

Santa Cruz County



Marine Protected Area (MPA) Community Compliance Forum Report November 4, 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 Santa Cruz 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.

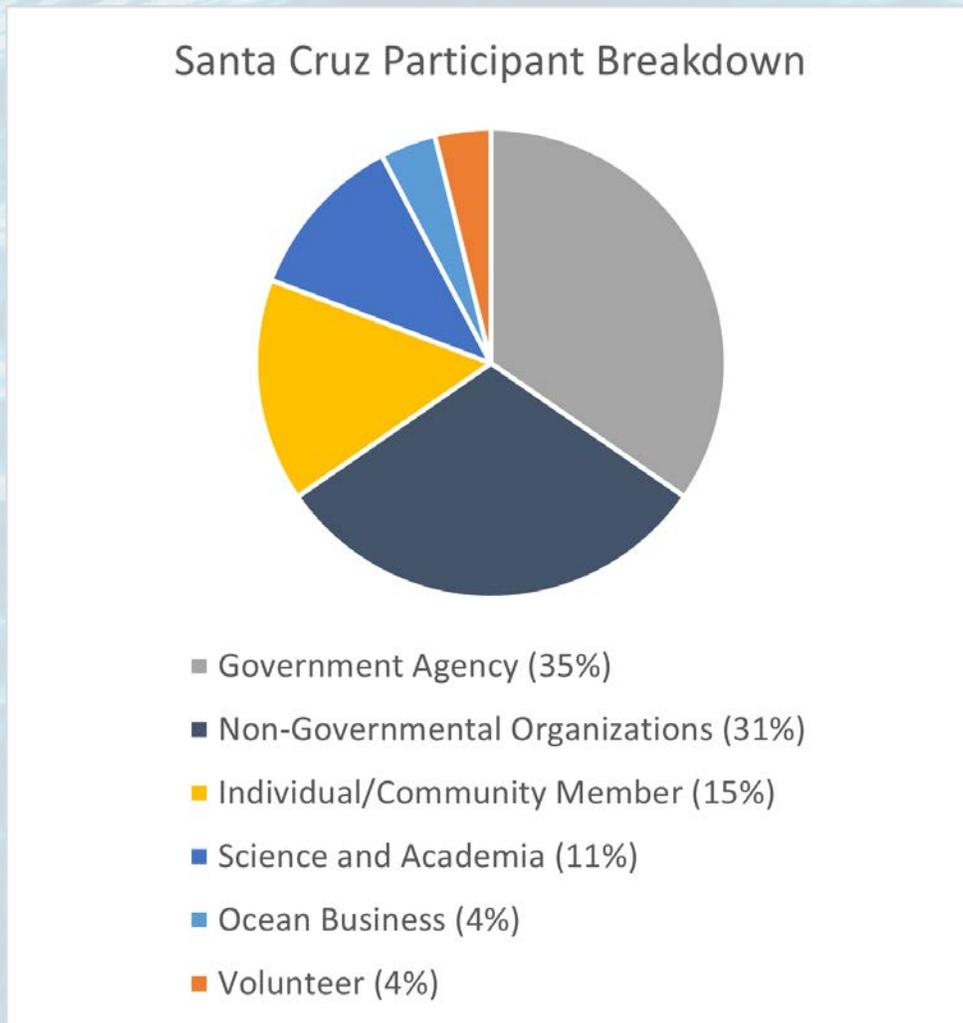
Key Takeaways

- There has been an increased number of visitors and associated impact since the COVID-19 pandemic began. This includes more trash, overtake of intertidal species (e.g., snails, hermit crabs), and poor tidepooling etiquette.
- Participants expressed concern regarding fishing in Soquel Canyon SMR (e.g., commercial rockfish, crab) and Año Nuevo SMR and boats potentially driving squid out of Greyhound SMCA.
- Wildlife disturbance (e.g., flushing, entanglement) of elephant seals is occurring at Año Nuevo.
- Ocean education and MPA awareness can be improved through targeted, bilingual outreach to school groups and youth environmental clubs (e.g., Sea Scouts). There needs to be incentives to participate (goodie bags and/or field trips to the ocean).
- Improved signage with translations is needed county wide, especially at Highway 1 pocket beaches.
- The lack of awareness appears to be tourist focused.

Highlighted Compliance Concerns

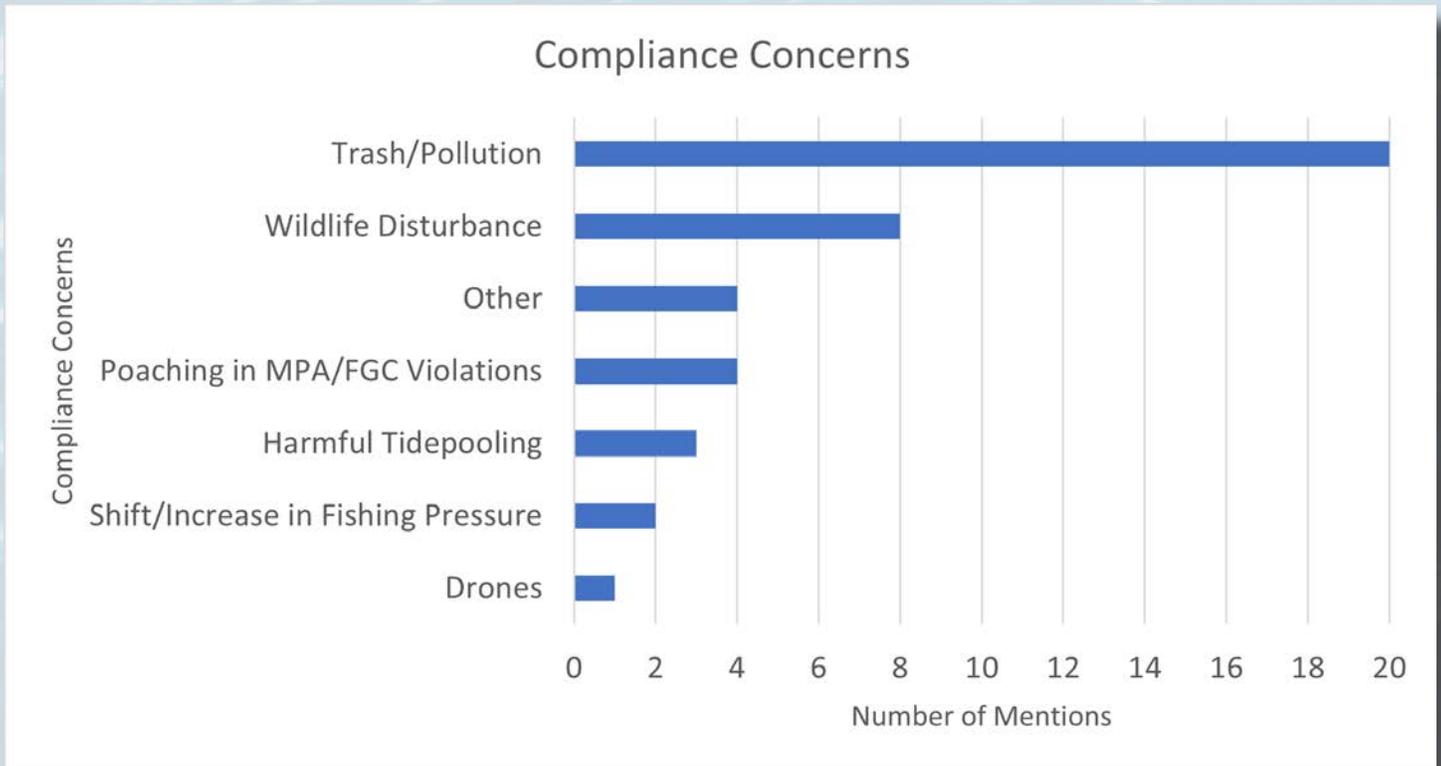
- Trash, pollution, and runoff was the top concern, especially in Natural Bridges SMR and along Highway 1 pocket beaches.
- Marine mammal (elephant seal) disturbance occurs at Año Nuevo by low altitude flyovers.
- Unlawful fishing occurs in Monterey Bay MPAs and in Año Nuevo SMR.
- Participants were concerned about the heavy impact of visitors to the intertidal.

Participant Breakdown



- A total of **25 participants attended** the Santa Cruz Community Compliance Forum. The majority of attendees identified as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, individuals/community members, and science/academia. Ocean businesses and volunteers also attended.
- A total of **33 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 **6 new Collaborative sign-ups**.
- In-meeting Zoom poll results indicated that 94% of respondents were “Very” or “Somewhat Familiar” with MPAs and 63% of respondents were 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

• **Trash/Pollution**

- ◇ There is trash along Highway 1 (trash, cigarette butts).
- ◇ Illegal camping and trash were observed at Four Mile beach and Shark Tooth Beach.
- ◇ Runoff from brussels sprout field at Four Mile beach was observed; hydrochloric acid barrels were draining into the lagoon at northern boundary of Natural Bridges SMR.
- ◇ There has been an increase in fishing line and fishing gear debris at Capitola Pier, Seacliff Pier, and the banks and jetties at Elkhorn Slough SMCA.
- ◇ It is still unknown the extent of pollution/runoff from wildfires (UC Santa Cruz is monitoring the impacts to intertidal areas).

• **Wildlife Disturbance**

- ◇ Low flyovers by military aircraft & people/surfers approaching elephant seal bulls at Año Nuevo.
- ◇ Entangled birds and whales were seen in greater Monterey Bay.
- ◇ Feral cats have been seen disturbing snowy plover nests.

• **Poaching in MPA/FGC Violations**

- ◇ Illegal take in Año Nuevo SMR, onshore and offshore hook & line fishing and tidepool collection.
- ◇ Crab pots and commercial rockfish take occurs at Soquel Canyon.
- ◇ Commercial squid occurs at Greyhound Rock.
- ◇ General over limit take, and common Fish & Game Code (FGC) violations such as fishing without a license or take of undersized fish throughout Santa Cruz County.

• **Harmful Tidepooling**

- ◇ Collecting for consumption occurs at southern boundary of Año Nuevo. Collection of invertebrates using a colander to collect snails and crabs was mentioned.
- ◇ Poor tidepooler etiquette occurs at Natural Bridges and trampling (e.g., laying/beach chairs in tidepools and handling intertidal organisms).

• **Shift/Increase in Fishing Pressure**

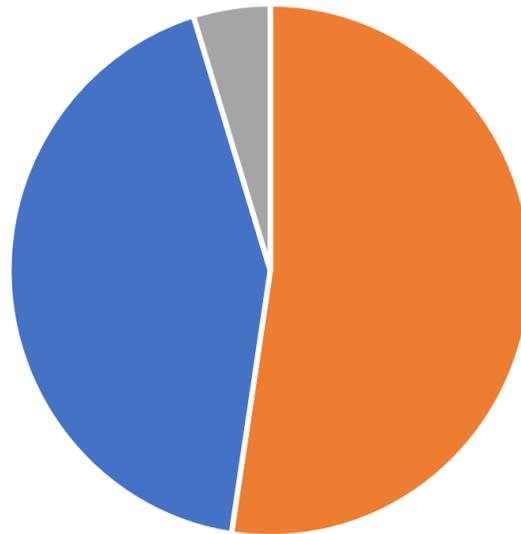
- ◇ There has been a shift in fishing pressure from the closed Cement Ship Pier to Capitola and the Santa Cruz piers.

• **Drones**

- ◇ Flying drones and filming with GoPros off vessels near white sharks at Rio Del Mar, New Brighton, and Seacliff State Beaches. Drones and speeding boats were associated with white shark research and tours.

Contributing Factors

Factors Contributing to Noncompliance



- Increase in Visitation
- Lack of Awareness
- Shortage of Uniformed Personnel/Enforcement Officers

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.

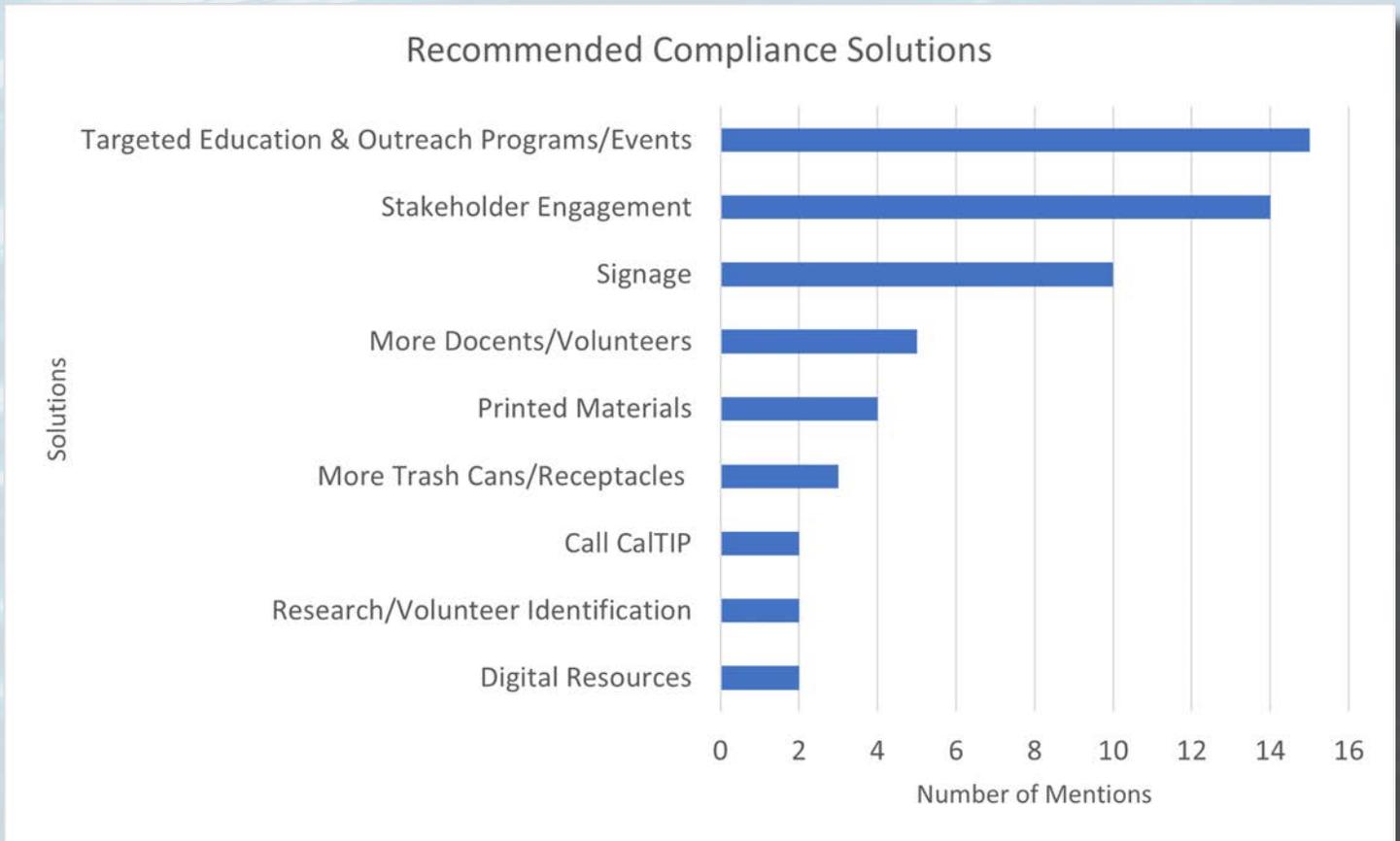
Across all the Forums, participants commonly mentioned an increase in visitation, a lack of awareness, a shortage of both enforcement officers and enforcement action, and confusion regarding regulations, boundaries, or jurisdiction as concerns. Due to their general nature and commonality across the state, 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

- **Increase in Visitation**
 - ◇ More people were visiting from out of the county or from inland areas during COVID.
 - ◇ More people were renting cars and driving down Highway 1.
- **Lack of Awareness**
 - ◇ There is a general lack of awareness of marine protected areas among public.
 - ◇ Participants specifically mentioned a need for outreach about Leave No Trace style camping.
 - ◇ Participants mentioned a need for Spanish translations of outreach materials and information.
- **Shortage of Uniformed Personnel/Enforcement Officers**
 - ◇ Marine enforcement resources are often diverted to other priorities (i.e., fire prevention and public safety).

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 Statewide Compliance Forum Report for more category detail.

Recommended Solutions

Recommended Compliance Solutions in Detail

• Targeted Education & Outreach Programs/Events

- ◇ Junior high and high school students could be engaged in ocean stewardship through targeted outreach events and field trips.
 - Field trips could be arranged to Año Nuevo to visit the elephant seals for clubs/schools in Santa Cruz.
 - Kayak trips to the Elkhorn Slough MPAs could be arranged with a bilingual docent for clubs/schools in Aptos or Watsonville, with goal of training students as future “guides.”
- ◇ MPA “goodie bags” could be used to engage communities who might not be able to afford conservation/sustainable materials, such as recyclable (bamboo) utensils. MPA outreach materials could be included in goodie bag.
- ◇ Youth involvement could also include creating, supporting, or engaging ocean or environmental (marine biology) student clubs or visiting existing ocean focused youth groups such as the Sea Scouts.

• Stakeholder Engagement

- ◇ More people/local groups should be involved in the Santa Cruz Collaborative including
 - Youth/school groups/clubs
 - Spanish speaking community members (Watsonville, Pajaro High School students)
 - Tribal members (Amah Mutsun)
 - Anglers

• Signage

- ◇ There is general need for more, updated, or new signage.
- ◇ There is a need for signs in Spanish.
- ◇ Save Our Shores may redesign their signs.

• More Docents/Volunteers

- ◇ Revisit the Save Our Shores Dock Walker Program.
- ◇ Expand the focus of plankton monitors.
- ◇ Have docents at popular locations/access points (e.g., harbors, piers, tidepools) to support compliance efforts.

Recommended Solutions

Recommended Compliance Solutions in Detail Continued

- **Printed Materials**

- ◊ Printed materials/literature/handouts would be helpful for Dockwalkers, Plankton Monitors, other docents, and harbor businesses to use in outreach.

- **More Trash Cans/Receptacles**

- ◊ More trash cans are needed in Natural Bridges SMR (through State Parks at Shark Tooth beach and Panther beach) and at Elkhorn Slough.
- ◊ Canisters for fishing line (monofilament) need to be installed on the piers and emptied regularly.

- **Call CalTIP**

- ◊ People should call the CalTIP hotline to report observed violations.

- **Research/Volunteer Identification**

- ◊ Researchers should be easily identifiable in the field (with banners and/or vests), especially research vessels with permission to study white sharks off Seacliff beach.

- **Digital Resources**

- ◊ Apps like FishLegal are helpful to determine locations of MPAs.

Wrap-Up Discussion

1. What are our high priority needs?

- Address poaching in MPAs/Fish and Game Code (FGC) violations and unlawful tidepooling. Specific examples include boats fishing in Año Nuevo, crab pots/traps at Soquel Canyon, poaching, and tidepool take at Natural Bridges.
- Address increased visitation and the associated impact: wildlife disturbance and trash/fishing debris.
- Improve awareness around MPAs and regulations.

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

- Targeted outreach, educational programs/events like school/youth clubs, engaging tourism companies, docent-led outreach to anglers on piers/at harbors.
- Signage – using local Santa Cruz artists, sign translations, graffiti resistant signage, and signs in strategic locations (e.g., on pocket beaches from Wilder to Año Nuevo).
- A programmatic approach to advertising research and volunteer activities and personnel in the field and making sure they are easily identifiable (e.g., vests, research banners).

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

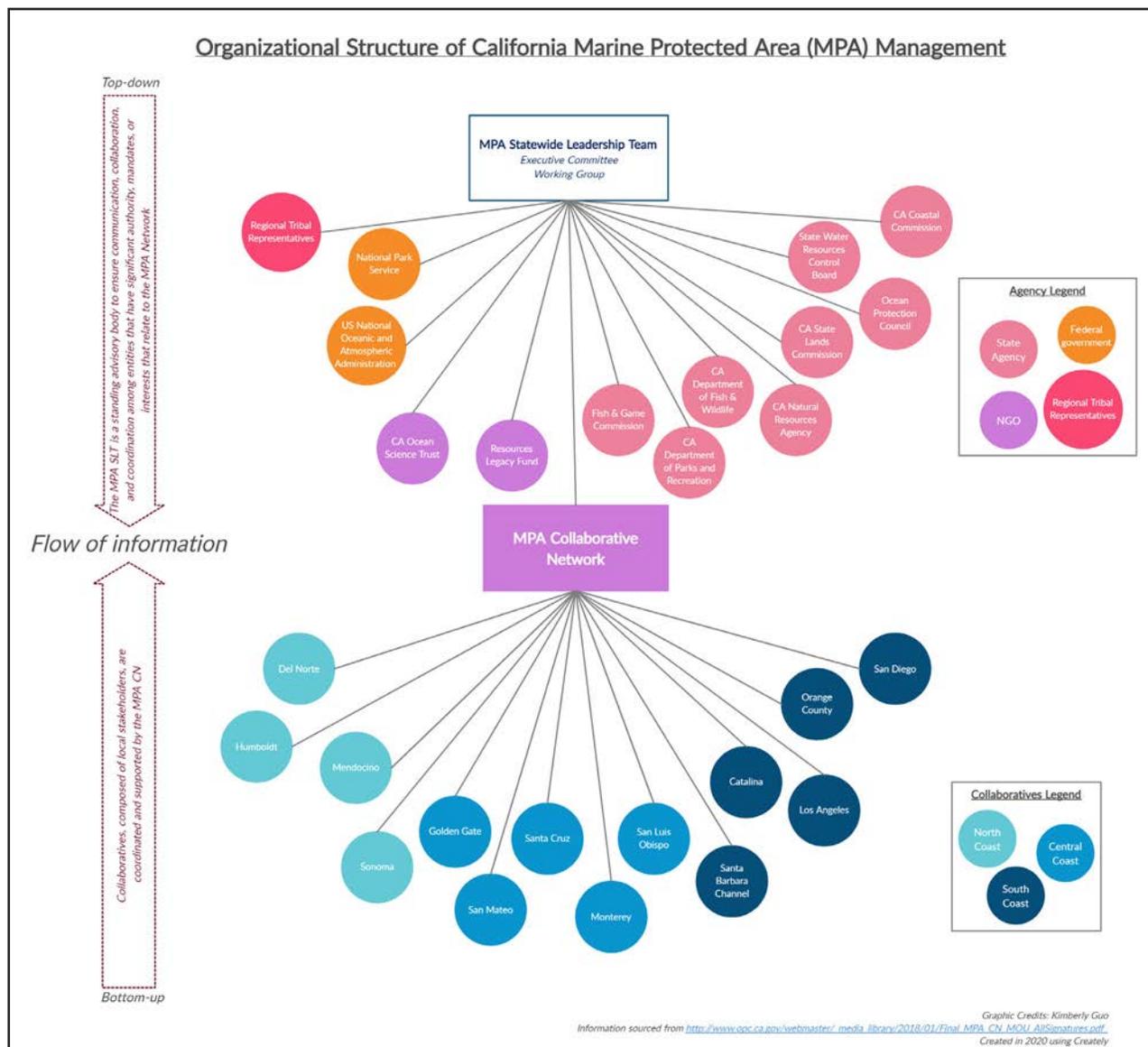
- California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW)
- California State Parks
- US Coast Guard Auxiliary
- County Sheriffs
- Harbor Patrol
- Allied agencies (uniformed personnel)

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.

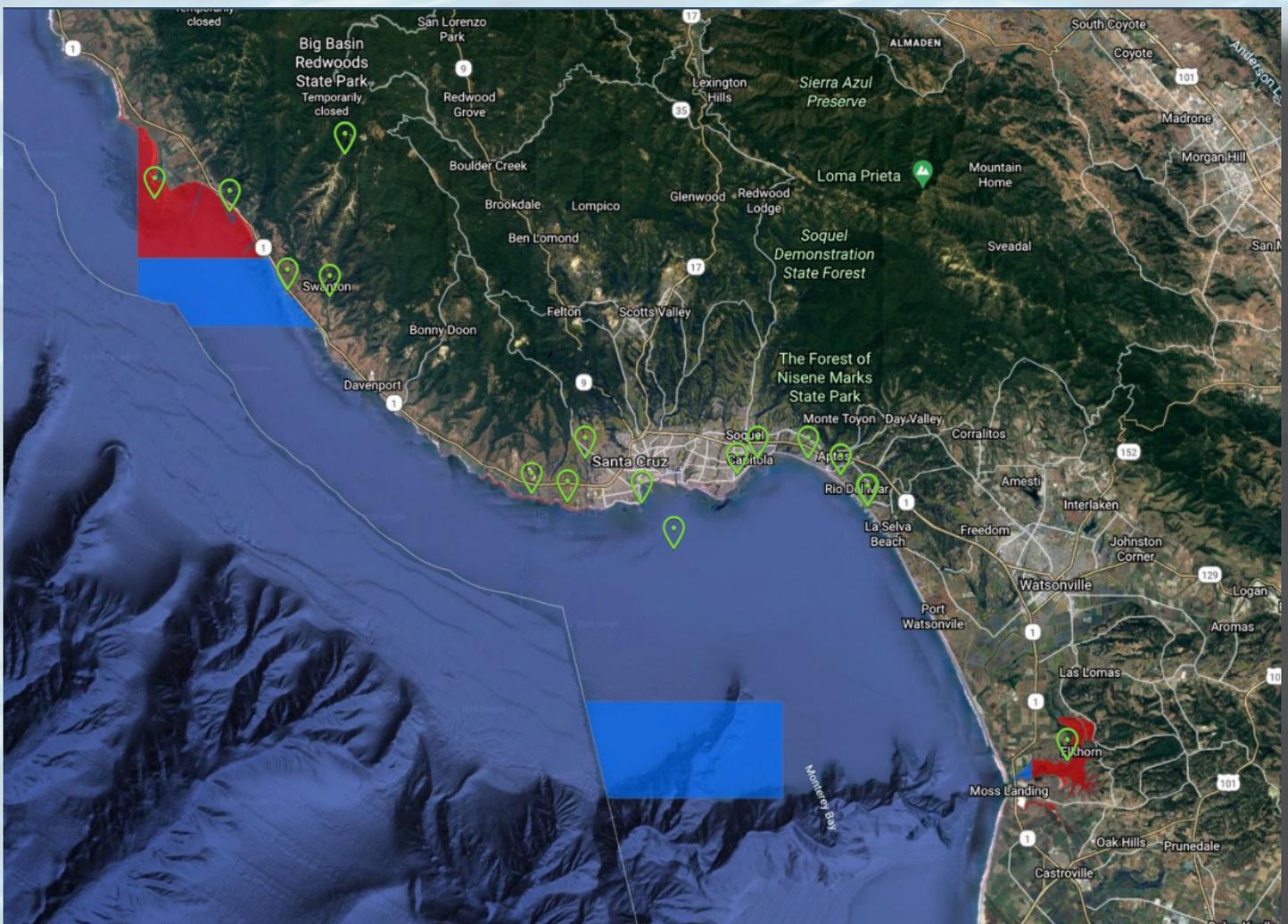
Issues identified during the Forum that have a potential for elevation and discussion with the MSLT include:

- ◇ Need to address the hydrochloric acid barrels draining into the lagoon at the northern boundary of Natural Bridges SMR (at Four Mile beach).



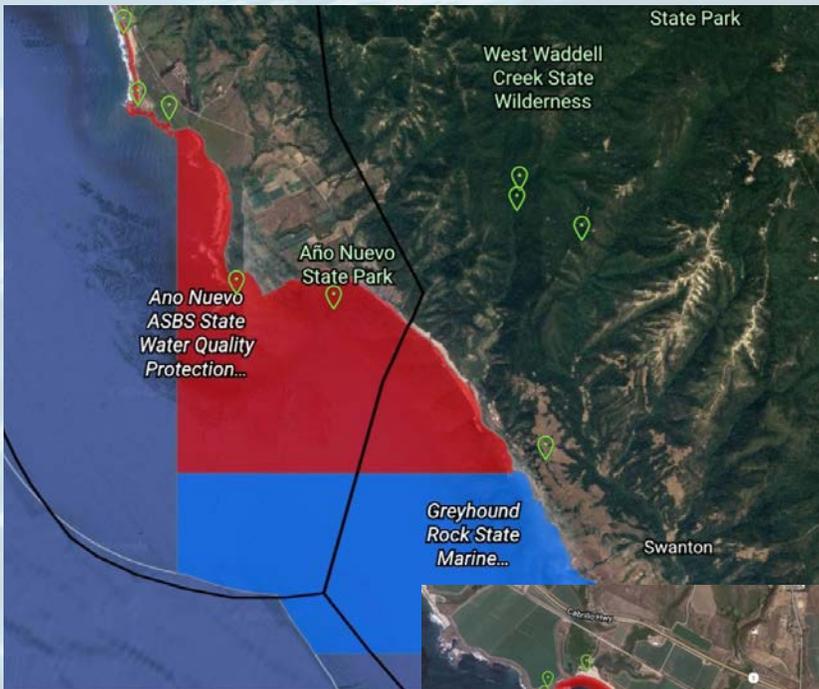
Interactive Map Results

Areas of MPA compliance concern were anonymously identified by Forum participants on interactive maps using the virtual collaboration platform Poll Everywhere. A total of 10 participants put pins on the map with 40 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 Santa Cruz County MPAs.

Interactive Map Results



Identified areas of concern in and near Año Nuevo SMR and Greyhound Rock SMCA (left). Inland pins are to identify concerns regarding erosion, runoff, and pollution from the wildfires.



Identified areas of concern in and near Natural Bridges SMR (below).



Identified areas of concern in and near the greater Monterey Bay area (above).

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**