

Humboldt County



Marine Protected Area (MPA) Community Compliance Forum Report November 19, 2020

With support and funding from:



About

The **MPA Collaborative Network's Compliance Initiative** is supported by the Ocean Protection Council (OPC), and in partnership with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the California District Attorneys Association, and Resources Legacy Fund. It is a multi-year initiative that aims to improve the compliance and enforcement of California's network of MPAs through community compliance forums, allied agency enforcement trainings, prosecutor training, and MPA violation data collection.

The individual **Community Compliance Forums** held for each coastal county provided space for local stakeholders to voice their MPA, ocean, and coastal compliance concerns and brainstorm ideas to address those concerns. The Collaborative Network hosted two in-person forums (pre-pandemic) and 13 virtual forums. Five hundred community members participated, resulting in over 2,200 compliance concerns and solutions mentioned during 40+ hours of engagement.

This report summarizes the input gathered from stakeholders during the Humboldt County Forum discussion as well the input provided in the post-Forum evaluation forms, Google surveys, and printed surveys.

Refer to the separate **Statewide Compliance Forum Report** for more information about the universal categories used to group mentioned compliance concerns and solutions. Refer to the **Glossary** at the end of this report for definitions of commonly used acronyms.

Key Takeaways

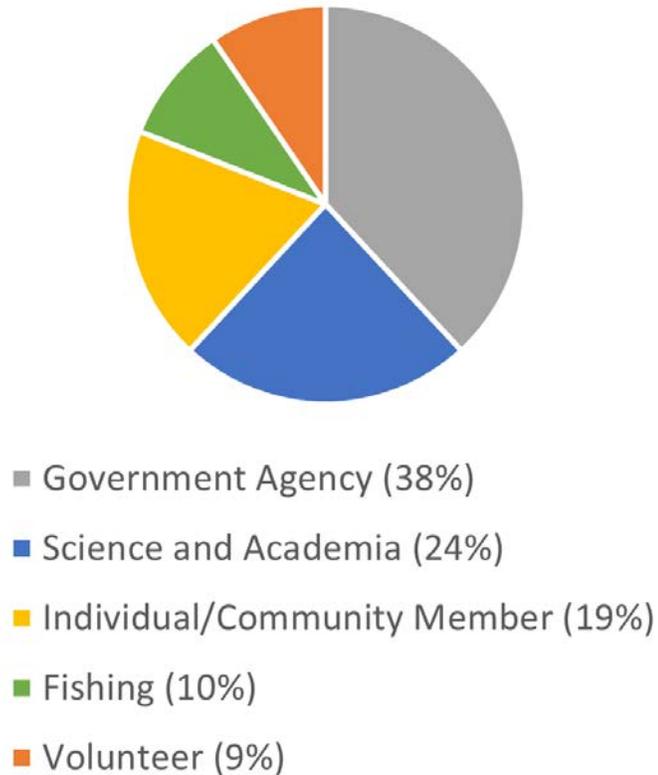
- The top concerns involved detrimental impacts to key habitats, including diminishing dunes, invasive grasses, and loss of eelgrass. Monitoring surveys and restoration activities were suggested to find out more and mitigate impacts.
- The top solution for increasing compliance was signage. Participants mentioned prioritizing regulatory signage at strategic locations to improve awareness regarding MPAs, reduce incidental take along the Lost Coast, and decrease the incidence of wildlife disturbance.
- Drifting commercial crab pots at MPA boundaries and poaching for surf perch were mentioned for the Reading Rock SMR and SMCA.
- Commercial kelp/algae leases need to be revisited because of large amounts of seaweed take at False Klamath Cove.
- Participants want to increase outreach to classrooms/schools through targeted education & outreach programs and events.

Highlighted Compliance Concerns

- Invasive grasses, loss of eelgrass, and general threats to habitat in Humboldt Bay
- Commercial crab traps drifting in MPAs
- Hook and line fishing and take of sand crabs at Reading Rock SMCA
- Commercial kelp/algae harvest at False Klamath Cove in neighboring Del Norte County
- Mussel harvest and fishing debris on Lost Coast Trail

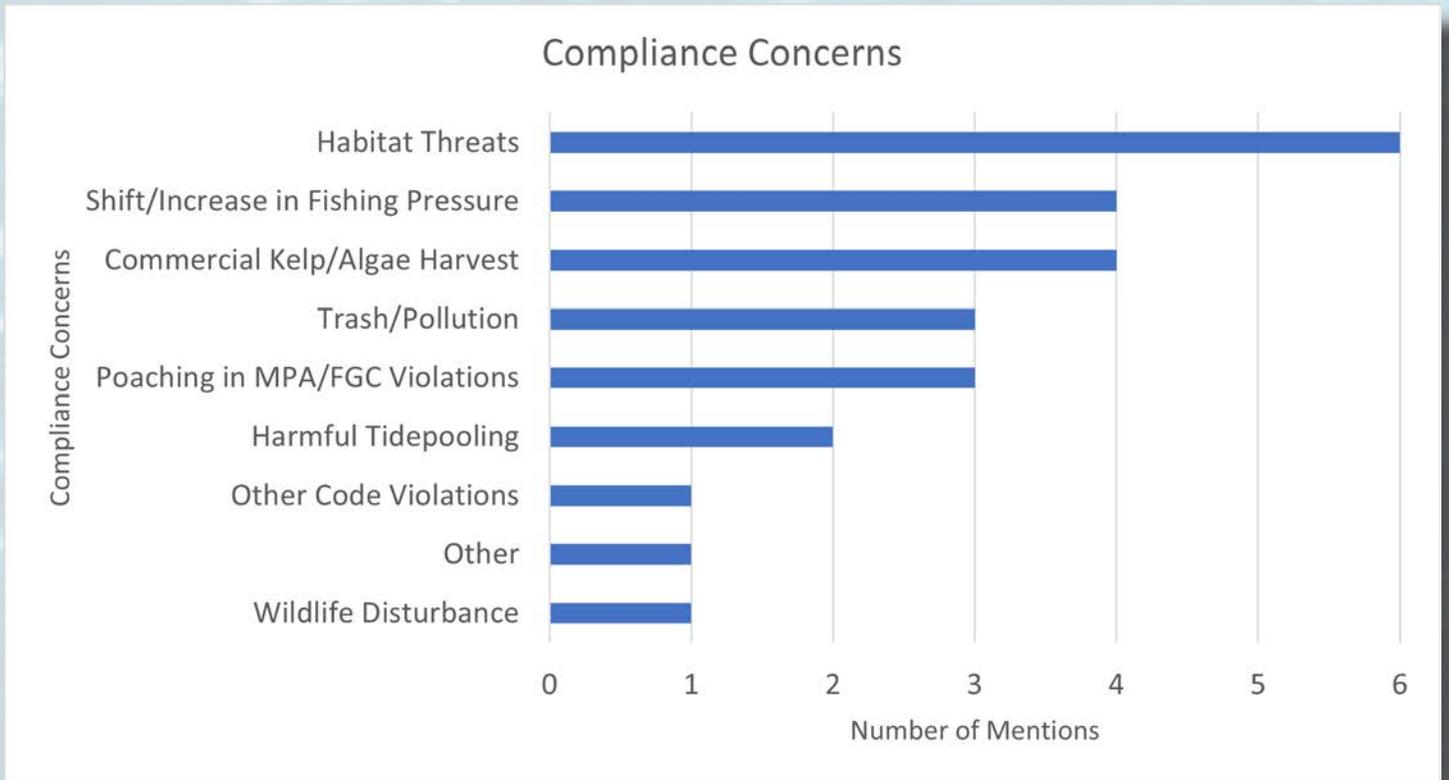
Participant Breakdown

Humboldt Participant Breakdown



- A total of **26 participants attended** the Community Compliance Forum. The majority of attendees identified as government agencies, science and academia, and individuals/community members followed by fishing representatives and volunteers.
- A total of **32 people registered** for the Forum and received MPA-related information, educational resources, and additional avenues for sharing input in the Forum follow-up email.
- It is estimated that the Forum resulted in at least **1 new Collaborative sign-up**.
- In-meeting Zoom poll results indicated that 87% of respondents were “Very Familiar” or “Somewhat Familiar” with MPAs and 60% identified as current Collaborative members.

Compliance Concerns



This chart summarizes the number of times each MPA compliance concern was mentioned during the Forum discussions and in the post-Forum evaluation forms, Google surveys, and printed surveys. Concerns are organized into general categories based on the overall input from the community. See the Statewide Compliance Forum Report for more category detail.

Compliance Concerns

Compliance Concerns in Detail

• **Habitat Threats**

- ◇ Diminishing dunes, erosion from invasive European beach grass removal, and loss of eelgrass were brought up as concerns in the South Humboldt Bay State Marine Recreational Management Area (SMRMA).

• **Shift/Increase in Fishing Pressure**

- ◇ Participants mentioned fishing the line for surf perch by hook and line at Samoa SMCA.
- ◇ Commercial crab pots have been seen on the MPA boundary of Reading Rock SMR and in Steamboat Rock Special Closure.

• **Commercial Kelp/Algae Harvest**

- ◇ Similar to the Del Norte Compliance Forum, participants were concerned about the harvest of large amounts of kelp/algae and the concern regarding kelp leases at False Klamath Cove.

• **Trash/Pollution**

- ◇ Discussion around trash was about (mostly) fishing related debris along the Lost Coast Trail; 1,000 pounds of debris was removed by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) rangers in 2020.

• **Poaching in MPA/FGC Violations**

- ◇ Shore-based fishing for surf perch and take of sand crabs at Reading Rock SMCA occurs regularly, especially at the southern boundary.
- ◇ Commercial crab traps were observed in Mattole Canyon SMR during a Coast Guard fly over.
- ◇ Backpackers/hikers harvest mussels along the entire Lost Coast Trail, including in the two MPAs.
- ◇ Surf fishing occurs at Miller Flat in Big Flat SMCA.

• **Harmful Tidepooling**

- ◇ Harvesting from tidepools was said to occur along the Lost Coast Trail (e.g., mussels), mostly in Big Flat SMCA and a limited amount in Sea Lion Gulch SMR.

• **Other Code Violations**

- ◇ The only other code violation mentioned was driving on the beach.

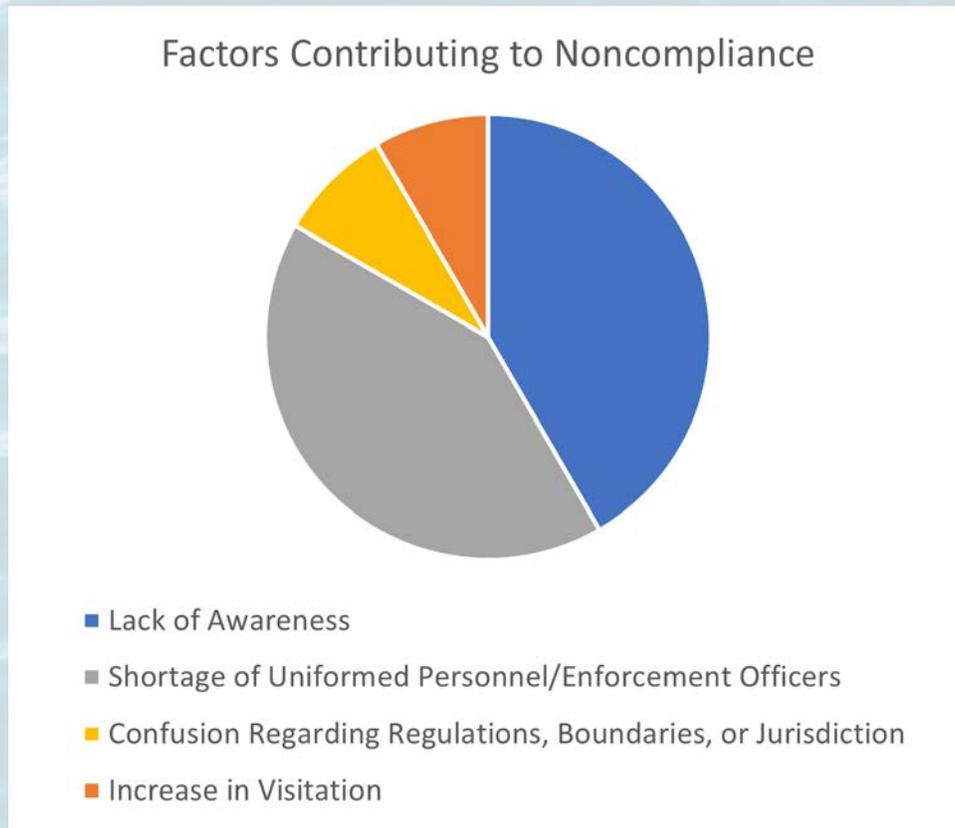
• **Other**

- ◇ Participants noted a proposed wind project and fish processing plant at Samoa SMCA.

• **Wildlife Disturbance**

- ◇ People are getting too close to the new elephant seal colony by Punta Gorda lighthouse.

Contributing Factors



This chart summarizes the potential factors contributing to noncompliance in or near MPAs mentioned during the Forum discussions and in the post-Forum evaluation forms, Google surveys, and printed surveys. Factors are organized into general categories based on the overall input from the community. See the Statewide Compliance Forum Report for more category detail.

Across all the Forums, participants commonly mentioned an increase in visitation, a lack of awareness, a shortage of both enforcement officers and enforcement action, and confusion regarding regulations, boundaries, or jurisdiction as concerns. Due to their general nature and commonality across the state, these concerns were identified as underlying factors potentially contributing to noncompliance. During 2020, visitation to the coast and MPAs was elevated, especially in the summer months (except during mandated beach closures) in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contributing Factors

Potential Factors Contributing to Noncompliance in Detail

- **Lack of Awareness**
 - ◇ There is a low level of awareness of marine protected areas among the public.
- **Shortage of Uniformed Personnel/Enforcement Officers**
 - ◇ Mentions included a lack of enforcement capacity or presence (no North Coast patrol vessel yet), an inability to respond, or a diversion of marine enforcement resources to other priorities (wildfires).
 - ◇ Participants suggested boat patrols and flyovers (USCG) as enforcement actions.
- **Confusion Regarding Regulations, Boundaries, or Jurisdiction**
 - ◇ There was confusion around whether signs were required for MPA regulations like they are for hunting regulations.
 - ◇ A need for boundary markers visible from sea was expressed.
- **Increase in Visitation**
 - ◇ More locals and out of town visitors are exploring the coast and MPAs during the pandemic.
 - ◇ More visitors to the Lost Coast have impacted the new elephant seal colony at the Punta Gorda lighthouse.

Recommended Solutions



This chart summarizes the number of times each MPA compliance solution was mentioned during the Forum discussions and in the post-Forum evaluation forms, Google surveys, and printed surveys. Solutions are organized into general categories based on the overall input from the community. See the next page and Appendix for more detail.

Recommended Solutions

Recommended Compliance Solutions in Detail

• Signage

- ◇ There is a general need for more, updated, or new signage.
- ◇ Participants want signs
 - that mark boundaries or have directional arrows,
 - at Reading Rock SMCA southern boundary (Redwood Creek),
 - at the Trinidad launch ramp with a regulatory focus,
 - at the hunting pullout at the south spit at South Humboldt Bay SMRMA,
 - at the Mattole trailhead kiosk for elephant seals,
 - and BLM signs to prevent foraging at the start and end of the Lost Coast Trail.
- ◇ Participants emphasized a need for regulatory signage that include maps and the CalTIP number.

• Targeted Education & Outreach Programs/Events

- ◇ Participants want to use the existing MPA Teacher Toolkits in the classrooms more and suggested targeting teachers and superintendent of schools.
- ◇ Participants suggested a debris reporting program for along the Lost Coast.

• More Enforcement Officers

- ◇ More enforcement actions are needed such as boat patrols/flyovers and sharing key enforcement experiences between agencies.

• Boundary Markers/Buoys

- ◇ A marker at the southern boundary of Reading Rock SMCA or a sign with arrow indicating “MPA here, restrictions may apply” was suggested.

• Stakeholder Engagement

- ◇ More people/local groups should be involved in the Humboldt Collaborative.
- ◇ Members should participate in the Fish and Game Commission Marine Resources Committee meetings.

Recommended Solutions

Recommended Compliance Solutions in Detail Continued

- **Printed Materials**

- ◇ Creating Humboldt-focused waterproof pamphlets/maps/regulations for anglers was mentioned.

- **More Docents/Volunteers**

- ◇ More volunteers could be utilized along Samoa and Reading Rock.
- ◇ Petrolia locals should be engaged in new MPA Watch site for Cape Mendocino and Mattole MPAs.

- **Monitoring/Restoration**

- ◇ Monitoring for endangered species
- ◇ Native marine plants (e.g., eelgrass in Humboldt Bay)
- ◇ Monitoring and the removal of invasive grasses (e.g., European beach grass) at Humboldt Bay SMRMA

- **MPA Boundary Photos**

- ◇ Surveyed photos of MPAs shown in presentation would be useful for the enforcement training manuals and potentially for inclusion in outreach materials.

- **Digital Resources**

- ◇ More apps like FishLegal are needed.

Wrap-Up Discussion

1. What are our high priority needs?

- Address areas where fishing the line is prevalent with improved awareness around MPAs and regulations, and increased uniformed personal/enforcement officer presence on the coast and in MPAs
- Boundary markers and better signage is needed
- Address commercial kelp/algae harvest and leases in collaboration with Del Norte County

2. What programs or projects could be used to increase compliance?

- Address signage needs (sign type, location, messaging)
- Develop targeted education and outreach programs/events – MPA Teacher Toolkits and youth outreach

3. What key partners need to be at the table to assist with law enforcement?

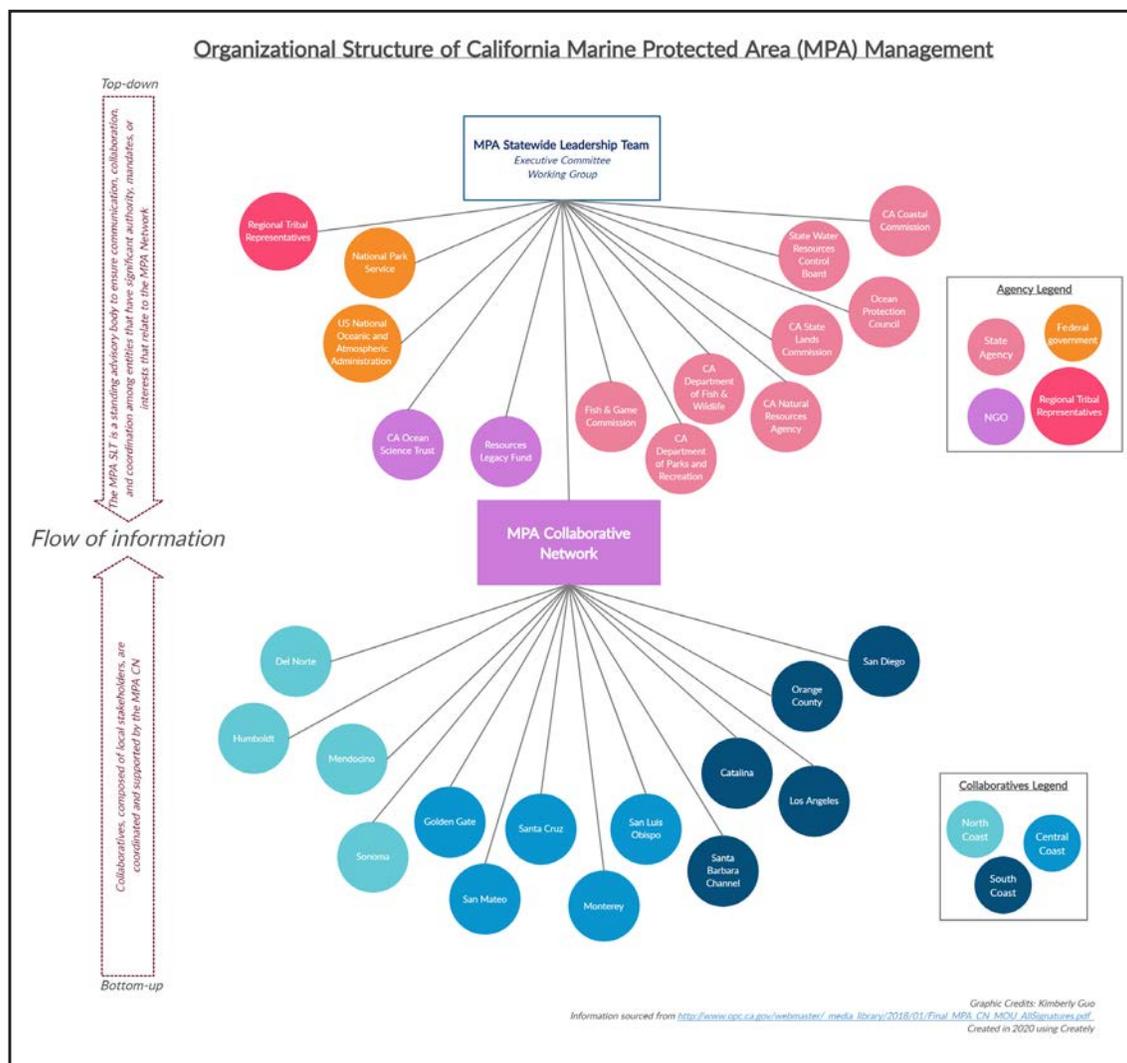
- California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW)
- California State Parks/National Parks
- Bureau of Land Management
- US Coast Guard
- Allied agencies (uniformed personnel)

Issues for Elevation

As a member of the [MPA Statewide Leadership Team](#) (MSLT), the MPA Collaborative Network can elevate issues, concerns, and ideas shared by stakeholders at the local level to the State managing agencies that have jurisdiction over MPAs in California.

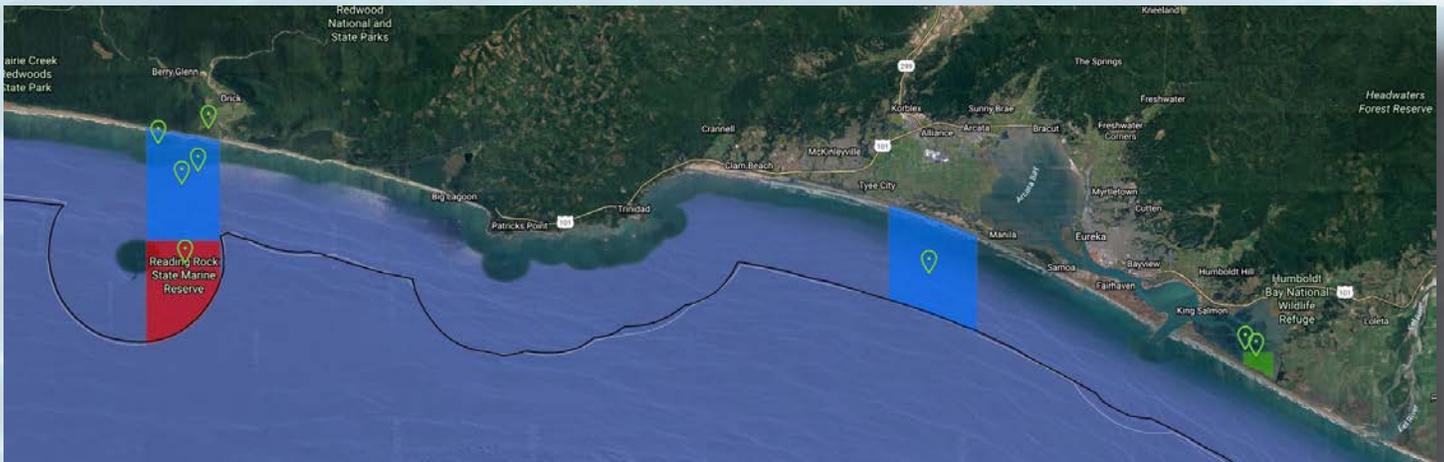
Issues identified during the Forum that have a potential for elevation and discussion with the MSLT include:

- ◇ Need to address commercial kelp/seaweed/marine plants harvest (analogous to Del Norte) and decline (e.g., eelgrass), and related habitat/ecosystem threats, particularly with research and monitoring.
- ◇ Revisit the need for MPA boundary markers or flags at the southern boundary of Reading Rock between the SMCA and SMR.



Interactive Map Results

Areas of MPA compliance concern were anonymously identified by Forum participants on interactive maps using the virtual collaboration platform Poll Everywhere. A total of 8 participants put pins on the map with 15 total responses (pins). Green pin shapes indicate the location of a virtual push pin placed by a participant. The pinned areas corresponded with the MPA compliance discussions.



Identified areas of concern in and near all northern Humboldt County MPAs (top) and southern Humboldt County MPAs (bottom).

Glossary

The Glossary defines the acronyms used in any or all the Compliance Forum Reports.

- **ADA:** American Disabilities Act.
- **ASBS:** Area of Special Biological Significance.
- **BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, and people of color.
- **CaITIP:** Californian's Turn in Poachers and Polluters.
- **CDFW:** California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- **CHP:** California Highway Patrol.
- **COVID-19:** Coronavirus Disease 2019 (also referred to as COVID and the pandemic).
- **CPFV:** Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel (also referred to as a party boat).
- **DA:** District Attorney.
- **FGC:** Fish and Game Code.
- **GPS:** Global Positioning System.
- **HOA:** Homeowner's Association.
- **M2:** Marine Monitor (M2) Radar System.
- **MPA:** Marine Protected Area.
- **MSLT:** MPA Statewide Leadership Team.
- **NMS:** National Marine Sanctuary.
- **NOAA:** National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.
- **NPS:** National Park Service.
- **OLE:** Office of Law Enforcement (within NOAA).
- **QR:** Quick Response [code].
- **SCP:** Scientific Collecting Permit.
- **SCUBA:** Self-contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus.
- **SMCA:** State Marine Conservation Area.
- **SMR:** State Marine Reserve.
- **SMRMA:** State Marine Recreational Management Area.
- **SUP:** Stand Up Paddle Board.
- **ROV:** Remotely Operated Vehicle.
- **UC:** University of California.
- **USFWS:** United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
- **USCG:** United States Coast Guard.



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These materials and MPA Community Compliance Forums made possible by a grant from the California Ocean Protection Council's Once-Through Cooling (OTC) Interim Mitigation Fund.

**Learn more about the MPA Collaborative Network at
www.mpacollaborative.org**

Join your local MPA Collaborative to get involved in bottom-up resource management.

**Visit the California MPA website at
www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs**