

4th Quarter 2014 Report

OC MPA Watch Program

Orange County Coastkeeper



Intro

January 1st, 2012 was the implementation date for the South Coast MPAs from Point Conception to the Mexican border. The Orange County Marine Protected Area (OC MPA) Watch Program began monitoring and collecting data for OC beaches in October 2011. The OC MPA Watch Program, organized by Orange County Coastkeeper (OCCK), enlists the help of volunteers, community groups, and local government to monitor human usage in the Marine Protected Areas. There are seven Marine Protected Areas along the coast of Orange County:

- Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve (SMR)
- Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)
- Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)
- Crystal Cove State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)
- Dana Point State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)
- Bolsa Bay State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)
- Bolsa Basin State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA)

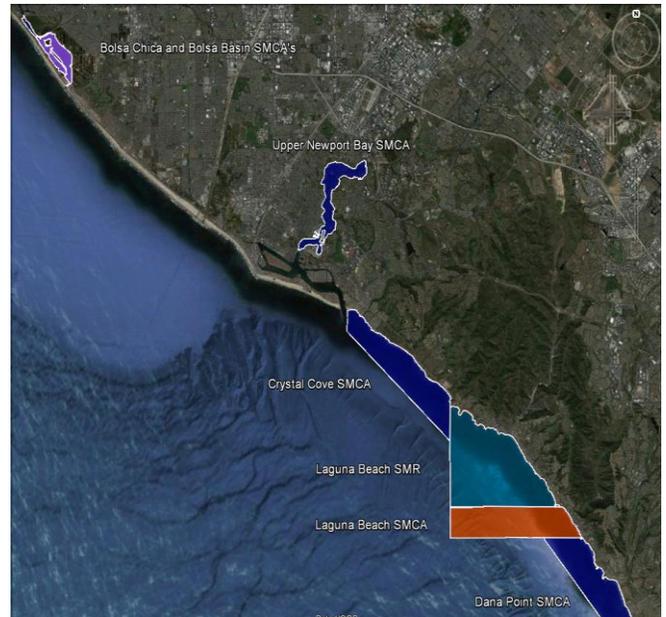


Figure 1: Orange County MPAs

Orange County Coastkeeper has divided the MPAs into over 30 separate sites for monitoring purposes. Continuous development and refining of the program resulted in seven of those sites being chosen for extended monitoring by OCCK:

- Crescent Bay
- Shaw's Cove
- Moss Point
- Aliso Creek State Beach
- Table Rock
- Castaways Beach
- Little Corona Del Mar

The data is compiled and delivered to the various organizations quarterly for review. This report details the results for the 4th Quarter of 2014, covering the time period between October 1st and December 31st.

Methodology

MPA Watch volunteers are trained to gather data based on observations of human activity. On and near-shore data is gathered by either walking along the beach within described boundaries or by observing from a vantage point. Volunteers are trained to record only activities specifically within the MPA boundaries. All the activities are recorded real time. This means that while scanning the beach from a vantage point or walking along the beach, the activity only counts if it is occurring when the volunteer’s eyes pass by that area or when the volunteer passes that area while walking. Observations are recorded on a data sheet that lists 30 commonly seen activities. The 30 activities are ones that our volunteers would be most likely to observe during their surveys. Examples are beach recreation, wildlife viewing, snorkeling, paddle boarding, and of course, fishing. Each activity falls under one of four categories:

- On-shore non-consumptive activity
- On-shore consumptive activity
- Off-shore non-consumptive activity
- Off-shore consumptive activity

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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				
On-Shore Activities		Rocky		Sandy		
Recreation (walking, resting, playing, etc. 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						
Off-Shore Activities (Non-Boating)						
Offshore Recreation (e.g., swimming, bodysurfing)						
Board Sports (e.g., boogie boarding, surfing)						
Stand-Up Paddle Boarding						
Non-Consumptive SCUBA and snorkeling						
Spear Fishing (free diving or SCUBA)						
Other Consumptive Diving (e.g., nets, poles, traps)						
Boating	Recreational		Commercial		Unknown	
	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Active	Inactive	Active
Boat Fishing - Traps						
Boat Fishing - Line						
Boat Fishing - nets						
Boat Fishing - Dive						
Boat Fishing - Spear						
Boat Kelp Harvesting						
Unknown Fishing Boat						
Paddle Operated Boat						
Dive Boat (stationary – flag up)						
Whale Watching Boat						
Work Boat (e.g., life-guard, DFW, research, coast guard)						
Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (5+ people)						
Other Boating (e.g., powerboat, sail boat, jet ski)						
Comments						
Did you observe: <input type="checkbox"/> scientific research; <input type="checkbox"/> education; <input type="checkbox"/> beach closure; <input type="checkbox"/> large gatherings (e.g., beach cleanup); <input type="checkbox"/> enforcement activity						

Figure 2: Example Data Sheet

Consumptive activities include on and offshore recreational and commercial take of marine species. Examples of non-consumptive activities include kayaking, surfing, scuba-diving, wildlife viewing, and beach-visiting. Survey data is submitted by volunteers online at www.mpawatch.org and/or directly to OCCK where it then undergoes a quality control review by OCCK before it is accepted into a statewide database.

Cal Tip (888) 334-2258 Dana Point (714) 325-1420 Laguna Beach (949) 497-0701 Newport Beach (949) 644-3036

The data is analyzed by OCCK and reports are created quarterly. The quarterly reports are sent to a number of organizations including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the cities of Newport Beach, Laguna Beach, and Dana Point, Crystal Cove State Park, The County of Orange, and local non-profit organizations and universities. MPA Watch data is also available to the public on the Coastkeeper website: www.coastkeeper.org.

Changes to Our Program

The MPA Watch program has been designed as a standardized survey. Since we are still in the beginning stages of MPA implementation, the program will adapt over time to meet the needs of the resource managers and local community. In June of this year, OCCK and members of the statewide MPA Watch coalition worked to develop a new data sheet, database and other supporting materials. The new data sheet updated and reorganized each of the 30 activities and was designed to be used statewide. An online database was also established last June. Volunteers can now enter their surveys easily online where it can be downloaded and analyzed by OCCK. It can be found at www.mpawatch.org.

Using recommendations from the Statewide MPA Watch Technical Advisory Committee, consultants and local resource managers made additional changes were made to the sites that are monitored. Rather than surveying over 30 separate sites, OCCK narrowed down the surveying to seven priority sites. The seven sites are Castaways Beach, Little Corona Del Mar, Crescent Bay, Shaw's Cove, Moss Point, Aliso Creek State Beach, and Table Rock Beach. Those sites are representative of the different varieties of beaches found in Orange County, ranging from small rocky coves to wide sandy beaches.

Allowed Activities

The 'take' regulations vary for each OC MPAs and are summarized below.

- Laguna Beach SMR and Laguna Beach SMCA do not allow any take of living marine resources including plants or animals.
- Upper Newport Bay SMCA allows the take of finfish only by hook-and-line from the shore in designated areas. The take of marine aquatic plants invertebrates is prohibited.
- Crystal Cove SMCA and Dana Point SMCA allow the recreational take of finfish by hook-and-line spearfishing. along with lobster and sea urchin, and the commercial take of lobster, urchins, and coastal pelagic species, such as sardine, anchovy, and squid, by round haul net. The take of any living marine resources from inside tidepools in these MPAs is prohibited.
- Bolsa Bay SMCA allows the recreational take of finfish by hook and line only from designated areas.

- Bolsa Basin SMCA prohibits any take of living marine resources including plants and animals.

State Marine Protected Areas in Orange County do not prohibit any non-consumptive activities, however in the Bolsa Chica and Upper Newport Bay SMCA some non-consumptive activities are not allowed on- and offshore due to the overlay of an ecological reserve that is a separate designation from the Marine Protected Area.

The Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve, which covers the northern portion of the Upper Newport Bay SMCA, only allows swimming between North Star Beach and mid-channel. Boats are limited to speeds less than five miles an hour. Additionally, shoreline access is confined to established trails, paths, or other designated areas.

Data

This report includes data from October, November, and December. From October 1st to December 31st, **94** surveys were completed and **2,151** activities were observed. Of these, **29** were consumptive activities and **3** appeared to be in violation of MPA take regulations.

The most popular non-consumptive activity onshore was beach recreation and the most popular non-consumptive offshore activity was swimming and board sports. The most observed consumptive activity was hook fishing both onshore and off a boat.

The data for five of the 7 “priority” sites Crescent Bay, Shaw’s Cove, Moss Point, Aliso Creek State Beach and Table Rock Beach are as follows:

Crescent Bay

Crescent Bay is mostly sandy but is bordered by rocks that are accessible during low tide. It is a popular site for beach recreation and snorkeling, especially around nearby Seal Rock. A total of 12 surveys and 630 activities were recorded, all of them being non-consumptive. The most observed onshore activities were beach recreation and tide pooling and the most observed offshore activity was offshore recreation like swimming and board sports.

Shaw’s Cove

Shaw’s Cove is smaller than Crescent Bay. It features exposed rocky areas during high tide, and even more so during low tide, making it a popular tidepooling location. It is bordered by rocks on both sides. An abundance of submerged rocks and kelp make Shaw’s Cove a popular SCUBA diving site. A total of 14 surveys and 278 activities were recorded, with only one

of those activities being consumptive boat fishing. The most observed onshore activity was beach recreation and the most observed offshore activities were offshore recreation and SCUBA.

Moss Point

Moss Point is the smallest and least frequented of the five priority sites. It features a mostly rocky landscape with little available sand area during low tide. It is bordered by rocks on both sides. There are some tidepools to explore. During extreme high tides, the beach is near inaccessible. A total of 12 surveys and 106 activities were recorded, all of which were non-consumptive. The most observed onshore activity was beach recreation and the most observed offshore activities were offshore recreation like paddle boarding.

Aliso Creek State Beach

Aliso represents a large, sandy beach. With easy parking, high surf, a café, and fire pits, Aliso is a popular destination for beachgoers from early mornings into the evening. It is bordered by rocks to the east and the Aliso Creek drainage to the west. A total of 6 surveys and 163 activities were recorded. Of the activities, 1 was recorded as being consumptive – line fishing off a boat, which violates MPA take regulations but the violation was not reported via CalTip. The most recorded onshore activity was wildlife viewing and beach recreation. The most recorded offshore activity was offshore recreation like swimming.

Table Rock Beach

Table Rock is a small cove with a large sandy area. There is a rocky area in the middle of the beach that can support tidepools. It is bordered by rocks on both sides. A total of 7 surveys and 68 activities were recorded, all non-consumptive. The most observed onshore activity was beach recreation and the most observed offshore activity was offshore recreation like swimming and windsurfing.

Other sites

A total of 44 surveys were completed among other sites along the coast of Orange County. These sites include Crystal Cove SMCA: Big Corona and Little Corona; Dana Point SMCA: Salt Creek, Strands, and Thousand Steps; Laguna Beach SMR: Fisherman’s Cove, Heisler, Montage, Victoria, Woods Cove; and Upper Newport Bay SMCA: Castaways, Jamboree, North Star Beach, and Rocky Point. 906 activities were observed. Of these, 27 were recorded as consumptive and one was reported as a violation to CalTip. The most observed onshore activity was beach recreation and the most observed offshore activity was board sports. The most observed consumptive activities were line fishing from a boat and spear fishing.

Conclusion

The 4th quarter of 2014 saw some big changes to the MPA Watch Program as a whole and in Orange County. The sites that were chosen as priority sites represent the different kinds of beaches found within our Marine Protected Areas. Volunteers observed over 2,000 activities



between October and the end of December and there were only 3 instances of possible violations. Most of the surveys were conducted by a small number of volunteers during a limited range for time of day. More volunteers are always welcome and can easily be trained. This will help expand our data to include more early mornings, evenings, and weekends.