

Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area

Central California Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), *Established September 2007*



Elkhorn Slough SMCA
Photo by Paulo Serpa



Elkhorn Slough SMCA, estuary
Photo by A. Lui



Brown Pelicans (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)
Photo by A. Lui

Site Overview

Photos are representative of the Central 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\(a\)\(1\)\(C\)](#)).

Elkhorn Slough SMCA Overview

- **MPA size:** 0.22 square miles
- **Depth range:** 0 to 10 feet
- **Along-shore span (shoreline):** 1.4 miles

Where is Elkhorn Slough SMCA?



Elkhorn Slough SMCA Key Habitats

- **Beaches:** 0.11 miles
- **Tidal flats:** 0.79 miles
- **Coastal marsh:** 1.15 miles
- **Estuary:** 0.11 square miles
- **Marsh:** 0.11 square miles
- **Eelgrass:** 0.01 square miles
- **Unidentified (all depths):** 0.08 square miles

Boundaries and Regulations

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

Only the following take is allowed in Elkhorn Slough SMCA:

1. The recreational take of [finfish](#) by hook-and-line only and clams. Clams may only be taken on the north shore of the slough in the area adjacent to the Moss Landing State Wildlife Area [subsection 550(a)].

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How and Why Elkhorn Slough 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 specific objectives (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. Elkhorn Slough SMCA was adopted by the Commission in 2007.

Summary of Objectives for Elkhorn Slough SMCA:

Provide increased protection for one of the few estuarine areas of the central coast while allow for traditional uses of recreational fishing. The intent of the area is to allow small scale recreational fishing activities to continue, while limiting any future increases in use that do not presently occur. The area will also prohibit take of clams in an area used by sea otters for foraging, potentially providing more available prey for the 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 central coast MPAs: www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/binder3b.pdf

Central Coast Regional Resources

California MPA Overview:

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

Central Coast Regional Goals and Objectives:

www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/rqop092805.pdf

2008 Master Plan Appendix O: Regional Management Plan:

www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/revisedmp0108o.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