

Soquel Canyon State Marine Conservation Area and Portuguese Ledge State Marine Conservation Area

Size of MPA(s):

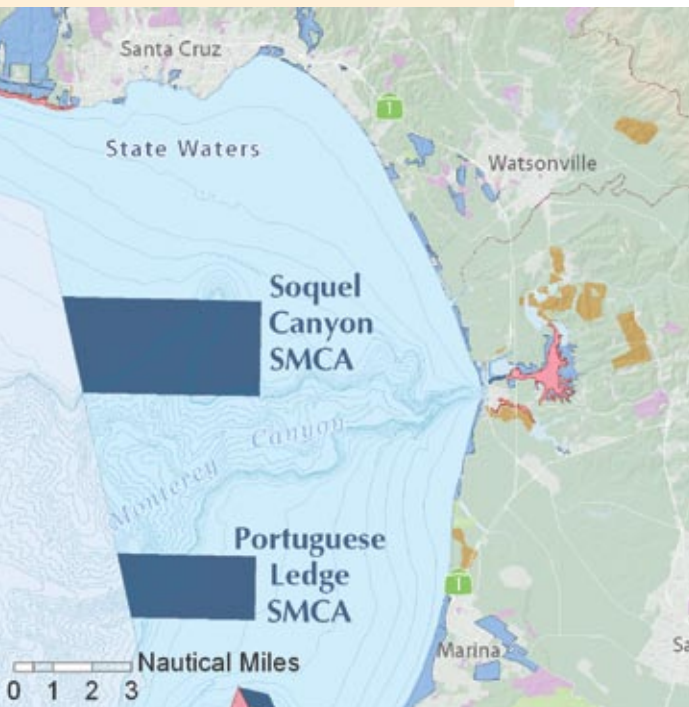
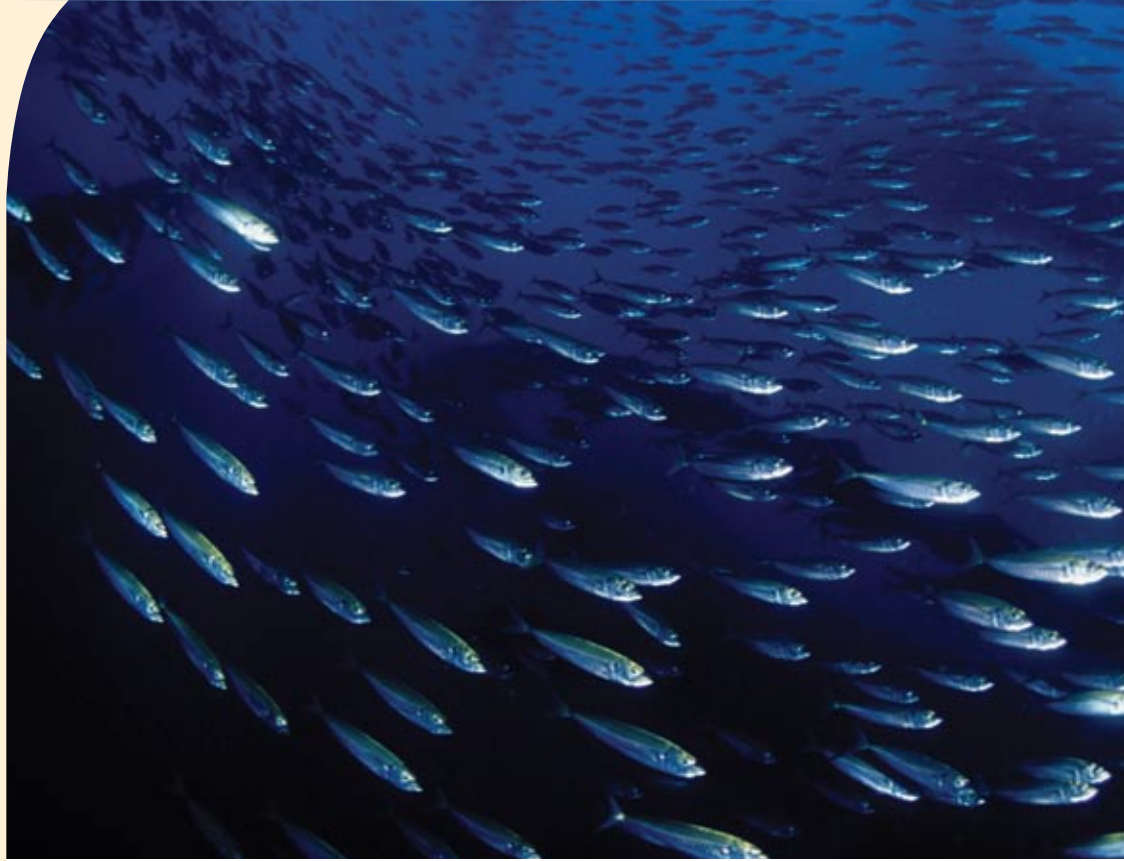
34.32 mi² (combined area)

Depth range of MPA(s):

Shore to 247-4838 feet

Key habitats protected:

Submarine Canyon, deepwater rock, cold water corals



The Monterey Submarine Canyon is a unique and biologically productive habitat.

- Plunging to depths greater than the Grand Canyon, the Monterey Bay Submarine Canyon and Soquel Canyon funnel cold, nutrient rich waters into the Monterey Bay.
- The Soquel Canyon SMCA captures an entire side-branch of the Monterey Submarine Canyon – from relatively shallow waters at the canyon’s head to very deep waters. The rocky canyon walls and mud-and-sand canyon floor offer ideal habitat for rockfishes including depleted species. It contains communities of fragile deepwater corals and sponges. The area is also an important seabird forage grounds and whale feeding area.
- Portuguese Ledge State Marine Conservation Area protects important refuge habitat for several overfished deepwater rockfish species and is expected to contribute to the recovery of these species.
- The Monterey Bay Area Aquarium Research Institute has performed submarine surveys at these sites and is building an undersea monitoring station in this area.
- Since this area is a favorite spot for the Santa Cruz, Moss Landing and Monterey fleets, the SMCA allows fishing for salmon, mackerel and sardines in the waters above these MPAs.