

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 River Estuary 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 River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area is to protect the tidal flats, coastal marsh and eelgrass beds found there. Salt water input from the ocean creates an estuarine environment that supports Dungeness crab, ghost shrimp, and other invertebrates, along with multiple species of fish (including seven species of perch) that use the estuary for food, shelter, and nursery grounds. The protected estuary also serves as resting, breeding, and hunting/feeding grounds for many seabirds and waterfowl; harbor seals and sea lions also hunt in the conservation area. The estuary also provides habitat for, and is part of, a transportation corridor that assists with the movement and dispersal of river otters throughout the area.

[Big River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area](#) is surrounded by [Mendocino Headlands State Park](#). Placing a state marine conservation area here provides moderately high levels of protection for marine life and the habitats they use.



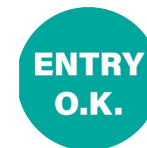
Report poachers and polluters
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or text 847411 - begin message with "Caltip" followed by the details.



Quick Facts: Big River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area

- **MPA size:** 0.13 square miles
- **Shoreline span:** 1.1 miles
- **Habitat composition:**
Estuary: 0.12 square miles
Coastal marsh 0.47 square miles



Non-Consumptive
Activities

Waterfowl Hunting
See Hunting
Regulations

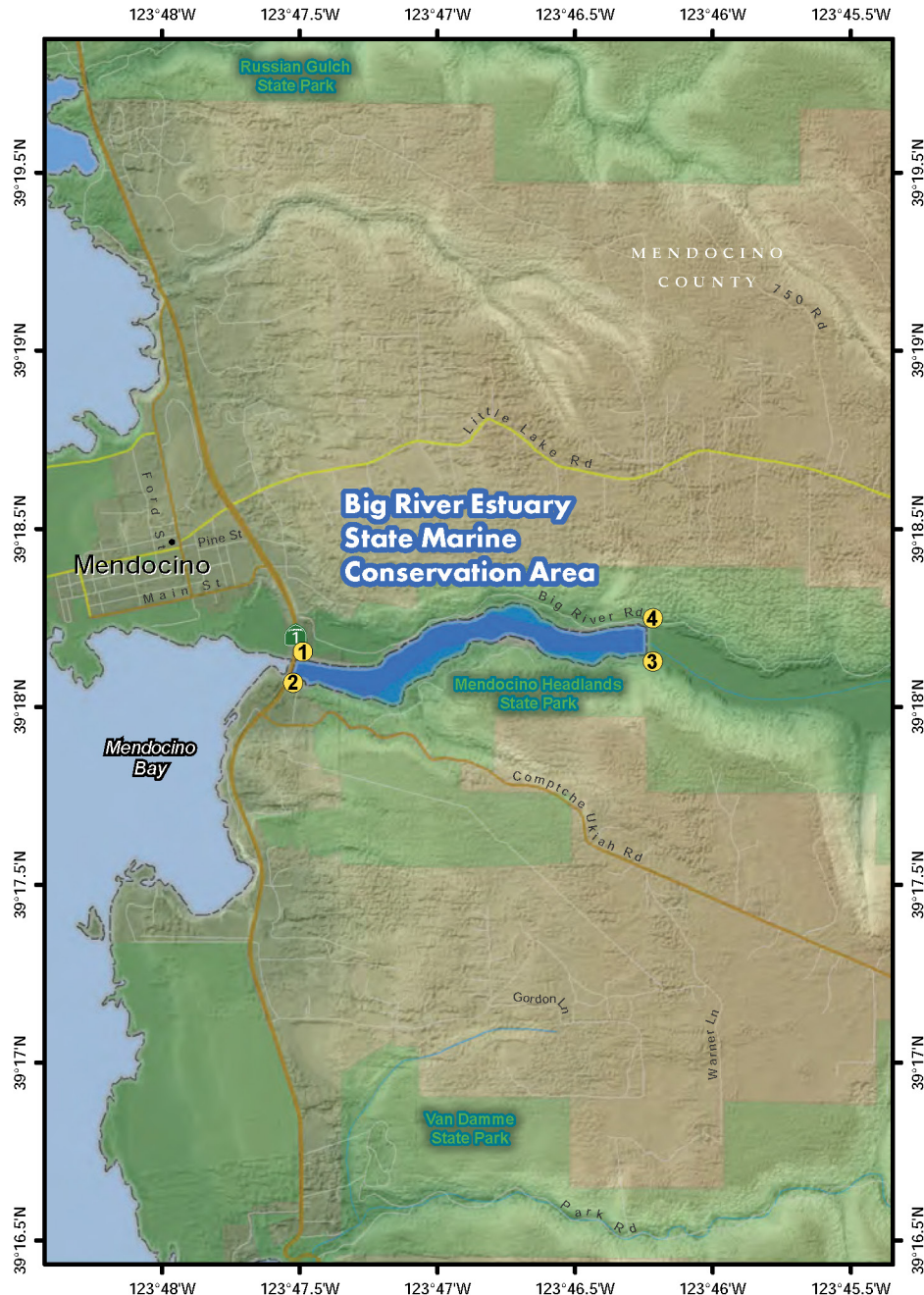
Fishing
See Regulations
On Back

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: Big River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area. photo © Leslie Kashiwada Lower right: Brandt's cormorant in the conservation area. photo © Sam, CC BY-NC 2.0 Lower left: Pacific acorn barnacles in the conservation area. photo © Wyatt, CC BY-NC 2.0



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

Boundary:

This area consists of waters below the mean high tide line within the Big River Estuary, eastward of a line connecting the following two points:

39° 18.134' N. lat. 123° 47.517' W. long. ①; and

39° 18.070' N. lat. 123° 47.543' W. long. ②

and westward of a line connecting the following two points:

39° 18.222' N. lat. 123° 46.242' W. long. ③; and

39° 18.150' N. lat. 123° 46.240' W. long. ④

Permitted/Prohibited Uses:

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

- a. The recreational take of surfperch (family Embiotocidae) by hook-and-line from shore only; and Dungeness crab by hoop net or hand is allowed.
- b. Waterfowl may be taken in accordance with the general waterfowl regulations (Sections 502, 550, 551, and 552).
- c. Take pursuant to operation and maintenance of artificial structures inside the conservation area is allowed pursuant to any required federal, state and local permits, or as otherwise authorized by the Department.
- d. The following federally recognized tribes (listed alphabetically) are exempt from the area and take regulations for Big River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area and shall comply with all other existing regulations and statutes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
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Take may be authorized for research, restoration, and monitoring purposes under a scientific collecting permit. See California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 632(a).