

## 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 Elkhorn Slough 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 Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area is to protect part of a large and vital central California estuary, while allowing small-scale recreational fishing to continue. Habitats in the slough include tidal flats, coastal marsh, and eelgrass beds. Elkhorn Slough is home to the largest concentration of southern sea otters in the world; recreational clamming is limited in the conservation area to help preserve a food source for them. At peak times, Elkhorn Slough may see an estimated 30,000 seabirds and shorebirds using its calm waters and vegetation for food and shelter. Flatfishes, bat rays, leopard sharks, cabezon, longjaw mudsuckers, and a variety of crabs forage in the estuary, while clams and fat inkeeper worms burrow in the sediments.

This conservation area shares an eastern border with [Elkhorn Slough State Marine Reserve](#) and a northern border with [Moss Landing Wildlife Area](#). Placing a state marine conservation area here provides moderately high levels of protection for marine life and the habitats they use.



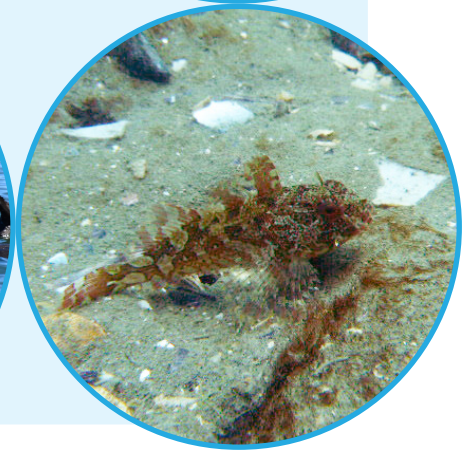
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or text 847411 - begin message with "Caltip" followed by the details.



## Quick Facts: Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area

- **MPA size:** 0.22 square miles
- **Shoreline span:** 0.10 miles
- **Depth range:** 0 to 10 feet
- **Habitat composition:**
  - Estuary: 0.11 square miles
  - Eelgrass: 0.01 square miles
  - Coastal marsh: 0.44 square miles



Non-Consumptive Activities

Fishing  
See Regulations  
On Back

No Collecting

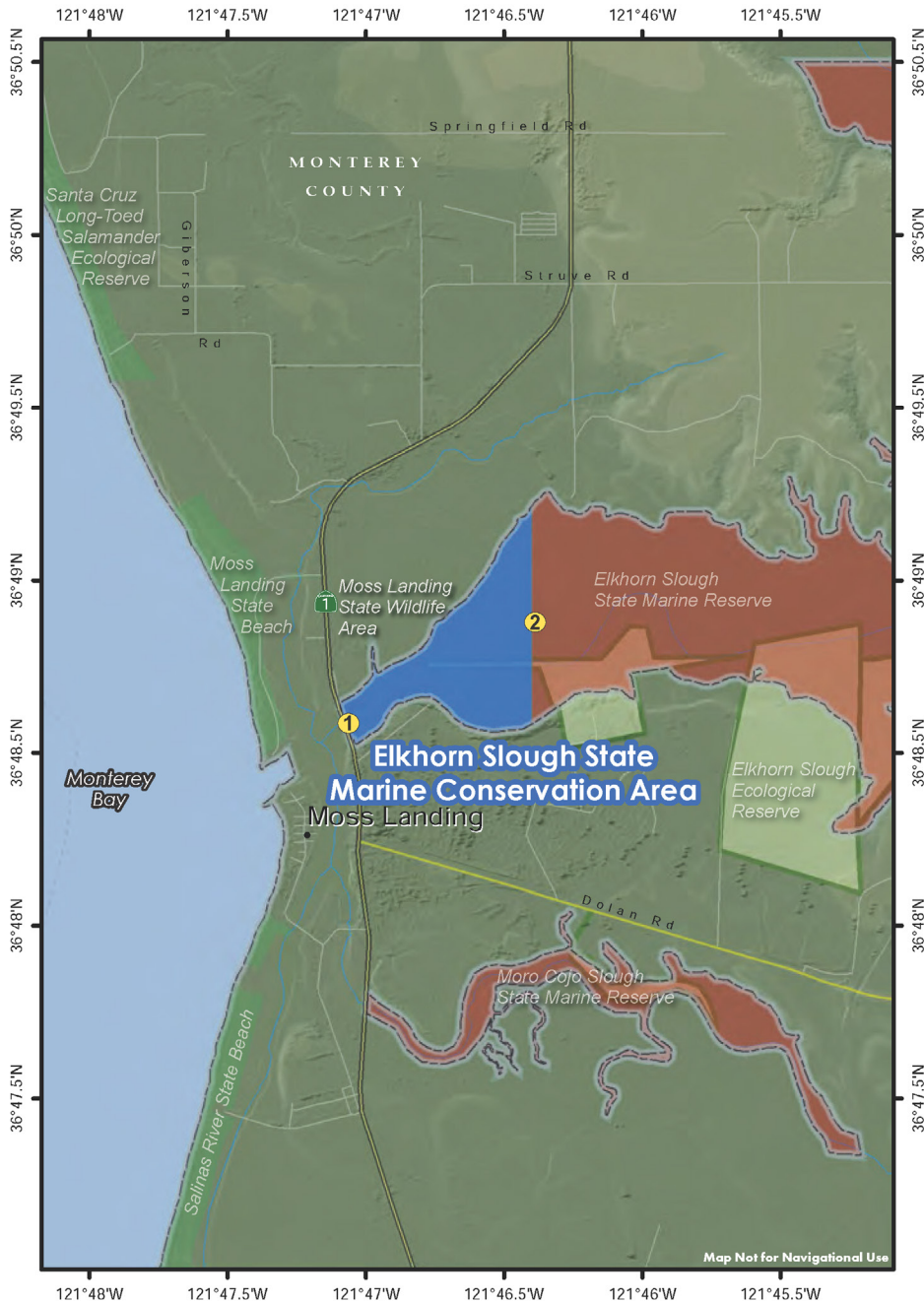
## Further Information:

- MPA Website: [www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs)
- MPA and Sportfishing Interactive Map: [www.wildlife.ca.gov/OceanSportfishMap](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/OceanSportfishMap)
- Email: [AskMarine@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:AskMarine@wildlife.ca.gov)

**Photos - Upper:** Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area. CDFW photo by P. Serpa  
**Lower right:** Cabezon in the conservation area. photo © Gena Bentall, CC BY-NC 2.0  
**Lower left:** Southern sea otters in the conservation area. photo © Todd Fitzgerald, CC BY-NC 2.0

# Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area

Central California - Monterey County



## Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area Boundary and Regulations from California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 632

### Boundary:

This area includes the waters below mean high tide within Elkhorn Slough east of the Highway 1 Bridge ① and west of longitude 121° 46.400' W. ②

### Permitted/Prohibited Uses:

1. It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource for commercial and/or recreational purposes, with the following specified exceptions:
  - a. The recreational take of finfish\* by hook-and-line only and clams is allowed. Clams may only be taken on the north shore of the slough in the area adjacent to the Moss Landing State Wildlife Area.



\* Finfish are defined here as any species of bony fish or cartilaginous fish (sharks, skates and rays). 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](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Network).