

ENGAGING BUSINESSES AS MARINE PROTECTED AREA AMBASSADORS

California's diverse coastal tourism, recreation and hospitality businesses can be great ambassadors for the state's marine protected areas (MPAs). Many of these companies rely on clean beaches and thriving wildlife, so they are natural outreach partners, and their customers are likely to be receptive to new information while enjoying the resources MPAs are designed to protect.



Based on experience working with tour operators, fishing businesses, outdoor gear shops, hotels, dive and kayak shops, restaurants, airports, and visitors bureaus, we have identified four key opportunities to increase MPA partnerships with business:

- **Print and video materials:** Collaborative Network members have created posters and local brochures for distribution to West Marine, bait and tackle shops, dive shops and sporting goods stores throughout the state. The San Luis Obispo Collaborative created a video highlighting local MPAs that is shown on VisitorTV in hotels throughout the county and at the local airport. The Golden Gate Collaborative engaged fishing and whale watching boat captains to create waterproof brochures, which they are now helping distribute to customers and boaters.
- **Digital content:** The California Marine Sanctuary Foundation has worked with chambers of commerce, ocean recreation businesses, and tourism websites to host specially created MPA webpages as well as a Google MPA Tour that highlights recreational opportunities and local businesses along the coast. MPA content is featured on Visit California, the official state travel and tourism website. Santa Barbara Channelkeeper has developed the Naples Dive Portal, which provides information about the MPA as well as an interactive dive map and links to local dive company websites.
- **Trainings:** Kayak instructors and guides are trained about MPAs in San Diego and Elkhorn Slough, and fishing and whale watching operators receive similar training in the Bay Area. In Santa Barbara, divers and fishermen are taken out to MPAs and educated on-site.
- **Co-marketing:** Kayak shops in San Diego proudly display MPA Ambassador logos. In Humboldt County, a local brewery and chocolate company made attractive labels with MPA information for their products. MPA t-shirts and hoodies have also been developed on the North Coast.

KEY INSIGHTS AND IDEAS

➤ **Identify businesses with MPA affinity**

Many businesses are already involved in activities in and around MPAs such as kayak excursions, SCUBA and snorkel trips, fishing charters, and whale watching. These businesses are the most receptive to incorporating MPA messaging and information, since learning about MPAs can enhance the experience of their customers.

➤ **Make a business case**

Business owners are busy. Some may need to be convinced about the benefits of participating in MPA training and outreach. Collaborative Network members have used incentives such as listing businesses on brochures and websites, creating videos for display on existing close looped systems, co-promoting MPA tours, co-hosting events that may draw in new customers, and providing window stickers for businesses to display.

➤ **Plan ahead and do your homework**

Many ocean businesses are seasonal and depend on good weather, calm seas and the busy months of summer. Start early and engage tour operators well before their peak season, when they'll have more time. Plan to repeat trainings periodically, and be sure to customize content for their customer base, location, and according to staff needs. Ask businesses what they need to engage as partners. The Monterey Collaborative worked with California State University Monterey Bay students to survey dive shop owners and customers of a local fish market to better inform outreach efforts.

➤ **Tailor to fit**

Attractive posters, giveaways like stickers, brochures, videos, and trainings work best. Inns, bed and breakfasts, and hotels may be willing share information and materials about visiting local MPAs with their guests. Materials for SCUBA shops should emphasize how MPAs around the world offer the best opportunities for diving. Fishing related businesses may be willing to distribute brochures or the FishAlerts! mobile app to help customers access information they can use about MPA rules and regulations.

➤ **Lean on existing relationships**

Organizations that are already working on business outreach in your area and have established a relationship with a company you want to engage are likely the best point of contact to facilitate an introduction or start a conversation. The San Luis Obispo Collaborative hired VisitorTV to produce an MPA video, and used the company's existing relationships to distribute it across the county.

For more information about Collaborative Network business outreach programs, please contact Calla Allison at calla.allison@resources.ca.gov

COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN BUSINESS OUTREACH PROGRAMS

WILDCOAST	Santa Barbara Channelkeeper	Shark Stewards
State Parks	Channel Islands NMS	Aquarium of the Bay
VisitorTV	Monterey Bay NMS	CSU Monterey Bay
City of Laguna Beach	Dana Wharf Sportfishing	Cambria Fishing Club
CMS Foundation	Captain David Bacon	Environmental Defense Center
City of Newport Beach	Legoland Sea Life Aquarium	Greater Farallones NMS
OC Coastkeeper	Crystal Cove Alliance	Heal the Bay
Laguna Ocean Foundation	Northcoast Environmental Center	San Diego Free Divers