

### What is a California marine protected area (or "MPA")?

An MPA is a type of managed area primarily set aside to protect or conserve marine life and habitats in marine 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. Fishing and collecting are banned at marine reserves such as Big Creek State Marine Reserve, providing this MPA with the highest level of protection.

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 reserve?

One of the goals for Big Creek State Marine Reserve is to protect the diverse surfgrass, submarine canyon, rock pinnacle and reef, sandy seafloor, and kelp forest habitats found there. The remote reserve contains over 3½ square miles of submarine canyon habitat. Expanses of sandy seafloor, surfgrass, and kelp forest support a rich abundance of fish species, including Pacific sanddab, canary rockfish, and rubberlip seaperch, along with invertebrates such as sea pens, rock scallops, and sea urchins. Marine mammals such as California sea lions and harbor seals often haul out to rest along the shore. Gray whales and humpback whales may be spotted offshore during their annual migrations, and southern sea otters frequently hunt for food in the reserve's kelp forests.

Big Creek State Marine Reserve expands on a previous marine reserve, and shares a boundary with [Big Creek State Marine Conservation Area](#). The reserve also overlaps a small portion of [Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary](#). Placing a state marine reserve here provides very high levels of protection for local marine species and the habitats they use.



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### Quick Facts: Big Creek State Marine Reserve

- **MPA size:** 14.51 square miles
- **Shoreline span:** 6.1 miles
- **Depth range:** 0 to 2,393 feet
- **Habitat composition:**
  - Rock: 1.90 square miles
  - Sand/mud: 13.70 square miles



Non-Consumptive  
Activities

Anchoring Restricted  
See Regulations  
On Back

No Fishing

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: Coastline at Big Creek State Marine Reserve, photo © Charlie Day CC BY 2.0.  
Lower right: Orange sea pen at Big Creek State Marine Reserve, CDFW/MARE photo.  
Lower left: Canary rockfish on a rocky reef at Big Creek State Marine Reserve, CDFW/MARE photo.



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

### Boundary:

This area is bounded by the mean high tide line and straight lines connecting the following points in the order listed except where noted:

- 36° 07.200' N. lat. 121° 37.968' W. long. ①;
- 36° 07.200' N. lat. 121° 39.000' W. long. ②;
- 36° 05.200' N. lat. 121° 38.000' W. long. ③;
- 36° 05.200' N. lat. 121° 41.222' W. long. ④; thence southward along the three nautical mile offshore boundary to
- 36° 02.650' N. lat. 121° 39.654' W. long. ⑤; and
- 36° 02.650' N. lat. 121° 35.130' W. long. ⑥

### Permitted/Prohibited Uses:

1. It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource.
2. Anchoring. Except as pursuant to Federal law or emergency caused by hazardous weather, it is unlawful to anchor or moor a vessel in waters shallower than 10 fathoms in the Big Creek State Marine Reserve.



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).