

What are Marine Protected Areas?

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are marine or estuarine waters set aside primarily to protect or conserve marine life and its associated habitat. MPAs have varying levels of protections and allowed activities, with special regulations in addition to general fishing regulations.

Types of MPAs

California uses three main MPA classifications: State Marine Reserve (SMR), State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and State Marine Park (SMP). The central California region also includes a State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA).

Central California MPAs

Major revisions and additions to Central California MPAs went into effect on September 21, 2007. The 28 MPAs and one SMRMA now encompass 207 square miles (close to 18 percent) of state waters in the Central California region. Of those, about 86 square miles are designated as "no-take" SMRs. Central California MPAs are part of a statewide MPA network that extends all along the California coastline.



In 1999, California's Marine Life Protection Act was passed into law with a clear mandate: to re-evaluate all existing marine protected areas (MPAs) and potentially design new MPAs with input from a broad array of stakeholders. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) was integral to this effort. The MPAs in this brochure were designed, in part, to:

- Protect and sustain marine life, habitats, and ecosystems
- Provide opportunities to learn from and enjoy marine areas subject to reduced human disturbance

For more information, visit the California Marine Protected Area website at wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs, email AskMarine@wildlife.ca.gov, or visit the central California CDFW office:



CDFW Monterey Office
20 Lower Ragsdale Dr
Suite 100

For general fishing regulations that are in effect in addition to MPA regulations, visit

wildlife.ca.gov/Ocean-Sport-Regs



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Sustainable Fish and Wildlife Resources



MPA Mobile Website

Alternate communication formats of this document are available upon request. If reasonable accommodation is needed, call CDFW at (916) 322-8911 / California Relay Service for the deaf or hearing-impaired from TDD phones: (800) 735-2929

California Marine Protected Areas



Central California:
Pigeon Point to
Point Conception



CDFW photos by
M. Elyash and D. Stein



CDFW file photo



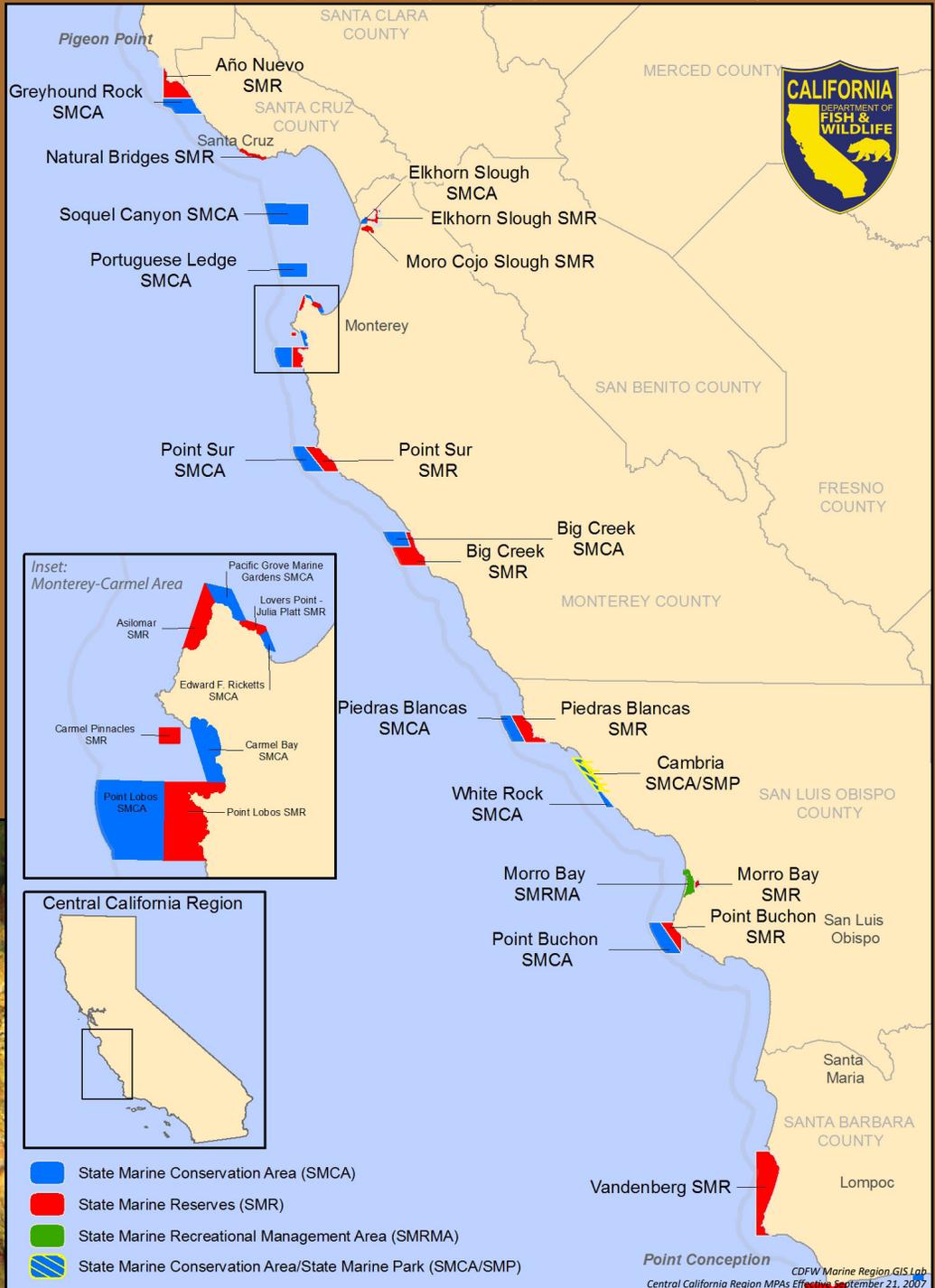
Central California Marine Protected Areas

Note: This document does not replace the official regulatory language found in California Code of Regulations Title 14

Central California MPA Regulations Effective September 21, 2007		
MPA Name	Permitted/Prohibited Activities	
SMR	Año Nuevo, Natural Bridges, Elkhorn Slough, Moro Cojo Slough, Lovers Point-Julia Platt, Asilomar, Carmel Pinnacles, Pt. Lobos, Pt. Sur, Big Creek, Piedras Blancas, Morro Bay, Point Buchon, Vandenberg	It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource.
	It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource, EXCEPT:	
	Greyhound Rock	Recreational and commercial take of salmon and squid, and giant kelp by hand is allowed. Recreational take of other finfish by hook-and-line from shore only is allowed.
	Elkhorn Slough (see map on reverse)	Recreational take of finfish by hook-and-line only, and clams from the slough's north shore near the Moss Landing State Wildlife Area, is allowed.
	Soquel Canyon, Portuguese Ledge	Recreational and commercial take of pelagic finfish ² is allowed.
	Edward F. Ricketts	Recreational take of finfish by hook-and-line only is allowed. Commercial take of giant kelp and bull kelp by hand is allowed.
	Pacific Grove Marine Gardens, Carmel Bay	Recreational take of finfish is allowed. Commercial take of giant kelp and bull kelp by hand is allowed.
	Point Lobos, Big Creek	Recreational and commercial take of salmon and albacore is allowed. Commercial take of spot prawn is allowed.
	Point Sur, Piedras Blancas, Point Buchon	Recreational and commercial take of salmon and albacore is allowed.
	Cambria (also a State Marine Park)	Recreational take is allowed.
White Rock	Commercial take of giant kelp and bull kelp is allowed.	
SMRMA	Morro Bay	North of latitude 35° 19.700' N only: Recreational take of finfish, commercial oyster aquaculture, and storing finfish taken outside of the SMRMA for bait purposes is allowed.

MPA boundaries, maps, coordinates and allowed activities are available on your smartphone or other mobile or web-enabled device at wildlife.ca.gov/OceanSportfishMap

This information is also available on the CDFW website at wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs and through your local CDFW office.



² See current fishing regulations for definition of "pelagic finfish."

Unless specifically prohibited, non-consumptive activities such as diving, surfing, swimming and boating are allowed within MPAs, as long as take restrictions are followed.