

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. Special closures such as North Farallon Islands Special Closure are specifically designed to minimize human disturbance at significant marine mammal haulout sites and seabird rookeries by restricting boating and access, seasonally or year-round.

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 special closure?

The Farallon Islands archipelago is a highly productive area filled with all manner of marine life, from plankton to whales. Near the rocky islands, the seafloor includes shallow rocky reef and sand surrounded by relatively deep open ocean. Strong upwelling of cold, nutrient-rich water from the depths to the surface during the spring makes the special closure a highly productive area for seaweeds, invertebrates, fishes, marine mammals, and birds. One of the goals for North Farallon Islands Special Closure is to protect a Steller sea lion haulout area and more than 70,000 nesting seabirds, including common murre, pigeon guillemot, pelagic cormorant, Brandt's cormorant, western gull, and Cassin's auklet.

North Farallon Islands Special Closure overlaps a small portion of [North Farallon Islands State Marine Reserve](#) and the [Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary](#). Placing a special closure here provides very high levels of protection for seabirds, marine mammals, and the habitats they use.



Report poachers and polluters
Call CalTIP: 1 (888) 334-2258

or text 847411 - begin message with "Caltip" followed by the details.



Quick Facts: North Farallon Islands Special Closure

- **Size:** 0.21 square miles
- **Depth:** 0 to 150 feet
- **Habitat composition:**
Sand/mud: 0.07 square miles
Rock: 0.24 square miles



Restrictions on Entry, Anchoring, and Non-Consumptive Activities
See Regulations On Back

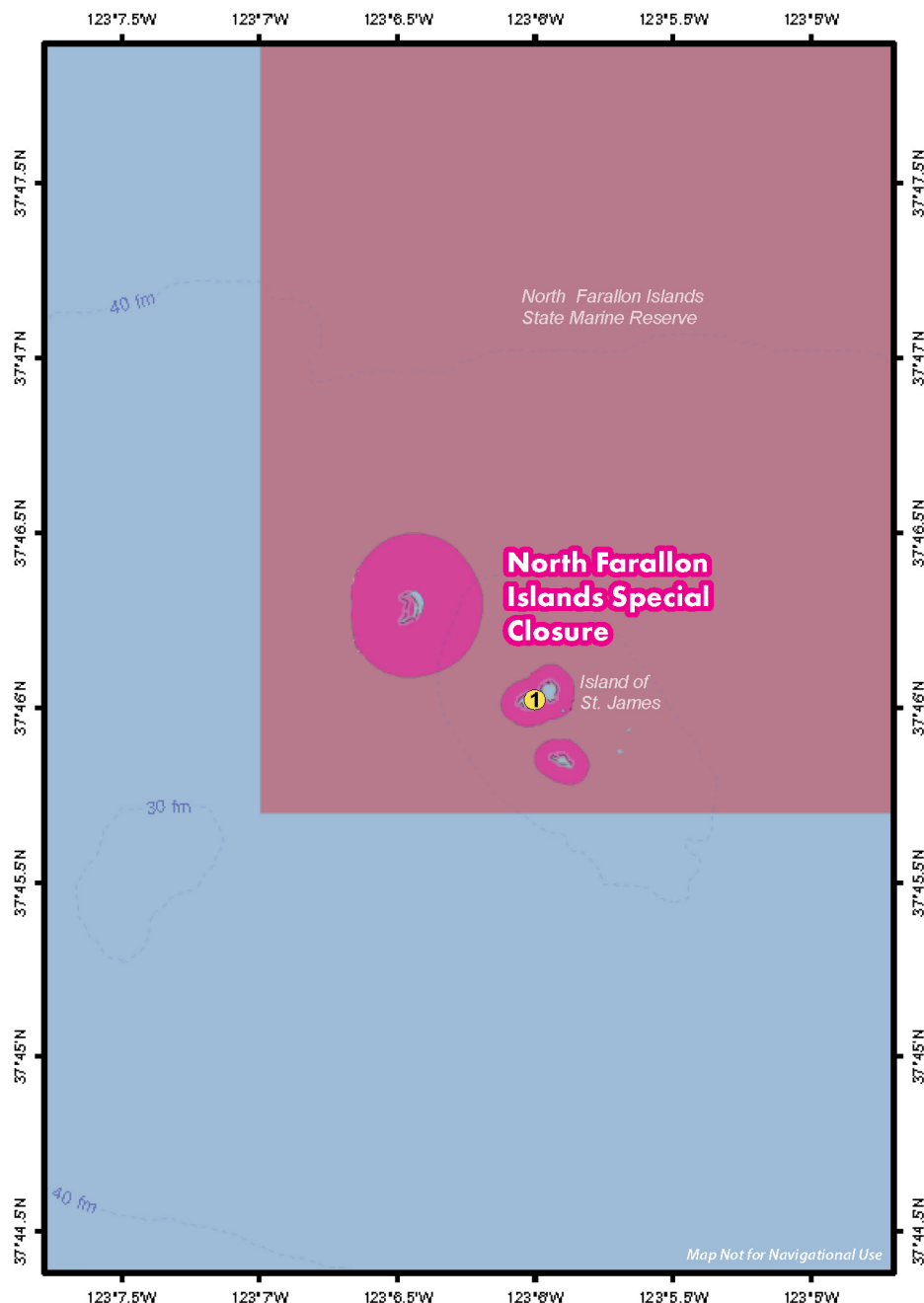
No Fishing

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: Northern fur seals at the special closure. photo © Adam Searcy, CC BY-NC 2.0
Lower right: Steller sea lions at the special closure. photo © Oscar Johnson, CC BY-NC 2.0
Lower left: Nesting Cassin's auklet at the special closure. photo © Oscar Johnson, CC BY-NC 2.0



North Farallon Islands Special Closure Boundary and Regulations from California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 632

Special regulations on boating and access apply to the North Farallon Islands as follows.

1. A special closure is established at the islets comprising the North Farallon Islands.
2. Except as permitted by federal law or emergency caused by hazardous weather, or as authorized by [3., below], no vessel shall be operated or anchored at any time from the mean high tide line to a distance of 1,000 feet seaward of the mean lower low tide line of any shoreline of North Farallon Island, or to a distance of 300 feet seaward of the mean lower low tide line of any shoreline of the remaining three southern islets, including the Island of St. James, in the vicinity of 37° 46.025' N. lat. 123° 06.018' W. long. ①
3. No person except Department employees or employees of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or United States Coast Guard, in performing their official duties, or unless permission is granted by the Department, shall enter the area defined in [2., above].
4. All vessels shall observe a five (5) nautical mile per hour speed limit within 1,000 feet seaward of the mean lower low tide line of any shoreline of the islets defined in [2., above].
5. In an area bounded by the mean high tide line and a distance of one nautical mile seaward of the mean lower low tide line of any of the four islets comprising the North Farallon Islands, the following restrictions apply:
 - a. All commercial diving vessels operating in the defined area shall have their vessel engine exhaust system terminate either through a muffler for dry exhaust systems, or below the vessel waterline for wet exhaust systems.
 - b. All commercial diving vessels equipped with an open, deck-mounted air compressor system, while operating in the defined area, shall have their air compressor's engine exhaust system terminate below the vessel waterline.

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).

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