

### 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 Morro Bay 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 Morro Bay State Marine Reserve is to protect a part of the Morro Bay wetland ecosystem. The reserve's shallow tidal flats, eelgrass beds, and coastal marsh provide more than 500 acres of critical feeding and resting habitat for migratory and resident birds, including pelicans, black brants, and the California black rail. Its sheltered waters serve as a nursery area for rockfish and flatfish, and hunting grounds for bat rays and shovelnose guitarfish. Topsmelt, shiner perch, and bay pipefish are found here as well, along with Pacific oysters, Washington and gaper clams, and ghost shrimp. Southern sea otters also use the estuary to hunt for clams and raise their young.

Morro Bay State Marine Reserve shares a western border with [Morro Bay State Marine Recreational Management Area](#), and is bordered by [Morro Bay State Park](#) to the east. Placing a state marine reserve here provides very high levels of protection for local marine species and the habitats they use.



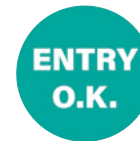
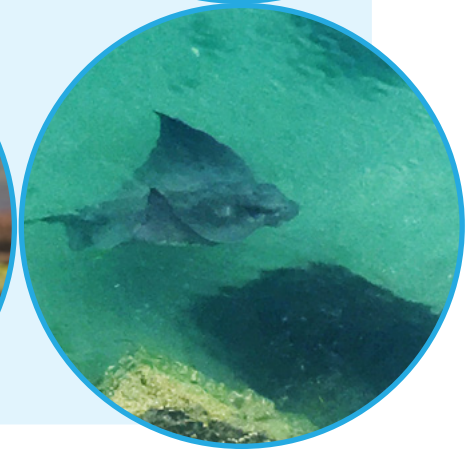
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or text 847411 - begin message with "Caltip"  
followed by the details.



### Quick Facts: Morro Bay State Marine Reserve

- **MPA size:** 0.88 square miles
- **Shoreline span:** 0.8 miles
- **Depth range:** 0 to 10 feet
- **Habitat composition:**  
Estuary: 0.83 square miles  
Other: 0.05 square miles



Non-Consumptive Activities

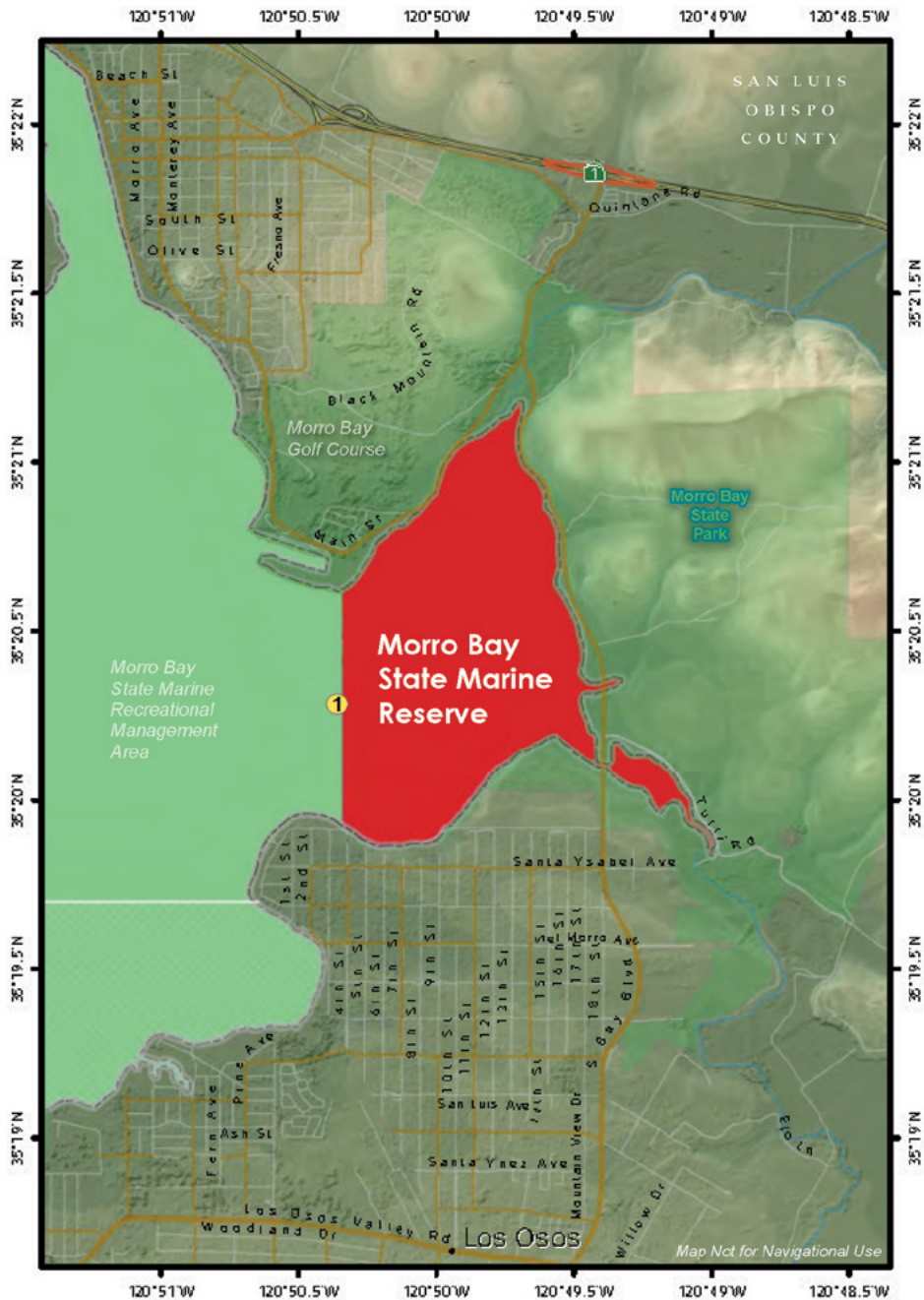
No Fishing

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: Morro Bay State Marine Reserve, photo © Mike Baird CC BY 2.0. Lower right: Bat ray in Morro Bay, Ryan Thelion CC BY-NC 2.0. Lower left: American white pelicans on the estuary mudflats, Morro Bay State Marine Reserve, photo © Mike Baird CC BY 2.0



**Morro Bay State Marine Reserve Boundary and Regulations from California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 632**

**Boundary:**

This area includes the area below mean high tide line within Morro Bay east of longitude 120° 50.340' W. ①

**Permitted/Prohibited Uses:**

It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living, geological, or cultural marine resource.



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).