

WILDCOAST

COSTASALVAJE

# MPA Watch Volunteer Field Guide



# MPA Watch Local Emergency Resources

## IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

To report fishing or wildlife related illegal activities:

- Call the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) at **1-888-334-CalTIP (888-334-2258)** to make an anonymous call
- Text "CALTIP", followed by a space and your message, to **847411 (tip411)**
- Download the **CalTIP app** to post an anonymous tip

To report injured or sick wildlife (including marine mammals, birds, etc.):

- Call the Project Wildlife Hotline at **619-225-WILD (9453)**

To contact the WILDCOAST MPA Watch Program:

- Angela Kemsley, MPA Watch Program Coordinator: **619-423-8665 x210**; [angela@wildcoast.net](mailto:angela@wildcoast.net)
- Cory Pukini, Conservation Coordinator: **619-423-8665 x209**; [cory@wildcoast.net](mailto:cory@wildcoast.net)

## MPA Watch

Goal:

- Train volunteers to collect data on how humans are using marine resources both inside and outside of MPAs
- Data collected by volunteers provide important information to understand how people are using local Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and to help inform MPA management

For more information:  
**WILDCOAST MPA Watch**  
619-423-8665

<http://www.wildcoast.net/programs/8-california-marine-protected-areas>

Angela Kemsley, MPA Watch Program Coordinator, x210  
[angela@wildcoast.net](mailto:angela@wildcoast.net)

WILDCOAST is partnering with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the official government agency in charge of MPA enforcement, monitoring activities and regulations.

For more information on California's MPAs:

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs>

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# Introduction to Marine Protected Areas

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## What are Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)?

MPAs are coastal ocean and estuarine regions that are subject to certain restrictions and regulations designed to protect marine life and ecosystems. They play the same role as our local, state, and national parks in the ocean, making them our underwater parks! In 1999, California adopted the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) requiring the implementation of a science-based statewide network of MPAs. This law includes conservation goals focused on ecosystem protection, natural diversity and habitat restoration. As a result, there are 124 MPAs established in California, with 50 located in Southern California and 11 within San Diego County. There are three types of MPAs found in San Diego County that have varying regulations:

- State Marine Reserves (SMR): *all* take is prohibited
- State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA): certain recreational and/or commercial fishing is allowed; fishing regulations differ per SMCA
- No Take State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA): recreational and commercial take is prohibited but take in accordance with the operation and maintenance of artificial structures located inside the SMCA is allowed; usually established in estuarine regions

All other non-consumptive recreational activities, including but not limited to tidepooling, surfing, kayaking, and snorkeling, are encouraged!

### **Why are MPAs important?**

MPAs protect ecosystems from stress and allow impacted regions to rehabilitate and thrive by limiting fishing, habitat destruction, and other threats. Southern California's marine ecosystems have experienced the collapse of abalone, kelp bass, and barred sand bass, amongst other fisheries, due to severe overfishing. Kelp forests are also harmed by overfishing due to the removal of top predators and its impact down the food chain. MPAs have shown to be effective in parts of California, the Florida Keys, New Zealand, and Mexico, where they have resulted in diverse ecosystems with more abundant and larger-sized organisms.

While MPAs prove beneficial for marine life and habitats, they are also favorable to us humans. Healthy ecosystems provide good views for recreation such as tidepooling, snorkeling, and diving, and clean waters make it suitable for us to enjoy the ocean without putting our own health at risk. MPAs also provide undisturbed resources for learning and research.

### **What is MPA Watch?**

MPA Watch is a citizen science program that trains volunteers to observe and record human use of areas within and outside MPA boundaries. Volunteers collect data that contribute to the enforcement and management of MPAs, as well as research studying the effectiveness of MPAs and how human interactions change with their



implementation. It is important to know how people interact with MPAs in order to guarantee that the public abide by the regulations and limit the amount of stress imposed onto ecosystems. Knowing which areas are most popular for certain activities also helps inform where enforcement efforts should be concentrated and where public outreach and engagement should be focused.

**WILDCOAST'S role in designating MPAs**

WILDCOAST has been actively involved in the implementation of the MLPA since 2006. We were part of a select group of southern California stakeholders elected to design the MPA network, which was adopted in December 2010. We also worked with our members and partner groups to generate support for MPAs by raising awareness about the state of our coastal resources and the urgent opportunity to establish MPAs in southern California. WILDCOAST has been working to educate San Diego residents about the new MPA network and provide opportunities to participate in stewardship actions.

WILDCOAST is carrying out this work on the beach, in schools, and at community events, in order to promote protection of the marine environment. WILDCOAST has also developed a countywide MPA Watch program that encourages residents and groups to adopt and work within the MPA network, where groups volunteer to monitor, organize beach cleanups, engage the public, and collect valuable data in the MPAs.



**WILDCOAST MPA Watch Data Sheet**

Name(s):		Date: ____/____/____	Transect ID:			
Start Time:	End Time:	Clouds: clear (0%)/ partly cloudy (1-50%)/ cloudy (>50%cover)	Precipitation: yes / no			
Air Temperature: cold / cool / mild / warm / hot		Wind: calm / breezy / windy	Tide Level: low / med / high			
Visibility: perfect / limited / shore only		Beach Status: open / posted / closed / unknown				
<b>Onshore Activities</b>		Sandy	Rocky			
Beach Recreation (walking, hiking, running, resting, playing, sitting, camping, art, other, but NOT TIDEPOOLING)						
Wildlife Watching						
Domestic animals on-leash						
Domestic animals off-leash						
Driving on the Beach						
Tide-pooling (not collecting)						
Hand collection of biota						
Shore-based hook and line fishing						
Shore-based trap fishing						
Shore-based net fishing						
Shore-based spear fishing						
<b>Offshore Activities (Non-Boating)</b>						
Surfing/ Boogie Boarding						
Kite/Wind Surfing						
Stand-up Paddle Boarding						
Offshore Recreation (Swimming/Bodysurfing)						
Non-Consumptive SCUBA and snorkeling						
Spear Fishing (free diving or SCUBA)						
Other Consumptive Diving (e.g., nets, poles, traps)						
<b>Boating</b>	<b>Recreational</b>	<b>Commercial</b>		<b>Unknown</b>		
	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Active
Boat Fishing - Traps						
Boat Fishing - Line						
Boat Fishing - Nets						
Boat Fishing - Dive						
Boat Fishing - Spear						
Unknown Fishing Boat						
Boat Kelp Harvesting						
Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (5+ people)						
Kayak/Canoe/Dinghy						
Sailing						
Private Power Boat						
Dive Boat (stationary – flag up)						
Whale Watching Boat						
Work Boat (specify oil tender, DFW, research, coast guard)						
Other Boats (e.g., jet ski)						
<b>Comments:</b>						
Did you observe: <input type="checkbox"/> scientific research <input type="checkbox"/> education <input type="checkbox"/> beach closure <input type="checkbox"/> large gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> enforcement activity Describe below and provide counts of individuals involved where possible, and whether it took place on rocky or sandy or sandy substrate.						
Did you report a violation: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no If yes, how many violations did you report _____						
Who did you report the violation to (mark all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> DFW <input type="checkbox"/> State Parks <input type="checkbox"/> other entity (e.g., lifeguard, harbor patrol)						
Which method did you use to report your violation (mark all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> phone call <input type="checkbox"/> text <input type="checkbox"/> mobile app <input type="checkbox"/> website <input type="checkbox"/> email <input type="checkbox"/> in person						
E-mail completed data sheet to <a href="mailto:angela@wildcoast.net">angela@wildcoast.net</a>				To report a violation: 1-888-334-CALTIP		

# How to conduct an MPA Watch survey

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1. Walk to the designated starting point (northernmost point)
2. Fill out the top portion of the data sheet. Make sure you record the correct date and start/end times.
3. Walk from north to south along the mean high tide line to the stopping point (the mean high tide line is the middle area between the highest point that sea weed reaches on the beach and the lowest point that the water reaches)
4. Only record an activity as you pass the person doing that activity. Do not count people ahead or behind you. This is important to maintain scientific consistency across MPA Watch volunteers and programs. Do not count people twice if their activity changes.
5. The only activities you count if the person is not actively doing those activities are surfing and SCUBA diving. If a person is walking in full gear and holding equipment for surfing/diving, you can assume those are their only recreational activities. However, if you see a person sitting/laying on the beach with a surfboard, they are counted as “beach recreation”.
6. Make sure to properly mark if a person is actively fishing or not actively fishing, in the appropriate section of the data sheet. The fishing regulations in the MPAs that prohibit or limit certain types of fishing state that a person may transit through the MPA with fishing gear to the regulated fisheries, as long as the gear is not baited or ready to be used to fish.
7. Write the correct end time at the top of your data sheet once you reach your stopping point. Do not count anyone past the stopping point.
8. Total each individual row and circle the sum.
9. Send your data sheet to the WILDCOAST office in one of the following ways:
  - a. Scan and email it to [angela@wildcoast.net](mailto:angela@wildcoast.net)
  - b. Fax it to 619-423-8488
  - c. Mail it to:  
925 Seacoast Drive  
Imperial Beach, CA  
91932
  - d. Come by and drop it off in person
10. You will receive a confirmation email from us when we receive your data sheet.



# Examples of Recreational Activities

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## Onshore Activities



Beach recreation: Walking



Beach recreation: Hiking/Rock Climbing



Beach recreation: Running



Beach recreation:  
Resting/Sunbathing



Beach recreation: Playing



Beach recreation:  
Skim-boarding



Beach recreation:  
Sitting/Camping/Picnicking



Wildlife Watching



Domestic animals on-leash



Domestic animals off-leash



Driving on the beach



Tidepooling (NOT collecting)



Hand collection of biota



Shore-based hook and line fishing



Shore-based trap fishing



Shore-based net fishing



Shore-based spear fishing

## Offshore Activities (Non-Boating)



Surfing



Boogie boarding



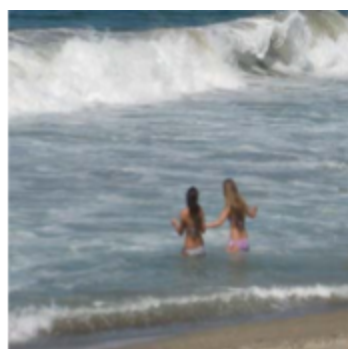
Kite/Wind surfing



Stand-up paddle boarding



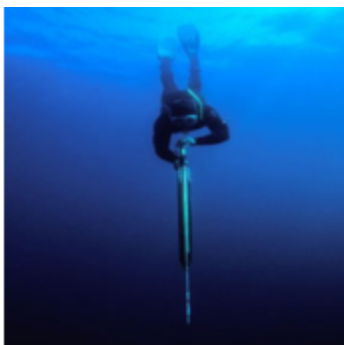
Offshore recreation:  
Swimming



Offshore recreation: Wading



Non-Consumptive  
SCUBA/snorkeling



Spear fishing (free diving  
or SCUBA)



Other consumptive diving  
(e.g. nets, poles, traps)



# Offshore Activities (Boating)



Boat fishing - Traps



Boat fishing - Line



Boat fishing - Nets



Boat fishing - Dive



Boat fishing - Spear



Boat fishing - Spear



Boat Kelp Harvesting



Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (5+ people)



Kayak/Canoe/Dinghy



Sailing



Private Power Boat (not fishing)



Dive Boat (stationary - flag up)



Whale Watching Boat



Work boat (specify type: lifeguard, CDFW, research, etc.)



Other (specify type: jet ski, etc.)

# Tijuana River Mouth SMCA Transect Sites

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## Boundary Description

Starts North of the Imperial Beach Pier at the end of Calla Ave. and ends just north of the U.S./Mexico Border.

From 32°35'9.20"N 117° 7'57.20"W to 32°32'4.48"N 117° 7'26.39"W

## Surveys

**Outside Boundary 1 (OUT 1):** End of Calla Ave. to the north side of the IB Pier (0.44 miles)

**Outside Boundary 2 (OUT 2):** South side of pier to end of Seacoast Dr. (0.92 miles)

**Tijuana River Mouth SMCA 1 (TRM 1):** South end of Seacoast Dr. to TJ River mouth (0.84 miles)

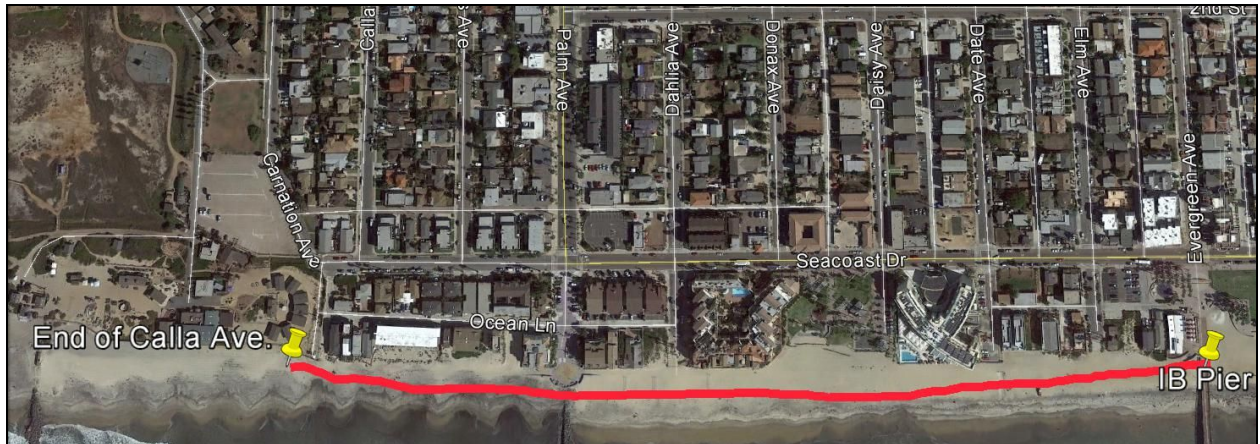
**Tijuana River Mouth SMCA 2 (TRM 2):** TJ River mouth to US/Mexico Border (1.45 miles)

## Background Information:

Some survey sites are outside the boundary of the State Marine Conservation Area. There are no additional fishing restrictions in this area, except for normal regulations regarding fishing seasons and licenses issued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The data collected in these sites will indicate what types of activities occur along the edge of the conservation area.



# OUT 1



**Caution:** Be aware of beach closure signs. In the case of a closure or advisory, avoid water contact. Be sure to record closure/advisory on the data sheet.

## Start Point

The start point begins on the beach, at the beach access between Calla Ave. and Carnation Ave. Orient yourself due south and include any activity occurring on the beach and in the ocean.

## End Point

The end point is at the pier. As part of this survey also *count all activities on top of the pier, but only on the north side.*

# OUT 2



## Start Point

The start point begins on the beach in the south side of the pier. Orient yourself due south and include any activity occurring on the beach and in the ocean. When you begin, include *all activities happening on top of the pier, but only on the south side*.

## End Point

The end point is at the end of Seacoast Dr., at the large rocks just beyond the southernmost apartments on the beach.

## Field Notes

Because there is a rocky point at the end of OUT 2, you will most likely get wet if you try to move past it at high tide. However, if you do not want to get wet during your survey there is a beach access point where you can exit. Be cautious, we recommend not getting in the water when the beach is closed.



This is what the early exit looks like.



This is the rocky area as you approach the end point of OUT 2.

# TRM 1



## Start Point

The start point begins at the beach access at the end of Seacoast Drive. Orient yourself due south and include any activity occurring on the beach and in the ocean.

## End Point

The end of this zone is before you get to the river mouth. You are NOT required to cross the river mouth for this survey. We recommend that you DO NOT enter the water at this point.



There is currently one sign near the Tijuana River Mouth that lets people know the area is a designated MPA.

# TRM 2



## Start Point

The start point is the Tijuana River Mouth. Orient yourself due south and include any activity occurring on the beach and in the ocean.

## End Point

The end point is at the U.S./Mexican Border.





# MPA Watch Frequently Asked Questions

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*Q: What is the difference between “sandy” and “rocky”?*

A: Any activity that happens on the sandy beach will be counted under “sandy”. Any activities happening on any rocky outcropping/jetties/cliffs such as tidepooling and fishing will counted under “rocky”.

*Q: How do I count someone who switches activities?*

A: You only count someone **ONCE**. If you see someone switch activities, such as someone who was originally laying on the beach but then goes in the water, count them only under the activity that you first observed them.

*Q: How do I count someone walking their dog?*

A: A person and their pet count **SEPARATELY**. For someone walking their dog, count the person under “beach recreation” and the dog under “domestic animals on/off leash”.

*Q: Should I include lifeguards in my survey?*

A: If you see a lifeguard standing on the beach or on the lifeguard tower, **DO NOT** count them in your survey. It is assumed that there are lifeguards at the beach, and therefore their presence does not affect the number of people visiting the beach.

*Q: How do I count a lifeguard vehicle driving on the sand?*

A: If you see a lifeguard car driving down the beach, please count that under the category “Driving on the Beach,” because that activity does have an effect on the beach ecology. Be careful not to double-count the same vehicle if it passed you earlier.

*Q: How do I count a lifeguard vehicle parked on the sand next to a lifeguard tower?*

A: **DO NOT** count a lifeguard vehicle parked in the sand next to a lifeguard tower.

*Q: How do I count a lifeguard vehicle parked on the sand, but NOT next to a lifeguard tower?*

A: A lifeguard vehicle parked on the sand but not next to a lifeguard tower should be counted as “Driving on the Beach.” Be careful not to double-count the same vehicle if it passed you earlier.

*Q: How do I count a lifeguard vehicle in the parking lot?*

A: **DO NOT** count any activity in the parking lot, including lifeguard vehicles.

*Q: How do I count the lifeguard boat?*

A: Count the lifeguard boat as "Other Boat (not fishing)." Make a note on your data sheet that it was a lifeguard boat.

*Q: Do I count surf instructors under the category "Surfing" or under the category "Beach Rec?"*

A: Even though the surf instructors may not actually be surfing, you should count their activity under the category “Surfing” because their action is only related to surfing, not beach recreation. Therefore, if there were one student and one instructor, you would count two people under the category “Surfing.”

*Q: How do I count people walking on the beach using metal detectors?*

A: People with metal detectors would count as "Other" and specify the activity (bottom part of the data sheet).

*Q: Why do I need to differentiate if someone is "actively fishing" or "not actively fishing?"*

A: The fishing regulations in the MPAs that prohibit or limit certain types of fishing state that a person may transit through the MPAs with fishing gear



for the regulated fisheries, as long as the e gear is not baited or ready to be used to fish. Therefore, for example, we need to differentiate between a kayaker with a rod/reel legally transiting through the MPA and a kayaker with a rod/reel that is illegally fishing inside the MPAs.

*Q: What should I do if I see NO activity during the entire survey?*

A: Even if you did not see any activity during a survey, that is still valuable scientific data. Please walk the entire survey segment and turn in your data sheet with the top portion filled out, and make a note that there was no activity seen.

*Q: Should I count border patrol vehicles while surveying the areas?*

A: Yes, if you see a border patrol vehicle driving down the beach, please count that under the category "Driving on the Beach," because that activity does have an effect on the beach ecology. Be careful not to double-count the same vehicle if it passed you earlier.

*Q: How do I count contractors working on a beachfront home?*

A: Do not count any contractors working on a beachfront home, even if they are standing on the beach. The purpose of them being there is not to enjoy the beach but to work on private property.

*Q: How do I count beach groomers driving on the beach?*

A: Count beach groomers as "other" at the bottom of your data sheet and then specify the activity as "beach groomer." Beach groomers have a specific purpose for driving on the beach (cleaning up trash), so they should not be counted in the same way as a car driving on the beach.

*Q: Should I count washed up lobster traps and other fishing gear washed up on shore?*

A: No, you should not count washed up lobster traps and other fishing gear. If you would like to make a separate note of it and email it to us, that would be great!

*Q: While surveying OUT 1/2, should I count activity on the pier?*

A: Yes, you should count activity on the pier the same way you would if it was on the beach. If a person is fishing on the pier, count it in your survey, and then make a note that the fishing was taking place on the pier at the bottom of the data sheet.

*Q: While surveying TRM2, should I count activity going on in the Tijuana River Mouth?*

A: Yes. Any activity you see going on in the river mouth should be documented in the survey sheet.

*Q: What should I do if I see illegal fishing activity going on in the MPA during my survey?*

A: Please record the fishing activity on your data sheet, as you would any other survey activity. You are not required to do so, but if you feel comfortable you can approach the person to let them know it is a protected area and no fishing is allowed. If you would like to report illegal activity to Cal-tip call this number 888-334-2285. Please do either activity AFTER completing your survey.

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