

California's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network

CONSERVING OUR UNDERWATER PARKS

WILDCOAST
COSTASALVAJE



Photo by Octavio Aburto

California's MPA network includes:

- 124 marine protected areas that encompass 545,280 acres—or 16%—of California's ocean waters.
- A wide variety of ocean and coastal habitats from kelp forests to sandy beaches, submarine canyons to estuaries, as well as the fish, invertebrates, seabirds, marine mammals, and other species that inhabit our coast.

Similar to parks on land, MPAs aim to restore coastal wildlife and habitats. They increase ocean biodiversity and resilience and help to buffer sea life against a changing climate. California is working with a wide range of partners to effectively manage its landmark network of MPAs.

California is the first state in the nation to establish a scientifically based network of marine protected areas, or MPAs. These MPAs protect and restore ocean habitats and increase the health, productivity, and resilience of ocean ecosystems. They dot the coast like a string of pearls, including some of the state's most beloved coastal places, like the Farallon Islands, Point Lobos, Crystal Cove, and La Jolla. Many MPAs are located alongside public beaches and parks, creating enhanced opportunities for learning and enjoyment.



Many areas now protected as MPAs are important cultural resources for tribes and other communities throughout California.

WILDCOAST's MPA Program

WILDCOAST is leading efforts in California to conserve the state's 545,280 acres of MPAs. Through community science monitoring such as MPA Watch, and our Explore My MPA Project, we are helping to guide MPA adaptive management while building a new generation of ocean stewards. Our signage, materials, and presentations are informing a broad and diverse public audience on the importance of MPAs and their locations, regulations and opportunities. Working with more than 600 partners, including local tribes, management agencies, researchers, anglers, and divers, we are helping make California's MPA network most effective at achieving its goals to recover fisheries, restore ecosystems, and enhance the recreational value of important coastal areas.

WILDCOAST's MPA program consists of three project areas:

- 1) Compliance and Policy
- 2) Education and Outreach
- 3) Research

WILDCOAST is an international team that conserves coastal and marine ecosystems and wildlife. We establish and manage protected areas, advance strong conservation policies, and work with communities to preserve healthy thriving oceans and wild coastlines. WILDCOAST is co-chair of the San Diego County MPA Collaborative.



Photo by Octavio Aburto

How to support your local MPA:

- 1) **DONATE** to WILDCOAST's MPA Program: Donations can be made online at wildcoast.org
- 2) **VOLUNTEER** to collect data for the MPA Watch Community Science Program: Visit mpawatch.org for opportunities
- 3) **VISIT** an MPA!

1. Compliance and Policy

WILDCOAST works with its partners to enhance compliance in MPAs through outreach, capacity trainings with allied agencies, and policy. In 2016, Assembly Bill (AB) 298 was passed to expand the existing MPA enforcement toolkit in California by allowing enforcement officials the ability to write infractions. Prior to the passing of AB 298, enforcement officials could only cite MPA violators with misdemeanors. In 2018, WILDCOAST successfully sponsored AB 2369 to increase penalties for commercial MPA violators in California. Together these bills help strengthen MPA enforcement and compliance in California.



Photo by CDFW

2. Education and Outreach

WILDCOAST provides opportunities and resources for local communities to enhance ocean stewardship. Our Explore My MPA Project engages students in hands-on MPA-based science, recreation, and education. To date we have worked with over 5,000 students including many from park-poor communities and local tribes. We manage signage at MPA access points to inform the public of regulations, boundaries, and local ecology and history. Resources including issue briefs, Wildlife and Recreation Guides, and an Outreach Toolkit for classroom and outdoor educators may be downloaded and printed from wildcoast.org/resources.



Photo by Briana Smith

3. Research

WILDCOAST manages the statewide MPA Watch Program, a network of organizations that support healthy oceans through community science by collecting human use data in and around our protected areas. Data inform adaptive management decisions and assist with improving MPA outreach, education and compliance in 58 MPAs containing 187,917 acres of coastal and marine ecosystems. More than 23,000 MPA Watch surveys have been submitted by volunteers throughout California. Visit www.mpawatch.org for more information.



Photo by Krissel Rivas