

What is a California marine protected area (or “MPA”)?

An MPA is a type of managed area whose main purpose is to protect or conserve marine life and habitats in ocean or estuarine waters. California's MPA Network consists of 124 areas with varying levels of protection and 14 special closures, all designed to help safeguard the state's marine ecosystems. Most marine conservation areas such as Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area provide some opportunity for commercial and/or recreational take (species and gear exceptions vary by location - see reverse).

One goal for California's MPAs was to strategically place them near each other to form an interconnected network that would help to preserve the flow of life between marine ecosystems. Within that network each MPA has unique goals and regulations, and non-consumptive activities, permitted scientific research, monitoring, and educational pursuits may be allowed.

Why was this location chosen for a state marine conservation area?

One of the goals for Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area is to protect the sandy seafloor and rocky reefs found there. The conservation area also protects the upper reaches of a submarine canyon known as Spanish Canyon. Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area is one of 28 California MPAs that include submarine canyon and steep wall habitat deeper than 650 feet. Flatfishes such as California halibut and petrale sole blend in easily with the sediments that cover most of the conservation area's seafloor, while rockfish, lingcod, and kelp greenling find refuge in the holes and crevices of the rocky reefs. Soft corals, sponges, white-plumed anemones, Dungeness crab, sea stars, and sea cucumbers all thrive within the conservation area's various habitats.

Placing a state marine conservation area here provides moderately high levels of protection for marine life and the habitats they use.



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Quick Facts: Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area

- **MPA size:** 11.59 square miles
- **Shoreline span:** 2.5 miles
- **Depth range:** 0 to 1,110 feet
- **Habitat composition:**
Sand/mud: 11.17 square miles
Rock: 0.81 square miles



Non-Consumptive
Activities

Fishing
See Regulations
On Back

No Collecting

Further Information:

- MPA Website: www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs
- MPA and Sportfishing Interactive Map: www.wildlife.ca.gov/OceanSportfishMap
- Email: AskMarine@wildlife.ca.gov

Photos - Upper: Cormorants on a rock along the shoreline at Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area. photo © V. Norton, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 Lower right: Young canary rockfish at the conservation area. CDFW/MARE photo Lower left: Sand-rose anemones at the conservation area. CDFW/MARE photo



Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area Boundary and Regulations from California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 632

Boundary:

This area is bounded by the mean high tide line and straight lines connecting the following points in the order listed except where noted:

- 40° 09.400' N. lat. 124° 12.671' W. long. ①;
- 40° 09.400' N. lat. 124° 19.366' W. long. ②; thence southward along the three nautical mile offshore boundary to
- 40° 07.500' N. lat. 124° 16.203' W. long. ③; and
- 40° 07.500' N. lat. 124° 10.313' W. long. ④

Permitted/Prohibited Uses:

1. It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource for recreational and/or commercial purposes, with the following specified exceptions:

- a. The recreational take of salmon by trolling; and Dungeness crab by trap, hoop net or hand is allowed.
- b. The commercial take of salmon with troll fishing gear, and Dungeness crab by trap is allowed.
- c. The following federally recognized tribes (listed alphabetically) are exempt from the area and take regulations for Big Flat State Marine Conservation Area and shall comply with all other existing regulations and statutes:

- Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria
- Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians of the Big Valley Rancheria
- Cahto Indian Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria
- Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians
- Elem Indian Colony of Pomo Indians of the Sulphur Bank Rancheria
- Guidiville Rancheria
- Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake
- Hopland Band of Pomo Indians of the Hopland Rancheria
- Lower Lake Rancheria
- Manchester Band of Pomo Indians of the Manchester-Point Arena Rancheria
- Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians
- Pinoleville Pomo Nation
- Potter Valley Tribe
- Redwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians
- Robinson Rancheria of Pomo Indians
- Round Valley Indian Tribes of the Round Valley Reservation
- Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians
- Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians