

Big River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area

Northern California Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), *Implemented December 2012*



Site Overview

Photos are representative of the North Coast Region and may not be within this MPA.

What is an MPA?

MPAs are a type of [marine managed area](#) (MMA) where marine or estuarine waters are set aside primarily to protect or conserve marine life and associated habitats. California has a coastal network of 124 protected areas designed to help increase the coherence and effectiveness of protecting the state's marine life, habitats, and ecosystems. The network includes three types of MPA: [state marine reserve](#) (SMR), [state marine conservation area](#) (SMCA), and [state marine park](#) (SMP); one MMA: [state marine recreational management area](#) (SMRMA); and [special closures](#). There are 119 MPAs, 5 MMAs and 15 special closures, each with unique boundaries and regulations in the network. Non-consumptive activities, restoration, and permitted scientific research are allowed.

What is an SMCA?

An **SMCA** is a type of MPA that protects resources by allowing for only specific types of recreational and/or commercial take to occur. (Area restrictions are defined in [Title 14, Section 632\(a\)\(1\)\(C\)](#)).

Big River SMCA Overview and Key Habitats

- **MPA size:** 0.13 square miles
- **Beaches:** 0.24 miles
- **Rocky shores:** 0.77 miles
- **Tidal flats:** 0.28 miles
- **Coastal marsh:** 1.32 miles
- **Marsh:** 0.02 square miles
- **Eelgrass:** 0.07 square miles
- **Estuary:** 0.12 square miles
- **Unidentified (all depths):** 0.12 square miles

Boundaries and Regulations

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:

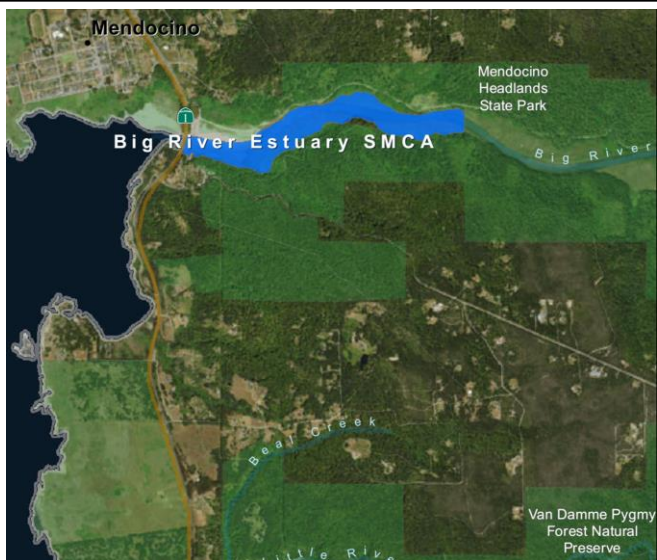
- 39° 18.134' N. lat. 123° 47.517' W. long.; and
- 39° 18.070' N. lat. 123° 47.543' W. long.; and westward of a line connecting the following two points:
- 39° 18.222' N. lat. 123° 46.242' W. long.; and
- 39° 18.150' N. lat. 123° 46.240' W. long.

Only the following take is allowed in Big River Estuary SMCA:

1. The recreational take of surfperch (family Embiotocidae) by hook and line from shore only; and Dungeness crab by hoop net or hand.
2. Certain federally recognized tribes are exempt from the area and take regulations for this MPA. For information regarding tribal take, please see California Code of Regulations Title 14, subsection 632(a)(11).
3. Take pursuant to activities authorized in subsection 632(b)(25)(D) is allowed.

Waterfowl may be taken in accordance with the general waterfowl regulations (Sections 502, 550, 551, and 552). 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.

Where is Big River Estuary SMCA?



Big River Estuary State Marine Conservation Area

How and Why Big River Estuary was Chosen for an SMCA

MPAs were designed through a collaborative, regional public process by a cross-interest regional stakeholder group (RSG). Using scientific criteria, public input and local resource knowledge the RSG developed MPA proposals. RSG proposals included site specific rationale (why the site should be an MPA-*included below*), the classification (type of MPA), boundaries, and regulations. Final MPA proposals were sent to the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) for their adoption process. Big River Estuary SMCA was adopted by the Commission in 2012.

North Coast RSG Identified Rationale for Big River Estuary SMCA:

This SMCA is close to population centers, with numerous coastal access points making research, long-term monitoring, recreation, and enforcement possible. This MPA protects fish and bird communities associated with areas of diverse estuarine habitat, larval source, and enhances reproductive capacity of numerous invertebrate species. It protects spawning and nursery grounds for populations that are found offshore. This MPA also protects prime shorebird and waterfowl habitat, feeding areas for pinnipeds, as well as habitat and a transportation corridor for river otters.

Species Likely to Benefit from the Establishment of MPAs in California

Species likely to benefit from establishing an MPA are those, whose home range, behavior, reproduction, exploitation rate or population status indicates that they may benefit from spatial management. This includes species that are directly targeted by fisheries, those which are caught incidental to fishing for the target species (bycatch) and which cannot be returned to the water with a high rate of survival, and those which may be indirectly impacted through ecological changes within MPAs.

For a list of species likely to benefit from MPAs statewide: www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/mpa/species.asp

For a list of species likely to benefit from north coast MPAs: www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/binders_nc/b2_3.pdf

North Coast Regional Resources

California MPA Overview:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs/Network-Overview

North Coast Regional Goals and Objectives:

www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/pdfs/binders_nc/b1_29.pdf

California MLPA North Coast Study Region Description of MPAs:

www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/northcoastproposals/rec_description_eca.pdf

Methods Used to Evaluate MPAs in the North Coast:

www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/northcoastproposals/evaluationmethods.pdf

MPA Research and Monitoring Activities:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs/Research-And-Monitoring

Regional MPA Statistics:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs/Statistics

Regional Planning History:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Planning-Process

California MPA Network Resources

Detailed MPA guidebooks maps and brochures:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs/Network

California Marine Life Protection Act Marine Protected Areas Master Plan:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Master-Plan

Marine Life Protection Act Summary and Network Goals:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs/Network-Goals



For more information, visit:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs

Email:

AskMPA@wildlife.ca.gov

MPA Mobile:



Report poaching and polluting,
Call CalTIP

1-888-334-2258

The information in this document does not replace the official regulatory language found in the California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 632 www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Network/Title-14-Section-632