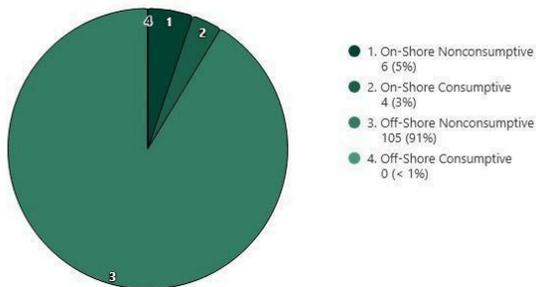
### Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025  
Top activity, 26 (100%) of all 26 observations



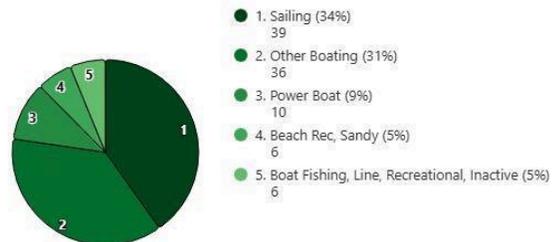
### Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025  
115 activity events



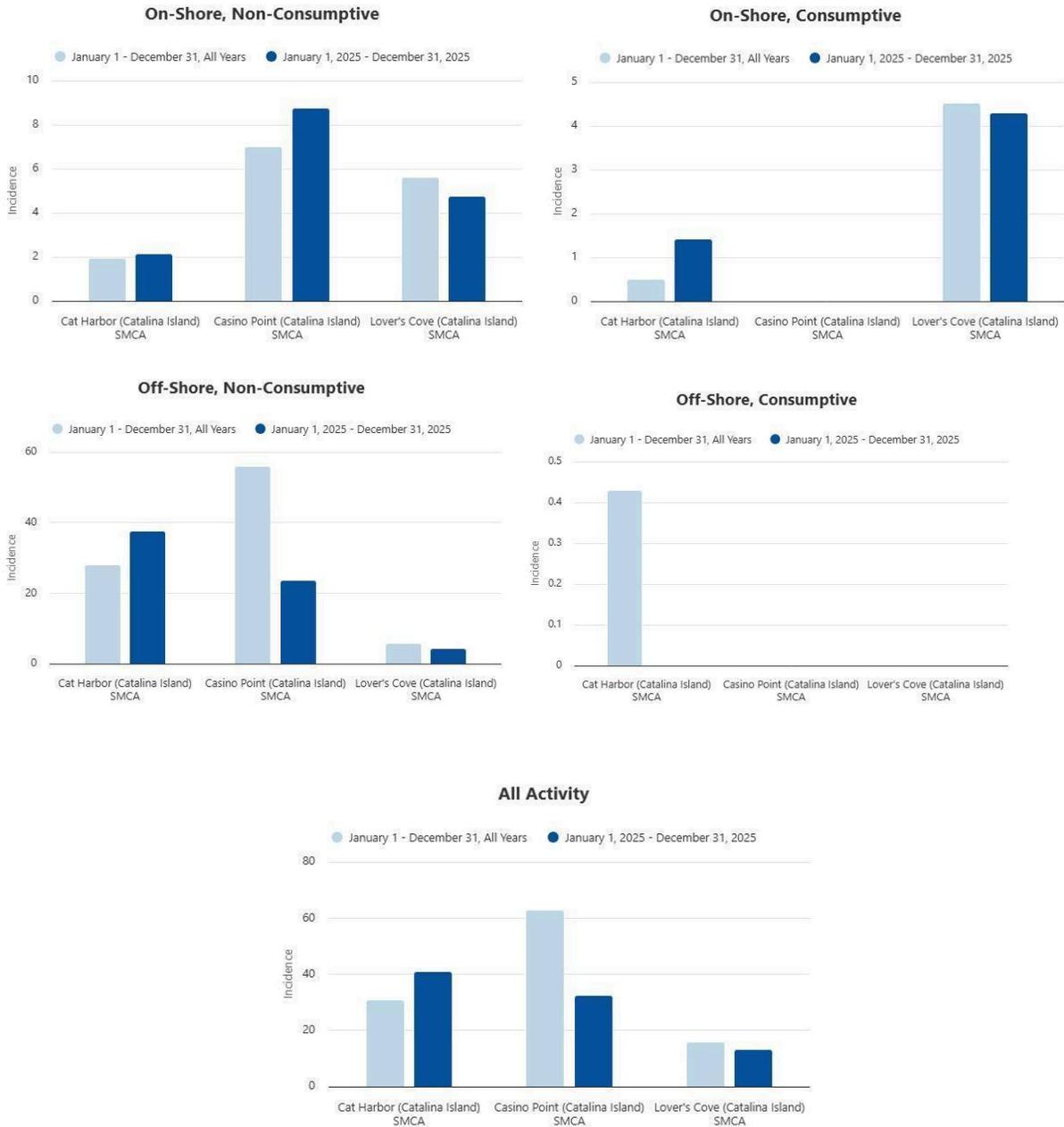
### Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025  
Top activity, 97 (84%) of all 115 observations



## ACTIVITY INCIDENCE BY MPA

### Incidence Bar Charts



*The above charts show incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch on Catalina Island. Incidence is calculated as the 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, 2025 through December 31, 2025	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025		January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	1.9	2.1	0.5	1.4	Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	28.1	37.5	0.4	0.0
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	7.0	8.8	0.0	0.0	Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	56.0	23.8	0.0	0.0
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	5.6	4.8	4.5	4.3	Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	5.9	4.2	0.0	0.0
All MPAs Combined	2.4	4.7	1.8	4.1	All MPAs Combined	6.7	6.2	0.2	0.0

Total Combined		
MPA	January 1 December 31 All Years	January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025
Cat Harbor (Catalina Island) SMCA	30.9	41.1
Casino Point (Catalina Island) SMCA	63.0	32.5
Lover's Cove (Catalina Island) SMCA	16.0	13.2
All MPAs Combined	11.2	14.9

### 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

### Casino Point State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)

Casino Point State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) is a fully protected no-take marine protected area. It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource for commercial or recreational purposes within the MPA. No exceptions for recreational or commercial take are permitted.

#### Monitoring Effort

Between the months of **January and December 2025**:

- **8 surveys** were collected
- **26 observations** were recorded
- **0 potential violations** were documented

#### Observed Use Patterns

People observed within Casino Point SMCA were primarily engaged in non-consumptive activities (100% of all recorded observations), occurring both on-shore and off-shore. Casino Point continues to experience consistently high recreational use, particularly related to diving and snorkeling access adjacent to Avalon Harbor. Top non-consumptive activities recorded includes scuba diving, snorkeling, and beach and shoreline recreation. Use was concentrated along established entry points and within the Casino Point Dive Park boundaries, reflecting the site's role as a premier shore-access dive location on Catalina Island. No consumptive or potentially non-compliant activities were observed.

#### Notes from Site Observers / Partners at Casino Point

- Casino Point remains one of the most heavily used MPAs in the region, driven by year-round diving, snorkeling, and tourism activity.
- The presence of organized dive operations, classes, and guided programs contributes to high levels of use but also supports general awareness of MPA rules.
- Observations indicate that most visitors demonstrate respect for MPA regulations, with limited instances of intentional non-compliance.
- Visitor education, signage, and visible monitoring presence continue to play a key role in maintaining compliance in this high-use area.
- Seasonal fluctuations in use were observed, with increased activity during warmer months and peak tourism periods.

## Lover's Cove State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)

Lover's Cove State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) is a fully protected no-take marine protected area. It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource for commercial or recreational purposes within the MPA. No recreational or commercial take is permitted.

### Monitoring Effort

Between the months of **January and December 2025**:

- **84 surveys** were collected
- **666 observations** were recorded
- **0 potential violations** were documented

### Observed Use Patterns

Observed use within Lover's Cove SMCA was dominated by non-consumptive recreational activities, accounting for 68% of all recorded observations. Lover's Cove is a high-visibility, nearshore MPA located adjacent to Avalon and is heavily frequented by residents, visitors, and commercial tour operators. Top non-consumptive activities recorded include snorkeling, swimming, kayaking, and beach and shoreline recreation. Activity was concentrated in shallow nearshore waters and along established access points, particularly during peak daytime hours and high visitor seasons.

### Consumptive Activities and Potential Violations

A limited number of consumptive activities were observed, representing 32% of total observations. For every observation recorded, these activities included hook-and-line fishing from the pier at the ferry dock. For this small section of the Lover's Cove MPA, hook-and-line fishing is permitted, and an explicit boundary-line is marked for this activity along the transect. While there is potential for violation when typically observing this activity in an MPA, in this case, no violations occurred.

### Notes from Site Observers / Partners at Lover's Cove

- Lover's Cove continues to experience very high recreational use, particularly from snorkel tours, kayak tours, and shore-based visitors.
- The MPA's proximity to Avalon makes it a frequent entry point for first-time ocean users, emphasizing the importance of education and clear signage.
- Seasonal increases in visitation were observed during summer months and holiday periods, resulting in higher overall activity density.

- Continued monitoring and public engagement remain important for maintaining compliance in this heavily visited nearshore MPA.
- Hook-and-line fishing is allowed in a small portion of this MPA and observations noted that all activities were conducted within the area specifically marked for fishing, showing that signage for permitted activities is clear and precise.

### Cat Harbor State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)

Cat Harbor State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) is a protected area designated to conserve marine life and habitats while allowing limited recreational take under specific regulations. Within this MPA, the injury, damage, take, or possession of living, geological, or cultural marine resources is prohibited for commercial purposes, with limited recreational take allowed as specified under state regulations.

#### Monitoring Effort

Between the months of **January and December 2025**:

- **2 surveys** were collected
- **115 observations** were recorded
- **0 potential violations** were documented

#### Observed Use Patterns

Observed use within Cat Harbor SMCA was primarily non-consumptive, accounting for the majority of recorded observations. Cat Harbor is a remote and sheltered natural harbor, resulting in lower overall activity levels compared to Avalon-adjacent MPAs, with use largely driven by vessel-based recreation and mooring. No consumptive or potentially non-compliant activities were observed.

#### Notes from Site Observers / Partners at Cat Harbor

- Cat Harbor experiences seasonal increases in vessel-based visitation, particularly during summer months and fishing seasons.
- Due to its more remote location, the area has lower monitoring visibility, emphasizing the importance of periodic patrols and boater outreach.
- Most observed users appeared to be recreational boaters and fishing vessels seeking overnight anchorage.
- Education efforts focused on boating regulations, anchoring practices, and MPA boundaries remain important for maintaining compliance in this area.

## POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS

No potential violations were recorded during this report period.

It will be important to ensure this trend continues by focusing on the following important outreach and education opportunities:

- Clear signage for permitted sections of hook-and-line fishing in Lover's Cove SMCA.
- Continued education for scuba divers and snorkelers in both Avalon MPAs that emphasizes violations for consumptive activities like spearfishing and lobster hunting.

## NEXT STEPS

In the next phase of this program, Bleu World will focus on strengthening survey consistency and community engagement across Catalina Island. In 2026, we plan to conduct regular, ongoing surveys in Avalon across both established transects, ensuring strong coverage throughout all seasons. To support this work, we will organize quarterly training sessions for both local community members and visiting student groups. These recurring sessions will expand our volunteer base and help maintain a reliable pool of trained participants capable of supporting year-round data collection. We also plan to host regular group survey days with local volunteers in Avalon, creating more opportunities for hands-on participation and reinforcing a sense of community involvement in MPA stewardship. These events will allow new and returning volunteers to build confidence while contributing meaningful data to the statewide MPA Watch network.

A major area of expansion will be our new partnership with the Pennington Marine Science Center at Camp Emerald Bay. Together, we aim to establish a new transect within the Arrow Point to Lion Head Point SMCA and train camp staff to conduct MPA Watch surveys with their students. This collaboration will extend the geographic reach of our program, increase the number of marine protected areas surveyed, engage thousands of youth participants each season, and build a strong connection between ocean education and marine conservation monitoring.

In addition to these core plans, we are exploring several stretch goals that would significantly expand the program's impact. First, we aim to host training days in Two Harbors for USC Wrigley students as well as local community members, with the long-term goal of building a volunteer base capable of supporting consistent shoreline surveys at Cat Harbor and Blue Caverns Onshore. Second, we are assessing the feasibility of adding boat-based surveys to our efforts, which would allow us to monitor human use patterns in areas not accessible by land and provide a more comprehensive dataset for Catalina's MPAs. These stretch goals represent exciting opportunities for program growth and will be pursued as capacity and partnerships allow.

## 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.

For additional information about Bleu World, including our Catalina Island MPA Watch program as well as other citizen science opportunities and how to get involved, please visit [bleuworld.org](http://bleuworld.org) or email us at [team@bleuworld.org](mailto:team@bleuworld.org). Connect with Bleu World on social media @bleuworld\_org.

