

# SNAPSHOT REPORT CENTRAL COAST

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are underwater parks that conserve marine life, habitats, and cultural resources while supporting recreation. Globally, MPAs protect habitats, support fisheries, conserve marine biodiversity, preserve cultural sites, provide economic, recreational, and learning opportunities, and strengthen the ocean’s resilience to stressors like climate change.

California has a network of 124 MPAs with varying levels of protection. Understanding how people interact with these areas is key to assessing their benefits and impact.

MPA Watch, a statewide community science initiative, collects data on human activity in and around MPAs to support ocean conservation.

MPA Watch provides valuable insights for managing, enforcing, and studying California’s MPAs by monitoring over 115 sites along the coast, including areas outside the MPA network for comparison. Volunteers are trained in standardized survey techniques. They collect unbiased data as they walk beaches to record human activities. The long-term data is compiled in a statewide database and reflects changes in resource use over time.

Founded in 2010 and with nearly 53,000 completed surveys, our valuable data shows trends over time that help us understand how to protect our coastlines. This program not only informs MPA management but also fosters community engagement, empowering Californians to become stewards of ocean ecosystems and increasing awareness of the importance of marine conservation.

## Humans on the Central Coast: The Last 10 Years in Data\*

- There were 281,603 observed activities in 17 MPAs or control sites in Central California.
- Activities are categorized into two types based on whether they remove resources from the marine protected area (MPA): non-consumptive and consumptive. Non-consumptive activities, such as beach recreation and surfing, do not involve removing anything. Consumptive activities, like fishing, do involve removal. 98% of activities observed in Central California were non-consumptive (275,199) and 3,983 activities were consumptive (Figure 2).
- The top 3 activities for the Central California region were: “beach recreation” (80% of all activities), “surfing” (3%), and “offshore recreation” (3%).

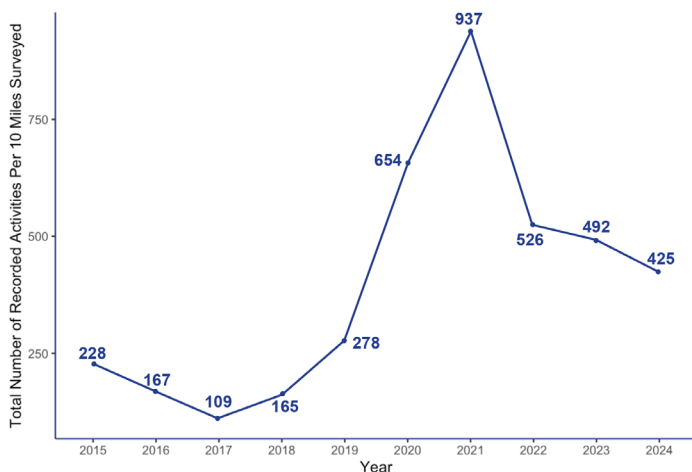


Figure 1. Total activities observed per 10 miles surveyed by MPA Watch volunteers from 2015-2024 in Central California.

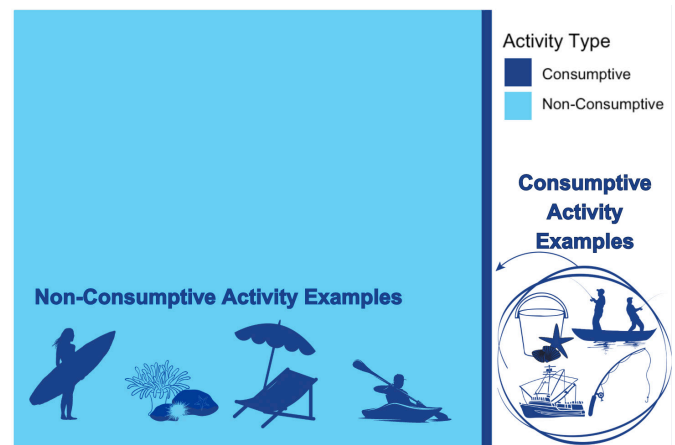







Figure 2. Proportion of consumptive and non-consumptive activities observed by MPA Watch volunteers from 2015-2024 in Central California. Examples of consumptive and non-consumptive activities are shown on the figure.

\*Observational MPA Watch data for 2015-01-01 to 2024-12-31 pulled from mpawatch.org

## MPA DESIGNATIONS

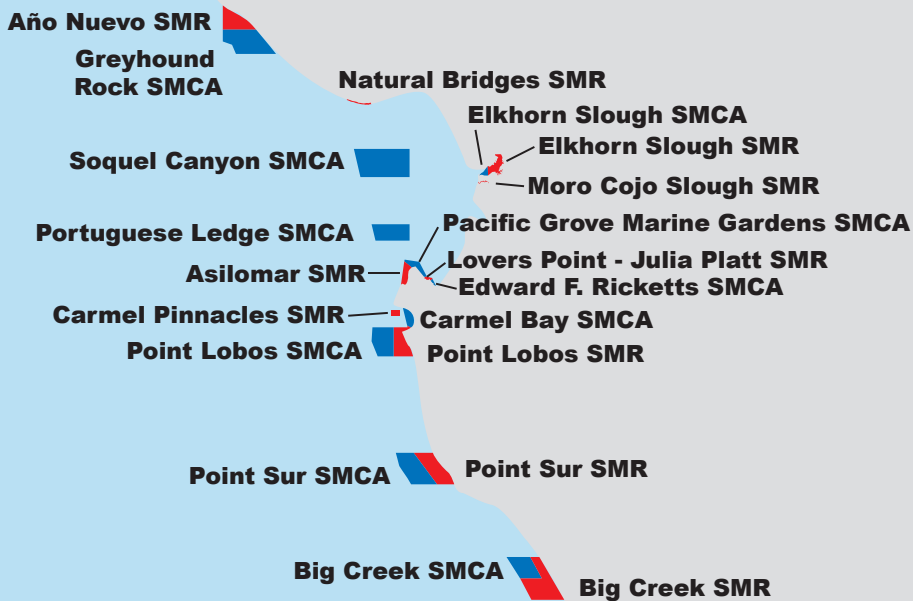
The California MPA Network includes different types of MPAs as well as other designations.

Each area is unique in its purpose and allowed uses.

-  State Marine Reserve (SMR) (0)
-  State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) (3\*)
-  No-Take State Marine Conservation Area (No-Take SMCA) (0)
-  State Marine Park (SMP) State Marine Recreational (0)
-  Management Area (SMRMA) (1\*)
-  Special Closure (27\*)

\*Number of sites monitored by MPA Watch in the region.  
19 control sites also monitored by MPA Watch

For more information please visit <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs>



## CENTRAL COAST 13,898 SURVEY MILES WALKED

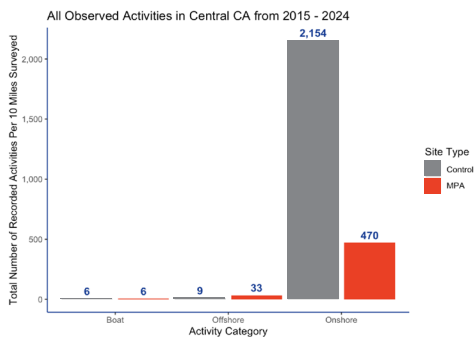


Figure 3. Total activities observed per 10 miles surveyed by MPA Watch volunteers from 2015-2024 grouped by activity location in Central California. A fishing boat transiting through an area, a person surfing, and a person resting on the beach are respectively examples of boat, offshore, and onshore activities. All these activities were observed in either MPAs or comparison ("control") sites.



Figure 4. Map of all marine protected areas, by designation, in Central California.



Over a decade's worth of data and counting! Visit [mpawatch.org](https://mpawatch.org) to learn more about MPA Watch data and how to support a MPA Watch program nearest you!

