

Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report

Los Angeles County Mainland Boat-Based Surveys

January 1, 2026 – June 30, 2026

Map of Region's MPAs

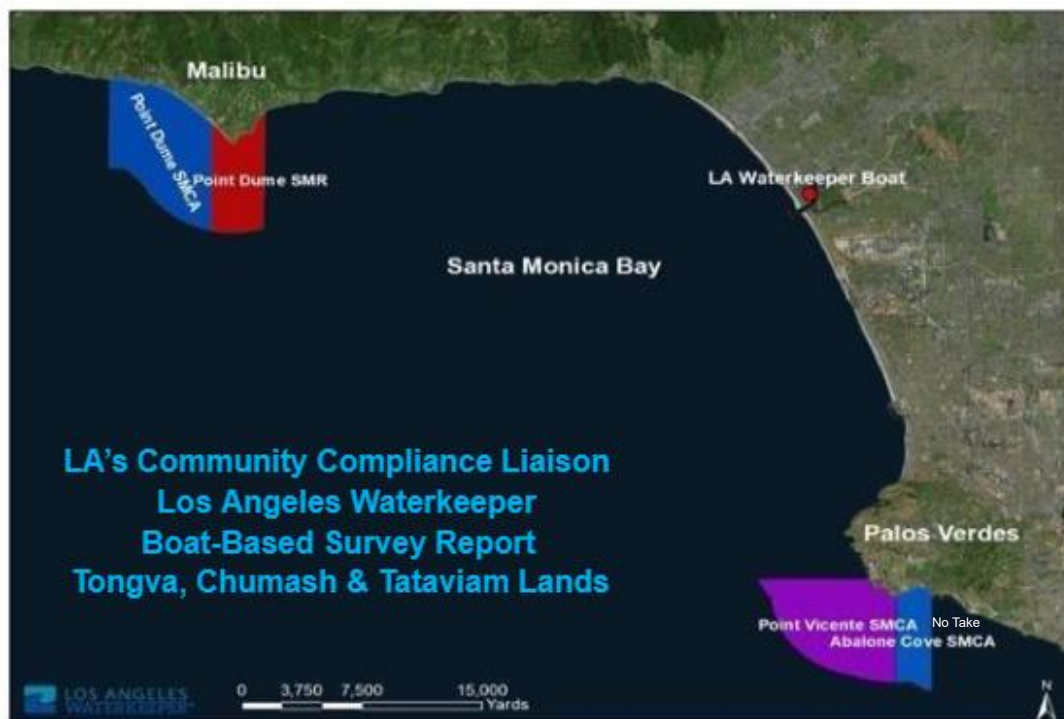


Figure 1

Since the Southern California Marine Protected Area (MPA) regulations took effect in January 2012, Los Angeles Waterkeeper (LAW) has conducted boat-based MPA Watch surveys throughout the mainland Los Angeles County MPAs at Point Dume (Malibu), Abalone Cove, and Point Vicente (Palos Verdes) featured in **Figure 1**.

Following California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) protocols, LAW documents boating activity and all observed consumptive uses within the MPAs, as well as in adjacent unprotected waters extending approximately two miles upcoast and two miles downcoast from each MPA boundary. Since 2012, LAW has consistently conducted approximately 50–80 surveys annually using the same standardized monitoring protocol.

Complementing Heal the Bay's shore-based MPA Watch program, LAW's vessel-based surveys provide complete coverage of each MPA while allowing trained observers to safely approach vessels when appropriate. LAW accurately documents activities, records GPS locations and times, provide eyewitness observations, and conduct direct outreach to recreational boaters and anglers on the water.

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Before approaching any vessel involved in a potential violation, Dr. Michael Quill reports the observation to CalTIP and determines whether CDFW wardens or other enforcement personnel are available to respond. When enforcement officers are unavailable and the vessel operator agrees to an approach, LAW provides educational outreach, including MPA guides, printed materials, and current coastal resource information.

Executive Summary

Several environmental and economic conditions likely contributed to reduced fishing activity throughout Santa Monica Bay during the first half of 2026. Fuel prices reached nearly \$10.00 per gallon between February and May, increasing the cost of recreational boating. Sediment and debris from landslides and wildfires have reduced sunlight reaching rocky intertidal habitats, affecting marine life. Multiple releases of oil, chemicals, and other hazardous materials into Santa Monica Bay occurred alongside frequent—and at times conflicting—unhealthy water quality advisories affecting much of the coastline.

Particularly significant has been the continuing Portuguese Bend landslide and associated sediment discharge affecting Abalone Cove and surrounding waters. Additional landslides elsewhere on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, together with runoff and debris from the Palisades Fire in Malibu, continue to blanket portions of the seafloor with sediment. These conditions have reduced water clarity, limited sunlight penetration, and degraded important marine habitats.

The heat maps presented in this report provide CDFW and partner agencies with a rapid visual tool for identifying areas where potential MPA violations are concentrated. Since 2012, LAW has built a collaborative partnership with CDFW that has grown into its role as Los Angeles' MPA Community Compliance Liaison.

Potential violations observed while LAW vessels are transiting through an MPA outside of scheduled surveys are not included in official survey totals. These observations are still reported to CDFW, and LAW conducts "Good Neighbor" educational outreach whenever appropriate.

LAW's boat-based survey methodology has become the model for similar monitoring programs operated by Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and WILDCOAST in San Diego. LAW also performs quality-control reviews of all three organizations' datasets before producing the regional heat maps included in each report.

As 2026 unfolded, hopes for healthier coastal waters were also tempered by the loss of our friend and longtime supporter, Doug Baron of Malibu. Doug lived his life on the ocean and generously supported LAW's MPA Watch program for many years. Whether providing local observations, assisting with educational signage at Broad Beach, or sharing updates on harmful algal blooms and human fecal pollution monitoring, Doug became an invaluable community partner.

We first met Doug on the water, where he welcomed us with a cold soda, local knowledge, and his enthusiasm for protecting our coastline. Often anchored offshore with an ice chest ready to greet us. Doug became another trusted **eye on the water**, texting or calling at all

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hours to report suspicious activity or changing conditions within our MPAs. Doug's friendship, commitment to ocean stewardship, and willingness to help protect Southern California's marine resources will be deeply missed.

Jan - Jun 2026 All Fishing Activity Palos Verdes and Malibu

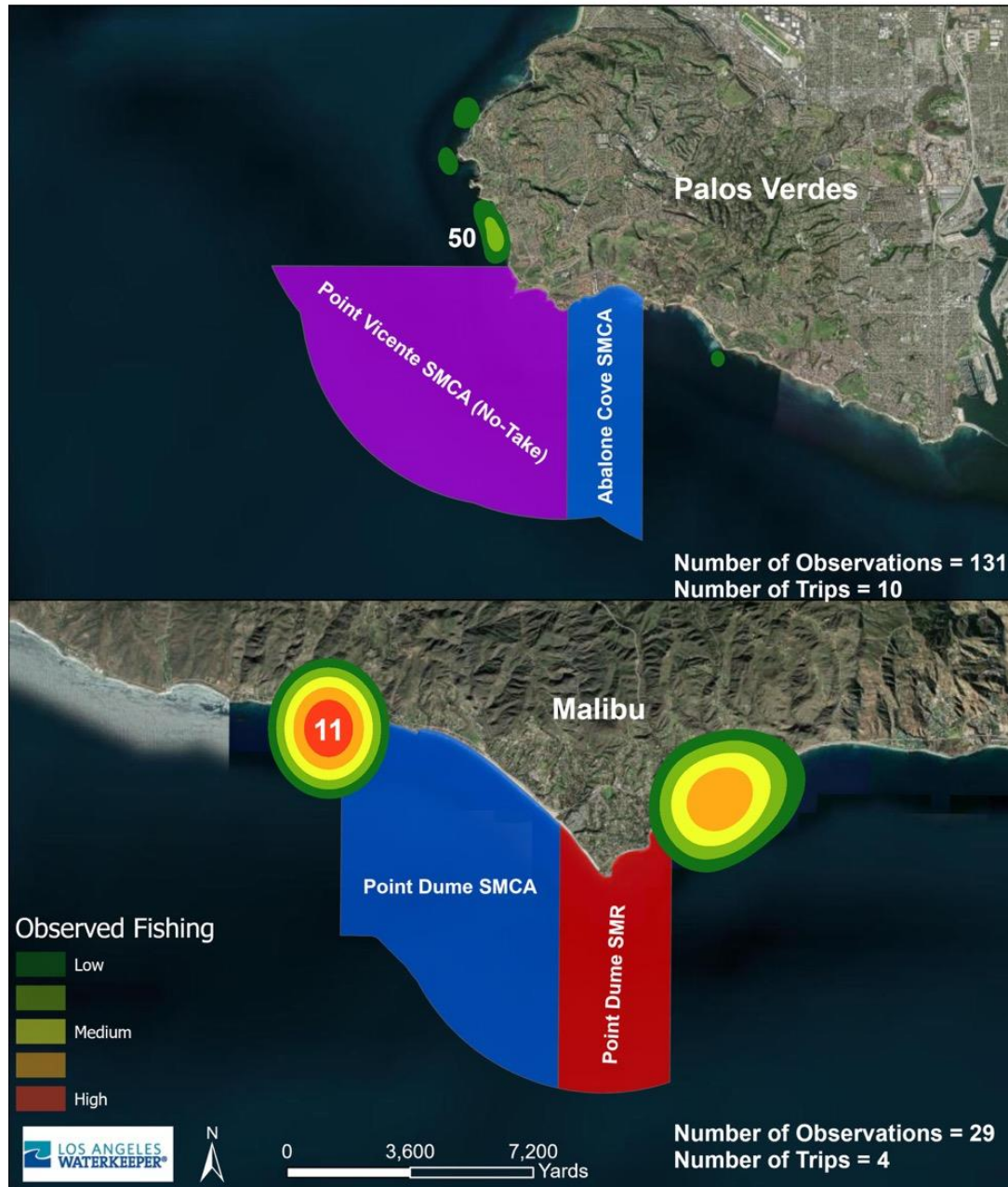


Figure 2. Minimal Commercial Fishing Was Observed and No Maps Were Generated. No commercial fishing maps were generated for the same period in 2025. All 4 Commercial Fishing Activity Observed Was Outside of MPAs and Legal.

Jan - Jun 2026 Recreational Fishing Activity Palos Verdes and Malibu

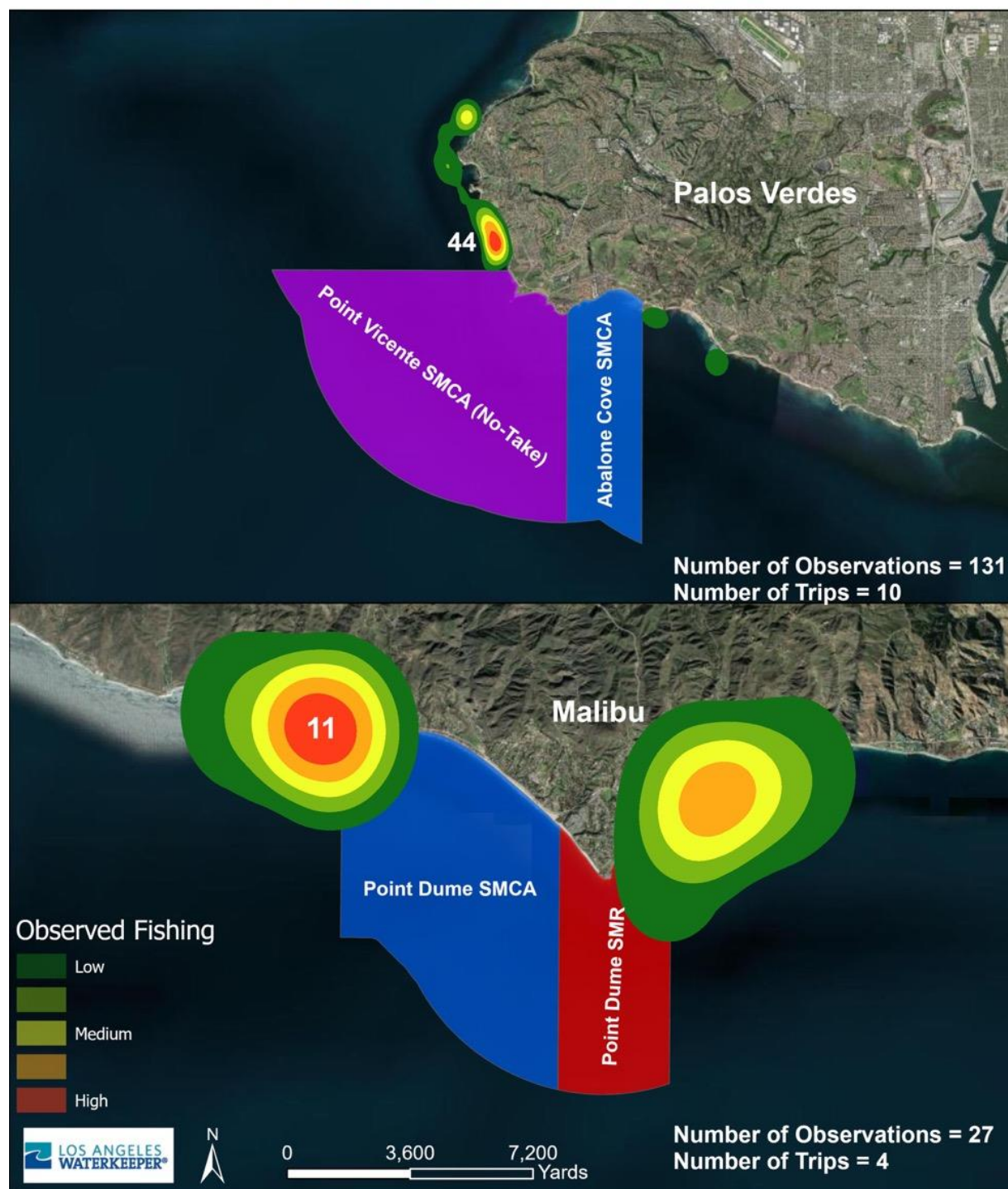


Figure 3

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Jan - Jun 2026 Onshore Fishing Activity Palos Verdes and Malibu

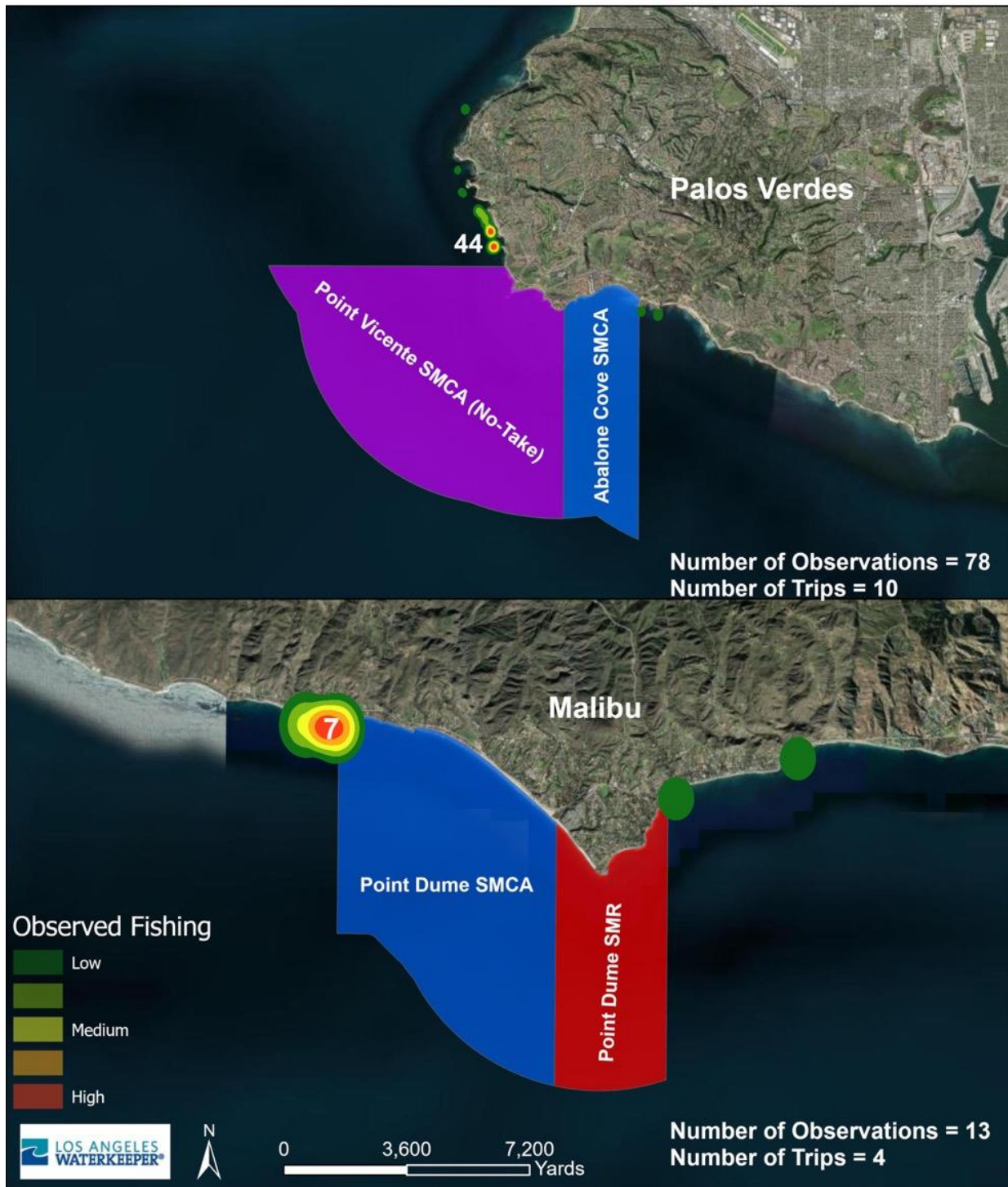


Figure 4

Jan - Jun 2026 Reported Violations Palos Verdes and Malibu

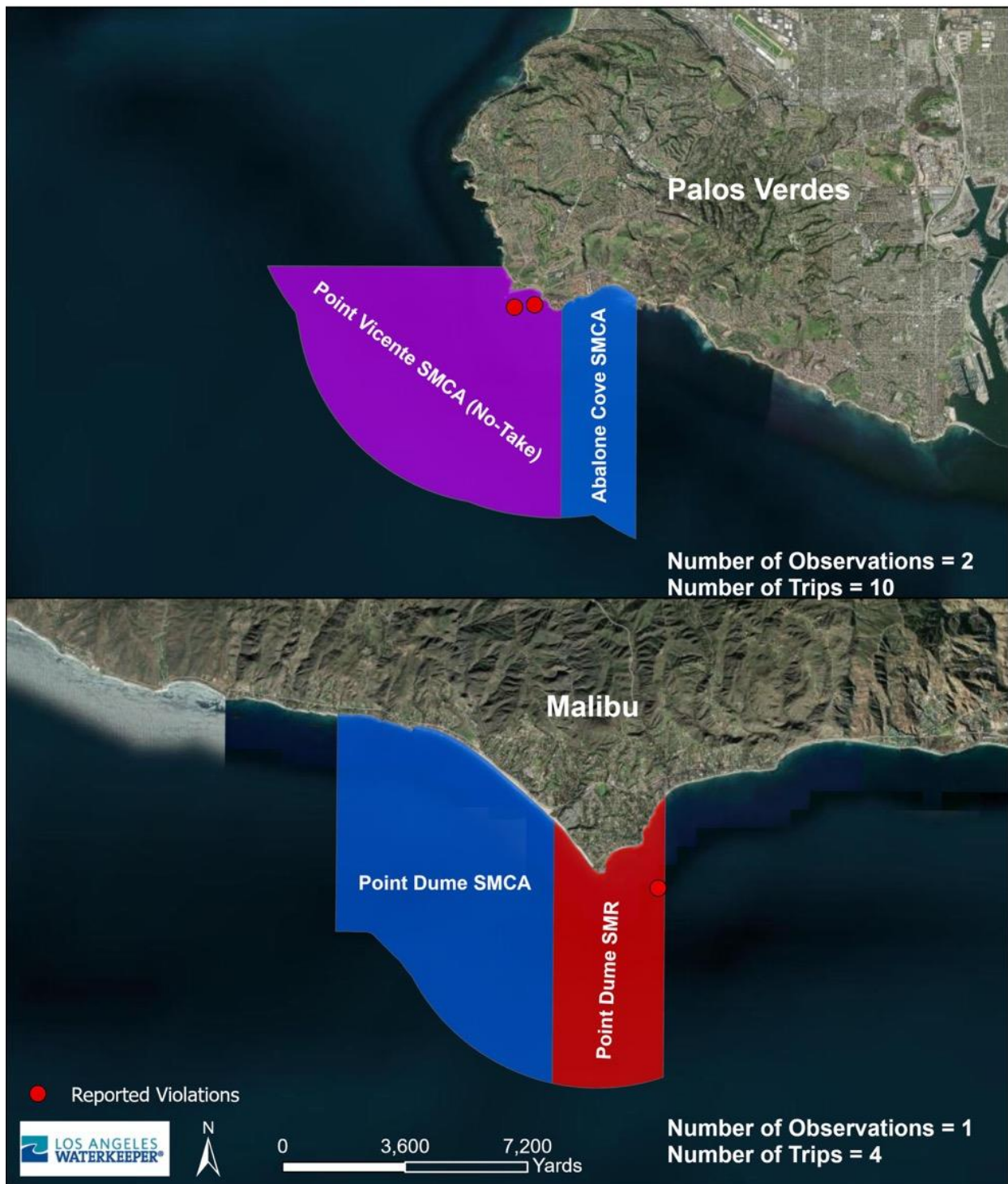


Figure 5

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**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
LA's MPA Community Compliance Liaison**



Figure 6. LA's Water Watchdog!



Figure 7. Abalone Cove MPA Shoreline Closed June 2024 And Remains Closed as of June 2026. Ongoing landslides at Portuguese Bend and Abalone Cove continue to reshape the coastline while releasing sediment and other materials into the nearshore environment.





Figure 8. The Earth Is Still Moving: The Uplift of The Dark Grey Land Mass Continues To Uplift Creating A New Coastline and Seafloor.



Figure 9. A Shout Out to Our MPA Volunteer Corps Members who dedicate 4–6 Hours on the water during each survey, collecting human-use data that supports marine conservation, education, and enforcement throughout Los Angeles County's MPAs!





Figure 10. LAW's MPA Watch Efforts Support Our CDFW Wardens And Allied Enforcement Agencies - Photo 2025



Figure 11. LAW Provides MPA Materials to Fuel Docks, Bait and Tackle Shops and Fishers – On-The-Water and Off-The-Water

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.

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.

Provide: Observation Location, Time, Description of Vessel and Persons and Description of The Potential Violation

Contact Dr. Quill @ mquill@lawaterkeeper.org for Questions and Information on Joining LAW's MPA Volunteer Corps