

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. The ban on collecting and fishing in no-take marine conservation areas such as San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area provides very high levels 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 conservation area?

One of the goals for San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area is to protect the coastal marsh habitat and shallow estuary waters found there. The lagoon provides important nursery and feeding areas for fish like topsmelt, California halibut, and arrow goby, and invertebrates such as fiddler crab, mantis shrimp, and California horn snail. San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area also provides critical habitat for migrating waterfowl. Bird species commonly found visiting the lagoon include the California least tern, brown pelican, and willet.

San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area overlaps a portion of [San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve](#) and shares a northwestern boundary with [Swami's State Marine Conservation Area](#). Placing a no-take state marine conservation area here provides very high levels of protection for marine species and the habitats they use.



Report poachers and polluters
Call CalTIP: 1 (888) 334-2258

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



Quick Facts: San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area

- **MPA size:** 0.50 square miles
- **Habitat composition:**
Estuary: 0.42 square miles
Coastal marsh: 1.59 square miles



Hiking

No Boating, Diving,
Swimming or
Wading

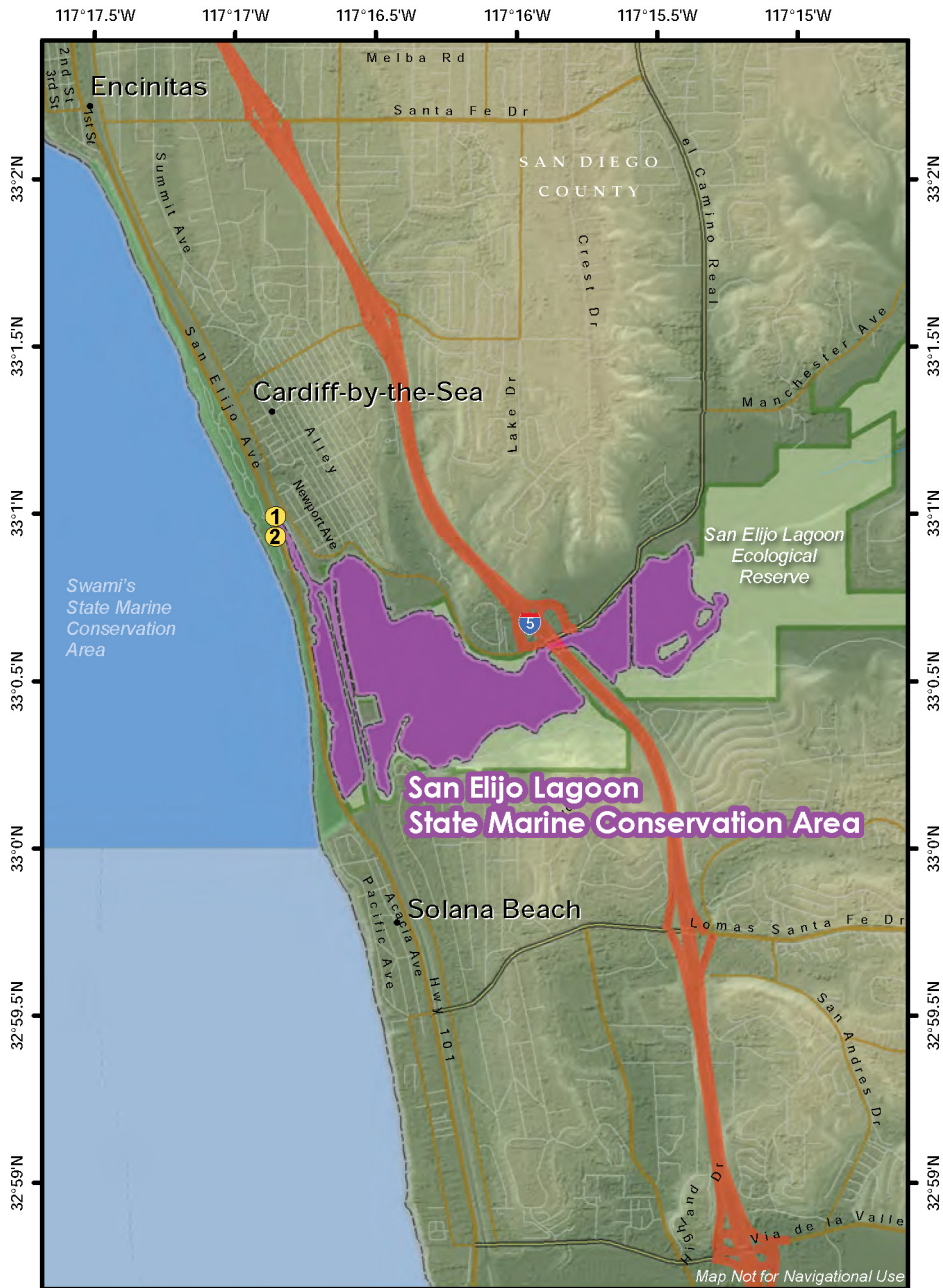
No Fishing

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: San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area, photo © Tim Buss, CC BY-NC 2.0
Lower right: Willet capturing a crab at San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area, photo © BJ Stacey, CC BY-NC 2.0
Lower left: California horn snails on a mudflat at San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area, photo © Tina Reimer, CC BY-NC 2.0



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San Elijo Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area Boundary and Regulations from California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 632

This area overlaps a portion of San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve. Ecological reserve rules are in effect as defined in CCR Title 14, Section 630 or as posted.

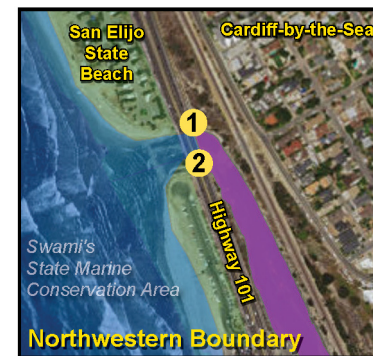
Boundary:

This area includes the waters below the mean high tide line within San Elijo Lagoon southeastward of a straight line between the following two points:

- 33° 00.980' N. lat. 117° 16.857' W. long. ①; and
- 33° 00.962' N. lat. 117° 16.850' W. long. 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. Take pursuant to operation and maintenance, maintenance dredging, habitat restoration including sediment deposition, research and education, and maintenance of artificial structures inside the conservation area is allowed pursuant to any required federal, state and local permits, or activities pursuant to Section 630, or as otherwise authorized by the Department.
2. Boating, swimming, wading, and diving are prohibited within the conservation area.



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.