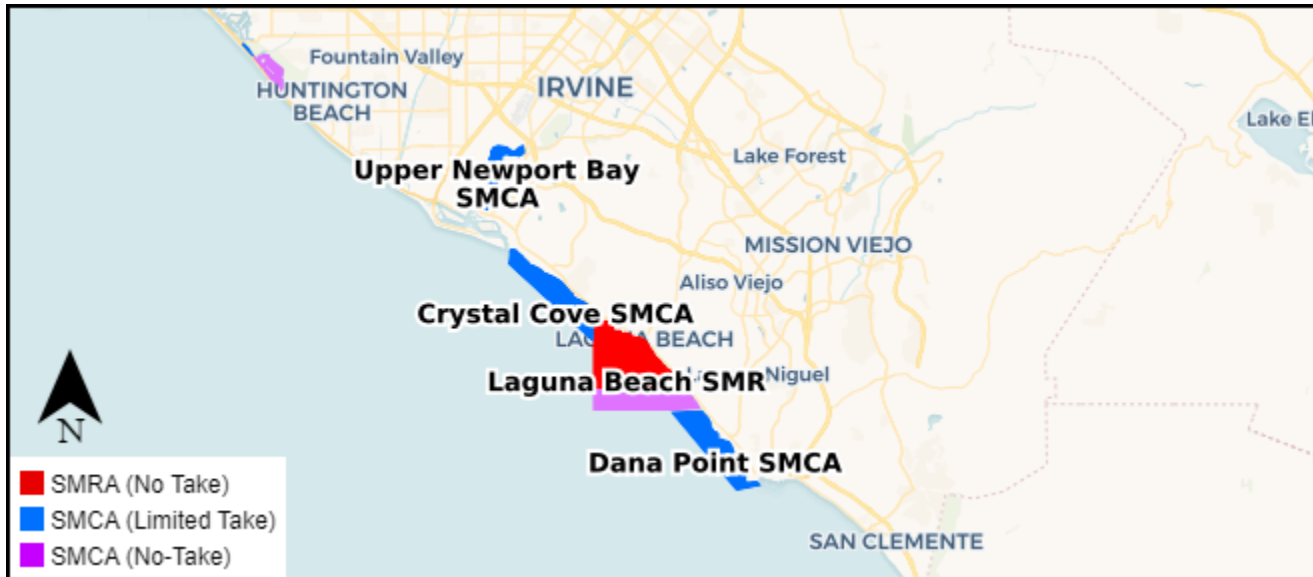


Marine Protected Area (MPA) Watch Regional Report  
Orange County  
January 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024



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). 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.

## Executive Summary

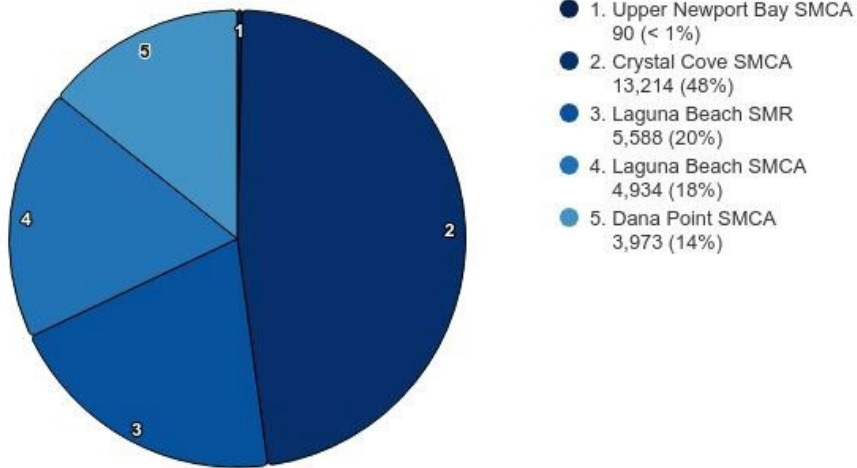
- During this period, 356 surveys were completed at 29 MPA survey sites by 30 volunteers.
- There were eleven potential violations observed out of 27,799 total activities documented. Five of those potential violations were reported to enforcement agencies
- This report period saw an increase in the rate of non-consumptive use vs. the long-term baseline, but a decrease in the rate of consumptive use vs. the long-term baseline.
- The rate of consumptive activities observed remains relatively low in all MPAs surveyed, accounting for less than 1% (0.10) of all observations recorded.

# Human Use of MPAs January 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024

## Overview

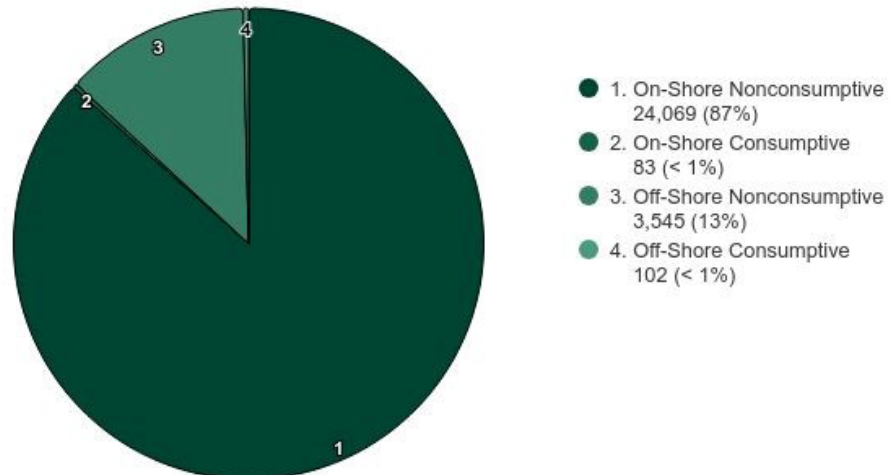
### Top 5 MPAs by All Activity

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
27,799 total activity events



### All MPAs Combined

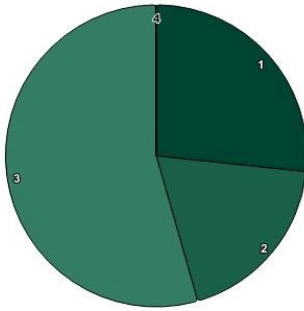
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
27,799 activity events



# Activity by MPA

## Upper Newport Bay SMCA

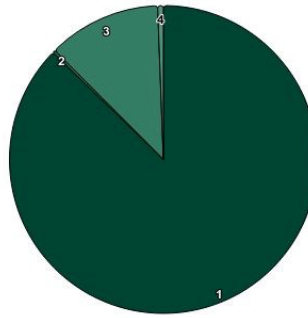
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
90 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
24 (27%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
17 (19%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
49 (54%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

## Crystal Cove SMCA

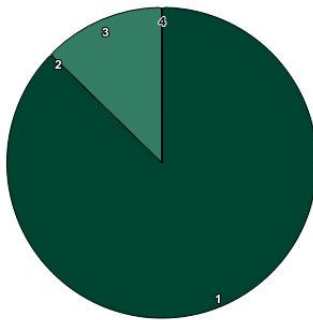
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
13,214 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
11,529 (87%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
40 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
1,567 (12%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
78 (1%)

## Laguna Beach SMR

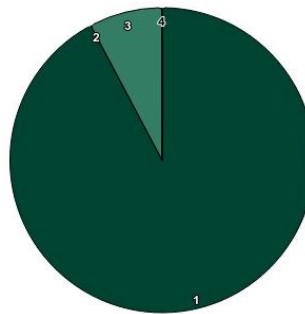
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
5,588 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
4,878 (87%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
710 (13%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
0 (< 1%)

## Laguna Beach SMCA

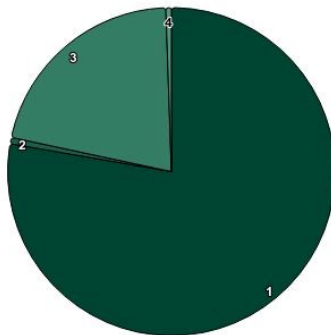
January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
4,934 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
4,550 (92%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
1 (< 1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
381 (8%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
2 (< 1%)

## Dana Point SMCA

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024  
3,973 activity events



- 1. On-Shore Nonconsumptive  
3,088 (78%)
- 2. On-Shore Consumptive  
25 (1%)
- 3. Off-Shore Nonconsumptive  
838 (21%)
- 4. Off-Shore Consumptive  
22 (1%)

### 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.

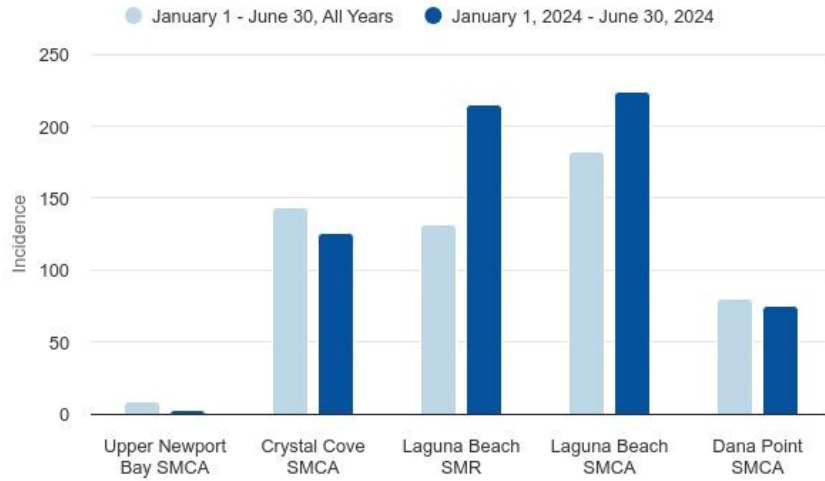
**Consumptive** - An activity in which a natural resource (i.e., fish, kelp, shells) is being collected.

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

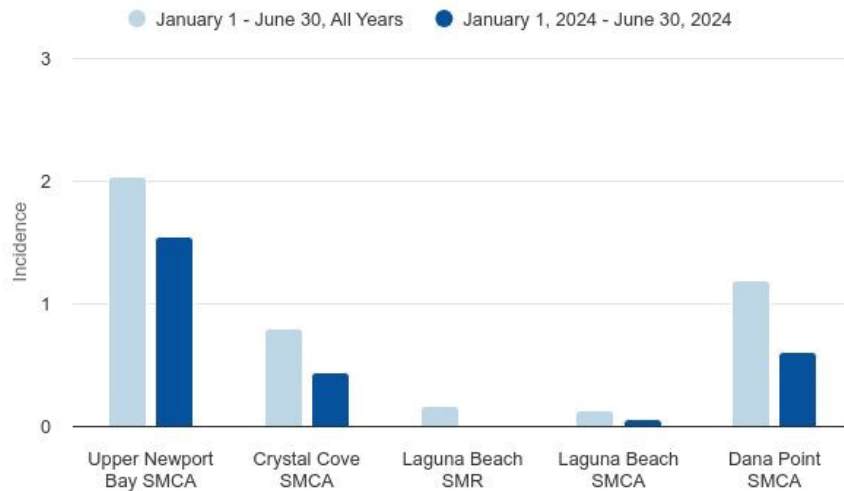
## Activity Incidence by MPA

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

### On-Shore, Non-Consumptive

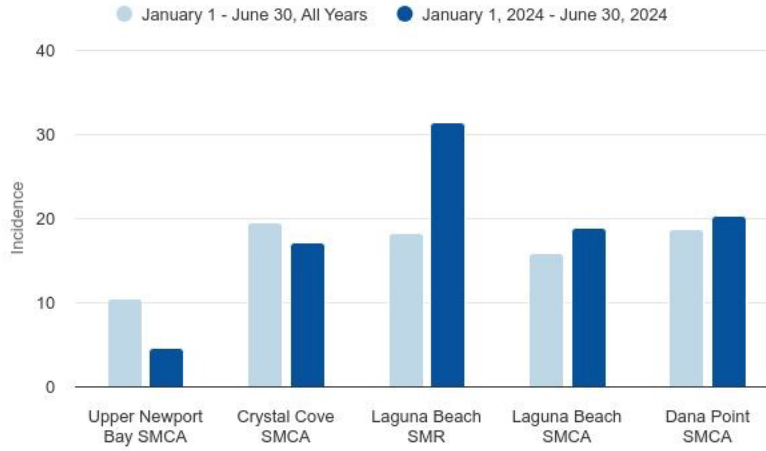


### On-Shore, Consumptive

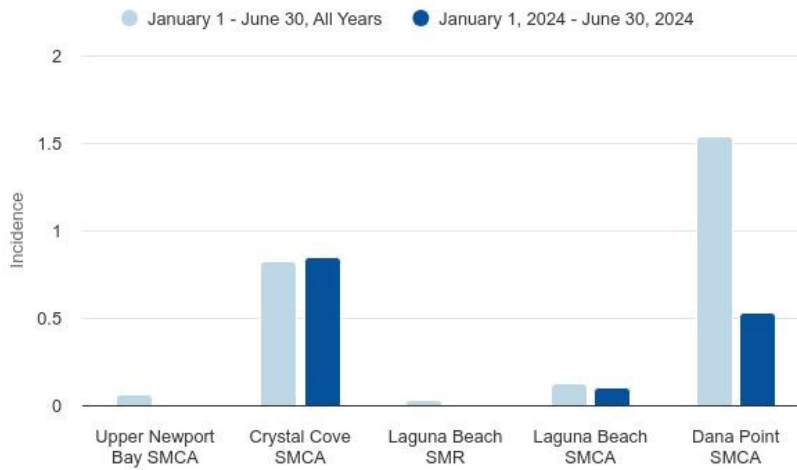


# Activity Incidence by MPA

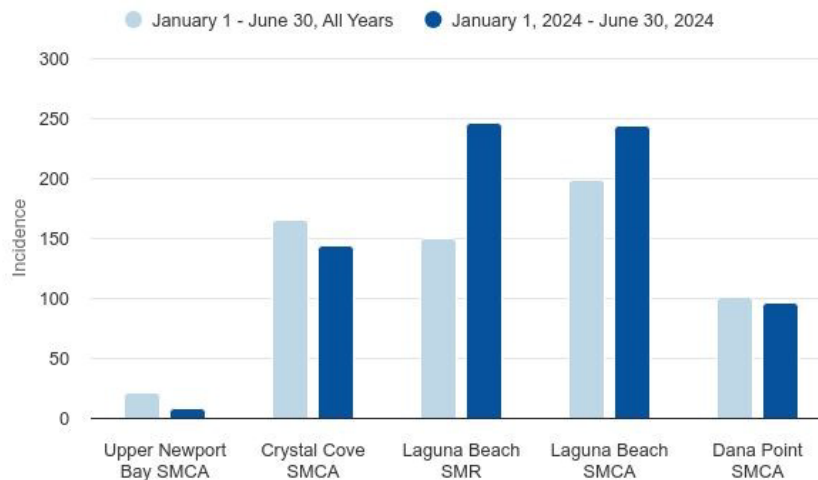
## Off-Shore, Non-Consumptive



## Off-Shore, Consumptive



## All Activity



## Activity Incidence by MPA

MPA	On-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	8.0	2.2	2.0	1.5
Crystal Cove SMCA	143.4	125.2	0.8	0.4
Laguna Beach SMR	131.5	214.9	0.2	0.0
Laguna Beach SMCA	181.8	224.1	0.1	0.0
Dana Point SMCA	79.5	74.4	1.2	0.6
All MPAs Combined	115.6	128.3	0.8	0.4

MPA	Off-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	10.4	4.5	0.1	0.0
Crystal Cove SMCA	19.4	17.0	0.8	0.8
Laguna Beach SMR	18.2	31.3	0.0	0.0
Laguna Beach SMCA	15.8	18.8	0.1	0.1
Dana Point SMCA	18.6	20.2	1.5	0.5
All MPAs Combined	17.5	18.9	0.6	0.5

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
	Upper Newport Bay SMCA	20.5
Crystal Cove SMCA	164.4	143.5
Laguna Beach SMR	149.9	246.2
Laguna Beach SMCA	197.8	243.1
Dana Point SMCA	100.8	95.7
All MPAs Combined	134.5	148.2

### 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.

# California State Parks Data

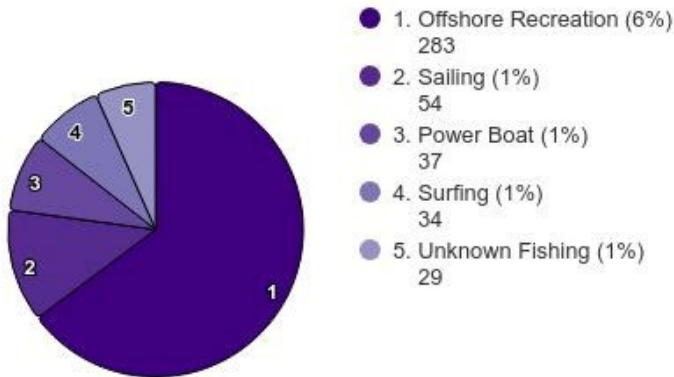
## Crystal Cove State Park-Los Trancos Transect

### Offshore Activities

#### Crystal Cove SMCA

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

Top offshore activity, 437 (9%) of all 4,796 observations

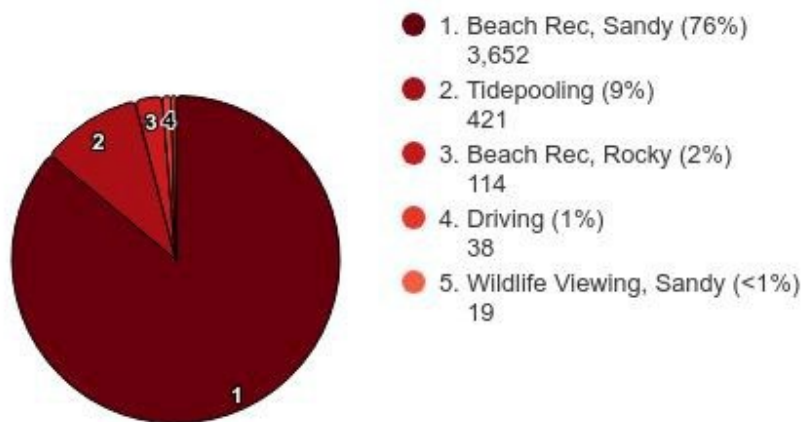


### Onshore Activities

#### Crystal Cove SMCA

January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

Top onshore activity, 4,244 (88%) of all 4,796 observations



## Activities Rate

MPA	Off-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Crystal Cove SMCA	14.2	13.6	1.3	1.4
All MPAs Combined	14.2	13.6	1.3	1.4

MPA	On-Shore			
	Non-Consumptive		Consumptive	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Crystal Cove SMCA	121.6	121.0	0.4	0.6
All MPAs Combined	121.6	121.0	0.4	0.6

MPA	Total Combined	
	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
	Crystal Cove SMCA	137.5
All MPAs Combined	137.5	136.6

### 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.



## Breakdown by MPA

### Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Area

For the months January through June 2024 there were 32 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data showed an activity incidence rate of 8.2.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in sandy beach recreational activities (24.0%), kayaking (18%), and hook and line fishing (19%). Offshore activities comprised 55.0% of the total activities in the MPA. Boating accounted for 53% of total activities.

During this reporting period we did not observe any potential MPA violations in the Upper Newport Bay SMCA. 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 2024, there were 138 surveys submitted to Orange County MPA Watch. This data showed an activity incidence rate of 143.5.

People in the MPA were primarily taking part in tidepooling (6.0%) and beach recreational activities (75.0%). Offshore recreation activities accounted for 8.0% of total activities.

During this reporting period we observed five potential MPA violations: all five within the Crystal Cove State Park.

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

### Crystal Cove State Park – State Parks Summary

From the start of the new year until the end of June Crystal Cove State Park has done 27 surveys. With the help of new park aides, more surveys will be conducted in the following months. During May and June there was a large increase in visitor numbers. As always with large increases in visitors, there is a large increase in on-shore recreation as well as an increase of consumptive activity. While numbers of consumptive use have increased, 89% of onshore non-consumptive activities have been accounted for in the park. Offshore consumption seems to be gradually increasing; fishing boats have been observed in frequent and increasing numbers during the last few months. Observations of offshore consumption activities mainly are from unknown fishing vessels

A violation hotspot is in the historic district of Crystal Cove. This area is a high foot traffic zone with restaurants and historic cottages nearby. Violations of illegal take of biota have been observed within the tidepool area with surveyors reminding visitors to return biota to the beach/tidepools frequently. According to the MPA watch data we had four violations. Anecdotally, staff see a lot more violations that take place while not on a survey. During the summer, staff make multiple contacts with people to help educate them on the tidepool rules.

### Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve

Between the months of January through June 2024, there were 59 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows an activity incidence rate of 246.2.

People in the MPA were taking part in beach recreational activities (84.0%), swimming, wading and body surfing (8%), board sports (3%), and tidepooling (1.0%). Offshore activities comprised 12.0% of the total activities in the MPA.

During this reporting period we did not observe any potential MPA violations.

Regulations do not allow take of any kind in the Laguna Beach SMR.

## Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2024, there were 70 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows an activity incidence of 243.1 within the MPA Watch area.

People observed in the MPA were primarily taking part in beach recreational activities (88.0%), swimming, wading and body surfing (6%), accompanying animals on-leash (1.0%), and tidepooling (1%). Offshore activities only comprised 7% of the total activities in the MPA.

During this reporting period, surveyors observed 3 potential MPA violations in the Laguna Beach State Marine Conservation Area.

Taking of onshore or offshore resources is not allowed within the Laguna Beach No-Take SMCA.

## Dana Point State Marine Conservation Area

For the months of January through June 2024, there were 57 surveys submitted to the MPA Watch website. Orange County MPA Watch data shows an activity incidence rate of 95.7.

Of the 3,973 activities observed in the Dana Point SMCA, 75.0% of coastal uses surveyed were sandy and rocky beach recreation. In addition to that, the most popular coastal activities in Dana Point were surfing and other board sports (13.0%), swimming, wading and body surfing (6%). During this period, volunteers reported 3 potential MPA violations in the Dana Point SMCA.

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

### Count of Potential Violations by MPA

MPA	January 1 June 30 All Years	January 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024
Upper Newport Bay SMCA	15	0
Crystal Cove SMCA	209	5
Laguna Beach SMR	66	0
Laguna Beach SMCA	29	3
Dana Point SMCA	30	3
All MPAs Combined	349	11

## Potential Violations

According to volunteers there were no MPA potential violations observed during surveys in the Upper Newport Bay SMCA during this reporting period. In this SMCA, the recreational take of finfish by hook and line is allowed from shore only in designated areas.

During this period we observed five potential MPA violations in the Crystal Cove SMCA: All five potential violations took place within the Crystal Cove State Park survey area.

The recreational take of finfish by hook and line or by spearfishing is allowed in this SMCA; no take is allowed from tidepools. According to volunteers, recurring issues with the illegal take and disturbance of tide pool organisms continue to be a problem during low tides. Anecdotally, staff see a lot more violations that take place while not on a survey. During the summer, staff make multiple contacts with people to help educate them on the tidepool rules.



Volunteers observed no potential violations in the Laguna Beach State Marine Reserve. No take is allowed from the Laguna Beach SMR.

During this reporting period we observed three potential MPA violations in the Laguna Beach No Take SMCA. One was hand collection of biota from tidepools, another was trap fishing just inside the MPA, and the third was consumptive diving. None of these potential violations were reported.

Taking of onshore or offshore resources is not allowed within the Laguna Beach No-Take SMCA.

During this period, volunteers reported 3 potential MPA violations in the Dana Point SMCA. All 3 incidents happened on the same day and involved hand collection of biota from the tidepools.

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

## Next Steps

Beginning in June, OC Coastkeeper has been piloting an Intercept Survey developed by MPA Watch Intercept Survey Working Group (a subcommittee of the MPA Watch managers). The Center for Community and Citizen Science served as consultants and the funding for this project came from the Resources Legacy Fund. This survey is designed to enhance and deepen our understanding of how MPAs are being used. The Intercept Survey is designed to go beyond the Core Protocol to identify generally who the users of the sites are, what is their purpose for visiting the sites, the frequency of these visits at each site and their knowledge/awareness of MPA rules and regulations. The pilot project will continue through August and then be evaluated for possible wider use throughout California's Marine Protected Area Network.

MPA Watch will continue to collaborate with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) along with local agencies, NGOs and the public to improve the management and enforcement of MPAs statewide. From January to June 2024, Orange County Coastkeeper trained 33 new MPA Watch volunteers. Orange County MPA Watch partners with local organizations including the Ocean Institute and Monarch Beach Club to enhance the scale and scope of our MPA monitoring. MPA Watch makes our human use data available on our website so it is accessible to partners, resource agencies, municipalities, and other interested parties. One of the goals of MPA Watch is that our volunteers 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](https://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](https://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](https://coastkeeper.org).