

west  
marin

 environmental  
action  
committee

# Duxbury Reef Marine Protected Area Petition

# Duxbury Reef

- One of the **largest shale reefs** in North America
- Extremely **biodiverse & Area of Special Biological Significance**
- **Rocky Intertidal Habitats are Rare** - 27% are Protected in MPAs
- Home to **over 200 species** of invertebrates, seaweeds, & marine plants
- **Harbor seal haul-outs, colonies** on proposed southern & northern expansion areas
- **Seabird foraging & nesting** in northern expansion area
- **Gentle slope makes it accessible** to many for tidepooling & education



Photo Credit: Jennie Pakradooni



Photo Credits: EAC

# EAC's Ongoing Work to Protect Duxbury Reef

- **EAC Local Docent Program** (since 2022)  
Trained volunteers provide visitor outreach & education.
- **Advocating for better signage**, including posting our own temporary educational signs.
- **Advocating for stronger enforcement** to agencies.
- **Promoting responsible tidepooling practices** by collaborating with partners, educating visitors, & providing information.



Photo Credit: EAC

## Current SMCA Rules:

It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource,

### EXCEPT:

Recreational take of abalone, and finfish from shore only, is allowed.

The abalone fishery is [closed until at least 2036.](#)



Photo Credit: EAC

# Original Request

**Goal: Fully protect the entire extent of the reef while maintaining access for non-consumptive uses like tidepooling, kayaking, walking along beach, etc.**

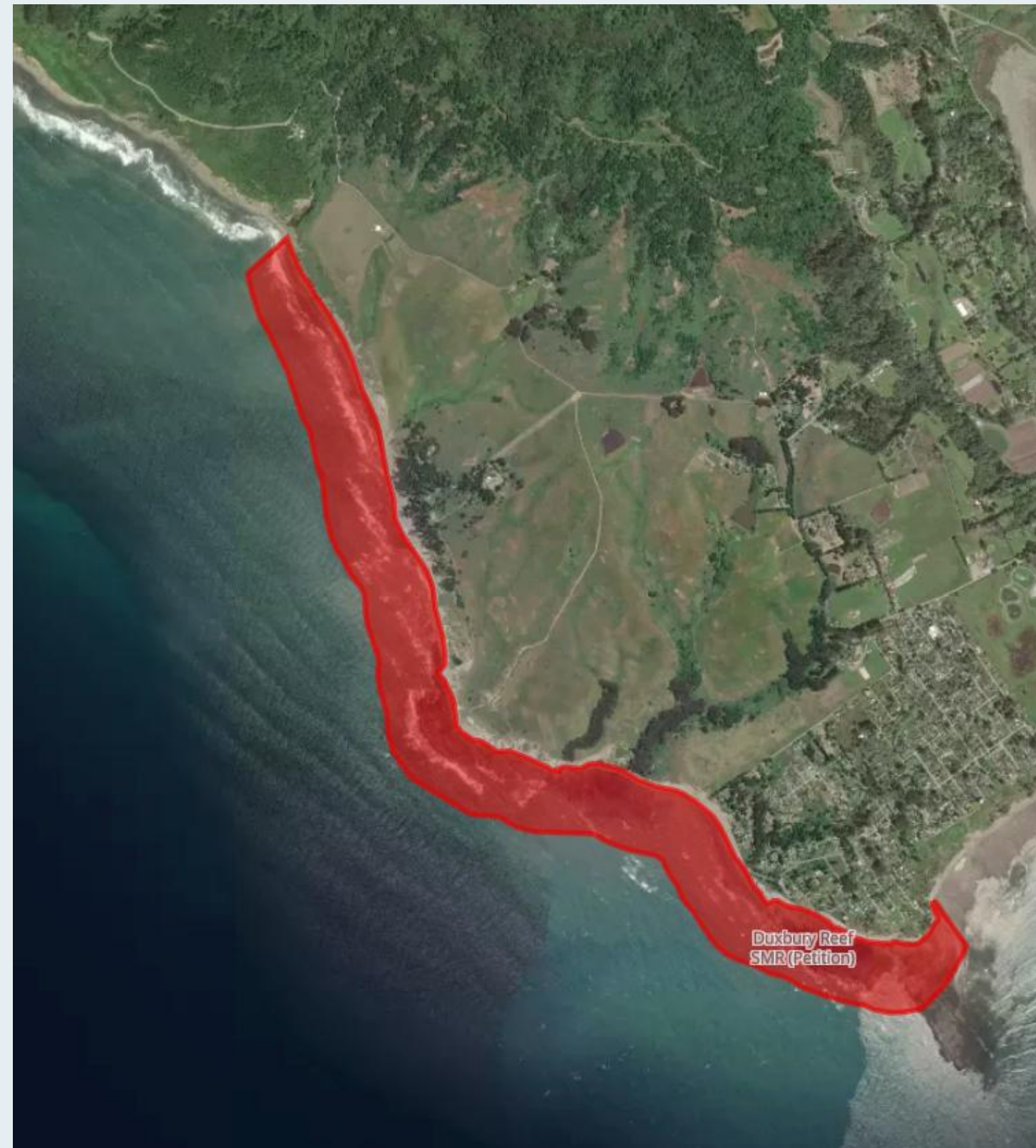
**November 2023  
(Original Petition)**

**3 Actions:**

**1**

**SMCA > SMR**

Change Duxbury Reef State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) to a State Marine Reserve (SMR)



# Original Request - South

November 2023  
(Original Petition)

1

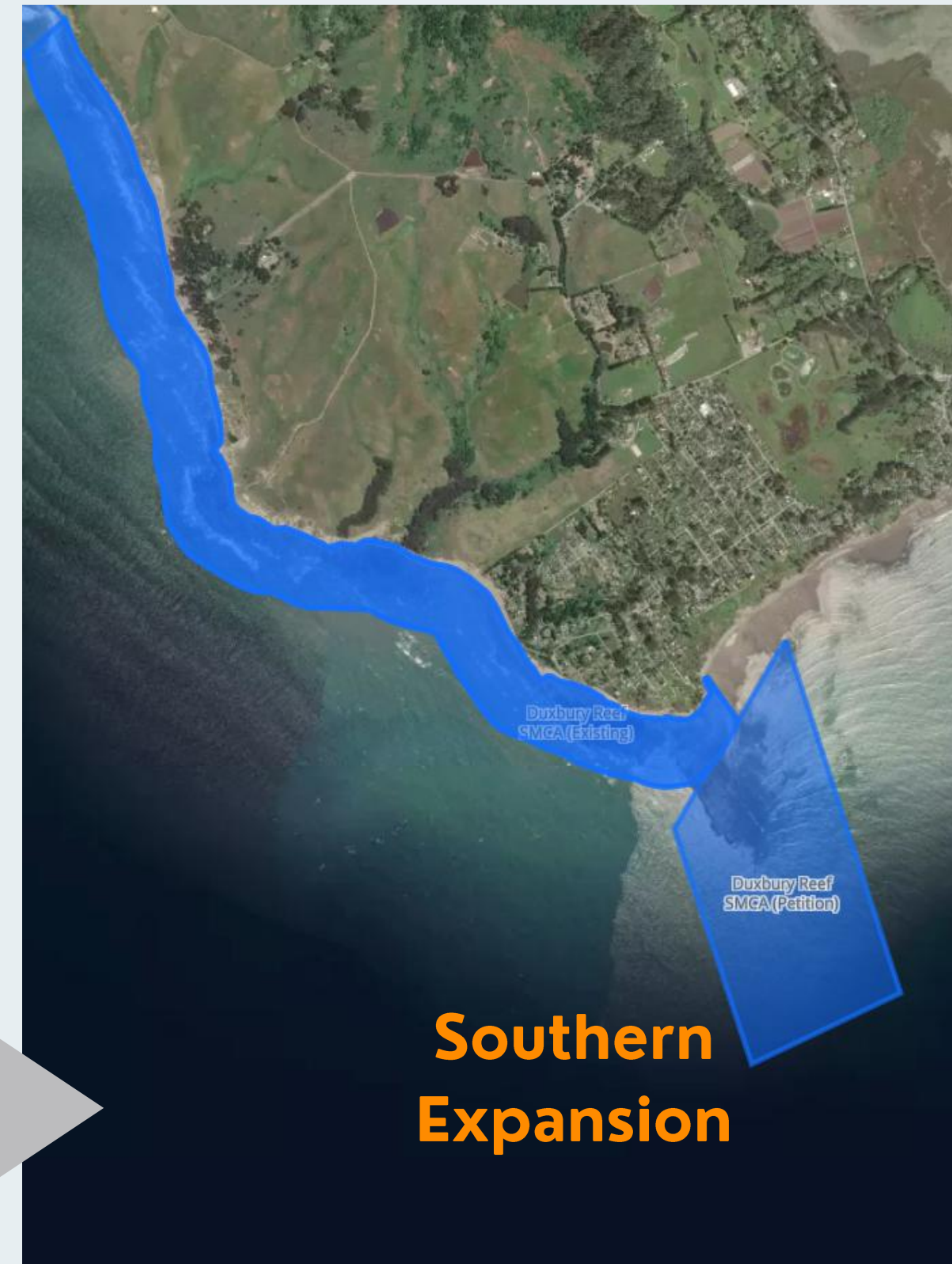
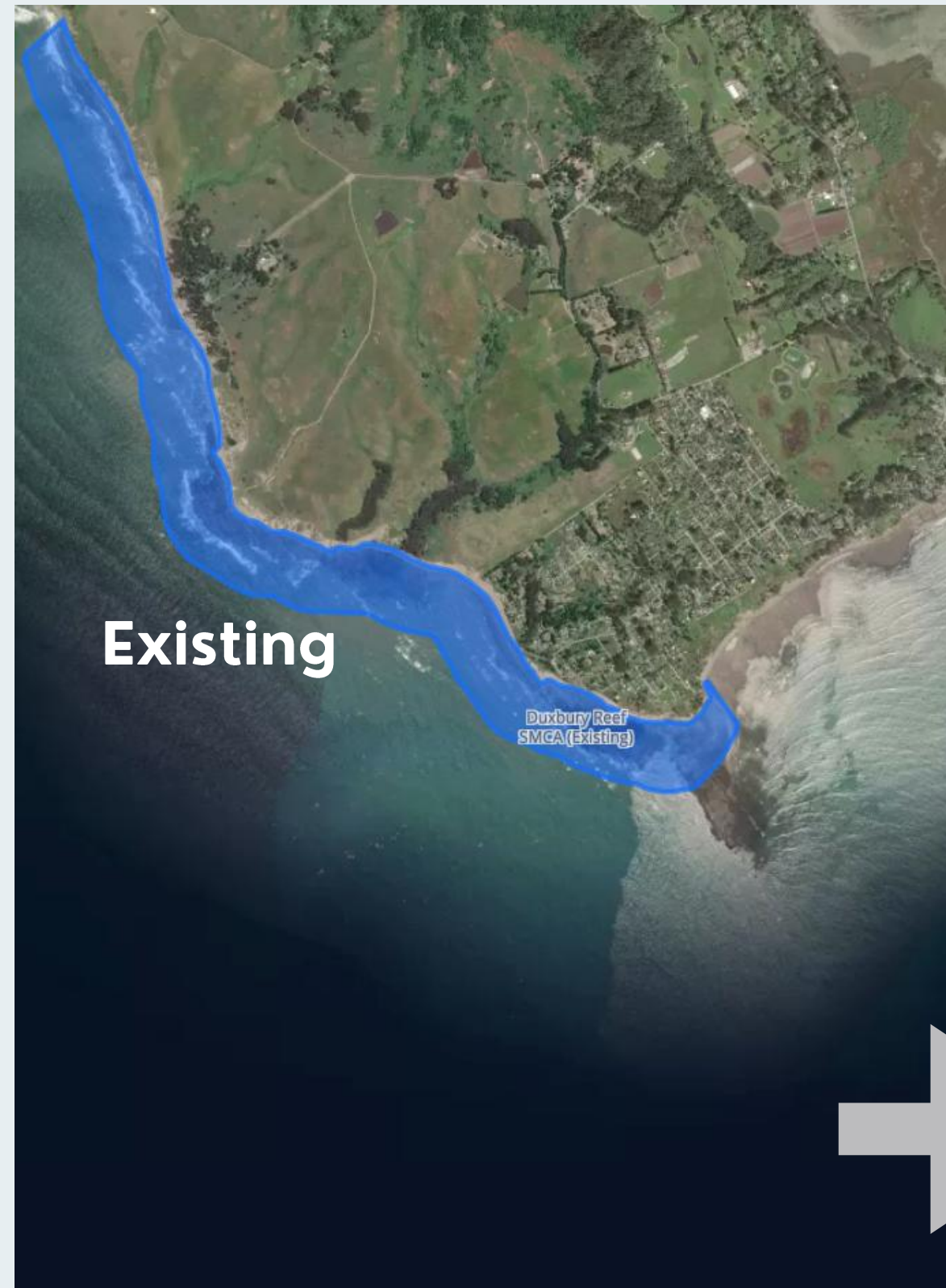
**SMCA > SMR:**

Change Duxbury Reef State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) to a State Marine Reserve (SMR),

2

**Southern Expansion:**

Extend the southern boundary further south to encompass the unprotected "tail"



# Original Request - North

November 2023  
(Original Petition)

1

**SMCA > SMR:**

Change Duxbury Reef State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) to a State Marine Reserve (SMR),

2

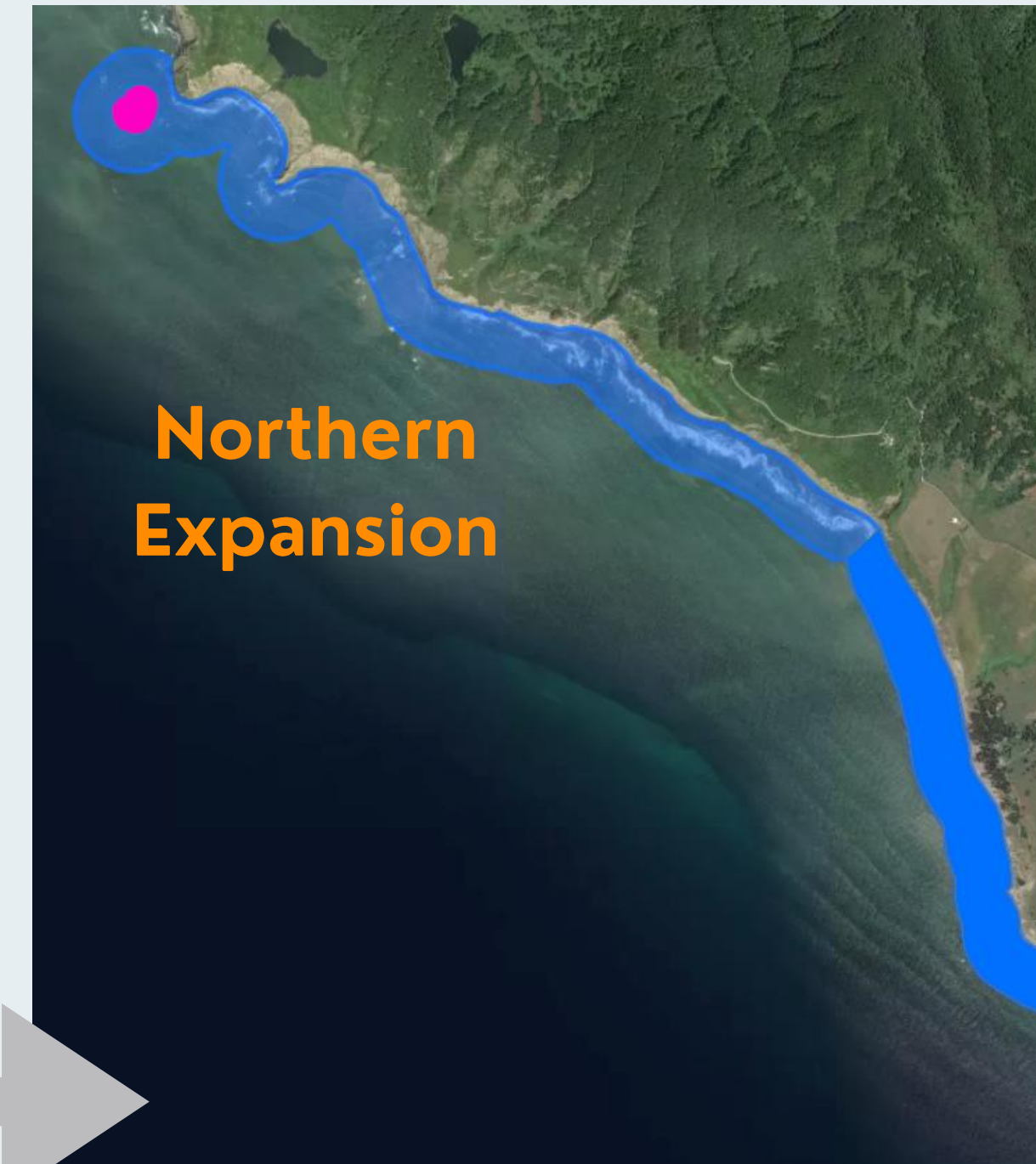
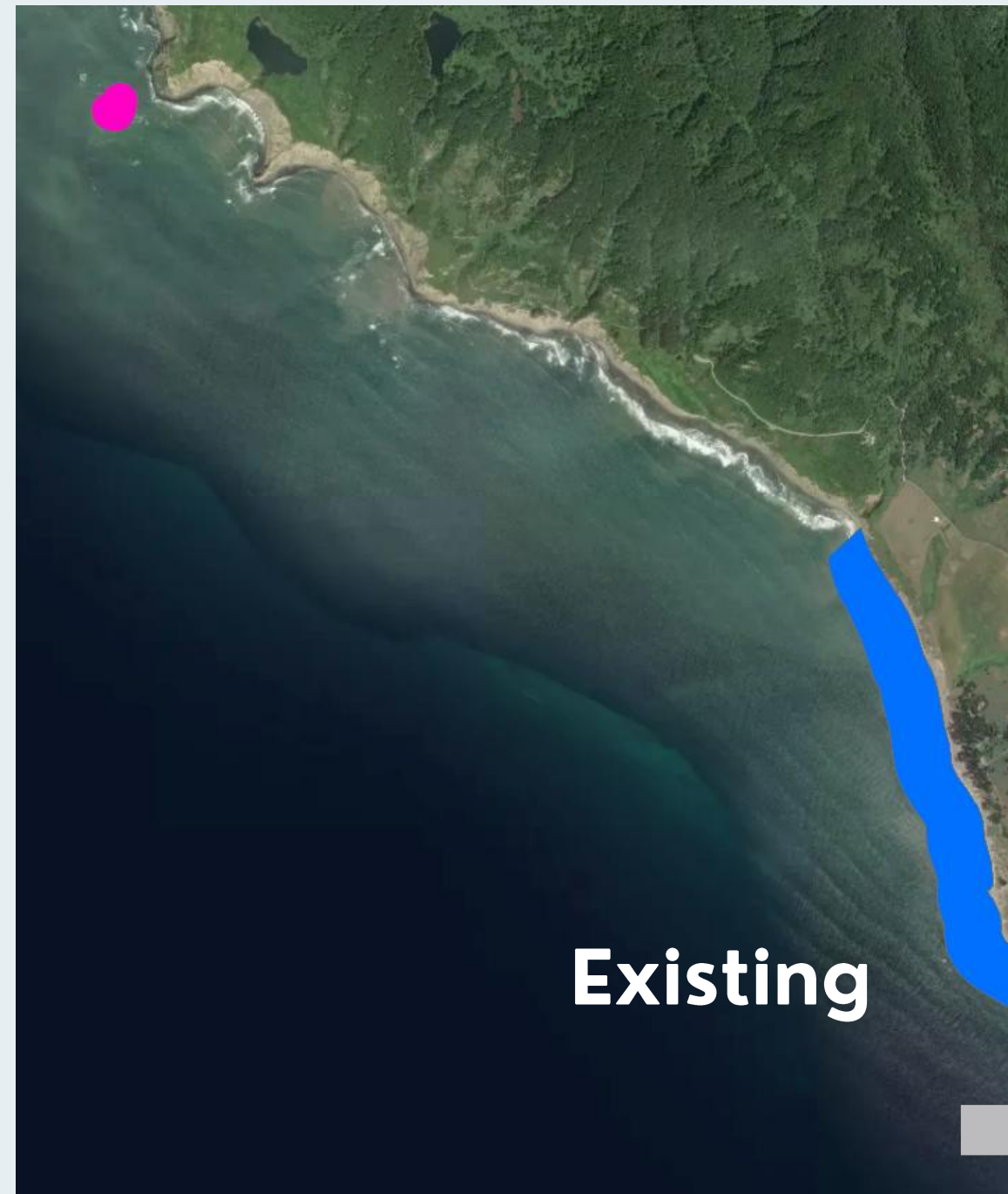
**Southern Expansion:**

Extend the southern boundary further south to encompass unprotected "tail",

3

**Northern Expansion:**

Extend the northern boundary to the existing Double Point Special Closure



# Overview

## Existing Boundary

## Original Request



# Community Outreach & Support

## Before petition was submitted

### Outreach:

- Presentation at Golden Gate MPA Collaborative public meeting
- Direct outreach to community by local resident
- Agencies and other partner organizations

### Support from:

- National Parks Service
- Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries
- Marine Science Professors, Marine Scientists
- NGOs (including Cal Academy, Marine Mammal Center)
- Community members, including Bolinas residents

## Since petition was submitted

### Outreach:

- Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
- Rod & Boat Club leadership
- Presentation & attendance at Bolinas Civic Group meetings
- Additional community outreach and resources including newsletters, social media, direct conversations
- Local press
- Presentation at Golden Gate MPA Collaborative public meeting

### Support from:

- Coast Miwok Tribal Council of Marin
- Additional NGOs
- Fitzgerald State Marine Reserve
- College Professors and Marine Scientists
- Additional community members from West Marin and Greater Bay Area

# November 2025 Amendment

1

**SMCA > SMR**

No change to SMR request



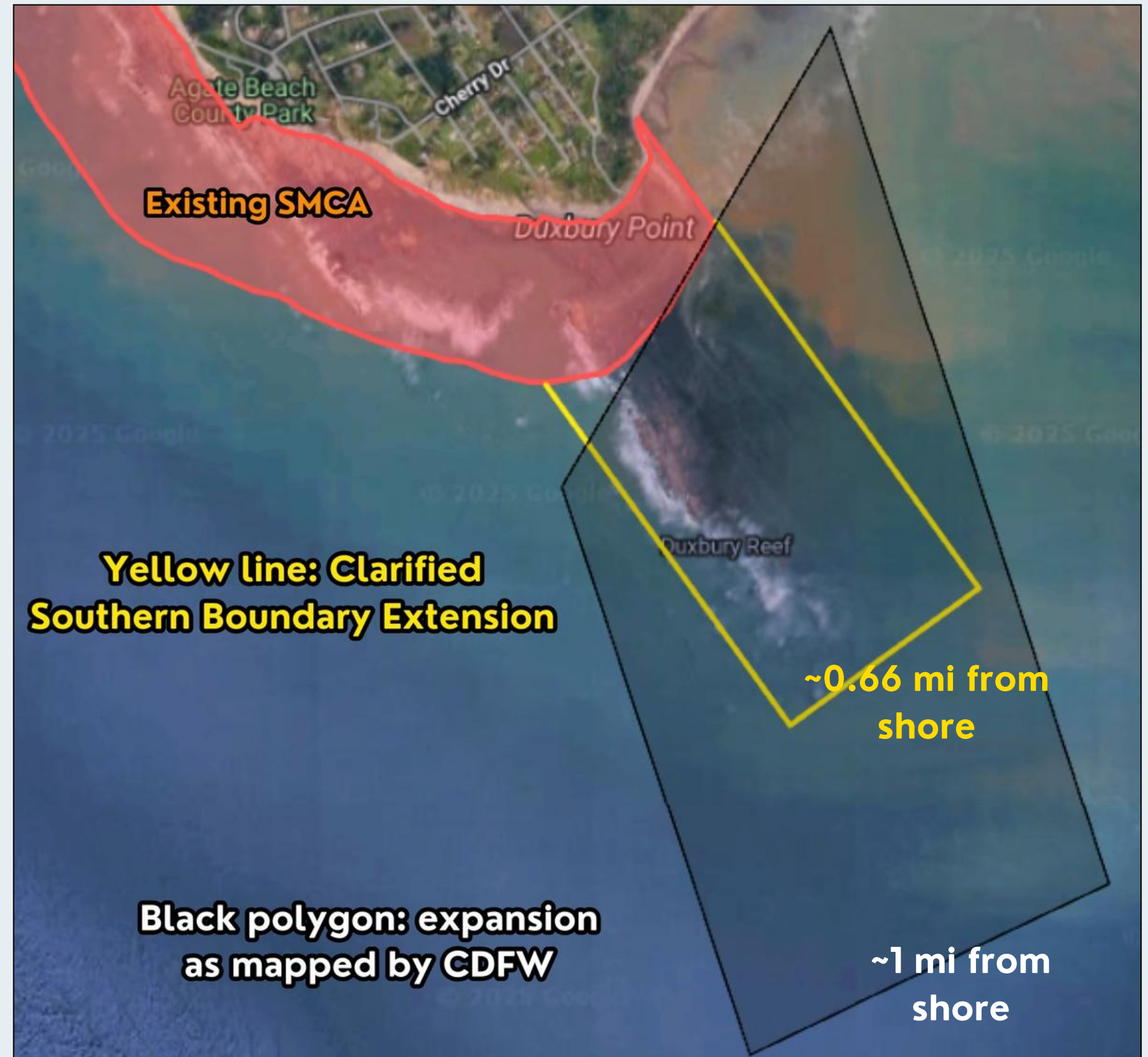
# November 2025 Amendment - South

1

SMCA > SMR

2

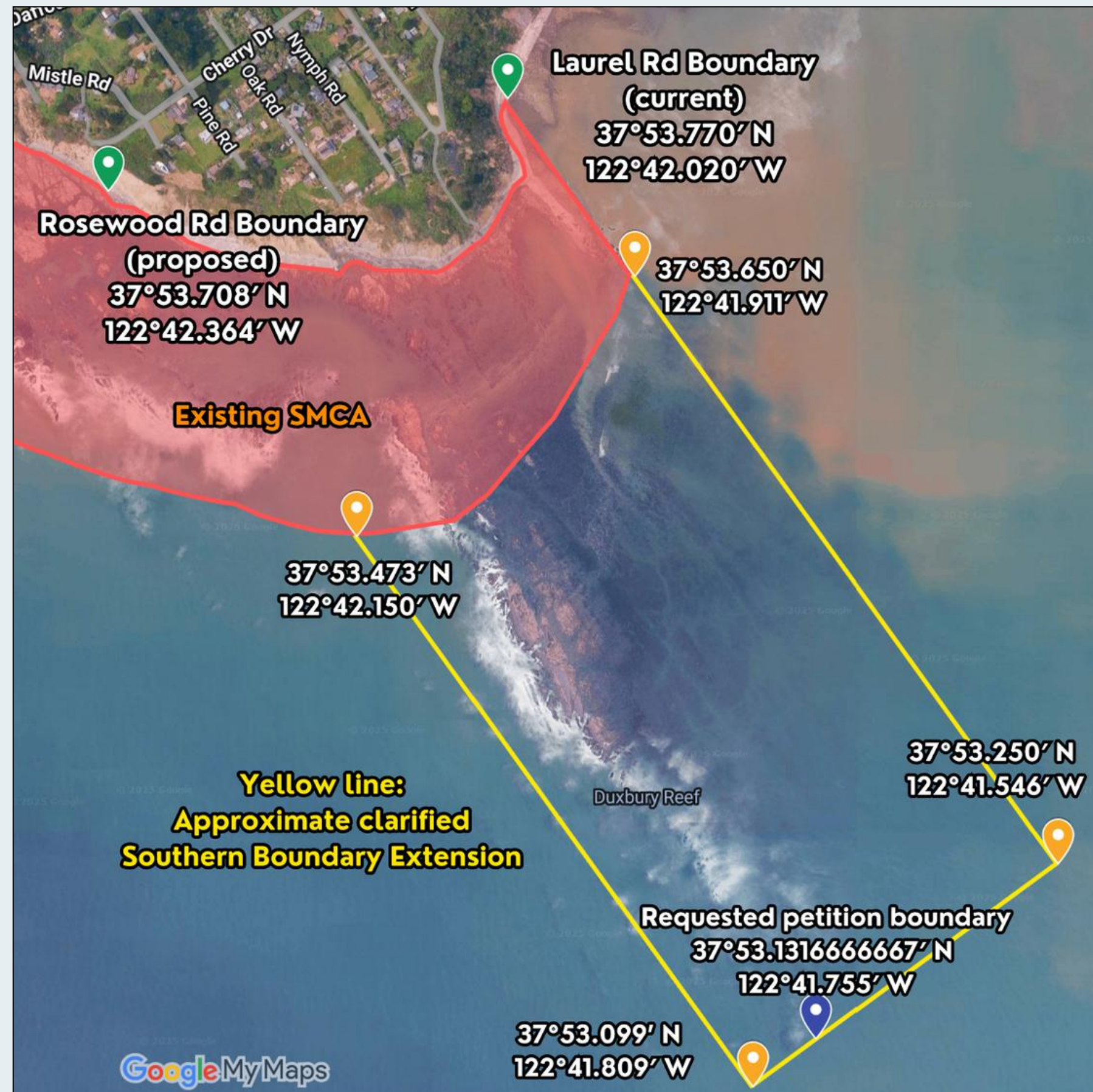
**Southern Expansion:**  
Clarify boundaries &  
reduce offshore expansion  
to focus on intertidal



# November 2025 Amendment - South

## Zoomed In View

- Important resting area for traveling marine mammals & hosts harbor seal colony year-round
- Rare & sensitive species protected



# November 2025 Amendment - North

The amendment aims to address all economic concerns.

November 2025

1

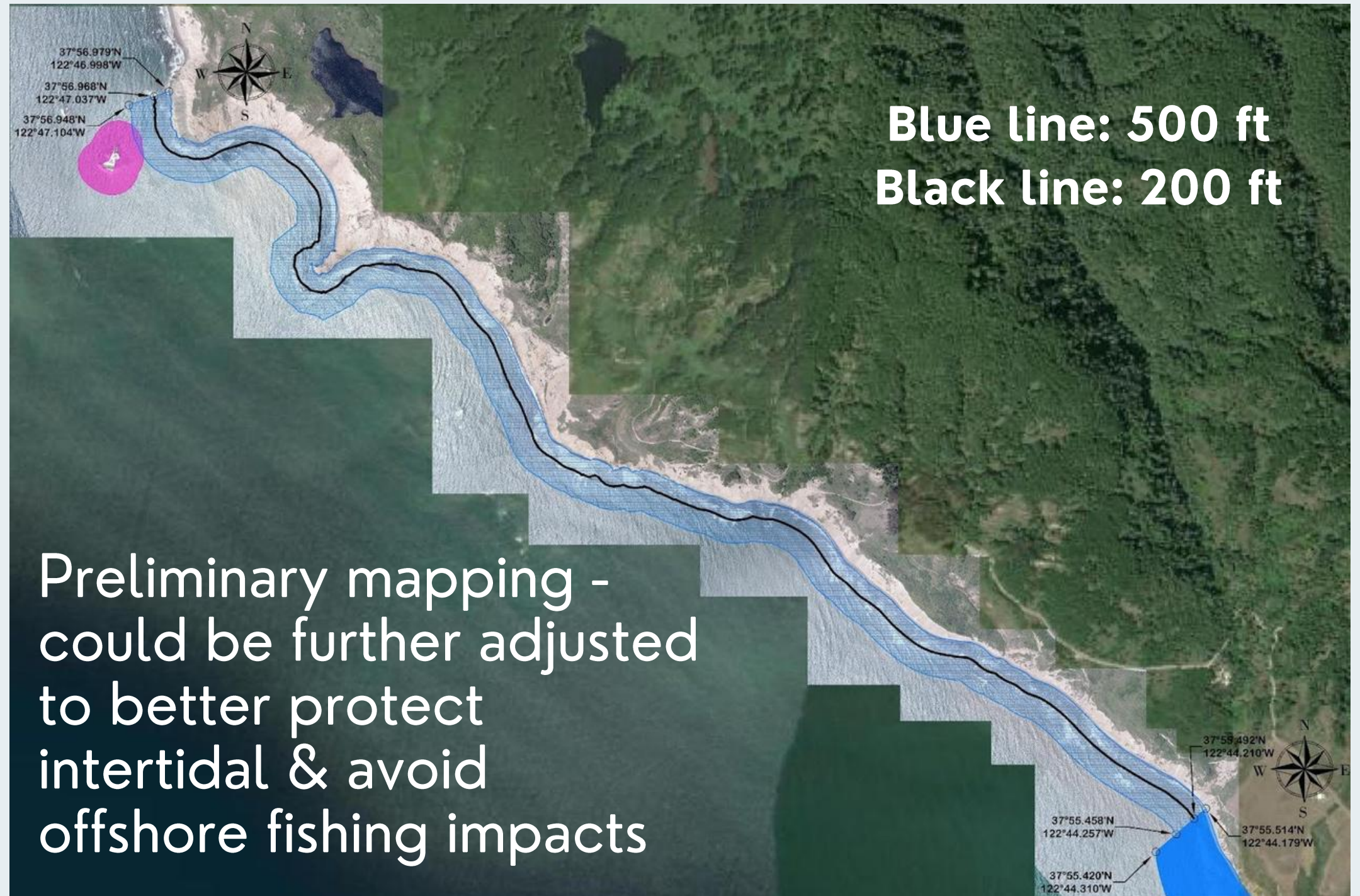
SMCA > SMR

2

**Southern Expansion:**  
clarify boundaries &  
reduce offshore expansion  
to focus on intertidal

3

**Northern Expansion:**  
Reduce offshore northern  
boundary extension to  
focus on intertidal



# CDFW Recommendation EAC Current Request

March 2026

April 12, 2026 Letter

1

## SMCA > SMCA

Keep Duxbury Reef an SMCA.

Same

2

3

## Boundary Expansions

"Grant in concept" northern and southern boundary expansions as SMCAs: do not restrict existing commercial or recreational take allowances beyond new intertidal protections in these areas; do not change existing SMCA.

## Boundary Expansions

Adopt CDFW recommendation + use November 2025 amended boundaries to make the entire area a single SMCA with uniform regs.

**Add language clarifications to protect tidepool marine life**

## Proposed Modified Language:

"It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource, EXCEPT: Recreational take of abalone, and finfish from shore

by hook and line only, is allowed.

Take of living, non-living, geological or cultural marine resources from tidepools is prohibited.

# Why a Petition for Duxbury Reef? The Need for Further Protection



Photo Credit: Grace Milstein

# A regulation change is needed because:

## Issue:

- **Decline in species biodiversity & biomass** observed by community scientists, long-time visitors, & educators
- High amount of **unpermitted take** compared to other rocky intertidal MPAs, according to Marin MPA Watch data & observed by National Park Service
- Documented **confusion of "partial take"** regulations
- **Enforcement challenge** of harvest and carry from adjacent, unprotected, and connected reef habitat
- **Climate impacts/highly vulnerable** - marine ecosystems declining - sea level rise, ocean acidification & warming
- Original request **similar to 2008 proposals** (conservation & cross interest) - boundaries (similar to Northern boundary expansion request)

## Value of Further Protection:

- Need to **protect full, continuous habitat & high larval connectivity**
- Extremely **rare ecosystem** - similar habitats in CA are fully protected as reserves
- **Improved access value:** more biodiversity + healthier habitat = **enhanced recreational and educational experiences** (~95% of visitors at reef are nonconsumptive)

# MPA Watch Data Shows Harm: Clearer Rules Will Help

[mpawatch.org](http://mpawatch.org)

- **Statewide community science network** - supports healthy oceans by collecting human use data in & around MPAs.
- **Trained volunteers** use **standardized protocols** to collect relevant, scientifically rigorous, & accessible data.
- **Data informs** management, enforcement, & science.

## Duxbury Reef MPA Watch data collected since 2014

Data on visitation & uses (both permitted and un-permitted, consumptive and non-consumptive).

- Long-term data show **high rate of non-compliance** at Duxbury compared to other rocky intertidal MPAs.
- Duxbury Docents report **high rate of non-compliance** observed on shifts and confusion about what is and is not allowed at the reef.
- **~95% of uses** observed by MPA Watch volunteers at Duxbury Reef SMCA since 2014 are **non-consumptive**.



People chiseling invertebrates from the Reef, Photo Credit: EAC

# MPA Watch Data Comparisons From Other CA MPAs & Duxbury

<b>2024 MPA Watch Data for Hand Collection Violations in Popular Tidepooling MPAs</b>					
<b>County</b>	<b>Rocky Intertidal MPA (surveyed by MPA Watch)</b>	<b># Surveys</b>	<b># Violations</b>	<b># Tidepooling Observations</b>	<b># Hand Collection</b>
Marin	Duxbury Reef	63	70	1,122	65
San Mateo	Montara SMR (Fitzgerald)	90	2	284	0
	Pillar Point Control (not an MPA)	17	0	114	38
Santa Cruz	Natural Bridges SMR	40	6	282	4
Monterey	Asilomar SMR	88	46	432	29
	Pacific Grove Marine Gardens SMCA	14	0	81	2
	Point Lobos SMR	100	1	248	0
Orange	Laguna Beach SMR	136	2	225	0
	Laguna Beach SMCA	112	5	97	1
	Crystal Cove SMCA	266	30	1,458	17
	Dana Point SMCA	94	3	54	3
San Diego	Swami's SMCA	139	1	387	1

This data was taken from 2024 MPA Watch annual reports and raw data.

# Summary of Today's Request

## Keep Duxbury Reef an SMCA

### "Grant in Concept" the northern and southern boundary expansions

- **Only restrict** expanded commercial & recreational **take to intertidal**
- Use the November 2025 **amended boundaries** to make the entire area a **single SMCA with uniform regs (No Weakening)**

## Add language clarifications to protect tidepool marine life

### This would:

- Maintain commercial fishing uses
- Maintain most recreational fishing uses
- Maintain all non-consumptive uses
- Protect the full rocky intertidal habitat within an SMCA
- Complement existing signage & education efforts
- Reduce confusion and improve compliance

# This Change Would Protect the Reef

- Regulatory change works **in conjunction** with signage, enforcement, & docent program
- **Better MPA Design: Continuous** habitat protected, **meets span guidelines**
- **Addresses enforcement issues** identified in the CDFW evaluation
- **Protects biodiversity & ecosystem function** for the future
- **More resilient to stressors:** protected rocky intertidal zones are more resilient to climate & human disturbances than non-protected zones.
- **Protects climate refugia:** Expanding established MPAs provides climate refugia as species' ranges shift
- **Protects high larval connectivity** in the north to help better reseed disturbed areas
- **Enhanced access:** clarified regulations & boundaries improve biodiversity and intertidal health, enhancing tidepooling & educational experiences
- Contributes to **30x30** to stem biodiversity loss



Photo Credit: EAC

## **We urge the Commission to:**

1. Adopt staff recommendation,
2. Combined with November 2025 amendment's refined mapping & intertidal focus +
3. Modify SMCA language to offer more protection to this rare rocky intertidal habitat.

**Thank you!**



Photo Credit: Nathan Scripps



# A Healthy Reef for All!

Photo Credit: EAC