

What is a Marine Protected Area (MPA)?

Marine protected areas are underwater parks that conserve marine life, habitats, and cultural resources while supporting recreation.

What is the MPA Watch Program?

MPA Watch is a network of programs that support healthy oceans through community science by collecting human use data in and around our protected areas. This statewide network of programs provide 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.

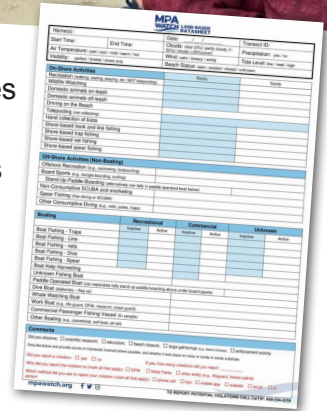
How Does it Work?

Volunteers from each partner program are trained in standardized data collection methods and given information about each of the sites they will be surveying. Every training consists of a classroom and a field portion that teaches them how to 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.



What Does an MPA Watch Volunteer Do?

MPA Watch volunteers monitor all human uses in MPAs including a wide variety of activities and can be grouped into four categories based on whether they remove resources and where the activity occurs. Non-consumptive recreational activities do not extract resources (like walking, swimming, surfing, and boating) while consumptive activities do (like fishing and collecting). Volunteers also record whether the activity happens on the beach (onshore) or in the water (offshore). Survey data are collected at various sites throughout California simply by walking along a predetermined route and keeping track of observed activities on an MPA Watch datasheet.



Example of observed activities that volunteers record:

Onshore

- Beach Recreation (non-consumptive)
- Tidepooling (non-consumptive)
- Shore-Based Fishing (consumptive)

Offshore

- Surfing (non-consumptive)
- Spearfishing (consumptive)
- SCUBA/ snorkeling (non-consumptive)

Boating

- Boat Fishing (consumptive)
- Kayaking (non-consumptive)
- Commercial fishing passenger vessels (consumptive)

Other Activities

- Potential Poaching (consumptive)
- Education (non-consumptive)
- Enforcement (non-consumptive)

Who Uses the Data and Results?

Data are used to inform policy and compliance efforts led by state agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and local governments. Researchers, like those at the Center for Community and Citizen Science at UC Davis, also use the data for analyses on human activities in MPAs that are shared with state agencies. The data collected and these types of analyses help officials determine where to focus their efforts and help protect marine life all along the Californian coast.

Who is the MPA Watch Network?

MPA Watch is coordinated on the state level and managed locally by network partners, including:

- Bleu World
- California State Parks
- Eagle Eyes of False Klamath Cove
- Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
- Greater Farallones Association
- Heal the Bay
- Los Angeles Waterkeeper
- Orange County Coastkeeper
- Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History
- Santa Barbara Channelkeeper
- Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation
- WILDCOAST



The statewide coordinator for the MPA Watch Network is WILDCOAST.

For general information or information on how to access the data and reports, please contact the MPA Watch Statewide Coordinator (mpawatch@wildcoast.org). To get involved with a program near you, visit mpawatch.org to find your local manager!