

ISSUE BRIEFING

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

2014

Surfers, divers, birders, beach goers, fishermen and tourists all enjoy the vibrant sea life found in the marine ecosystems of California. The state's Marine Protected Areas (MPA) were established to allow declining fish populations to rebound and ensure that generations to come experience healthy and rich coastal ecosystems.

WILDCOAST is working to support California's science-based network of MPAs through community engagement, stewardship, education and outreach throughout San Diego County. These efforts complement the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's management of the MPA network.

SAN DIEGO'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

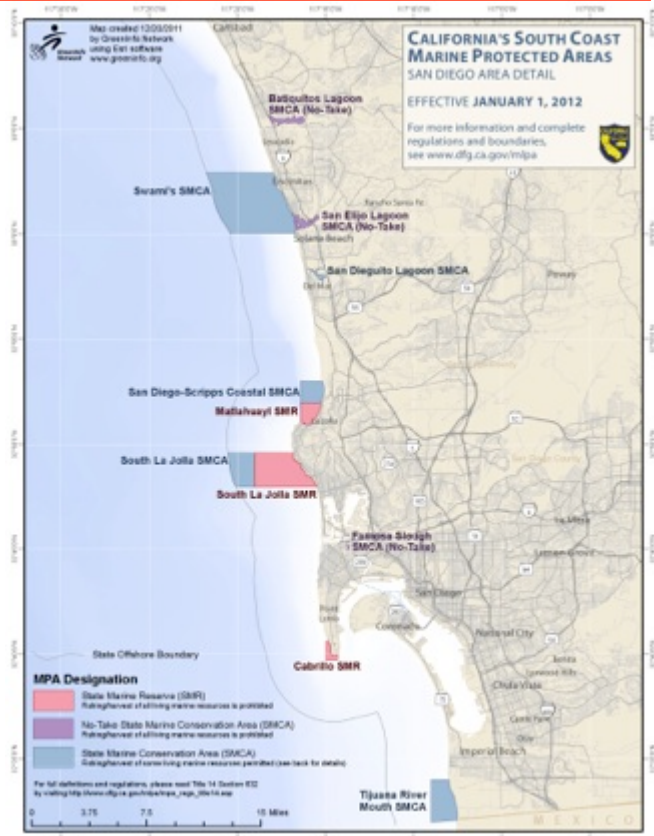
In 2012, 11 new Marine Protected Areas were established in San Diego County to promote recovery of the region's once vibrant and diverse coastal ecosystems. San Diego County's MPAs are located at Swamis (Encinitas), La Jolla, Pt. Loma, and the Tijuana River Mouth, near Imperial Beach.

San Diego County's MPAs are part of the Southern California network of 49 MPAs that includes 354 square miles of state waters and stretches from Santa Barbara to the Mexican Border. The Southern California MPAs are connected to the larger statewide network of underwater parks that stretches to the Oregon border.

WHY MPAs?

Southern California's coastline is recognized around the world for the incredible recreational opportunities it affords both residents and visitors. Unfortunately, California's historically abundant and diverse sea life has been impacted by overfishing, habitat destruction, and pollution. The result has been a steep decline in fish size and abundance, and habitat degradation.

There is strong scientific evidence that Marine Protected Areas can be valuable tools to counter impacts to the environment and promote ecological recovery. Case studies from around the world show that MPAs work when they are managed well and have strong community support and participation.



Rather than trying to manage a single species, MPAs take a more holistic conservation approach by protecting the important habitat for marine life and the broader linkages within these unique ecosystems. MPAs are underwater parks and the public is encouraged to visit them for quality outdoor recreation experiences.



BUILDING SUPPORT FOR MPAs

WILDCOAST has launched a series of education, outreach and stewardship projects to strengthen awareness and support for San Diego County MPAs; these activities include:

KEY TERMS:

Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA)

– The Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) was adopted in California in 1999, and is the nation’s first state law requiring implementation of a comprehensive, science-based network of Marine Protected Areas along the coast of California. The MLPA’s conservation goals focus on ecosystem and habitat protection, restoration of marine diversity, and the promotion of ocean-based recreation.

Marine Protected Area (MPA) –

Areas of coastal ocean set aside to protect ocean life and habitat. MPAs were established by the CA Fish and Game Commission and are managed by the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Working to educate San Diego residents and visitors about the new MPA network and providing opportunities to participate in stewardship actions. WILDCOAST is carrying out this work on the beach, in San Diego schools, at community events, with commercial associations, and with the regional media, to promote protection of the marine environment.

Providing up-to-date information to the public on appropriate recreational activities and fishing in MPAs. We have designed, printed, and distributed four different brochures at key locations in San Diego County. Our website also includes fact sheets and maps of MPA locations and site-specific regulations.

Organizing community events to promote recreational activities in MPAs, such as: kayaking, surfing, diving, snorkeling, wildlife viewing and tide pooling.

Development of a county-wide MPA Watch program that encourages residents and groups to adopt and work within the MPA network. Groups volunteer to monitor MPA sites, coordinate beach cleanups, engage the public, and collect valuable MPA user data to provide decision-makers and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife with a better understanding of how (and how many) visitors are enjoying San Diego’s Marine Protected Areas. Contact WILDCOAST if you and/or your community group are interested in participating.

WILDCOAST

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