

# Celebrating Our Underwater Parks!

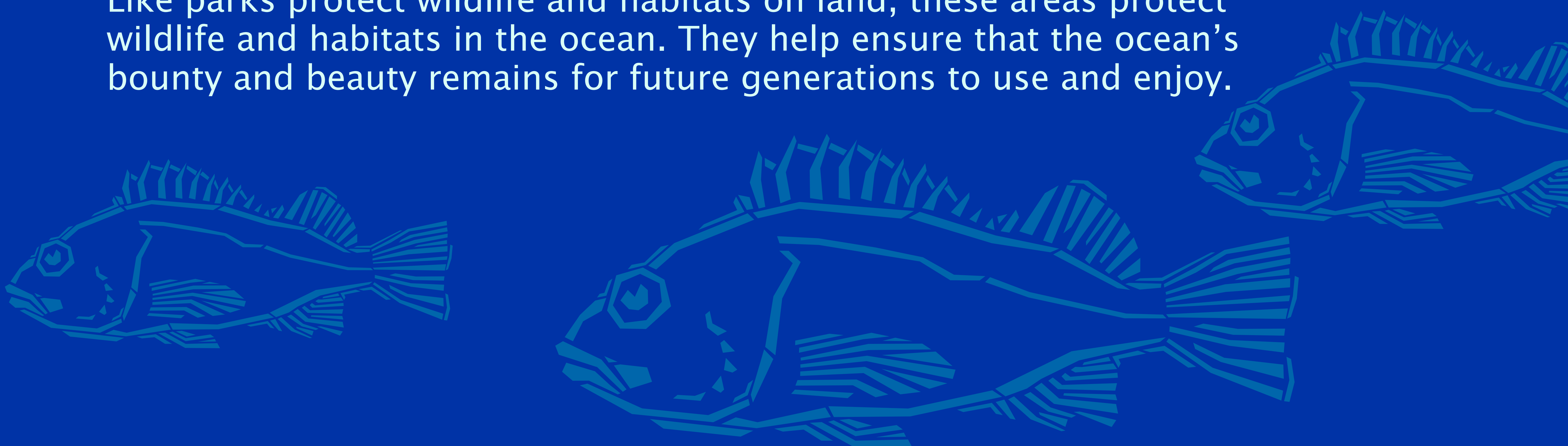
California leads the nation in ocean protection



Beautiful beaches and breathtaking views abound along our California coast.

Nearly 150 years ago, a few visionary leaders recognized the importance of protecting Yosemite. Their work helped shape a new land conservation ethic in America. Today, millions of acres of wild lands—our nation's natural cultural heritage—lie protected in national and state parks, forests and wilderness areas.

Now California is leading the way in conserving our ocean heritage by creating a statewide system of marine protected areas (MPAs). Like parks protect wildlife and habitats on land, these areas protect wildlife and habitats in the ocean. They help ensure that the ocean's bounty and beauty remains for future generations to use and enjoy.





# Troubled Waters

Along our coast and around the world  
ocean health is threatened



Pollution on land affects our ocean wildlife.

Overfished and polluted, threatened by habitat destruction and climate change, our ocean is in crisis. Once it seemed endlessly bountiful. Now, with populations of many marine species in decline, the ocean has been pushed to the end of its' limits.



Teens volunteer to keep our ocean clean.



Volunteers help in many ways.

Fortunately, we still have time to repair the damage. We can control pollution. We can act to reduce climate change. And by creating marine protected areas, we can preserve the ocean ecosystems and protect threatened marine life.

There's much to be done, but around the world, and here in California, people are working to restore the ocean.



# Changes Below

Our ocean isn't as healthy as it looks from the surface



A kayaker enjoys the beauty of an ocean sunset.

Looking out over the ocean from almost anyplace along our coast, we're struck by its scenic beauty. The waters seem timeless and enduring. Seabirds wheel overhead. Kelp floats on the waves. We may even see seals, sea otters, dolphins or whales.

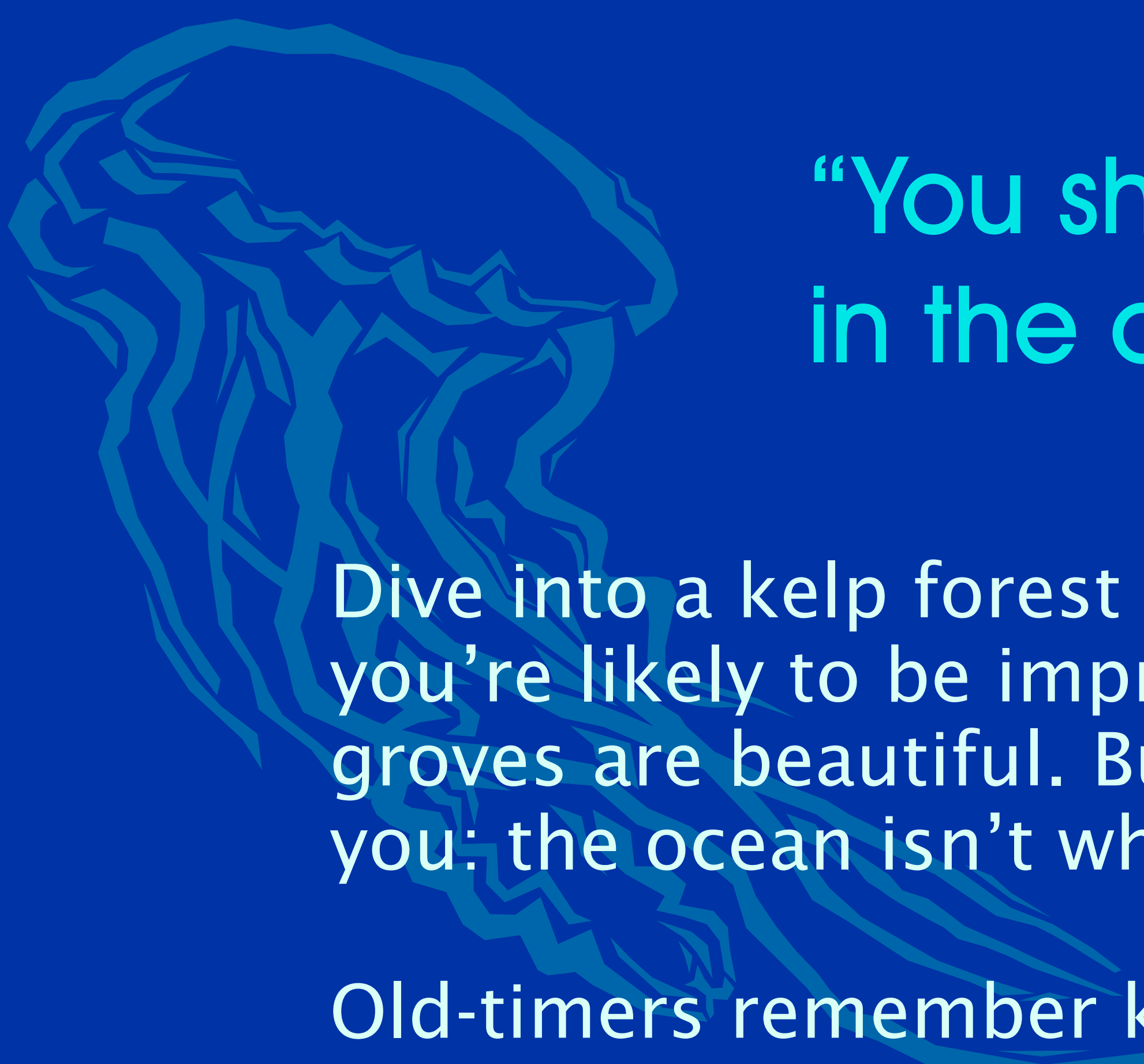


Squadron of pelicans soars above a turbulent ocean.

But beneath the waves, it's a different story. In countless subtle ways, the health of our ocean has declined over time. Marine life isn't quite as abundant as it once was. Fishermen are catching fewer fish, and what they catch is smaller.

The changes are there to see if we know how to look. Now that we're aware of the problems we can take action to turn the tide.

# Seeing Is Believing


A large, stylized illustration of a jellyfish in a vibrant blue color, positioned on the left side of the page. It has a prominent bell and long, flowing tentacles.

“You should have seen it  
in the old days!”

Dive into a kelp forest along the California coast, and you’re likely to be impressed. The swaying undersea groves are beautiful. But as long-time divers can tell you: the ocean isn’t what it used to be.

Old-timers remember kelp forests filled with huge black sea bass, broomtail groupers, sheephead and other fishes. Large spiny lobsters patrolled the seafloor. Black abalones were so abundant they could be harvested from tide pools.

You have to see it to believe it. These images—depicting the bounty of the 1960s and the scarcity of today—give a sense of what’s been lost. But they also show us what can be restored if we act now.

A large, stylized illustration of a jellyfish in a vibrant blue color, positioned at the bottom right of the page. It has a prominent bell and long, flowing tentacles.



# Tools for Protection

It takes a whole kit of tools  
to protect the ocean



This map shows locations of no-take marine protected areas worldwide.

Worldwide we have a variety of tools to help us protect the ocean. But marine protected areas (MPAs) are among the most useful.

MPAs come in different sizes and have many uses. Some protect entire ecosystems. Others safeguard a particular fishery, rare species, critical habitat for marine life, or underwater historical sites.

They also differ in what they allow. Some are “no take” areas that ban all fishing, drilling, mining and other extractive activities. Others allow some commercial and recreational fishing. Most allow research, education and recreational uses like kayaking, surfing and scuba diving.



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Plemmirio Marine Protected Area in Sicily, Italy



Exposed reef at Low Island, Australia's Great Barrier Reef

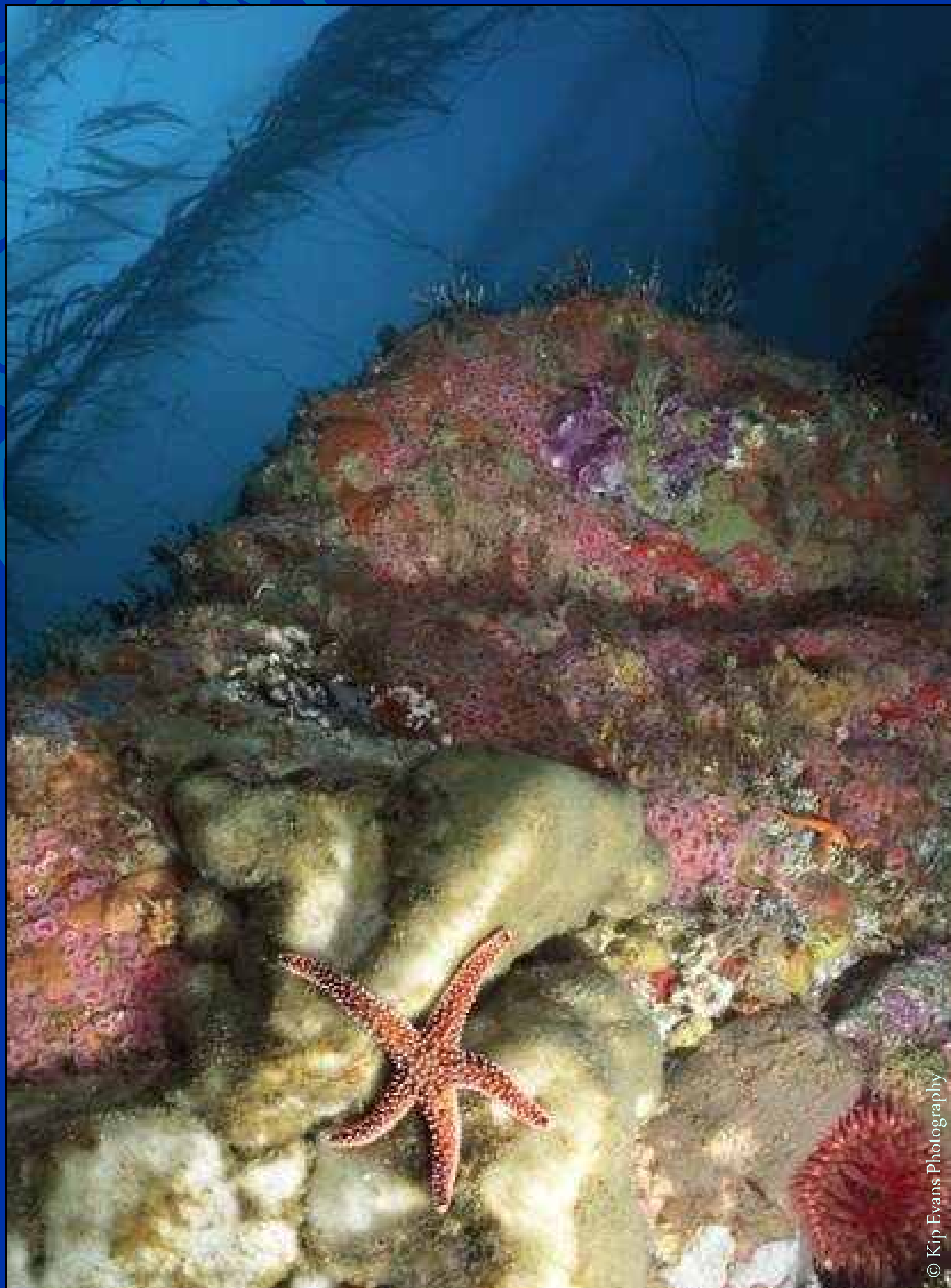


# California Is Taking Action

California is working hard to keep our ocean healthy



From seashore to seafloor, MPAs are being created to include each type of ocean habitat.



MPAs protect a variety of species that make up healthy ocean ecosystems.

California has been working for years to protect coastal habitats and marine life from threats like pollution, overfishing and invasive species. We are the first state in the nation to begin creating a statewide network of marine protected areas (MPAs).

Based on sound science and careful planning, the network of MPAs are designed to protect a variety of critical ocean habitats. As refuges for marine life, MPAs complement our other conservation efforts by providing a chance for marine ecosystems to recover and thrive. By limiting fishing and other activities in select areas, MPAs not only help restore natural ecosystems they also enhance recreational opportunities.



MPAs serve as refuges for marine life.



Sea otters and other marine mammals benefit from the protection offered by MPAs.



# MPAs Along the Central Coast

Twenty-nine MPAs line our coast



A network of twenty-nine MPAs now protect our coastal waters from Pigeon Point to Point Conception. They cover 204 square miles (529 km<sup>2</sup>), including 85 square miles (220 km<sup>2</sup>) designated as fully protected marine reserves. Eventually the network will be expanded to include the entire California coast.



Aerial view of Point Sur SMR and SMCA



Aerial view of Piedras Blancas SMR and SMCA



Aerial of Point Lobos SMR and SMCA



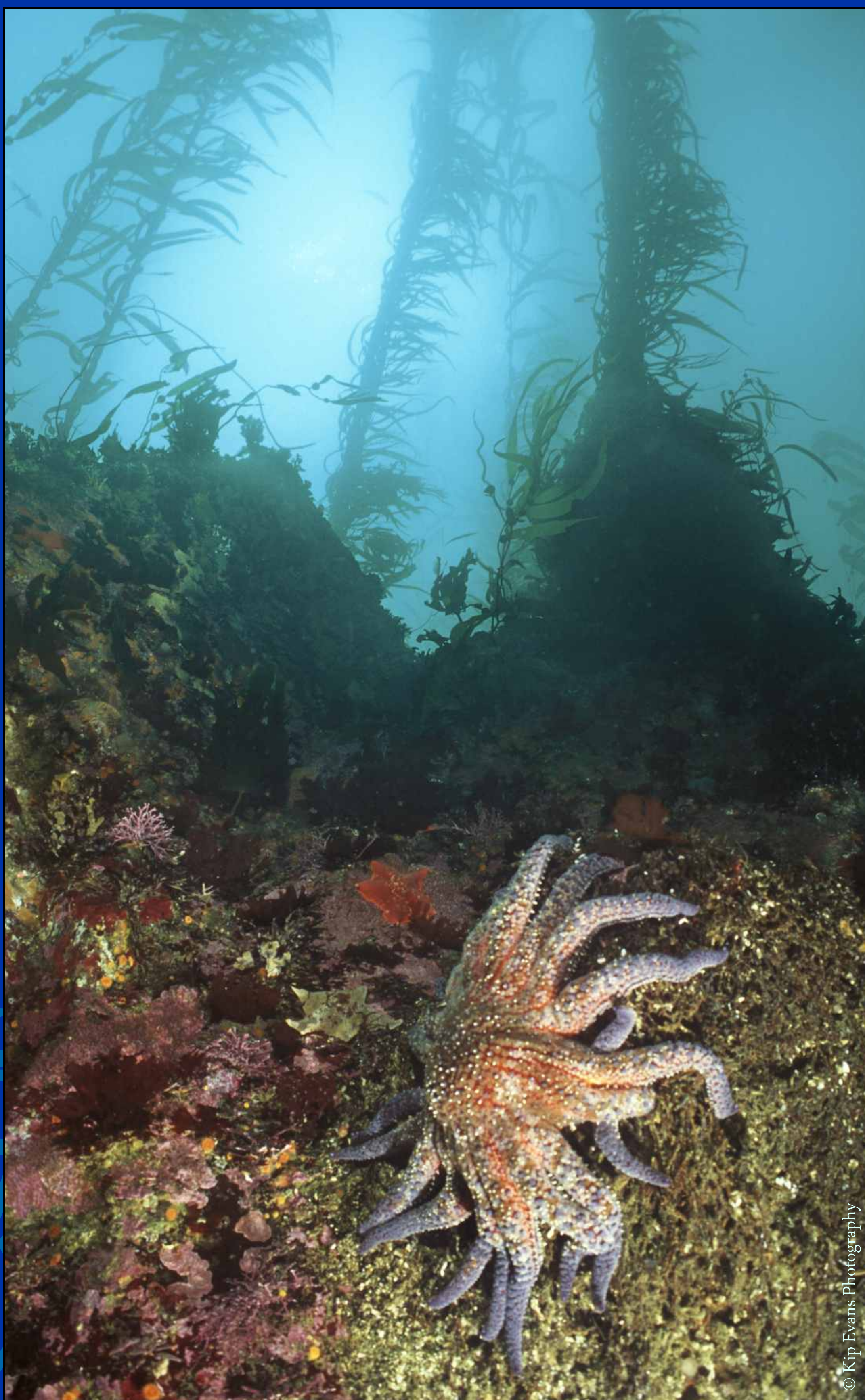
# From Seashore to Seafloor

## California MPAs protect a variety of habitats

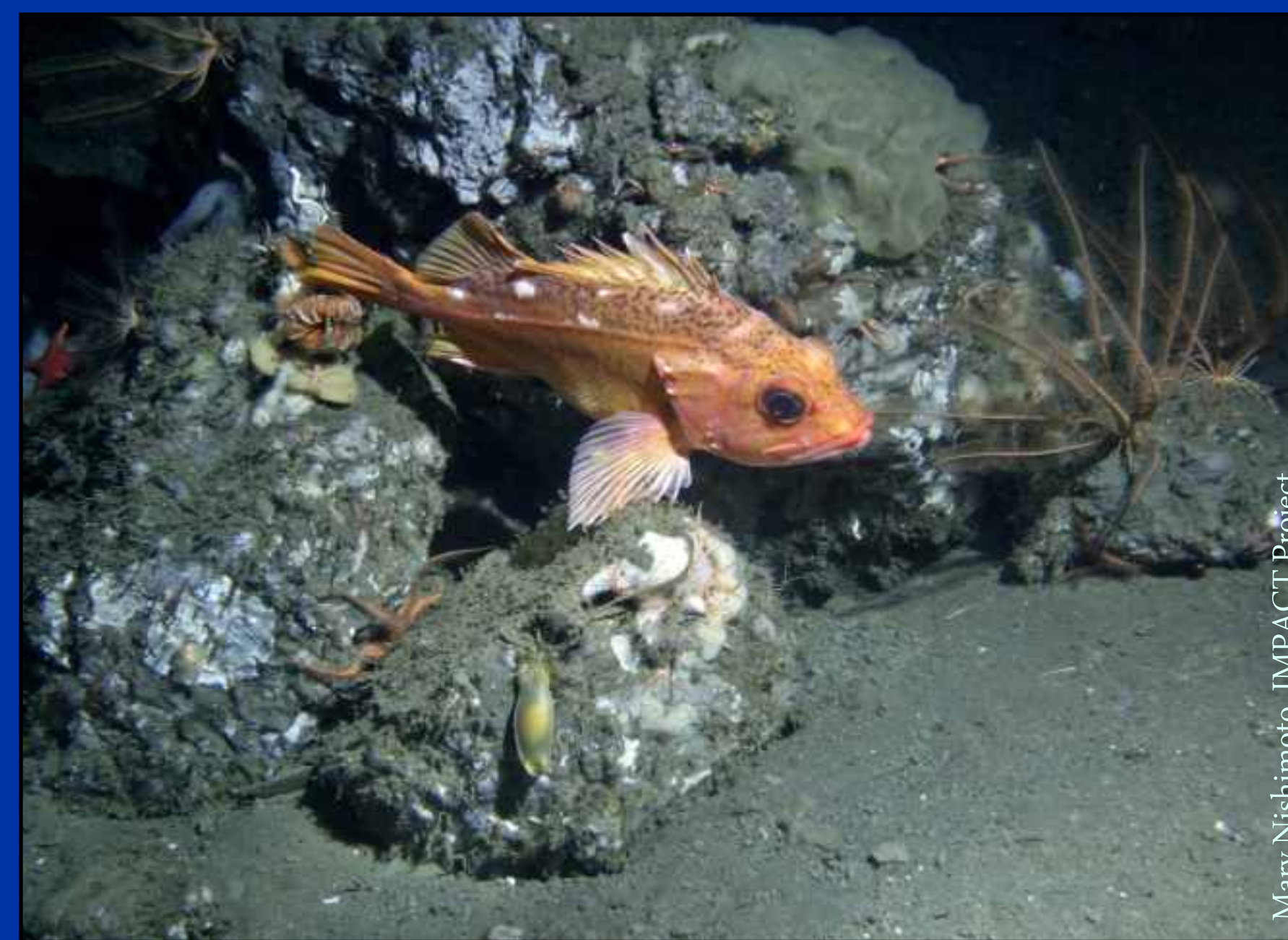


Estuaries and wetlands are critical feeding grounds for huge numbers of migratory and non-migratory birds, nurseries for fishes, and shelter for seals and sea otters.

When fully implemented, the California network of MPAs will include a portion of every habitat along our coast. In doing so, it will protect the greatest diversity of life, and it will help preserve vital connections between habitats. The new California Central Coast MPAs include a variety of habitats. These range from sandy beaches, rich estuaries at Elkhorn Slough and Morro Bay, and nearshore reefs along Cannery Row, Point Sur and Piedras Blancas. Offshore, some MPAs protect sheltered kelp forests and deeper, rocky reefs. Further out, others encompass open ocean habitat and deep sea canyons in Monterey Bay and off the Big Sur Coast.



Highly productive, fast-growing kelp forests are nurseries for rockfishes and provide habitat and food for a variety of marine life.



The cold, dark waters of the deep sea hide extensive plains of mud, undersea mountains and deep submarine canyons that are home to strange and wonderful creatures.

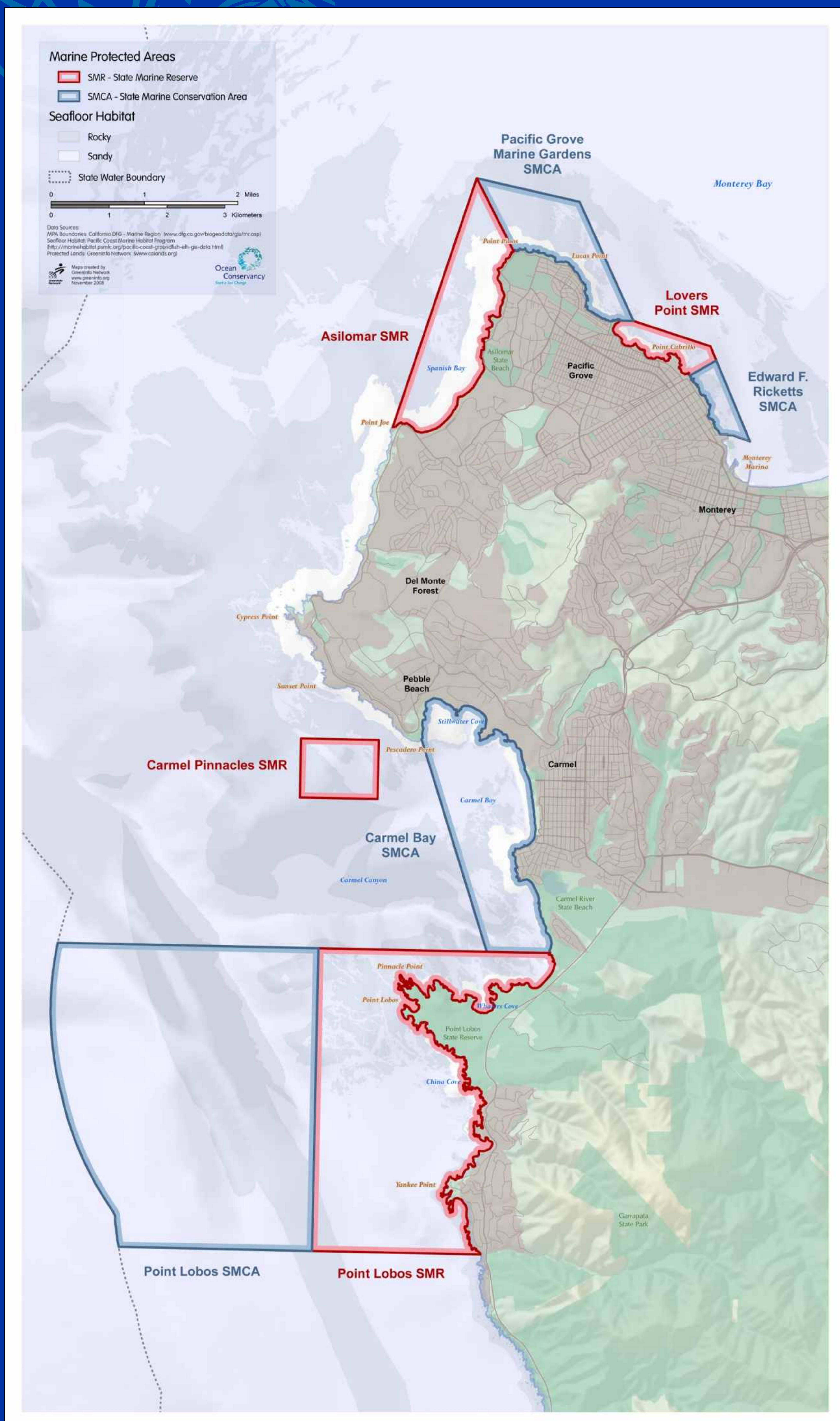


Intertidal life in and around the tidepool depends on oxygen, water and nutrition brought in by crashing waves and incoming tides.



# Around the Monterey Peninsula

Visit MPAs right here  
on the Monterey Peninsula



The Monterey Peninsula is a great place to enjoy, explore and learn about the ocean. Included within a marine sanctuary and protected by several state MPAs, these shores teem with life.

Here—right outside these doors—you'll find habitats ranging from sandy beaches to rugged rocky shores. Get out and explore your MPAs!



# The Science of Marine Protected Areas

## MPAs can protect ecosystems



MPAs can protect endangered species like the black abalone.



Sloughs and wetlands provide rich habitat for a diverse range of plant and animal species.

Marine protected areas support the entire ocean web of life. Some are designed to protect particular fisheries, others to preserve sensitive habitats or threatened species.

Because they are healthier than disturbed areas, protected areas can recover more quickly from stresses like severe storms, climate change and pollution. MPAs also provide places where scientists can monitor changes in ocean health.

Networks of MPAs, like those being created by the State of California, provide even greater protection. Since they include a diversity of habitats, they help preserve the connections and flow of life between habitats vital to the health of marine ecosystems.



MPAs of all kinds preserve and restore habitats vital to the health of our ocean wildlife.



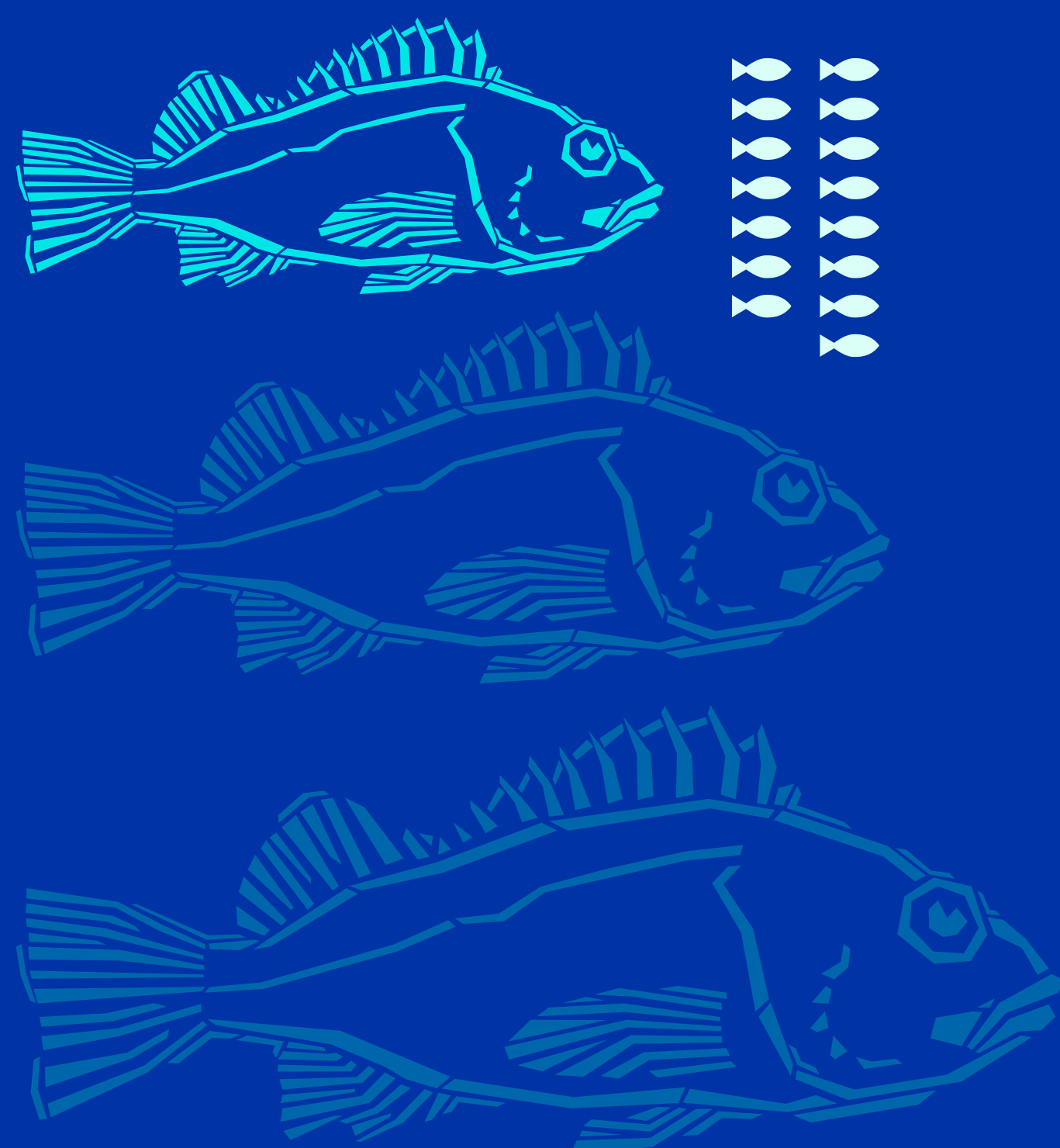
# What's a BOFFFFF?

## A Big, Old, Fat, Fertile Female Fish!

Older, larger female fish play a big role in supporting healthy fish populations. Compared to smaller females, they produce far more and healthier young. MPAs that limit fishing can help provide a safe refuge for BOFFFFs.

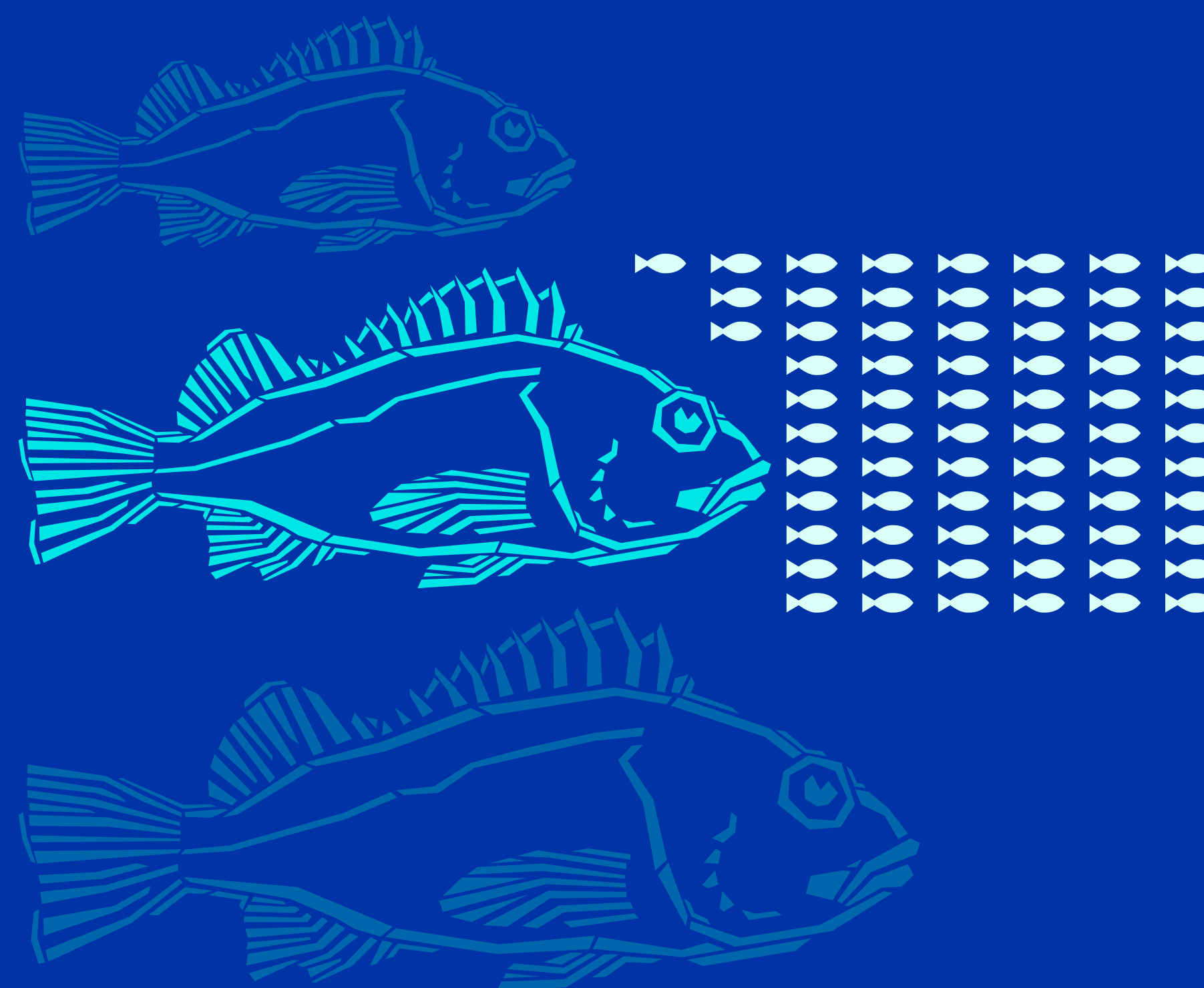
How many young can each of these female rockfish produce?

Lift to find out!



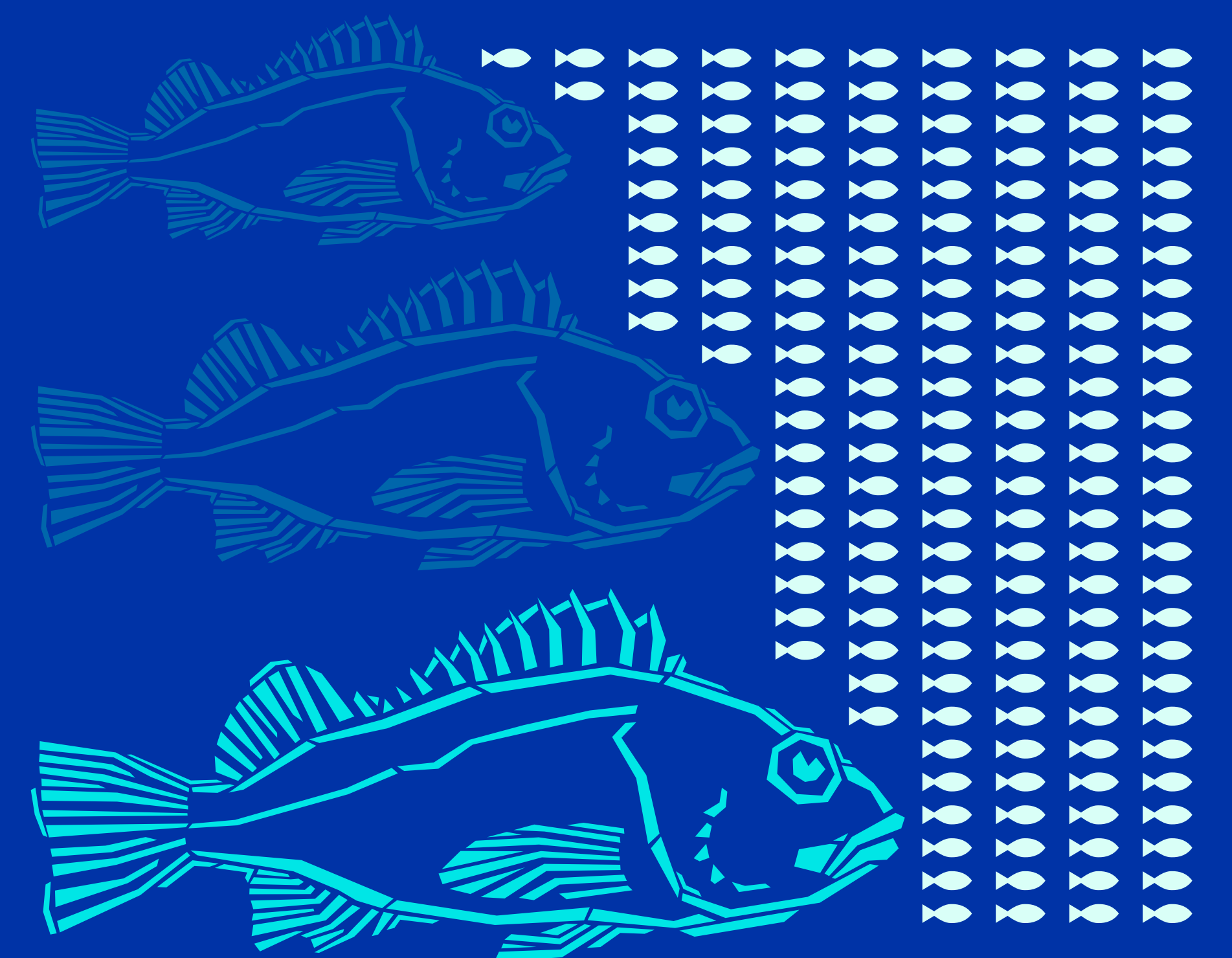
 = 10,000 young

A 14.6-inch (37 cm.) vermilion rockfish can produce 150,000 young.



 = 10,000 young

A 19.7-inch (50 cm.) vermilion rockfish can produce 700,000 young.



 = 10,000 young

A 23.6-inch (60 cm.) vermilion rockfish can produce 1.7 million young.



# Fish Flourish Inside MPAs

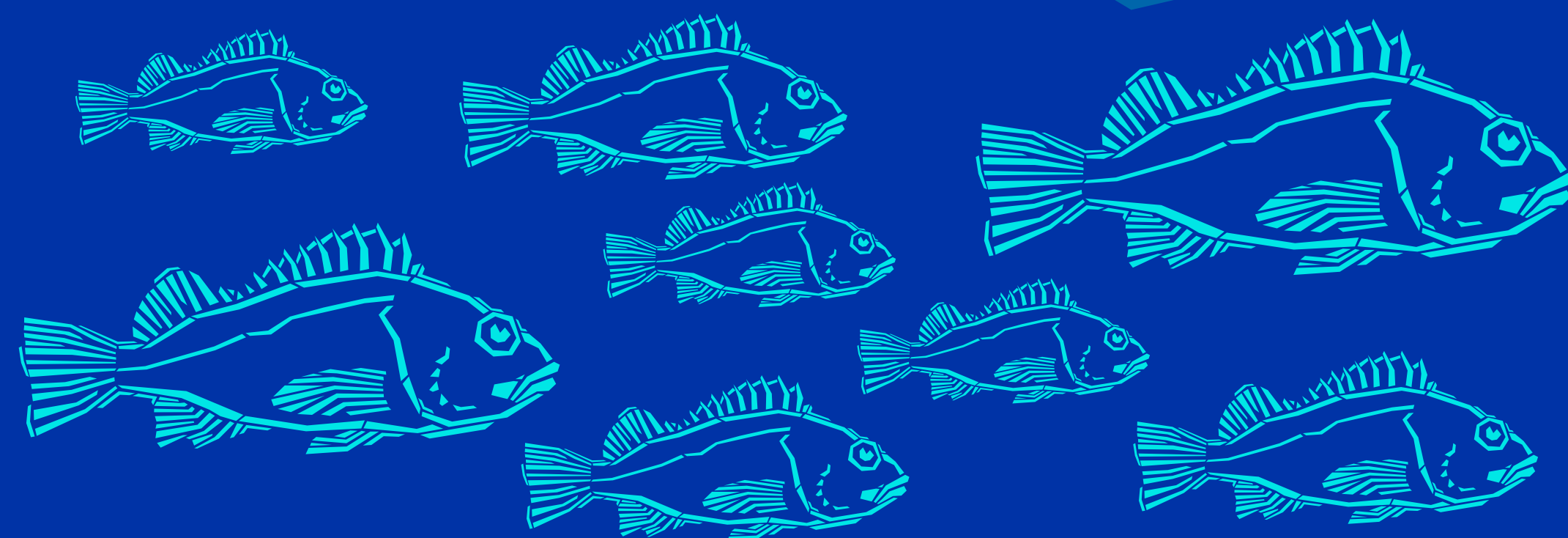
MPAs are home to more fish than the waters around them

MPAs that limit fishing are home to more fish and marine life compared to the unprotected waters around them.

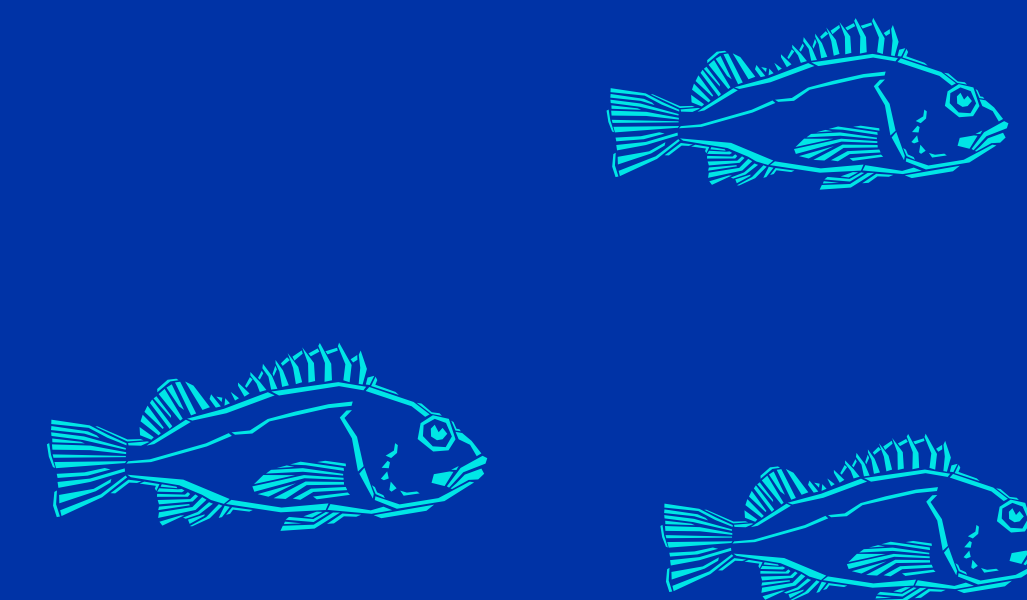
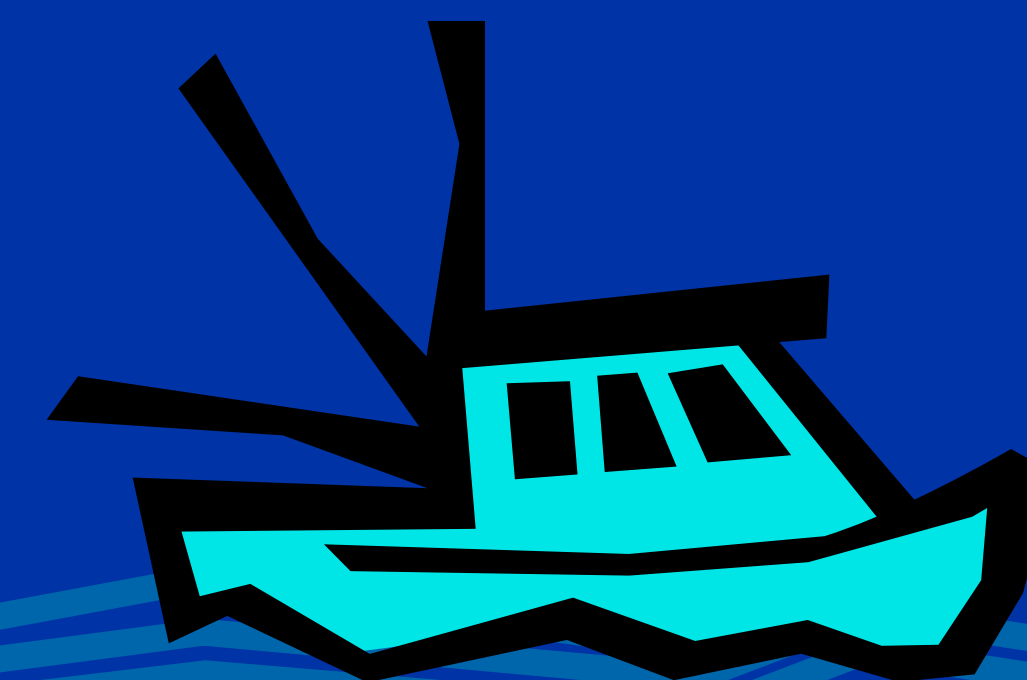
And they are refuges for older, larger fish that can produce more young and thus help replenish depleted fish populations.

How do fish populations inside MPAs compare with those outside their boundaries?

Lift to find out!



Fish of all sizes are abundant inside MPAs where they're protected from fishing.



Waters open to fishing have fewer fish, and most fish may never reach full size



# MPAs and Me

## Places to enjoy and appreciate



Kayakers glide along the ocean surface.

In protecting marine life and healthy ocean ecosystems, MPAs provide other benefits as well. They help preserve the coast that we cherish and that draws visitors from around the world.

Fishermen often catch more fish in waters near marine protected areas. Kayakers and scuba divers come to explore both above and below the surface. And birders and others find a wealth of wildlife to watch.

By supporting tourism and recreational opportunities, MPAs provide valuable sources of sustainable income for coastal communities.



A diver explores a marine protected area.



Both young and old can enjoy tidepool exploration.



# The Ocean Needs Our Care

There are many ways you can get involved in ocean conservation



Pollution on land affects our ocean wildlife.

Each of us can play a role in protecting our ocean. Conservation starts with awareness, so stay informed about ocean issues. Visiting this exhibit is a good first step!


Then step into action by joining or volunteering with organizations involved with ocean conservation. Encourage your friends and family to do the same. Even small actions can add up to big results!



Young adults volunteer to test water quality.



# Make a Pledge



## Pledge your support for the ocean

There are so many ways—both large and small—that each of us can act to help keep the ocean healthy. Positive action begins with a pledge of support.

What will you do? Take a moment now and add your pledge to those of the many others working for a healthy ocean.





# Speak Out for the Ocean



Tell your representatives  
that you care

The twenty-nine new marine protected areas along the Central Coast are just the first step in protecting our coastal waters. There's much more to be done to achieve the goal of creating a statewide network of MPAs.

Studies are underway to select areas to protect along other parts of our coast. For the process to succeed, state leaders need to know that you care. Send a postcard to say that you support ocean protection.