

Big Creek State Marine Reserve and Marine Conservation Area

Size of MPA:
22.45 mi²

Depth range of MPA:
Shore to 2393 feet

Key habitats protected:
Submarine canyons,
Canyon heads.



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The Big Sur coast is world renowned for its spectacular views and rugged topography. Offshore, the submerged geography is equally dramatic - a series of unique narrow finger canyons plunge for the shoreline into the ocean's depths.

- In the waters off the Big Sur/Big Creek coast are a unique series of narrow and steep finger canyons that serrate the continental shelf. The canyons provide habitat to a variety of deepwater rockfishes such as cabezon and bocaccio.
- The Big Creek MPAs expand upon an existing tiny underwater reserve established in recognition of the high natural heritage value of this area where underwater canyons and rock formations have been compared to Yosemite.
- The Big Sur coast is an important forage area for southern sea otters and also provides habitat for a variety of fish species such as cabezon, kelp greenling, and rockfish.
- These MPAs were designed specifically to address concerns raised by spot prawn fishermen and to allow continued fishing for spot prawns in adjacent, favored fishing grounds.
- This SMR is bordered by a SMCA that would allow some fishing. This allows a scientific comparison of similar habitats that are protected in MPAs and open to some forms of fishing.

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