

Orange County Coastkeeper (Coastkeeper) is a nonprofit clean water organization that serves as a proactive steward of our fresh- and saltwater ecosystems. We work collaboratively with diverse groups in the public and private sectors to achieve healthy, accessible, and sustainable water resources for the region. We implement innovative, effective programs in education, advocacy, restoration, research, enforcement, and conservation.

The Orange County Marine Protected Area (OCMPA) Watch Program enlists volunteers, community groups and local government to monitor human activity in the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve and Conservation Areas (SMRs & SMCAs), Crystal Cove, Dana Point, and Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCAs). MPA Watch is a statewide program with the Orange County component run by Orange County Coastkeeper (OCCK). The goal of MPA watch is to provide information to enhance management and performance of Marine Protected Areas.

Executive Summary

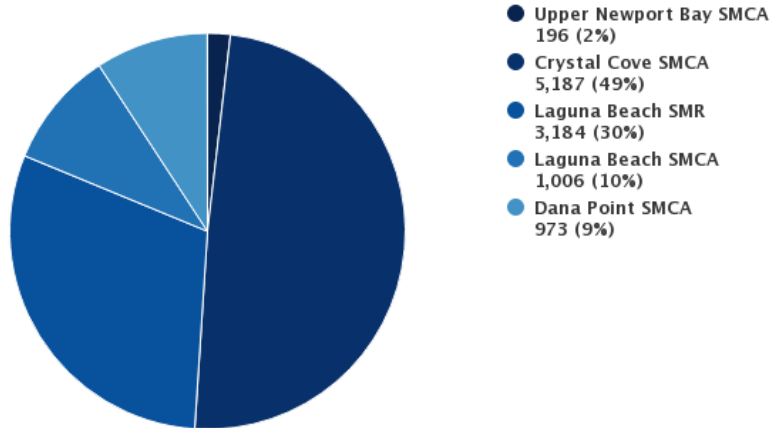
During this period 213 surveys were completed at 27 MPA survey sites by 20 volunteers. There were 26 potential violations observed out of 10,546 total activities documented. Surveys were suspended from March 15 through June 1 2020 due to state and local activity restrictions and beach closures related to the pandemic.

Human Use of MPAs January – June 2020

Overview

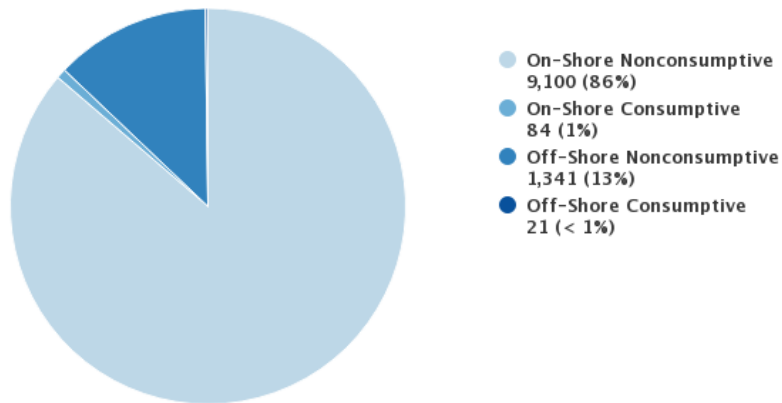
Top 5 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
10,546 total activity events



All MPAs Combined

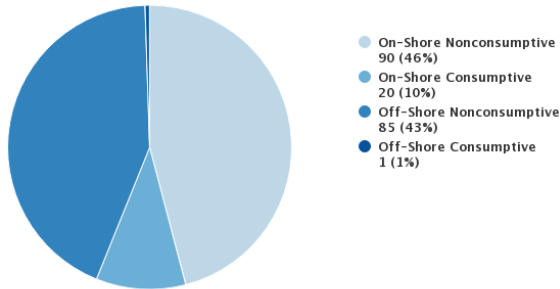
January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
10,546 activity events



Activity by MPA

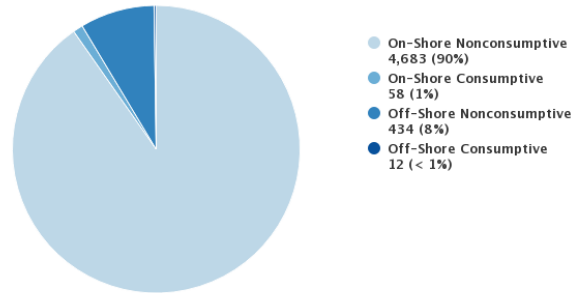
Upper Newport Bay SMCA

January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
196 activity events



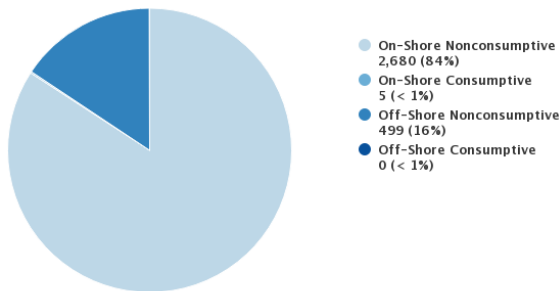
Crystal Cove SMCA

January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
5,187 activity events



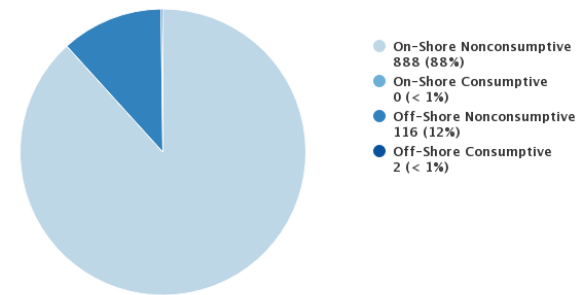
Laguna Beach SMR

January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
3,184 activity events



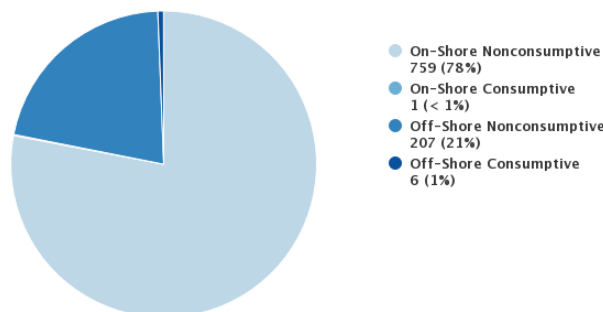
Laguna Beach SMCA

January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
1,006 activity events



Dana Point SMCA

January 1, 2020 – June 30, 2020
973 activity events



Activity Classifications

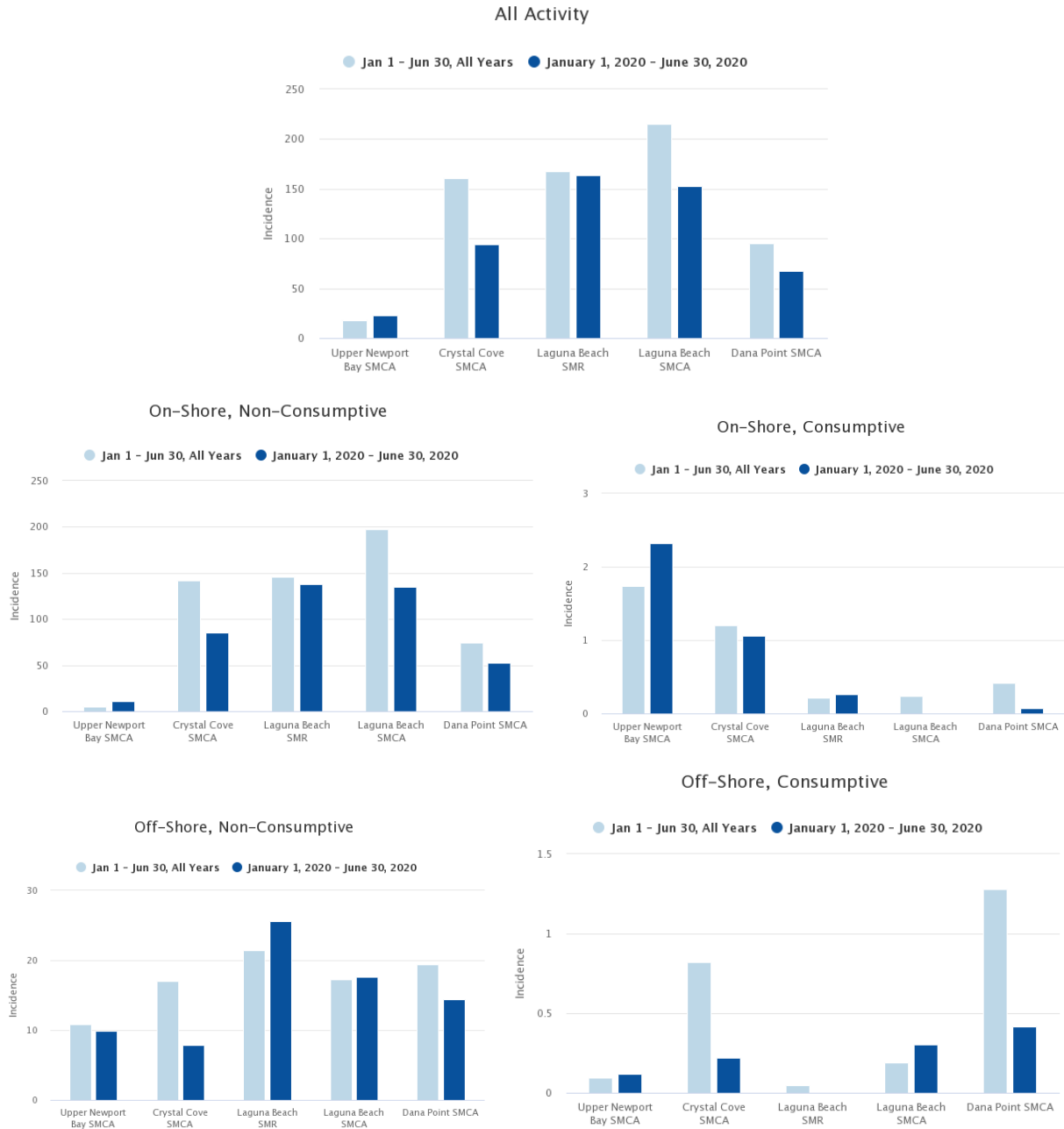
On-Shore - Activities that take place on a sandy or rocky beach. Excludes bluffs, trails, sea walls, parking lots, or other man-made structures. Includes recreation, tidepooling, shore-based fishing, etc.

Off-Shore - Activities that take place offshore, typically in knee-deep water or deeper. Includes surfing, SCUBA diving, kayaking, boat fishing, etc.

Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource (i.e. fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.

Non-Consumptive - An activity in which a natural resource is not collected.

Activity Incidence by MPA, Comparison Charts



The above charts show incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch in Orange County. Incidence is calculated as number of activities recorded divided by total survey-miles.

Survey Count by MPA

MPA	Jan 1 Jun 30 All Years	Jan 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2020
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	293	22
Crystal Cove SMCA	391	87
Laguna Beach SMR	634	60
Laguna Beach SMCA	165	25
Dana Point SMCA	196	19
All MPAs Combined	1,679	213

Activity Incidence by MPA

MPA	Total Combined	
	Jan 1 Jun 30 All Years	Jan 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2020
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	18.0	22.8
Dana Point SMCA	95.6	67.6
Crystal Cove SMCA	160.8	94.3
Laguna Beach SMCA	215.4	152.4
Laguna Beach SMR	167.5	163.3
All MPAs Combined	130.4	101.3

MPA	On-Shore				
	Non-Consumptive			Consumptive	
	◆ Jan 1 Jun 30 All Years	◆ Jan 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2020	◆	Jan 1 Jun 30 All Years	▲ Jan 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2020
Laguna Beach SMR	145.8	137.4		0.2	0.3
Laguna Beach SMCA	197.7	134.5		0.2	0.0
Dana Point SMCA	74.5	52.7		0.4	0.1
Crystal Cove SMCA	141.8	85.1		1.2	1.1
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	5.3	10.5		1.7	2.3
All MPAs Combined	111.4	87.4		0.8	0.8

MPA	Off-Shore				
	Non-Consumptive			Consumptive	
	◆ Jan 1 Jun 30 All Years	◆ Jan 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2020	◆	Jan 1 Jun 30 All Years	▲ Jan 1, 2020 through Jun 30, 2020
Laguna Beach SMR	21.4	25.6		0.0	0.0
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	10.9	9.9		0.1	0.1
Laguna Beach SMCA	17.2	17.6		0.2	0.3
Crystal Cove SMCA	17.0	7.9		0.8	0.2
Dana Point SMCA	19.4	14.4		1.3	0.4
All MPAs Combined	17.7	12.9		0.5	0.2

The above table shows incidence values for each MPA monitored by MPA Watch in Orange County.
Incidence is calculated as number of activities recorded divided by total survey-miles.

Notes on Calculating Incidence

The baseline rate for the reporting period was calculated by summing the total use count for each category during the same period from each previous year and dividing this value by the transect miles surveyed at each site. The miles surveyed were calculated by first identifying the length of each transect for all the MPA's in question and multiplying the length of the transect by the number of surveys that had been taken along that transect during the same time period. For MPA's with multiple transects, the total distance traveled for each transect within the MPA were summed together to get the total miles surveyed within that MPA.

COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic No surveys were conducted between March 15th and June 1st 2020. This has created a gap in our data collection that will affect comparisons of this time period to previous years. Additionally, when surveys resumed there was a larger amount of people at the beach than previously observed. We feel this is largely due to people being displaced from their normal activities such as shopping, movies and school and visiting the beach instead.

Beaches closures were in effect during some of the time surveys were suspended.

- Laguna Beach closed March 23rd and reopened on May 5th.
City beaches were closed on July 4th and 5th.
- Dana Point: Closed March 23rd. Reopened May 5th.
- Newport Beach: Closed March 18th. Reopened May 6th.
City beaches were closed July 3-5th.
- Crystal Cove State Park: Closed March 27. Reopened May 16.
State beaches were closed July 4-5th.

Breakdown by MPA

Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Area

For the months January through June 2020 there were 22 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data showed a rate of 11.38 total use count per total miles (17.22) surveyed in the Upper Newport Bay's State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA).

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities both onshore (46%) and offshore (43%), such as: beach and ocean recreation. The remaining 11% of human use was comprised of fishing activities.

During this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed no potential MPA violations in the Upper Newport Bay MPA Watch area.

The recreational take of finfish by hook and line is allowed from shore only.

Crystal Cove State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2020 there were 87 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data showed a rate of 27.88 total use count per total miles (186.03) surveyed.

People in the MPA were primarily taking part in both onshore (91%) and offshore (9%) activities. Tidepooling (6%) and fishing (1%) accounted for 10% of the observations documented in MPA Watch surveys.

During this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed nineteen (19) potential MPA violations in the Crystal Cove MPA Watch area (Los Trancos and Little Corona).

According to volunteers, illegal hand collection from tidepools is commonly observed. Regulations do not allow any taking from tidepools in the Crystal Cove SMCA.

Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January and June of 2020, there were 60 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows a rate of total use count per total miles (111.6) surveyed.

People in the MPA were taking part in onshore (84%) and offshore (16%) activities. The most popular coastal activity in Laguna Beach SMR were tidepooling (9.0%) and offshore recreations (9.5%).

During this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed five (5) potential MPA violations (Taking from tidepools) in Show's Cove, Woods Cove and Heisler MPA Watch areas. According to volunteers, illegal hand collections and fishing activities are commonly observed. Regulations does not allow any taking in the Laguna Beach SMR.

Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2020 there were 25 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows a rate of 32.45 total use count per total miles (31) surveyed.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in non-consumptive activities both on and off-shore, like beach and ocean recreation. This accounted for 99.8% of the activities logged in MPA Watch surveys. The most popular coastal activity in Laguna Beach SMCA are wildlife watching and animal walking (2.0%). Other common activities are board sports (1.0%).

During this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed two (2) potential MPA violations (Boat fishing, Trap & Line) in the West Beach MPA Watch area.

No take allowed from Laguna Beach No-Take SMCA.

Dana Point State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2020 there were 19 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows a rate of 99.28 total use count per total miles (9.8) surveyed.

99.0% of the Dana Point coastal uses surveyed since MPA implementation are non-consumptive. The most popular coastal activities in Dana Point are general beach recreation (75.0%). Other common activities are tide pooling (3.0%) and offshore recreation (12.0%).

During this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed no potential MPA violations in the Dana Point MPA Watch area.

Regulations do not allow any taking from tidepools in the Dana Point SMCA.

Potential Violations

Rate of consumptive activities observed remains relatively low in all MPAs surveyed, accounting for less than 1% (0.25) of all observations recorded.

According to volunteers there were no MPA potential violations observed during surveys in the Upper Newport Bay Marine Conservation Area. The recreational take of finfish by hook and line is allowed from shore only.

However, during this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed nineteen (19) potential MPA violations in the Crystal Cove SMCA (Little Corona and Los Trancos). The recreational take of finfish by hook and line or by spearfishing is allowed; no take allowed from tidepools. According to volunteers, recurring issues with the illegal take and disturbance of tide pool organisms continues to be a problem during low tides.

Also, during this period (Jan- June 2020) we observed five (5) potential MPA violations in the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve Areas (Shaw's Cove, Wood Cove and Heisler). No take is allowed in the Laguna Beach SMR. According to volunteers there are occasional take violations in the reserve including the collection of biota and illegal fishing from the offshore.

Volunteers observed one (2) potential MPA violation in the Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area (West Beach). No take is allowed from the Laguna Beach No-Take SMCA. According to volunteers illegal fishing occurs occasionally on and offshore.

According to volunteers there were no MPA potential violations observed during surveys in the Dana Point Marine Conservation Area. Regulations do not allow any taking from tidepools in the Dana Point SMCA.

Next Steps

MPA Watch collaborates with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to distribute MPA Watch reports to regional managers in order to improve the management and enforcement of MPAs. MPA Watch is also looking to expand its network of partner organizations to enhance the scale and scope of MPA monitoring across California. MPA Watch makes our human use data available on our website to make it accessible to partners, resource agencies, municipalities, and other interested parties. One of the hopes of MPA Watch is that volunteers and community members help spread knowledge and awareness of MPAs to the communities that surround them, inspiring marine stewardship in our populations.

Additional Information

For additional information on MPA Watch, including survey sites, participating organizations, protocols and datasheets, media kit, and how to get involved, please visit mpawatch.org. Connect with MPA Watch on social media [@MPAWatchOrg](https://twitter.com/MPAWatchOrg).

For additional information regarding MPAs and regulations specific to the various classifications of MPAs please visit wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs. If you see an activity that violates MPA regulations, please call CalTip to report the violation at (888)-334-2258.

For more information about the work OC Coastkeeper does to conserve California's MPAs and other conservation projects please visit coastkeeper.org.