



MPA Monitoring and the Refugio Oil Spill

Putting MPAs to work to inform recovery

Image: Reef Check California

A network of marine protected areas (MPAs) stretches along California's entire coast. Together, these important places can build more resilient ecosystems. The state has invested \$16 million in scientific monitoring of MPAs, equipping decision-makers with the information needed to assess impacts from the Refugio oil spill and help restore ocean health.

MPAs are living laboratories for tracking change

Through comprehensive monitoring inside and outside of MPAs, we already have an unprecedented wealth of detailed information about the condition of areas at and near Refugio State Beach before the spill. This will serve as a reference point for identifying changes.

MPA monitoring has built a network of people who are responding to the Refugio oil spill

Immediately after the spill, scientists mobilized to conduct rapid monitoring of affected areas. With this network already in place, we have the expertise and capacity to efficiently generate robust information that decision-makers can use.

Rocky intertidal scientists mobilize to respond

Immediately after the Refugio oil spill, Multi-Agency Rocky Intertidal Network (MARINe) scientists conducted rapid assessments of six key sites near the spill. MARINe, who is a partner in MPA monitoring, works closely with OSPR to respond to spill events. Because of these efforts, we have critical information about the spill's initial impacts. Continued monitoring will be key to understanding effects of the spill and tracking ecosystem recovery.



Image: C. Blanchette

MPA monitoring is critical to track recovery of these important places

The knowledge we have from MPA monitoring is useful and powerful. Moving forward, continued monitoring will be critical for tracking the spill's impacts and helping decision-makers recover habitats and restore ocean health.



Long-term data from volunteer divers provides a reference at Refugio State Beach

As a partner in MPA monitoring, Reef Check California (RCCA) brings together highly-trained citizen scientists to monitor kelp forests. Their nine-year dataset at Refugio State Beach is key to understanding conditions before the spill. RCCA is ready to survey the spill area as soon as it is safe to do so. This continued monitoring will provide important information about the impacts of the spill and recovery moving forward.

Looking forward

Long-term monitoring of these areas will help identify the ecosystems and species most affected by the spill, and can support decision-makers in pursuing management actions that build a resilient, productive, and healthy coast and ocean.

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Image: C. Blanchette