



Marine Protected Areas

Conserve key marine life and habitats

Preserve natural diversity

Help rebuild depleted populations

Protect geologic features and cultural areas

Support research and education

Offer recreational and economic opportunities

Image above: marbled godwit (David T. Gomez)
below: snowy egret (Jerry Kirkhart)



Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

831-728-2822

For more information:
www.elkhornslough.org
www.nerrs.noaa.gov

California Department of Fish and Game

For more information:
www.dfg.ca.gov

For boundaries and regulations, go to:
www.dfg.ca.gov/MLPA

Help stop poaching and polluting:
1-888-DFG-CALTIP (1-888-334-2258)

California State Parks

Monterey District: 831-649-2836
711, TTY RELAY SERVICE
www.parks.ca.gov

This publication is available in alternate formats by contacting Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation:
831-647-4209



Cover: harbor seals (Tom O'Connell)

Elkhorn Slough Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Elkhorn Slough State Marine Reserve and State Marine Conservation Area
Moro Cojo Slough State Marine Reserve



Central Coast Marine Protected Areas



From hillsides to coastal tidal marshes



California Is Making a Difference

by creating a statewide network of marine protected areas (MPAs). Marine protected areas are underwater places designed to protect key habitats and species by prohibiting or restricting the take of marine life. Just as the nation's parks, forests and wilderness areas protect special places on land, California's MPAs protect unique areas in the ocean. The California MPA network includes the many different types of habitats found along our coast, from sheltered estuaries and lush kelp forests to steep underwater canyons.

Image above left: striped shore crab (Jerry Kirkhart)
above right: southern sea otter (Jerry Kirkhart)

Elkhorn Slough—Winding Waterways

Elkhorn Slough, an estuary, is home to three marine protected areas—Elkhorn Slough State Marine Conservation Area, Elkhorn Slough State Marine Reserve, and the Moro Cojo Slough State Marine Reserve. The Slough is one of the few coastal wetlands remaining in the state, second in size to San Francisco Bay. Nearly 7 miles long, this waterway shelters an abundance of marine life.

Protecting Our Watershed— Enhancing Marine Wildlife

Rain falls on our coastal hillsides, travels downhill, and winds its way to Elkhorn Slough. Here, the waters from tidal creeks and streams converge into a maze of eelgrass and coastal marsh. Much of the upland that abuts the slough is protected from development. Protecting both the land and coastal habitats in one area enhances benefits to marine life.

Amazing Diversity of Life

- Fish in estuaries can tolerate a mix of salt and fresh water. These nutrient-rich wetlands are prime habitat for a variety of fish including killifish, striped bass, topsmelt, surfperch, leopard sharks, bat rays and starry flounder.
- Marine mammals such as sea otters, sea lions and harbor seals eat and rest along the muddy banks of the slough.
- Invertebrates such as gaper clams, shore crabs, fat innkeeper worms and many others thrive here.
- Over 340 species of birds live or migrate to these rich and diverse MPAs.

Scientific Research

Many scientists study Elkhorn Slough and their research helps us make sound management decisions. Studies of marine mammals, bird populations, habitat loss, and water quality are vital to understanding how to better manage these coastal treasures.



wetlands (Becky Stamski)

monitoring clams (ESNERR)

raised walkway (Becky Stamski)

kayaking (Andrew DeVogelaere)

brown pelican (Jerry Kirkhart)

jackknife clam (Kerstin Wasson)

