



Laguna Beach Petition 2023-24

**Fish and Game Commission
South Coast Bioregional meeting
May 19, 2026**

MPA Petition

Petition submitted by Laguna Bluebelt Coalition proposing a revision to the Laguna Beach SMCA to the City's southern boundary (F&G Petition 2023-24-AM)

Letters of support sent to F&G from:

- South Laguna Civic Association
- Laguna Ocean Foundation
- Laguna Canyon Conservancy
- Orange County Coastkeeper
- Social Compassion in Legislation
- Project O
- Acjachemen Tribal Nation
- Village Laguna

Over 5,986 verified signatures at Change.org in support of the Bluebelt Petition for citywide protection

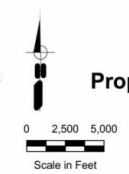
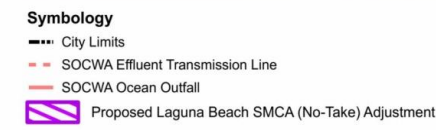
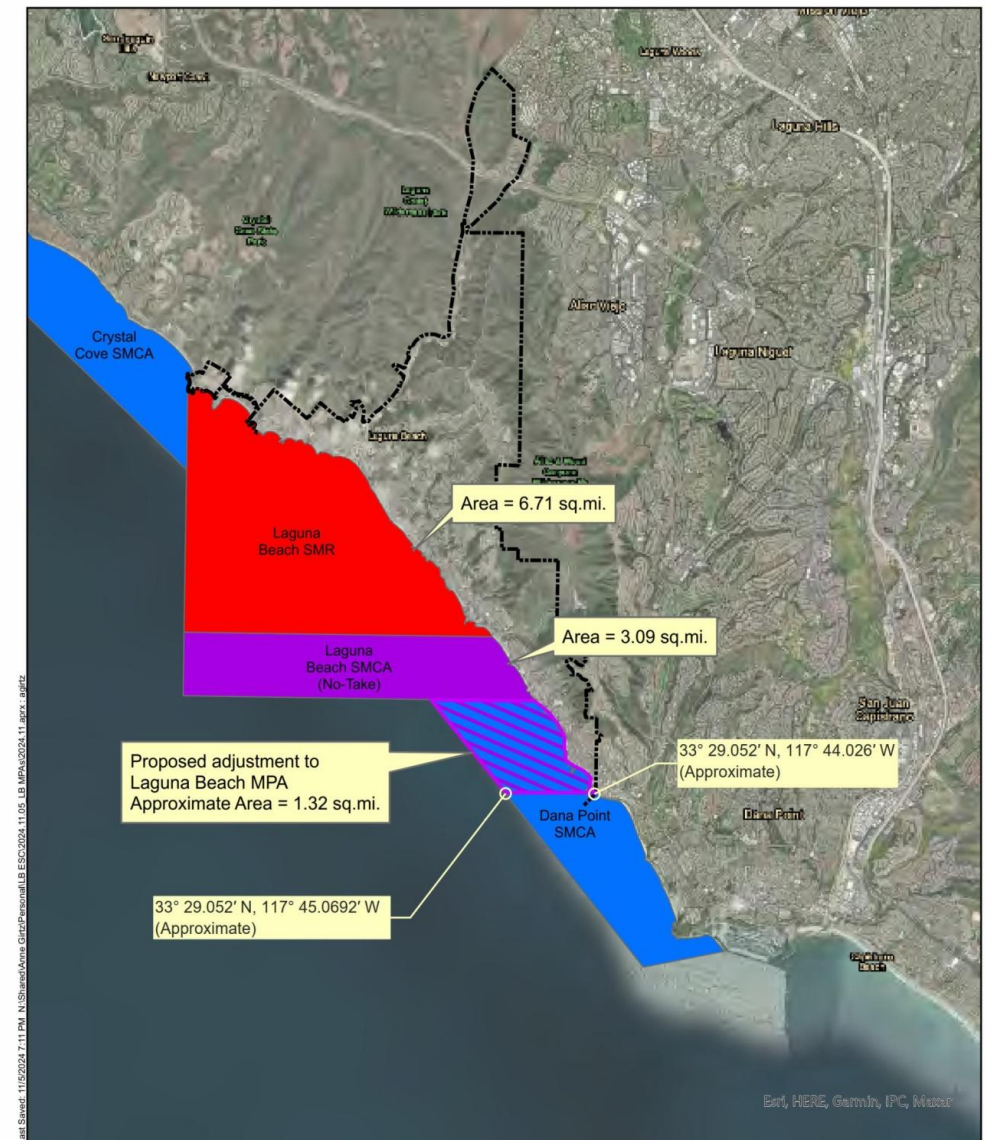
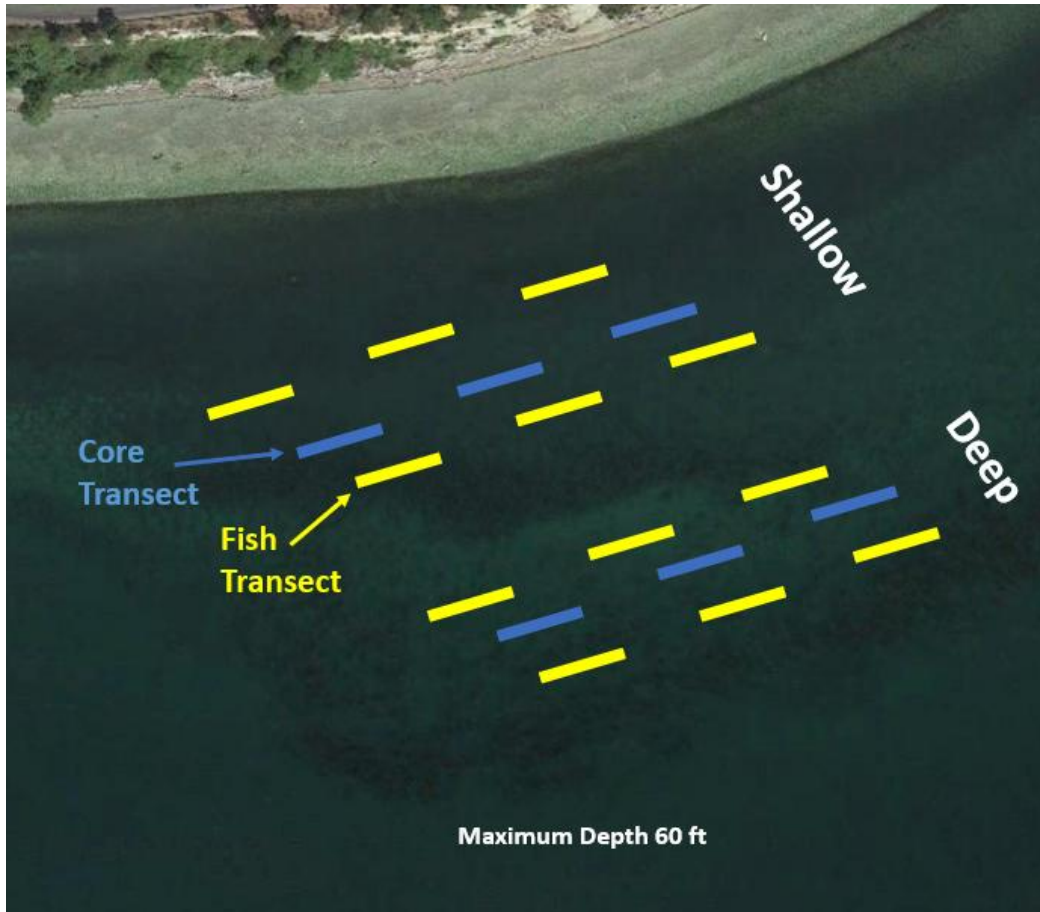


Figure 1
City of Laguna Beach
Proposed Marine Protected Area Adjustment

Laguna Beach Coastal Kelp Forest Surveys

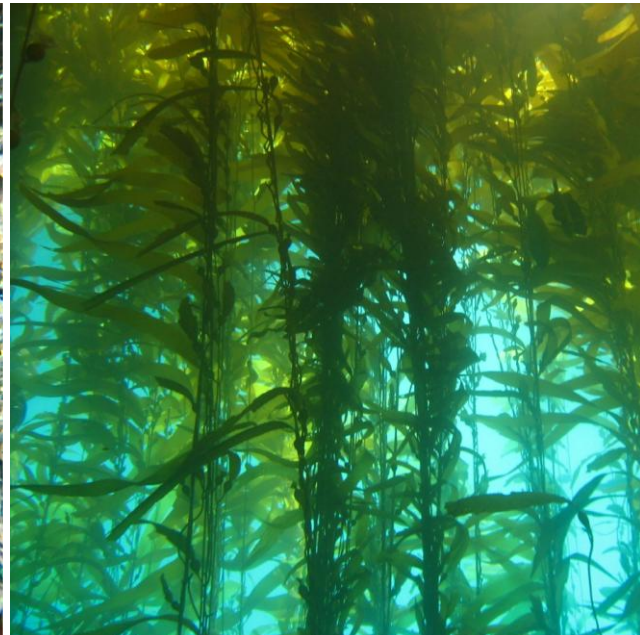
Jaclyn Mann
Southern CA Regional Manager
Reef Check Foundation

Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Protocols: Site Layout



- 18 benthic transects
 - 6 core transects
 - Fish
 - Invertebrates
 - Algae
 - UPC (substrate)
 - 12 fish-only transects
- Sites are surveyed annually

Reef Check Kelp Forest Monitoring Protocols: Indicator Species



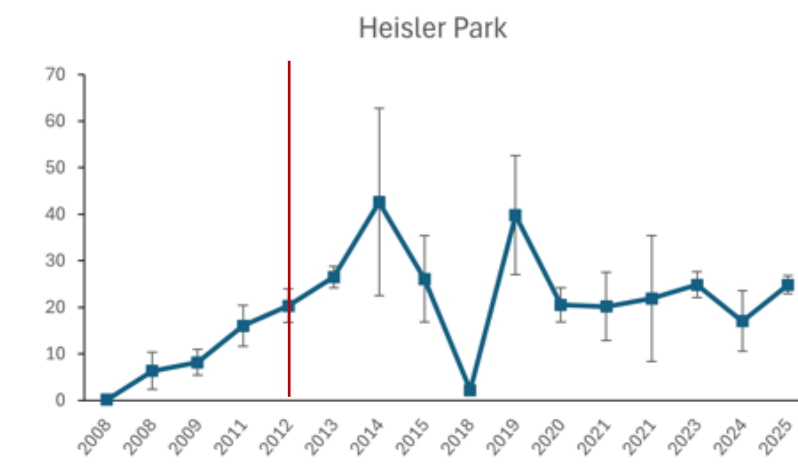
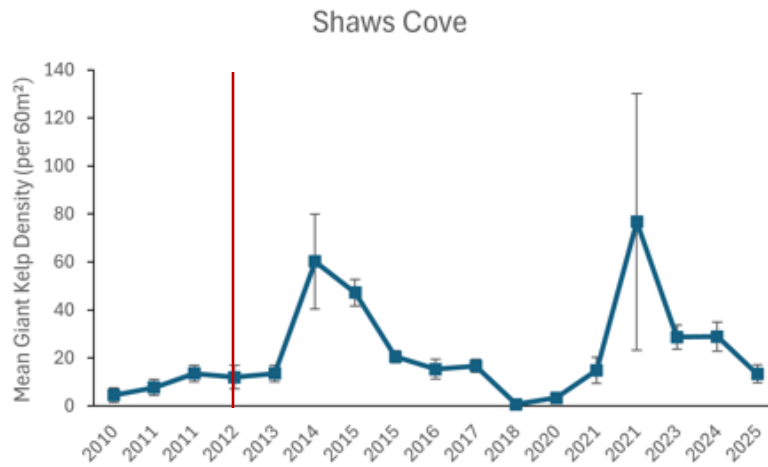
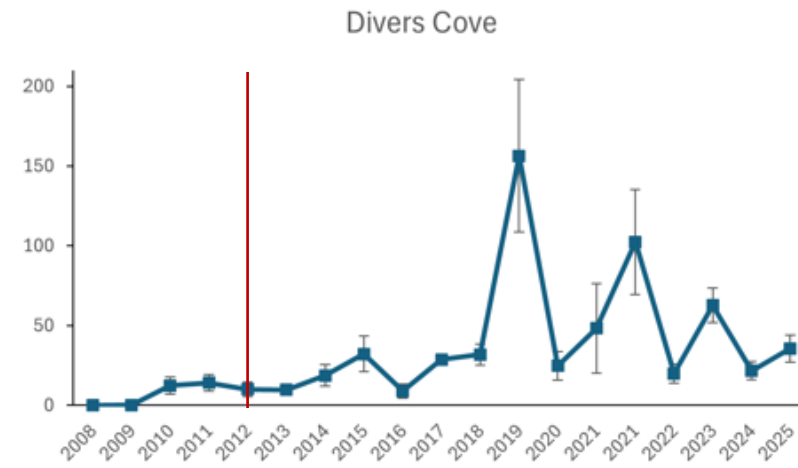
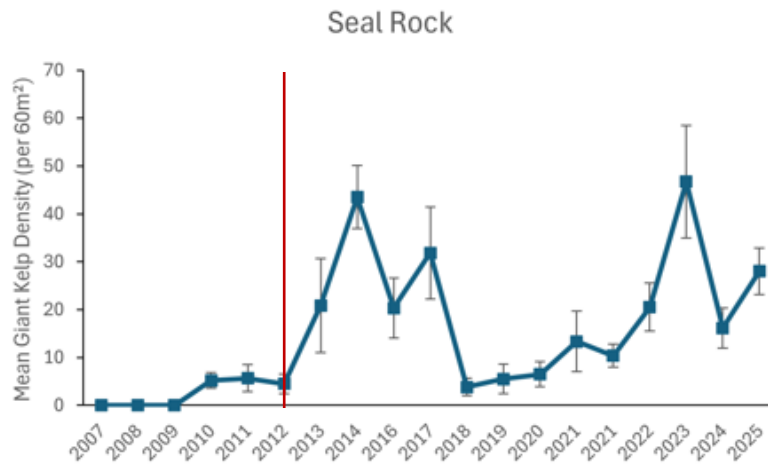
Fish
35 Species

Invertebrates
35 Species

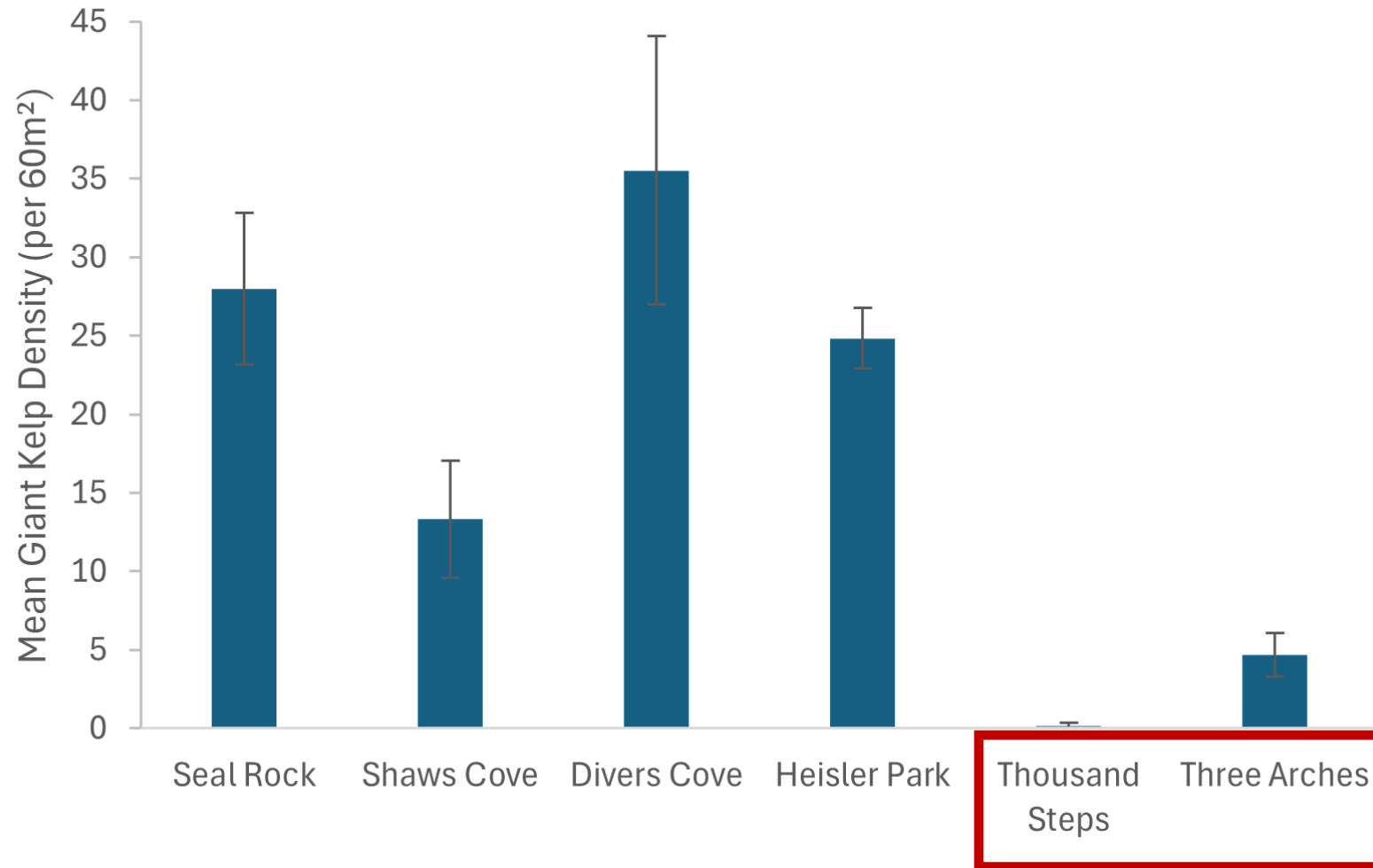
Algae
13 Species

UPC

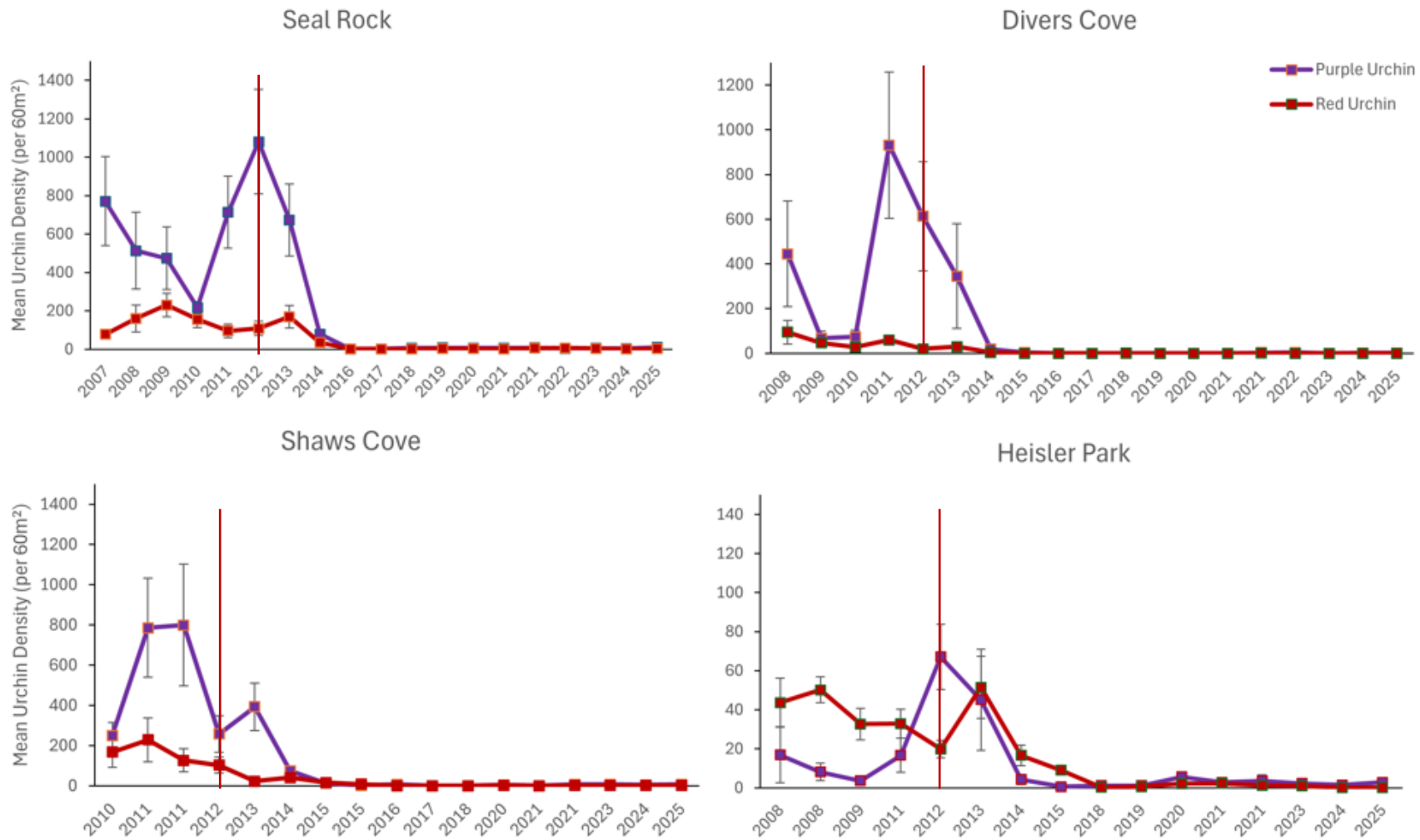
Giant Kelp Trends Inside Laguna Beach SMR



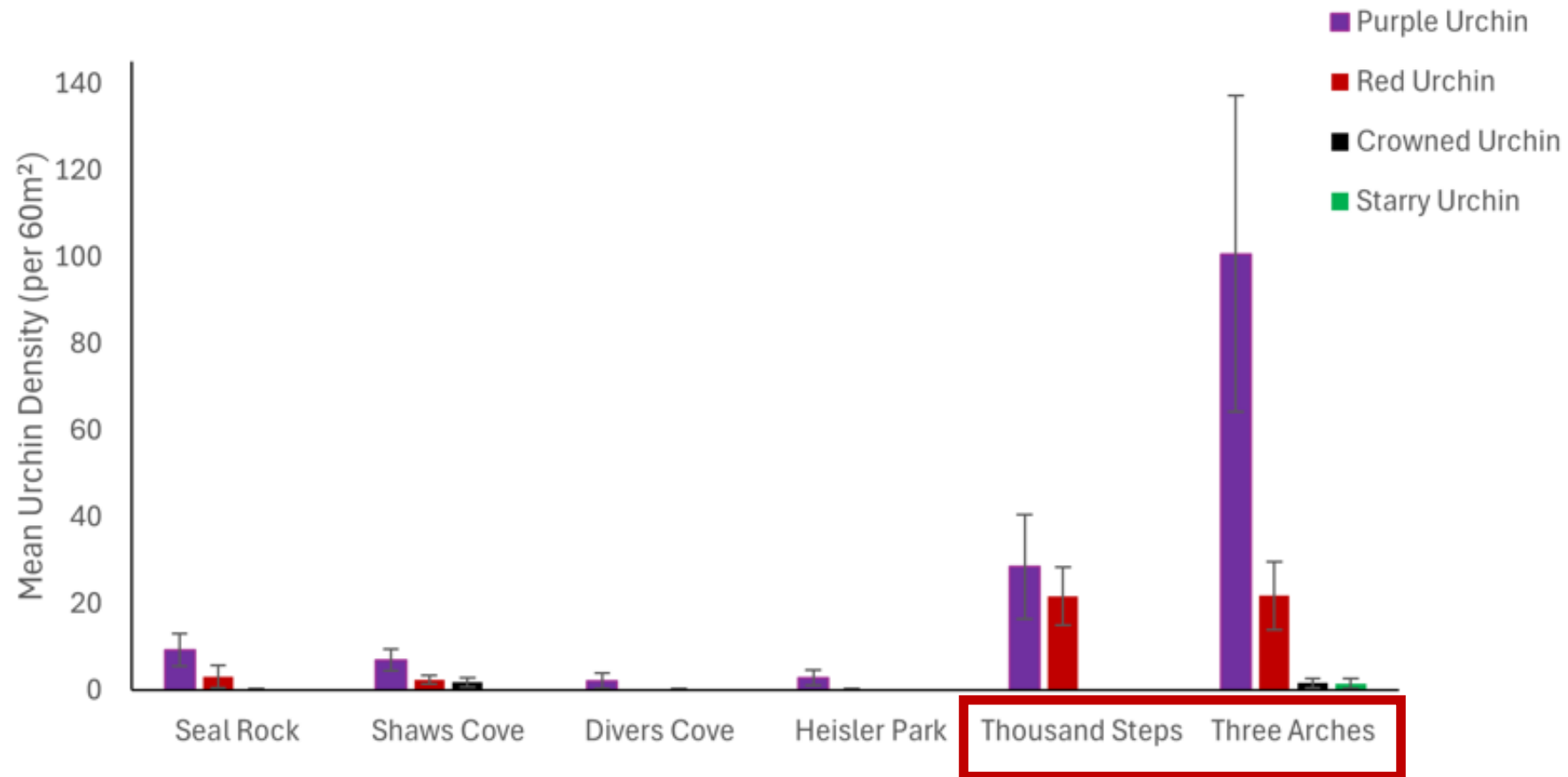
Current Giant Kelp Densities Inside and Outside the Laguna Beach SMR



Sea Urchin Trends Inside Laguna Beach SMR



Current Sea Urchin Densities Inside and Outside the Laguna Beach SMR



Conclusions

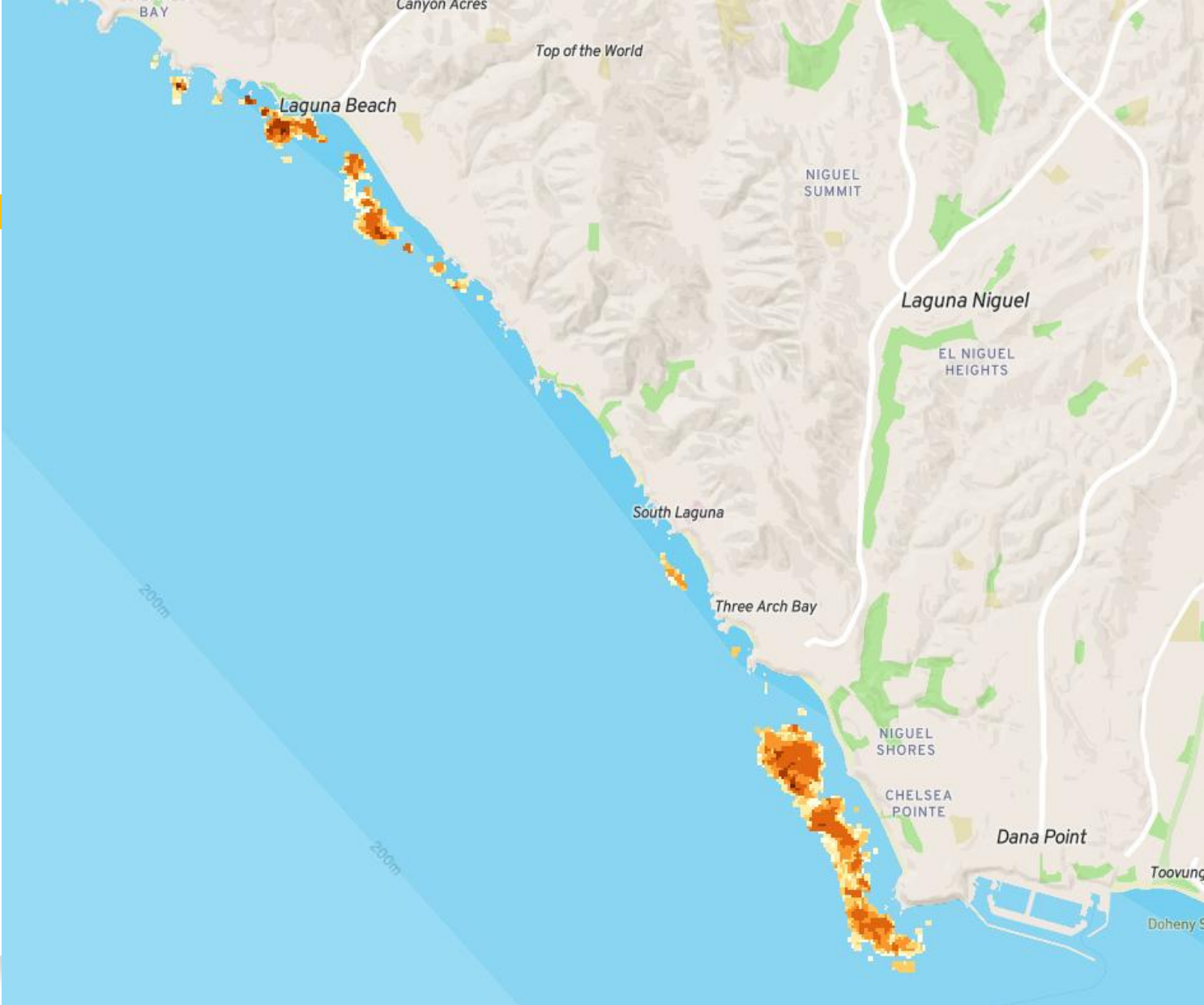
- Since the establishment of the Laguna Beach SMR and SMCA, protected reefs have shown a slight positive trend in giant kelp densities and a decline in sea urchin populations
- Kelp forests inside the Laguna Beach SMR have higher giant kelp densities and smaller sea urchin densities than the reefs in the proposed expansion area

Key Considerations

- **New Survey Data**
- **Kelp Analysis**
- **Enforcement**
- **Economic Analysis**
- **Boundary/Regulatory**



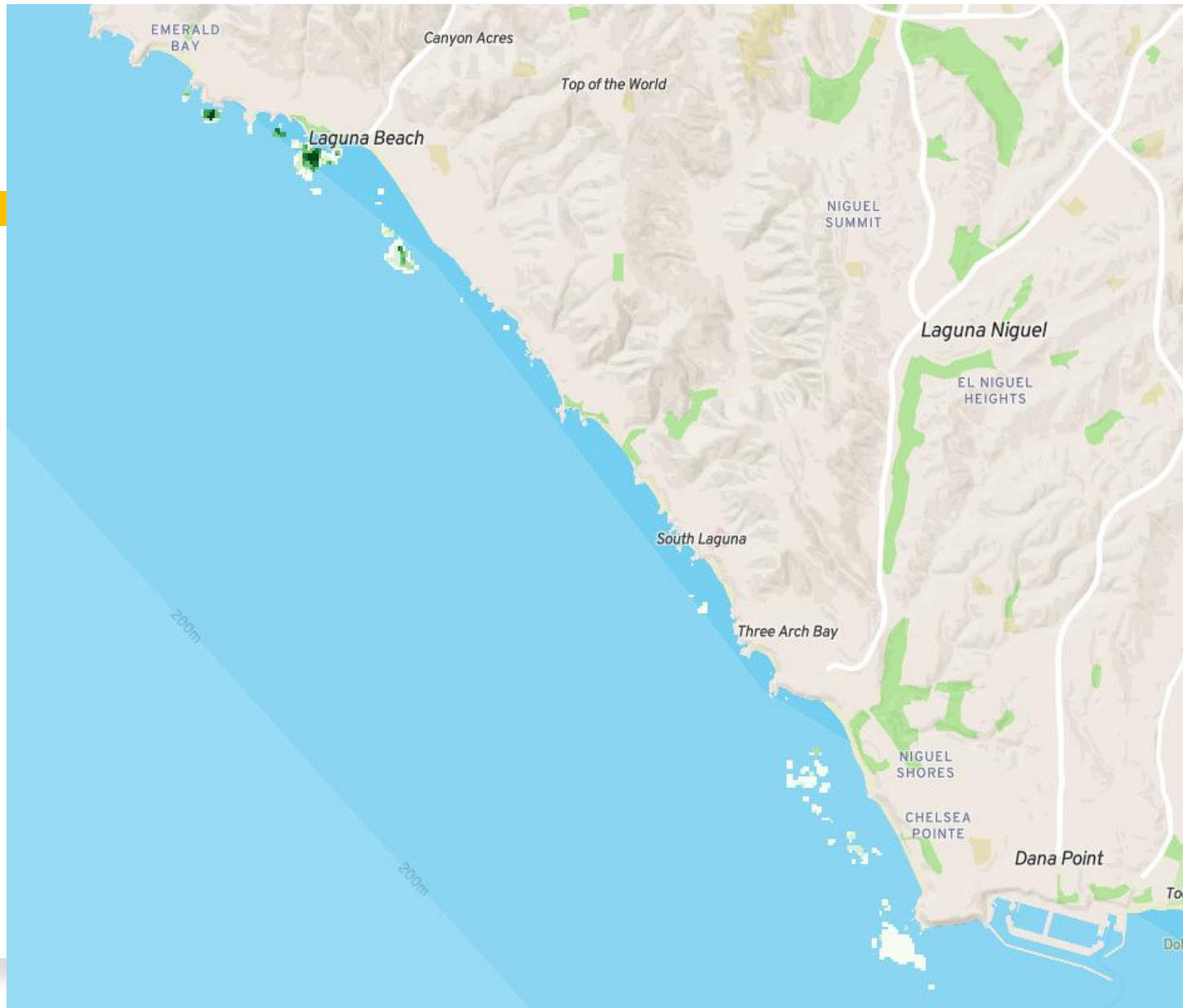
Kelp Analysis/Pre Heatwave



- Sea Sketch map using Kelp Persistence –Area Landsat 2010-2016

- The DFW analysis only looked at reefs in the Dana Point SMCA, The comparison should have included the Laguna Beach no take area.

Kelp Analysis/Post Heatwave



- Sea Sketch map using Kelp Persistence – Area Landsat 2017-2023
- Although initial kelp loss can be attributed to the 2014-2016 marine heatwave, we can also observe that areas within the MPA have seen better recovery and exhibit higher kelp persistence than those within the Dana Point SMCA. If no other site specific drivers exist other than fishing, then what is driving the disproportionate kelp recovery across these areas?

Enforcement Clarity and Practicality



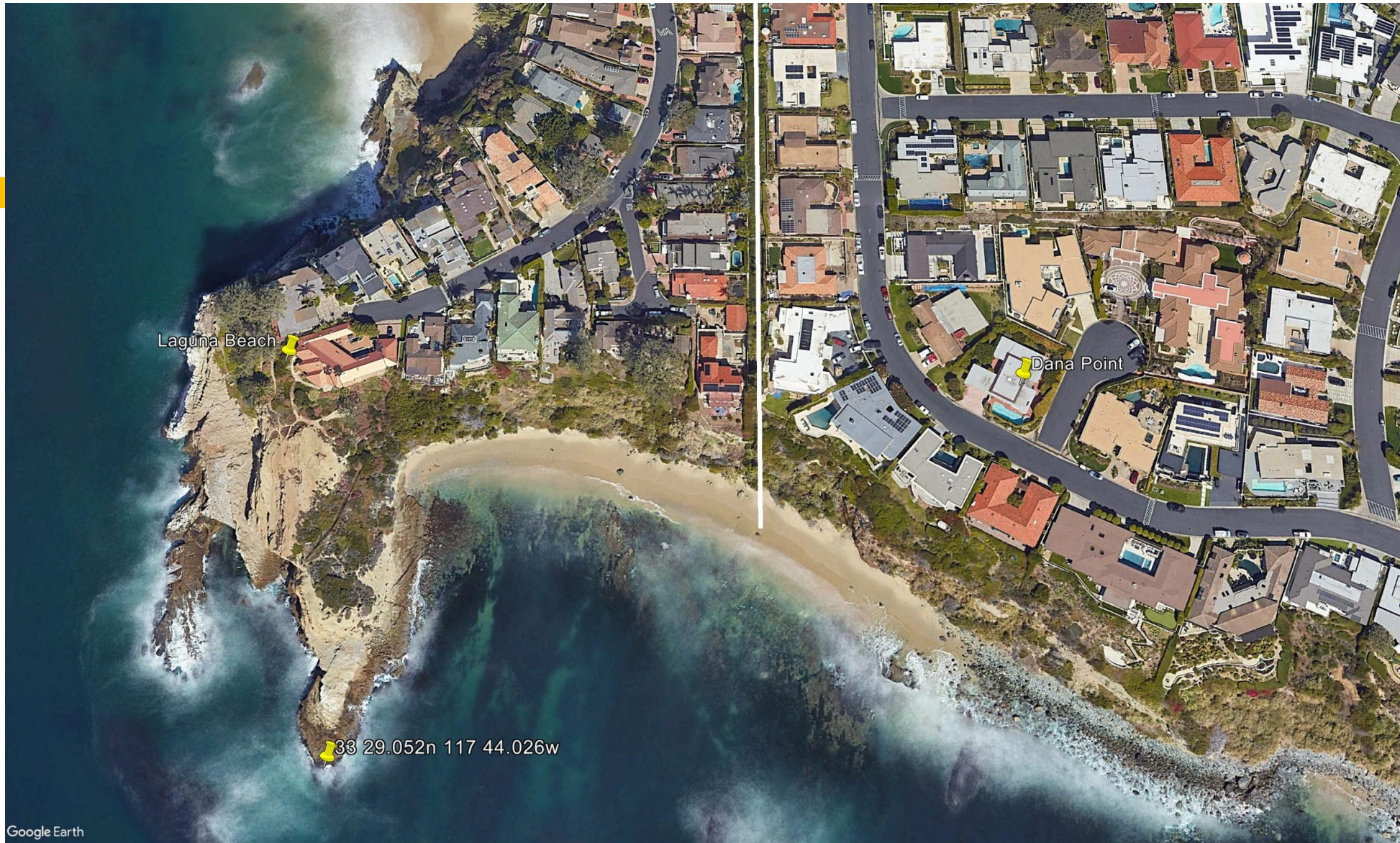
- A single, consistent no-take rule across the entire Laguna Beach coastline is far easier for the public to understand than a patchwork of zones with different allowances.
- Currently, Laguna Beach has a confusing regulatory split: north of Table Rock is no-take, while south of Table Rock allows some recreational and commercial take. The proposed southern boundary features a prominent 50 foot tall bluff landmark.

Economic Analysis Concerns



- The Petition Evaluation says that there is not enough socioeconomic data to conduct an analysis but goes on to do one anyway.
- The socioeconomic information gap is not listed in question 5 regarding information gaps.
- No reference to what the actual threshold for a “significant fisheries impact” is.
- In question 8 it states that the Petition area takes up half the fishing grounds in the Dana Point SMCA. Measurements show the petition area is only 34% of the existing Dana Point SMCA.

Boundary/ Regulatory Concerns



The southern boundary is on a straight line of latitude at 33 29.052 and within the city of Laguna Beach, not Dana Point

The SOCWA outfall pipe is in the existing Laguna Beach SMCA, not the petition area.

Thank You For Your Consideration



Laguna
Bluebelt

