

Update

Marine Protected Area Management Program e-news

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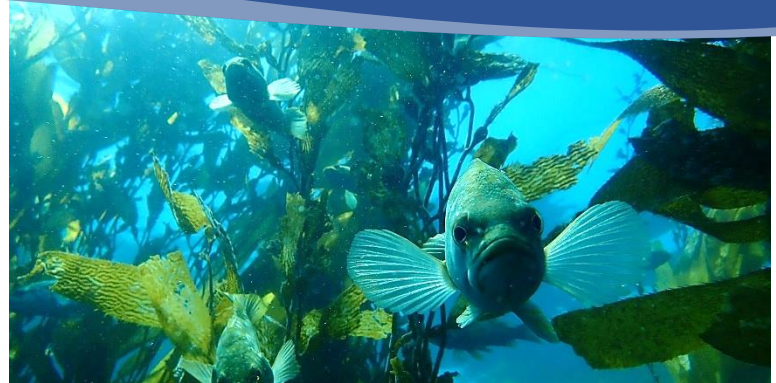


Standing on the deck of a gently rolling boat, I hear someone call, “everybody have their slate, caliper, and flashlight?” Confirming I have my gear I put my regulator in my mouth, place one hand on my mask, the other on my weight belt, and plunge into the waters below.

The cool water that floods my wetsuit is a welcome relief after baking in the southern California summer sun, while decked out in scuba gear. After signaling my OK to the crew on the boat, I quickly swim over to my buddy, and we begin our descent to the rocky reef below.

Over the course of the day I complete three separate dives alongside eleven other divers to survey the local kelp forest community. These specific surveys are part of a statewide marine protected area (MPA) monitoring effort led by [Reef Check California](#) working in partnership with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

As a CDFW Environmental Scientist and scientific diver I often accompany the research programs monitoring California’s MPAs. Participating in different monitoring programs ensures CDFW is confident and familiar with the methods used to collect the data helping to inform management decisions. While most other monitoring programs are conducted by professionally trained scientists like myself, Reef Check is unique in that its surveys are completed with the help of citizen scientists.



Ranging from accountants, business executives, and lawyers, to teachers, students, and certified scientific divers from aquariums and universities, Reef Check offers citizens the opportunity to volunteer and get involved in the collection of scientific data through underwater surveys of marine life on nearshore rocky reefs.

All volunteers must go through the same four-day training and species identification tests. Volunteers are only allowed to submit data for species groups they have been successfully certified to monitor. When asked about training expectations, Dr. Selena McMillan, the southern California Reef Check manager, said, “although this program is termed citizen science we offer a fairly rigorous training because we want to produce [scientifically credible data](#).” This expectation to produce defensible data leaves volunteer divers with a feeling of fulfillment that they are investing their time and energy into a program that can help inform management.

So, as I descended through the clear blue waters to the rocky reef below, I was confident with the abilities of my fellow divers to collect scientifically sound data. Knowing everyone went through the same rigorous training required of all Reef Check volunteers, I trust the data being collected on these dives will be an invaluable resource as CDFW continues to work towards achieving the goals of the [Marine Life Protection Act](#).



This newsletter provides updates about the [MPA Management Program](#). California’s MPA network is managed collaboratively through the MPA Management Program, which includes four focal areas: outreach and education, enforcement and compliance, research and monitoring, and policy and permitting.

QUESTIONS?

Please send all inquiries to ASKMPA@wildlife.ca.gov



LEARN!

Watch this [video](#) to learn how MPAs work to protect our resources.