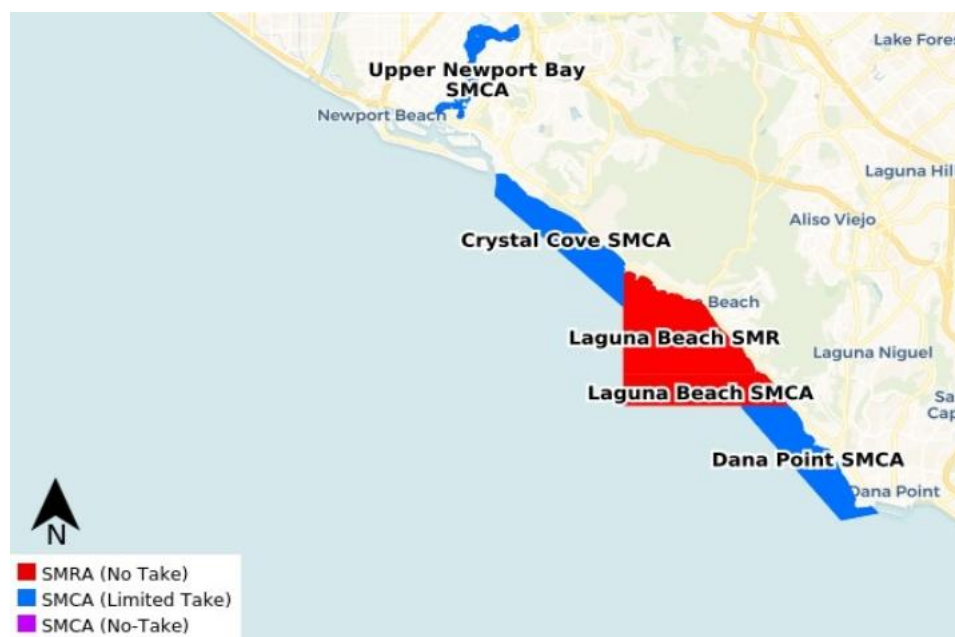


Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report

Orange County

January 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026

Map of Region's MPAs



MPA Watch is a statewide collaborative effort to collect critical human use data to enhance the management and conservation of California's marine protected areas (MPAs). MPA Watch collects data inside and outside of MPAs along California's coast, and data is compiled in a statewide database that allows us insight on how human uses change over time. MPA Watch trains volunteers to observe and collect unbiased data on coastal and marine resource use through standardized survey techniques. By involving local communities in this important work, MPA Watch programs inspire and empower stewardship, educate California communities about ocean ecosystems, and increase awareness of marine conservation.

Orange County Coastkeeper (OCCK) 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), and the 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. This report also includes MPA Watch data collected by California State Parks at Crystal Cove State Park. The goal of MPA Watch is to provide information to enhance the management and performance of Marine Protected Areas.

Orange County MPA Watch Report

January 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026

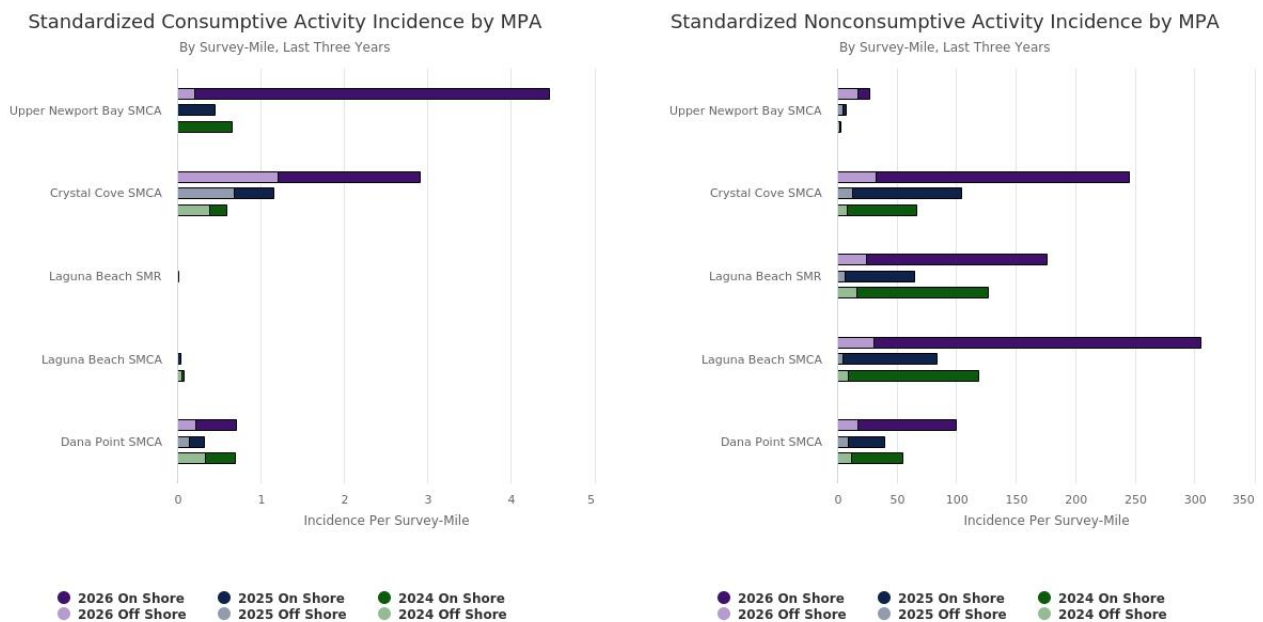
Page 1



Executive Summary

- During this period, 335 surveys were completed at 31 MPA survey sites in Orange County by 26 volunteers.
- There were 40 potential violations observed out of 26,904 total activities documented.
- 29 of the potential violations observed were at the Crystal Cove SMCA. 18 of the 100 surveys taken at Crystal Cove SMCA were taken by State Parks staff and volunteers.
- The Upper Newport Bay SMCA experienced a large increase in on-shore consumptive activities compared to the last three years.
- The rate of consumptive activities observed remains relatively low in all of the MPAs observed.

CONSUMPTIVE VS. NON-CONSUMPTIVE ACTIVITY BY MPA, THREE-YEAR COMPARISON



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.

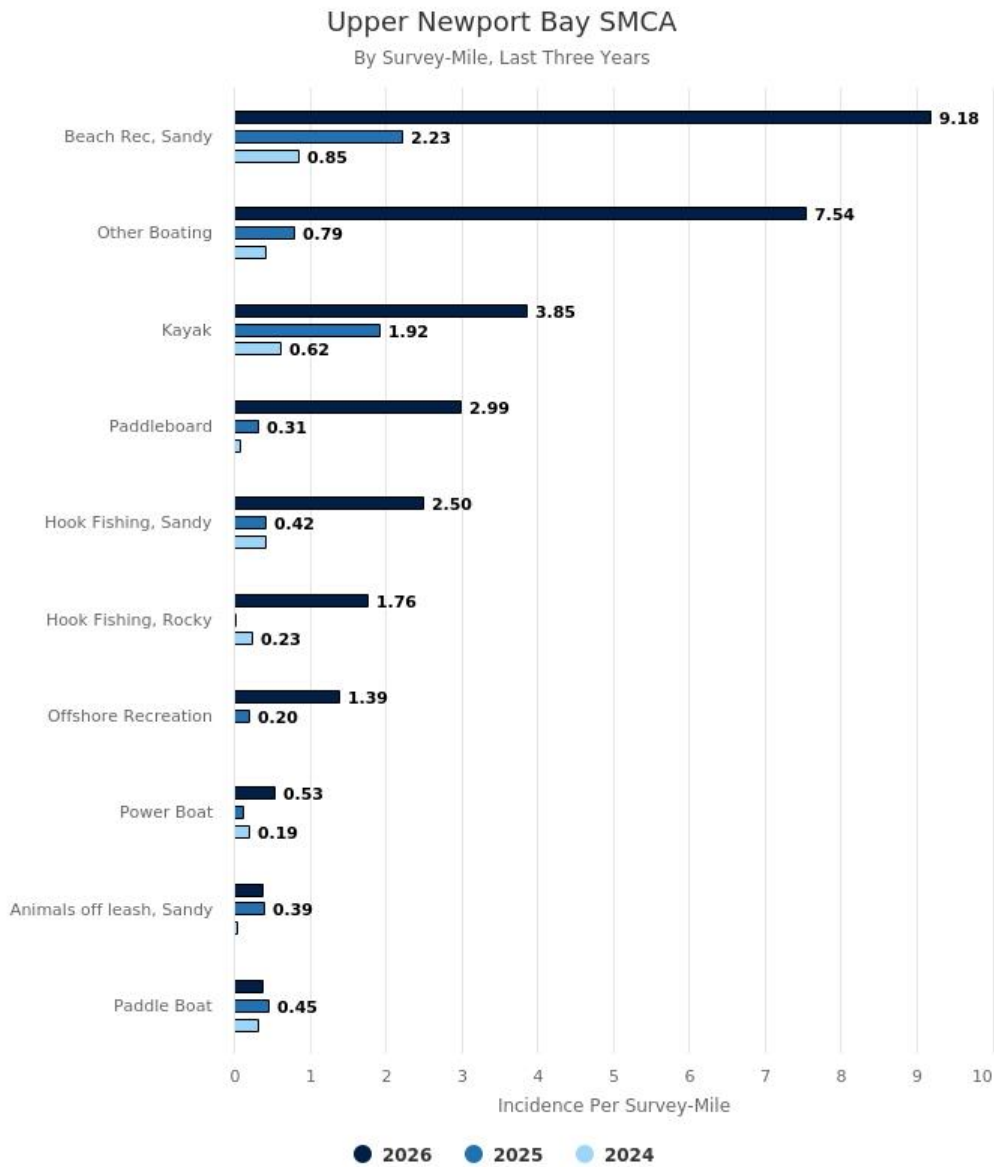
Off-Shore - Activities that take place offshore, typically in knee-deep water or deeper. Includes surfing, SCUBA diving, kayaking, boat fishing, etc.

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.

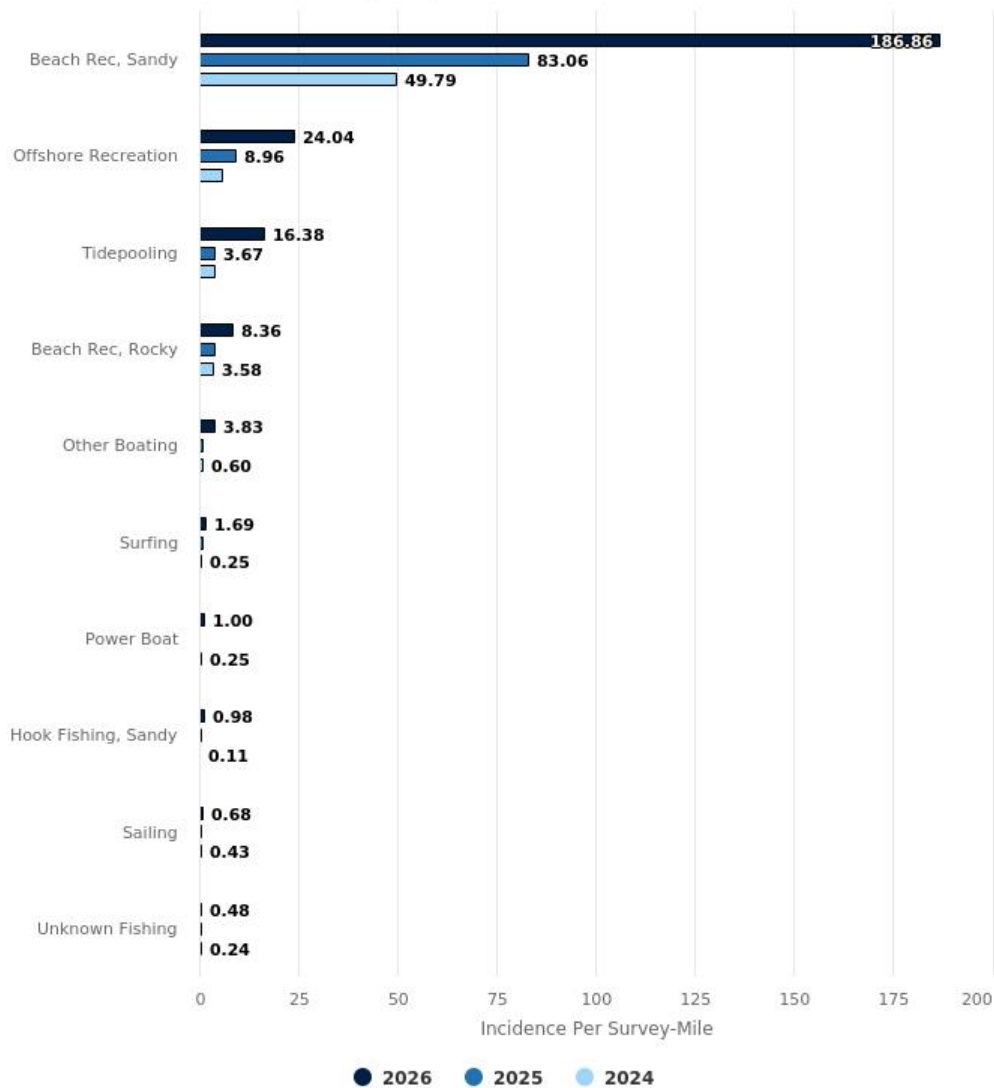


ACTIVITY BY MPA



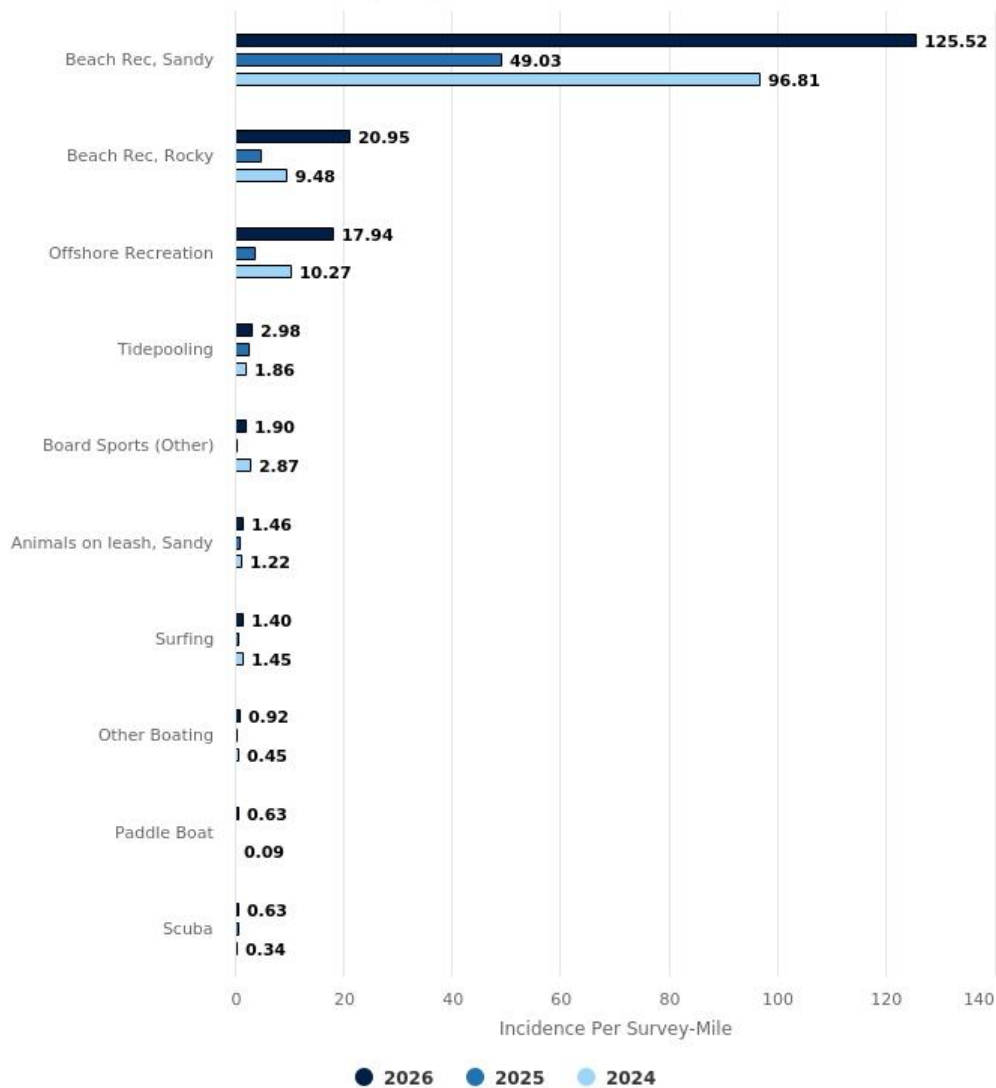
Crystal Cove SMCA

By Survey-Mile, Last Three Years



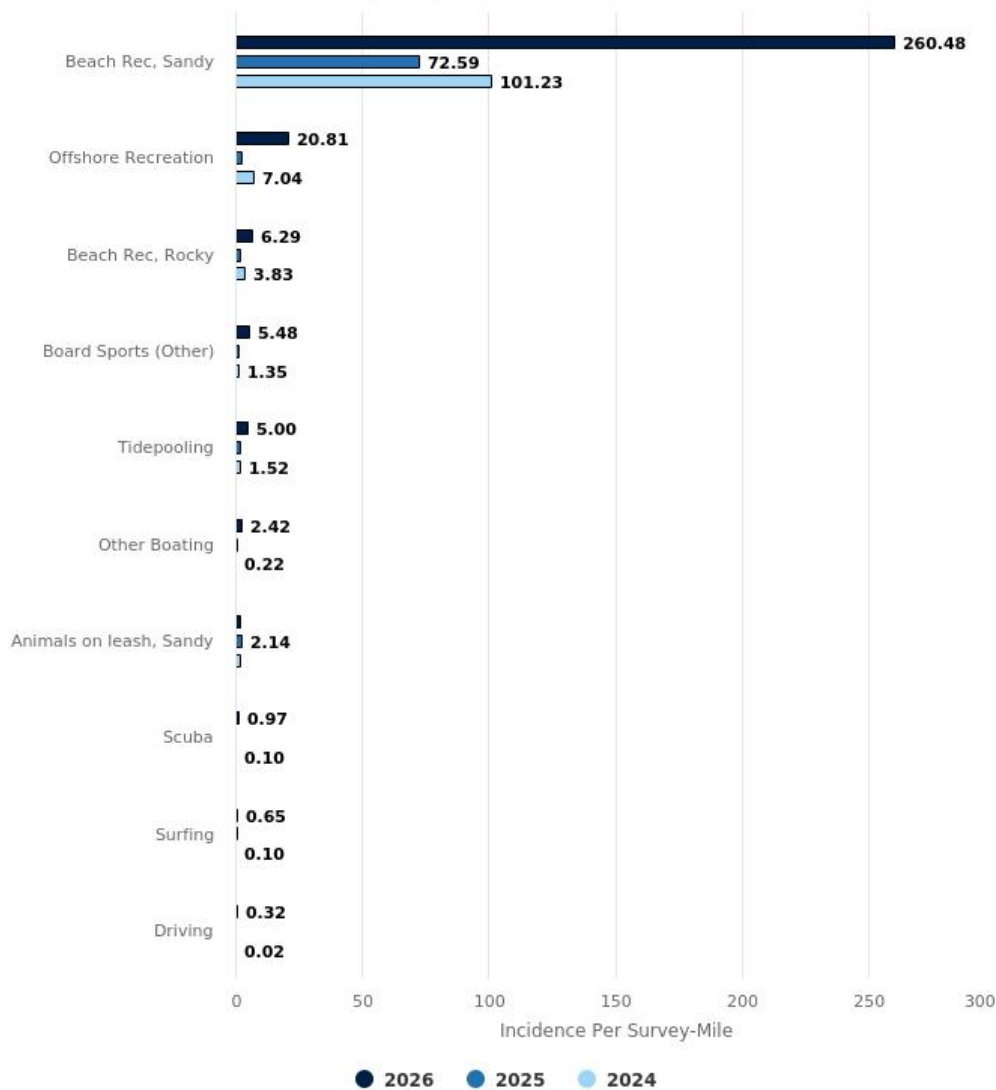
Laguna Beach SMR

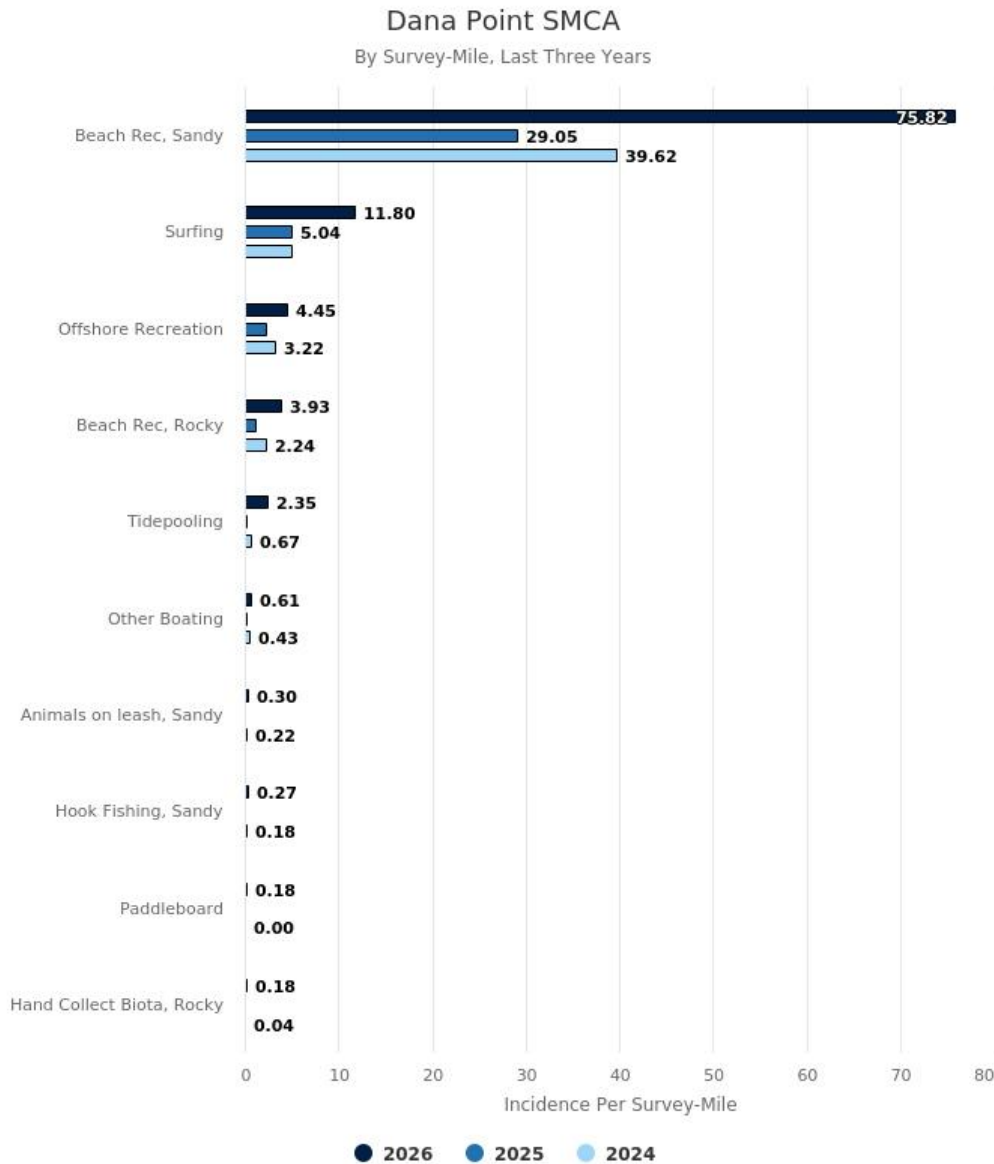
By Survey-Mile, Last Three Years



Laguna Beach SMCA

By Survey-Mile, Last Three Years

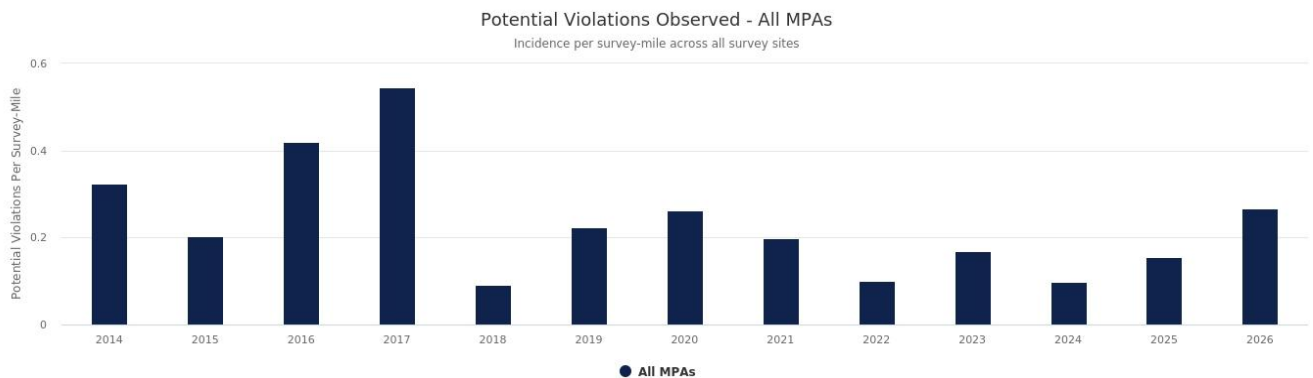




BREAKDOWN BY MPA

MPA	Number of Surveys January 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026	Activities Observed January 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	60	769
Crystal Cove SMCA	100	15,410
Laguna Beach SMR	120	5,531
Laguna Beach SMCA	19	1,890
Dana Point SMCA	36	3,304
All MPAs Combined	335	26,904

POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS



NEXT STEPS

Over the duration of this reporting period, Coastkeeper continued to run the second pilot of the Intercept Survey project, a project developed by the MPA Watch Intercept Survey Working Group (a subcommittee of the MPA Watch managers) and the UC Davis Center for Community and Citizen Science. This survey is designed to enhance and deepen our understanding of how MPAs are being used, identify who the users of the sites are, what their purpose is for visiting the sites, the frequency of these visits at each site, and their knowledge/awareness of MPA rules and regulations.

Coastkeeper will continue with the Intercept Survey protocol as determined by the working group.

MPA Watch collaborates with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to distribute MPA Watch reports to regional managers 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.

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.

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.