

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 Creek 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 Creek State Marine Conservation Area is to protect the submarine canyons and sandy, soft sediment habitat found there. The remote conservation area contains over two square miles of submarine canyon habitat and expanses of soft sandy seafloor that support a rich abundance of flatfish, such as longnose skate, English sole, and Pacific sanddab, along with invertebrates such as sea pens, brittle stars, and sea whips. Rockfish such as bocaccio, canary rockfish, and rosy rockfish are drawn to the occasional rocky reef that juts from the sandy seafloor, covered with anemones, sponges, and sea stars.

Big Creek State Marine Conservation Area shares an eastern and southern boundary with [Big Creek State Marine Reserve](#), and overlaps a small portion of [Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary](#). 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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Quick Facts: Big Creek State Marine Conservation Area

- **MPA size:** 7.85 square miles
- **Depth range:** 107 to 1,964 feet
- **Habitat composition:**
 - Sand/mud: 7.82 square miles
 - Rock: 0.03 square mile



Non-Consumptive Activities

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: Longnose skate near Big Creek State Marine Conservation Area. Lower right: Canary rockfish at the conservation area. Lower left: Painted anemone and vase sponge at Big Creek State Marine Conservation Area.

CDFW/MARE photos



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

Boundary:

This area is bounded by the three nautical mile offshore boundary and straight lines connecting the following points in the order listed except where noted:

- 36° 07.200' N. lat. 121° 39.000' W. long. ①;
- 36° 07.200' N. lat. 121° 42.869' W. long. ②; thence southward along the three nautical mile offshore boundary to
- 36° 05.200' N. lat. 121° 41.222' W. long. ③;
- 36° 05.200' N. lat. 121° 38.000' W. long. ④; and
- 36° 07.200' N. lat. 121° 39.000' W. long. ⑤

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 salmon and albacore is allowed.
 - b. The commercial take of salmon, albacore, and spot prawn is allowed.

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.