



Los Angeles Waterkeeper
 Connecting Community Through
 MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
 and the
 MPA Watch Collaborative Network





**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

Introduction:

Los Angeles Waterkeeper (LAW) is an organization of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world's fastest growing environmental movement. Along with 300 other Waterkeeper Organizations, our movement works for swimmable, drinkable, and fishable waterways worldwide. The Waterkeeper Alliance was born out of a collaboration between environmentalist and commercial fishers in a successful effort to clean up the waters of New York's Hudson River in 1980's. LAW's Marine Protected Area reflects that collaborative approach to our MPA Program. Follow this link to [LA Waterkeeper's Web Site](#)

LAW's community supported dive program was the foundation on which our MPA Watch Boat-Based Survey Program was developed. Our early collaborative MPA outreach and education efforts influenced the LA MPA Collaborative's development. Visit the reports submitted by MPA Collaborative Network and MPA Watch for more on LAW.

LAW has patrolled 70 miles of our coastal waters and has monitored two mainland Los Angeles County MPAs at Pt. Dume in Malibu and at Pt. Vicente/Abalone Cove in Palos Verdes since 2012. Our MPA Watch and our MPA Collaborative efforts are supported by our community of seasoned on the water relationships with advanced SCUBA divers, commercial fishers, recreational fishers, academics, Non-Government and Government Organizations we've worked with on our restoration and monitoring efforts.

LAW has contributed to MPA Management with participation in MPA Watch, the LA MPA Collaborative, MPA Outreach and Education with LA's diverse community, including our MPA Watch classroom and fieldwork collaborations with Title 1 high schools. [Link to LAW Photos](#)

Highlights and Key Findings:

Enforcement and Compliance

- LAW began sharing our MPA Watch boat-based data with a few local CDFW wardens early on in 2012. As our sharing of on the water observations with CDFW expanded, other members of the MPA Watch Network began to do the same. Based on our CDFW feedback, LAW began producing GIS mappings of our on the water data to support and help CDFW enforcement and policy direction.
- Our sets of GIS maps include: All Fishing, Recreational Fishing, Commercial Fishing, Onshore Fishing and Observed MPA Violations. LAW's data collection supports CDFW enforcement and policy efforts leading to public compliance with MPA regulations. Our enriched community and enforcement agency collaborative relationship is certainly a highlight of our MPA Watch and MPA Collaborative Network effort. [.Link to LAW's MPA Watch Report Mappings here.](#)

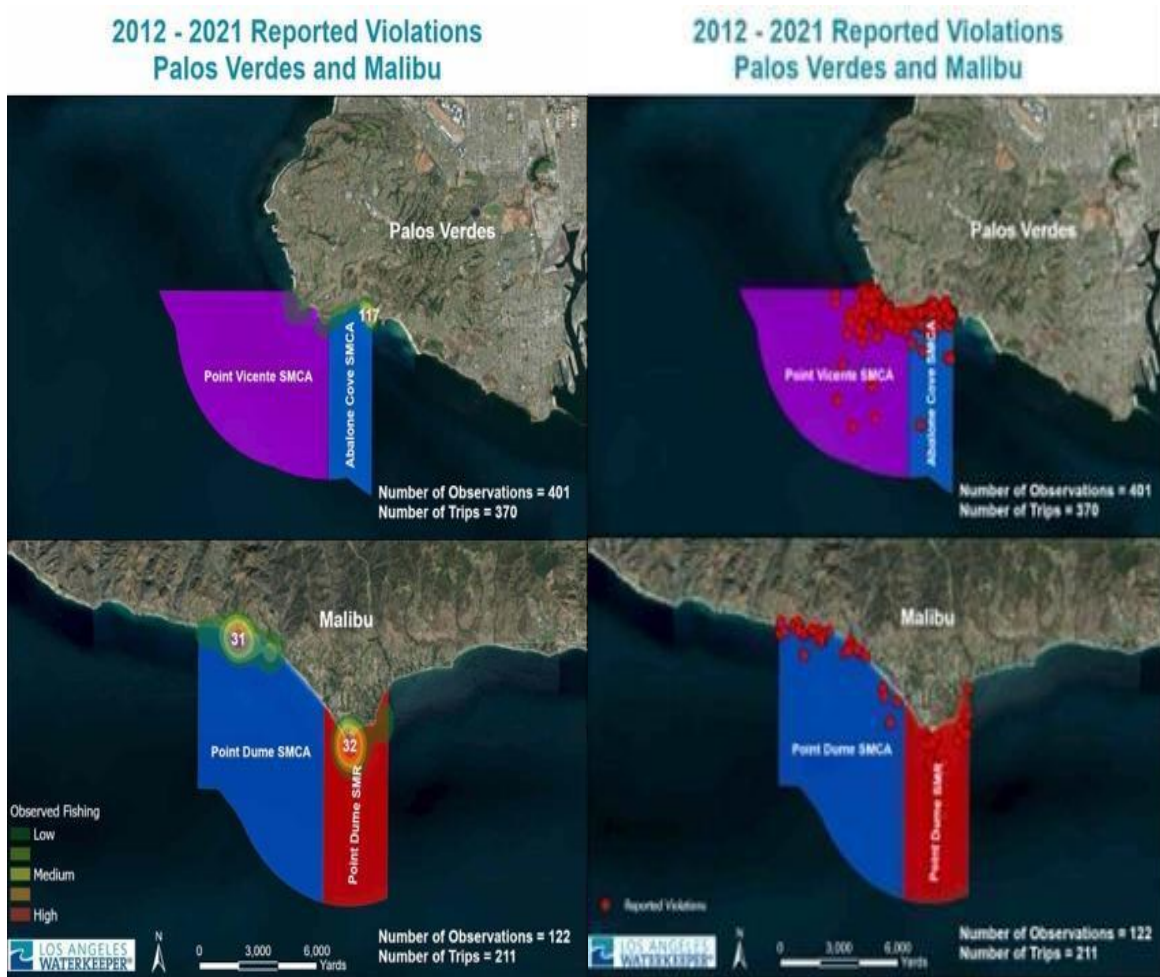


**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- The maps below display the location of marine protected areas off the coast of Palos Verdes and Malibu with the results of a hot spot analysis for activity from 2012 – 2021. Where green is the lowest number of observations and red is the highest.
- Viewing the Reported Violations map below on the left, the number of observations found within the highest areas of activity are **627** for Palos Verdes and **184** for Malibu Map. The map on the right displays the same data with the red dots at specific hot spots of violations observed. [Link here to view larger copies of LAW's 2012-2021 Mappings](#)



- Another CDFW and NGO collaboration effort emerged from the need for an efficient CDFW citation record keeping system. LAW’s legal team requested CDFW citation records several times and each time it became more evident that those records needed attention. The citation record keeping system is in the process of being cleaned up and improved and LAW has aided in that effort.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- LAW began tracking all CalTip call-ins and any responses received supporting CDFW's exploration of CalTip efficiency. In 2020 LAW began a collaborative effort with the Rancho Palos Verdes Rangers and those contacts are also included in those spreadsheets in our 2020 & 2021 MPA Watch Reports.
- LAW's MPA Watch boat-based survey effort has evolved into a Community Enforcement and Compliance Liaison role for LAW. LAW has kept the same data collection protocol in place since 2012. LAW shares that same protocol with Santa Barbara Channel Keeper and WildCoast and provides trainings for staff at each. 12- and 6-month reports are archived at [Marine Protected Areas Watch Reports](#). More recent LAW reports include detailed spreadsheets documenting all probable MPA violations reported.

Research and Monitoring:

- LAW has completed 565 MPA Watch boat-based surveys over the 9 years from 2012-2021, with a goal of 70 surveys in 2022. Our vessel, the Waterkeeper, is a 24 ft workboat with space for 4-5 volunteers per trip. LAW welcomes volunteers from all backgrounds.
- MPA Watch Volunteers have filled approximately 1500 spots onboard the Waterkeeper since 2012. Waitlists to participate are common and we look forward to reconnecting with our volunteer corps in post pandemic days ahead.
- All volunteers learn MPA Watch boat-based survey data collection protocol. All data collection is supervised onboard by our current Marine Programs Director who co-created and refined the protocol with former LAW Marine Programs Manager, Brian Meux, MPA Watch participants, Resources Legacy Fund, OPC, Ocean Science Trust, Green Info Network, and others in this ongoing statewide community collaboration.
- LAW's MPA Watch Boat-Based survey research program's early foundation was built in 2010-2011 and is a natural offspring of our volunteer dive program. LAW's sense of pride in our dive team work ethic and our collaborations with other organizations and including commercial fishers influenced the development of our MPA Watch Network and our MPA Collaborative Network efforts.
- A major kelp restoration site bridges the Pt. Vicente/Abalone Cove MPA boundary located in Palos Verdes. Restoration work at that site stopped in December of 2010 after the passing of the Marine Life Protection Act. Trial runs of our boat-based surveys took place in that area in late 2011. LAW was on the water completing its first official MPA Watch boat-base surveys of Palos Verdes and Malibu MPAs in January 2012.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- Each of LAW's boat-based transect compliments 9-12 of Heal the Bay's land-based surveys covering the same area. LAW's surveys focus on all boating and all fishing activity on the water and fishing activity onshore.
- Cross walking that data into a compatible format now managed by Green Info Network was a collaborative effort that was not necessarily supported by all the land-based members of MPA Watch.
- LAW's data collection protocol includes GPS coordinates of each data point and a description of activity. MPA Watch Network's summary of data does not recognize the same details of our data. In many ways we are comparing apples and oranges when comparing land based-data to boat-based data. Common areas of data are cross walked into our common data bank.
- Just as LAW has explored common grounds on which to build community dialogue, LAW has worked with land-based data programs to find common areas of survey data to build into a collaborative MPA Watch reports generated by Green Info Network and UC Davis.
- LAW's GPS coordinates included in each data point is provided as an aide to enforcement efforts leading to community compliance with MPA regulations.
- LAW's 6-month and 12-month data reports are available for review. [Follow this link to MPA Watch Data Reports](#) which includes boat-based survey protocol. The MPA Watch DMR report contains copies of our boat-based data collection sheet for review as well.
- After nine years of ebbing and flowing, LAW has developed a cooperative relationship with enforcement agencies and shifted confrontational and defensive thinking from an us versus them atmosphere and has edged into a community collaboration effort focusing on MPA compliance.
- LAW's sharing of MPA information on the water and on land with fishers and sharing valuable live observances with CDFW and allied agency enforcement has built a sense of community compliance and enforcement partnership.

Outreach and Education:

MPA Collaborative Network Support:

- LAW's Colleagues at Sea Grant and Heal the Bay have served with LAW as co-chairs of the LA MPA Collaborative.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- LAW assists the Collaborative Network's efforts to document and photograph MPA boundary lines of LA Mainland and Catalina MPAs providing institutional knowledge and boat transportation to the MPAs. Our on the water viewpoint provides views of MPA boundary lines used in enforcement training efforts and MPA guides and brochures.
- The LA MPA Collaborative's Honor the Oceans Days honors Indigenous connections to our planet, our ocean, other species, and each other. Photos and more of Honor the Ocean Day can be found in the Collaborative Network's report.
- LAW's Marine Programs Director was honored as an Unsung Hero in 2016 for his work with at risk youth and LAW's MPA Watch and MPA LA MPA outreach and education efforts. [Follow this link to Ca Community Foundation's Unsung Hero's Page](#)
- LAW led a 2015 MPA LA Collaborative survey headed by Mount Saint Mary's Dr. Adriane Jones and her students. This unique opportunity brought students from Santa Monica College including our MPA intern who eventually transferred to UCLA and graduated with honors. [Explore these articles, maps, guides, and recap of events here.](#)
- Our LA MPA Collaborative has been enriched by more diverse community members joining our effort. Inclusion of our fishers' voices and opinions in our outreach presentations has been an invaluable addition to our collaborative. Short circuited by COVID restrictions, collaborative members John Ballotti and current co-chair Michael Quill look forward to more inclusive MPA outreach, education, and opportunities for open MPA discussions. [Follow this link to LA Rod and Reel's Web Site](#)
- LAW staff and volunteers have tended MPA outreach tables at numerous venues including the LA SCUBA Show, Aquarium of the Pacific, Cabrillo Aquarium, Santa Monica College, CSUN, UCLA, UC Irvine, Disney Studios, various street festivals and events held further inland to enhance more inclusive MPA awareness and stewardship.
- Prior to the formation of the MPA Collaborative network, LAW and Heal the Bay worked side by side on MPA outreach and education efforts in Los Angeles. LAW took on the task of reaching out to marinas, bait and tackles and fishing clubs. LAW's boots on the ground effort supports the Collaborative Network's and the statewide fisher focused outreach efforts of the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation.
- Early versions of LAW's MPA maps became a common ground on which dialogue and critical discussion with fishers was built. Input from fishers was incorporated into subsequent versions of MPA maps. That slow to evolve collaboration was enriched by those early tenuous discussions focused on MPA maps.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- Continuing that collaborative approach to MPA outreach, the LA MPA Collaborative has consistently made efforts to develop outreach materials with input from our fisher community. Our collaborative looks forward to becoming more inclusive in our efforts with fishers and more of our diverse community joining our collaborative.
- LAW has been a member of the Collaborative since its formation and accepted the invitation to serve as a third co-chair of the LA MPA Collaborative in 2016.
- LAW's social media outreach includes on the water MPA Watch and other water and ocean commentary on a regular basis.
- Our consistent presence on the water provides opportunities to collect phytoplankton samples for the California Department of Public Health's Marine Biotoxin Monitoring Program. LAW volunteers our effort to that cause.
- Volunteer responses to being out on the water and the emerging thoughts and subsequent discussions that take place on the water are a highlight of our MPA Watch program. These moments are often shared with other crewmembers and have sparked discussions around subjects from our queer ocean, organized efforts by various entities to separate humans from nature. These chats seemingly emerge and often occur after discussions of MPAs. Our survey run 4-6 hours and as our day wraps up our volunteers often drift into a liminal state of mind from which interesting insights emerge.
- The vast differences in education offerings at schools across Los Angeles requires adjusting presentations to meet students where they are or the level of education they have been offered.
- As our organization began focused efforts to reach inland hoping to enrich relationships with often underserved communities, LAW was fortunate enough to incorporate the wisdom from our developed relationships with leaders at New Earth, YouthBuild, Sacred Places Institute with Sherman Indian School, and with the late Antonio Gonzales at the William C. Velasquez institute Their input, insight and guidance was. Invaluable lessons learned in building friendships continue to influence our program's evolution.
- LAW's MPA boat-based survey program was developed in the atmospheric stew of divisive, angry and community disempowering series of MLPA public hearings. Our current Marine Programs Director perceived those hearings as an example of a confrontational system, vulnerable to perpetuating habitual ongoing arguing, finger pointing, and othering of diverse community members.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- Inspired by that turbulent beginning of the MLPA's journey, LAW seeks to explore common grounds on which connective critical community dialogue might be built.
- LAW believes the Earth's natural flow of clean water to be essential to MPA success and common ground on which many sides of divisive MPA opinions can find agreement.
- In the process of engaging in critical dialogue, stories of shared experiences can emerge to establish common grounds on which more dialogue and community actions can collaboratively be built.
- Witnessing a lack of inclusion of underserved communities and the outright disrespect directed toward Indigenous participants in those MLPA hearings sparked a desire at
- LAW to develop a MPA Watch boat-based survey program.
- MPA Collaborative Network provides opportunities to reconnect our divided community to the planet, to each other, and to themselves as part of a whole interconnected ecosystem.
- LAW's participation in the LA MPA Collaborative efforts focus on building enriched understandings of our diverse community's relationships with our oceans, our planet, nature, and each other. Holding space for this explorative approach honoring those relationships is challenging.
- LAW's effort to build bridges of dialogue connecting our diverse community and their diverse needs and perspectives is the undercurrent of our MPA Watch program and our participation in the MPA Network Collaborative. Our diverse volunteer corps reflects that effort. Many of our early survey and outreach efforts were supported by our dedicated dive team at such events as the annual SCUBA show and Diver's Day at the Aquarium of the Pacific and various outreach events in LA County.

Title 1 School MPA Outreach and Education:

- LAW was invited to work with a few Title 1 schools: Aspire Pacific, Aspire Ollin, Los Angeles Academy of Arts and Enterprise, New Earth Arts and Leadership Center. With the cooperation of some talented and committed teachers, our Watershed and Marine Program leads developed our Creeks to Coast program. That program ran from 2017-2020 and included Watershed and MPA classroom and fieldwork.
- Students who participated in the Creeks to Coast program were introduced to our watersheds, our waterways and our MPAs first in their classrooms. Fieldwork days followed. The entire class of 30 -40 students then spent a day exploring our Inland



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

waterways from their sources down through LA into our coastal waters. Subsets of students from that group, 4 students and 1 school chaperone each, spent a day of fieldwork on the Waterkeeper conducting MPA Watch boat-based surveys. After our last group completed their MPA Watch fieldwork day, the program concluded with a classroom wrap up and student presentations.

- All students and all volunteer crew members participating in MPA Watch are provided with MPA Collaborative outreach and education materials that aid in understanding the science behind MPAs and the history of the MLPA process, the MPA network.
- All community science volunteer crew members are introduced to MPA science as well as survey protocols. Crews collect written, photo, and GPS documentation of human activity in and around LA's MPAs under the supervision of Waterkeeper staff.
- A boat-based survey day on the water experience often includes up close sea life interactions. Community scientists also witness just how close we all are to oil tankers downloading crude oil just offshore at the El Segundo Oil Refinery, the Hyperion Sewage Treatment Plant, the Scattergood OTC power plant, cargo barge traffic, sewage spills, oil sheens, and vast amounts of human generated garbage is regularly floating in our oceans. The boat-based perspective also provides an opportunity to take in LA from a different perspective and see the overwhelming mass of human influence on ecosystems and MPA health.
- MPA Watch on the water interactions with nature serve as reminders of how dramatically human behavior, both on and offshore, influences the planet, our inland waterways, and their connection to and influence on our coastal waters. Our crews witness the effects humans have on the health of our water, our oceans, and our fisheries.
- On the water experiences can plant seeds of understanding of why human connection to and stewardship of our MPAs and our oceans is so integral to reversing, or at least stalling the negative human influences on our planet.
- MPA Watch provides community scientists with a glimpse of understanding our interconnected, co-creative influence on nature.

Challenges:

Oil spills, sewage spills, a pandemic, hi-seas, rising gas prices, and weak stomachs challenge our LA MPA Collaborative activities and volunteer participation in our MPA Watch boat-based survey efforts.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- As of January 2022, we are amid a pandemic and political crisis as our community is recognizing injustices that influence the health of our ecosystem. Witnessing the intense increase in take from our ocean inside and outside of our MPAs, indicates we have many challenges ahead of us as a community.
- LAW responded to increased fishing pressure and reports of widespread onshore poaching by increasing its survey efforts in May 2020 during the COVID crisis. Navigating the future of volunteer participation in our programs is a challenge we can only take on by responding to an uncertain future.
- LAW also extended our post survey time on the water providing MPA outreach to fishers and boaters on the water and communicating with any onshore MPA enforcement available amidst the fluctuating COVID spikes and CDC restrictions.
- Outreach approaches to communities in less populated areas differs from our crowded urban areas. Outreach materials and approaches to future MPA outreach and education efforts need attention paid to the area that it serves. One size fits all approaches to developing outreach materials bypasses incorporating community specific input into those materials. The process of including more of our diverse communities in the development of MPA outreach materials builds community connections and opens opportunities for strengthening our broader sense of community in that process.
- The LA Collaborative is focusing on building relationships with communities yet to be included in the state's outreach materials and other physical MPA related outreach efforts. We ask for advice and seek input in co-developing viable outreach materials and expanding the diversity of members in our collaborative.
- Providing transportation and financial compensation for time dedicated to participation in MPA Watch and the MPA Collaborative Network is a challenge that needs to be met if broader community inclusion in MPA support is to be nurtured.
- Community distrust of a system that is evolving continues to challenge ecosystem health as social justice and environmental justice intersect and influence each other.
- Our MPA Watch days run 4-6 hours, our vessel does not have a bathroom onboard, and we are always dancing with our ever-changing ocean conditions.
- Community divisions and mistrust often percolate up when even casually discussing MPAs. The challenge to resist confrontation goes against the grain of many on both sides of the MPA discussion.



**Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Connecting Community Through
MPA Watch Boat-Based Surveys
and the**



MPA Watch Collaborative Network

- From 2015-2019, half of LAW's yearly MPA boat-based survey trips were dedicated to Title 1 high school students who participated in LAW's Creeks to Coast Program. Due to our limited boat space and limited student fieldwork days lotteries were held to determine participation and waitlists for students.

Knowledge Gaps and Recommendations:

- Incorporating fisher knowledge into MPA outreach materials and including more fishers in our Collaboratives across the state is an area being addressed by our Collaboratives and the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation. Refer to their DMR report for updates.
- Community members have aired concern around not being included in research, various meetings, access to completed research etc. Open and transparent efforts to open lines of communication and information sharing, plans for future studies that could involve fishers could serve to inform "sides" of a topic and serve to build fruitful and transparent relationships in the future.
- Cultural and language differences have been viewed as barriers to building community awareness of our MPAS. These barriers are challenges slowly being addressed.

Policy and Legal:

- LAW has been supporting MPA enforcement agency efforts since 2012. Progress is slowly being made in addressing the lack of a functional CDFW citation record keeping statewide. LAW is supportive in that process and continues to aid in ongoing citation record research efforts. LA MPA citation records are to be reviewed.
- LAW continues to voice its support for CDFW enforcement and record keeping funding at Department of Fish and Game Commission meetings in Sacramento, as well as in online remote meetings held during the COVID epidemic.
- LAW staff has also addressed the Department of Fish and Game Commission on MPA related issues including more significant fines for MPA violations.
- LAW's Senior Attorney attended Rancho Palos Verdes City Council Meetings to encourage expanding citing capabilities of RPV Rangers filing PRAs.

LAW has received support for our MPA Watch Program from Resources Legacy Fund, Pacific Life, California Coastal Commission, Coastal Conservancy, Patagonia, Rose Foundation, CA Community Foundation, Edgerton Foundation, Marisla Foundation, Pisces Foundation, Dorrance Foundation, Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation, Dorrance Foundation, Konan Brewing, Pacific Life, and some general operations grant funds.