

Proposed Point Sal State Marine Conservation Area



Photo: Phil Capitoto, UC Santa Cruz

Point Sal is an ecologically rich area in Santa Barbara County that supports a diversity of ocean life. The point itself and its offshore waters hold historical and cultural significance for the Chumash people. Petition 2023-28MPA seeks to protect the waters of Point Sal in a new State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA). Point Sal's remoteness offers an opportunity to protect thriving seabird and marine mammal colonies, an important area for baby fish and invertebrates, and Indigenous cultural resources while they are in a relatively undisturbed state.

Protecting the waters off Point Sal would:

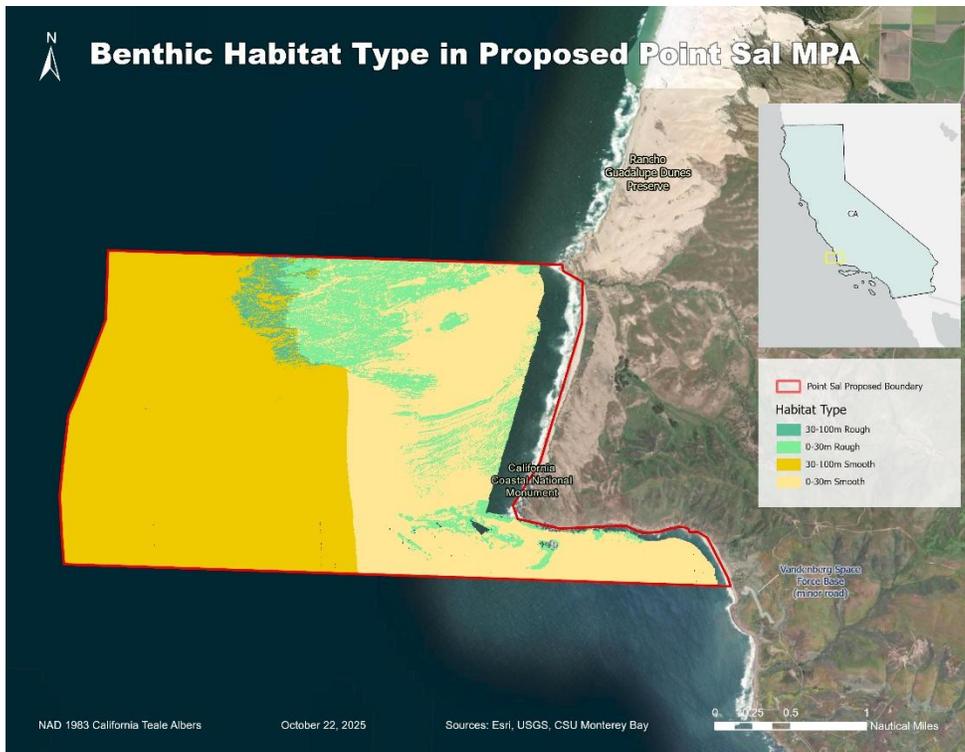
- Increase habitat connectivity, representation, and replication of Central Coast habitats in California's marine protected area (MPA) network.
- Protect kelp forest, tidepool, coastal, and offshore habitat for sea otters, seabirds, fishes, sea lions, seals, whales, porpoises, and more.
- Conserve an important area for marine larvae, nurturing baby fish in their earliest phase of life, helping to boost important fish populations and restore ecosystem health.

- Promote land-and-sea conservation by protecting waters adjacent to Point Sal State Beach and culturally important, relatively undisturbed coastal areas.
- Protect Lion Rock, an important haul out, roosting, and breeding site for sea lions, seals, cormorants, and pelicans.
- Protect important feeding and migrating areas for humpback whales, gray whales, and harbor porpoises.
- Improve the current MPA network's resilience in the face of climate change and increasing ocean threats, aligning with at least 11 climate-smart MPA design guidelines for the California Bight.¹



Photo: Kristen via iNaturalist, CC BY-NC

¹ Arafah-Dalmau et al. 2023. "Integrating Climate Adaptation and Transboundary Management: Guidelines for Designing Climate-Smart Marine Protected Areas." *One Earth* 6 (11): 1523–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.10.002>.



Key Stats:

Northern boundary:
Mussel Point

Southern boundary:
End of Vandenberg Space Base Force road

Total area: 9.18 sq miles

Shore-adjacent distance:
4.03 miles

Proposed regulations: Non-extractive activities allowed (e.g., swimming, snorkeling, boating, surfing). No take, damage, injury, or possession of any living, geologic, or cultural marine resource allowed except recreational fishing with hook and line from shore.

Sign the public petition to show your support!



SCAN ME

Conserving biodiverse marine areas along California's coast promotes the health and well-being of marine life and our communities. California completed the first ten-year review of its MPA network in 2022, which showed that MPAs are enhancing biodiversity, helping fish populations thrive, and even increasing California's coastal ecosystem resilience to warming ocean temperatures.² The state is now in the process of adaptively managing the MPA network, evaluating potential changes that would improve the network's functioning in the face of changing ocean conditions.³ Threats to our ocean are increasing, from marine industrialization to major biodiversity loss. This petition process is an opportunity for all Californians, including those from inland communities, to call for stronger ocean protections and a resilient MPA network for all Californians to enjoy.

To support this petition, please contact: saylesworth@nrdc.org and isullivan@nrdc.org

To learn more about the petition and CDFW's evaluation process, visit:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/27e78c677dca484ebfb37120abc59d10?item=2>

² California Decadal Management Review 2022

³ MLPA Master Plan 2016