

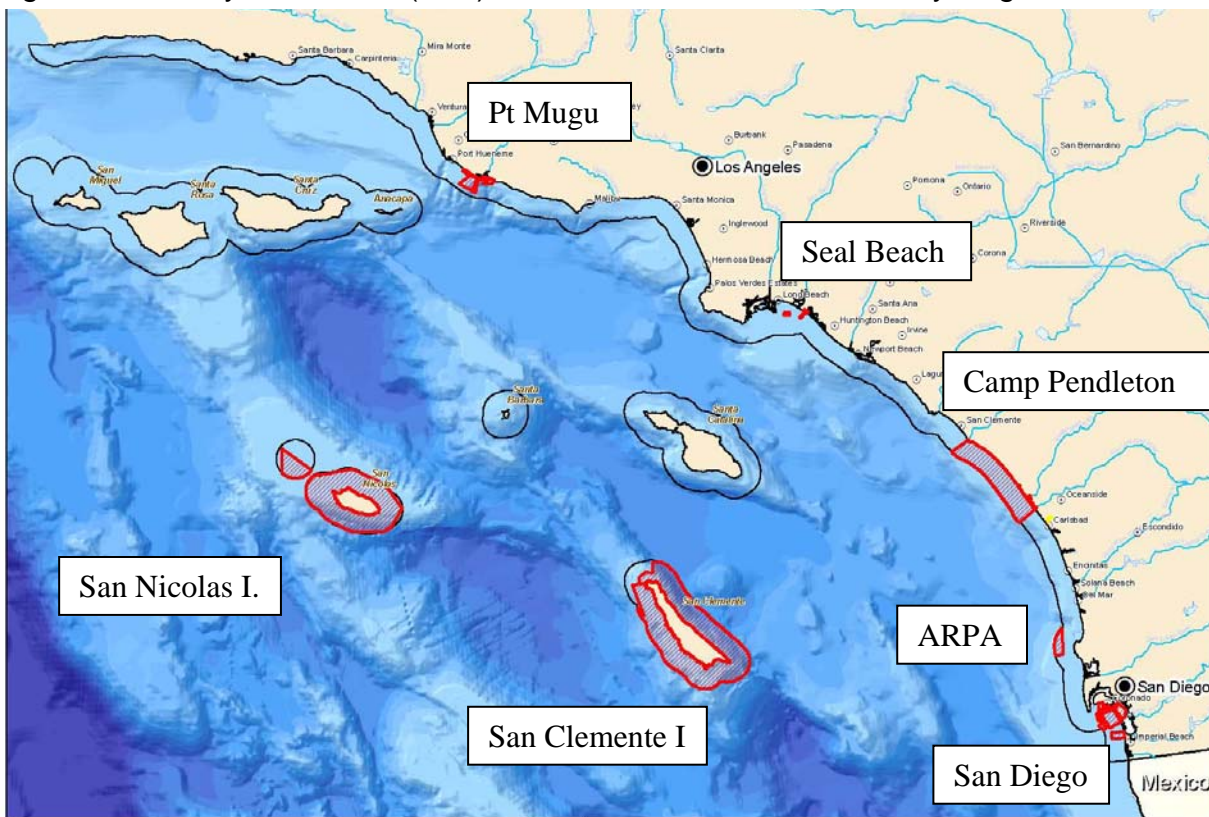
**California MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team**  
**DRAFT Analysis of Military Use Areas in the**  
**MLPA South Coast Study Region**  
*February 23, 2009 Draft*

The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRFT) has requested that the MLPA Master Plan Science Advisory Team (SAT) provide descriptions and analyses of the military use areas located in the MLPA South Coast Study Region (SCSR). Specifically, the SAT was asked to describe and analyze the:

- 1) ecological characteristics of the island and mainland areas used by the military,
- 2) habitats represented in these areas, and
- 3) ecological linkages between these and other southern California sites and particularly between the islands and the mainland coast.

The SAT also was asked to include any other important considerations for effective MPA network design. The following represents the SAT response to the BRFT request. Emphasis has been placed on the military use areas at San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Island because of their large size, location with respect to the SCSR, and the significant roles these islands play in meeting the objectives of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA), particularly with regard to the size and spacing guidelines developed by the SAT for the SCSR.

Figure 1. Military Use Areas (Red) in the Southern California Study Region.



Seven important military use areas identified by the U.S. Department of Defense in the MLPA South Coast Study Region include Point Mugu, Seal Beach, Camp Pendleton, Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) Training Area and San Diego (including North Island and Silver Strand) along the southern California mainland area and San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Island (Figure 1). A variety of military activities occur in these designated military use areas some of which impact marine organisms and their habitats. Together, the seven military use areas identified represent a total of 414 mi<sup>2</sup> or 18.0 % of the 2297 mi<sup>2</sup> of mapped habitats in state waters in the SCSR. The military use areas that include the greatest amount of area are Camp Pendleton (63.8 mi<sup>2</sup>), San Clemente Island (188.0 mi<sup>2</sup>) and San Nicolas Island (134.0 mi<sup>2</sup>). The two island areas account for 322 mi<sup>2</sup> or 77.8 % of the mapped habitats in the SCSR, which are used by the military.

The five bioregions identified for the SCSR contain different amounts of marine habitats identified by the SAT as important for MPA planning (Table 1). These habitats include consideration of bottom type, depth, and biogenic habitat. The seven military use areas also are of different sizes and occur throughout the region, therefore their impact on the MLPA planning process will differ by bioregion.

**Table 1. Amount of Available Habitat in the SCSR by Bioregion.**

Habitat Type	East Channel Islands Bioregion	Mid Channel Islands Bioregion	West Channel Islands Bioregion	North Mainland Bioregion	South Mainland Bioregion
Beaches (linear mi)	61.39	27.51	40.70	102.51	147.70
Rocky Shores (linear mi)	62.31	83.92	75.01	30.40	28.88
Kelp - (linear mi)	49.40	24.13	70.38	24.23	30.07
Hard – 0-30m proxy (linear mi)	71.65	43.07	42.85	13.19	28.68
*Hard 0-30m (sq mi)	25.27	12.58	46.07	31.35	46.72
Hard 30-100m (sq mi)	89.28	16.79	41.24	22.63	13.59
Hard 100-200m (sq mi)	55.22	9.70	6.90	2.39	0.77
Hard 200-3000m (sq mi)	84.41	9.85	0.13	1.01	1.20
Soft –0 – 30m proxy (linear mi)	4.31	36.06	72.44	117.93	128.58
*Soft 0-30m (sq mi)	3.69	25.07	70.13	155.09	245.27
Soft 30-100m (sq mi)	15.26	186.94	250.01	215.82	148.57
Soft 100-200m (sq mi)	15.58	34.47	54.30	21.23	21.44
Soft 200-3000m (sq mi)	129.89	67.89	29.12	22.03	68.56
Totals (mi)	251.44	214.69	301.52	329.13	707.04
Totals (sq mi)	418.61	363.30	497.90	471.56	546.12

\*Accuracy of area estimates for shallow substrate is limited by barriers to mapping nearshore habitats

## Habitat Representation in the Military Use Areas

The military use areas contain more than 25% of six different habitat types available in all SCSR state waters (Table 2). These include hard bottom at 200 – 3000 m depth (31%), hard bottom at 30 – 100 m depth (30%), kelp (28%), hard bottom at 100 – 200 m depth (27%), soft bottom at 200 – 3000 m depth (27%), and a proxy of hard bottom at 0-30m depth (26%).

**Table 2. Percentage of Available Habitats Identified for the SCSR found in the Seven Military Use Areas.**

Habitat Type	South Coast Study Region Total	Military Areas Total	% in Military Areas
Beaches (linear mi)	379.81	64.47	17%
Rocky Shores (linear mi)	280.51	52.41	19%
Kelp (linear mi)	198.21	55.99	28%
Hard 0-30m proxy (linear mi)	199.44	52.80	26%
*Hard 0-30m (sq mi)	161.98	31.75	20%
Hard 30-100m (sq mi)	183.53	59.30	30%
Hard 100-200m (sq mi)	74.98	19.99	27%
Hard 200-3000m (sq mi)	96.60	29.48	31%
Soft 0-30m proxy (linear mi)	359.33	44.55	12%
*Soft 0-30m (sq mi)	499.25	79.56	16%
Soft 30-100m (sq mi)	816.60	91.54	10%
Soft 100-200m (sq mi)	147.03	17.96	12%
Soft 200-3000m (sq mi)	317.50	84.40	27%

\*Accuracy of area estimates for shallow substrate is limited by barriers to mapping nearshore habitats.

Of the five bioregions located in the SCSR, military use areas account for the greatest percentage of all mapped habitats in the East Channel Islands Bioregion (44.9 %) and the West Channel Islands Bioregion (26.9 %; Table 3). The total mainland area identified as important for military use amounts to only 9.0 % of mapped habitats with more than two-thirds of this located in Camp Pendleton in the South Mainland Bioregion.

The percentages of the mapped habitat of different types located in the military use areas differ by bioregion (Table 3). In particular, the military use areas in the East Channel Islands Bioregion and the West Channel Islands Bioregion, which include San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Island respectively, include large percentages of certain habitat types. No military use areas were selected for consideration in the Mid Channel Islands Bioregion. In the East Channel Islands Bioregion, more than 50% of kelp, rocky shores, hard bottom habitats at all depths (0-30m proxy, 0-30m, 30-100m, 100-200m and 200-3000m), sandy beaches, and soft bottom habitats at all depths (0-30m proxy, 0-30m, 30-100m, 100-200m, and 200-3000m) are included in the San Clemente Island military use area. The contribution of the San Nicolas

Island military use area to habitat availability in the West Channel Islands Bioregion is less, but includes more than 50% of soft bottom habitat (200–3000m) and more than 25% of beaches, kelp, hard bottom habitats at 0-30m proxy, 0–30m and 30–100m depth.

The percentage of different habitat types contained within the military use areas located in the North Mainland and South Mainland Bioregions is much less compared with the East Channel Islands and West Channel Islands Bioregions. The military use areas contribute no more than 5% of any habitat type within the North Mainland Bioregion and no more than 24% within the South Mainland Bioregion (Table 3). Habitat types with the greatest representation in military use areas in the South Mainland Bioregion include soft bottom at 0-30m depth (24%), hard bottom at 30-100m depth (21%), and beaches (16%).

**Table 3. Percentage of the Available Habitat Types Identified for the SCSR found in the Seven Military Use Areas by Bioregion.**

<b>Habitat Type</b>	<b>East Channel Islands Bioregion</b>	<b>Mid Channel Islands Bioregion</b>	<b>West Channel Islands Bioregion</b>	<b>North Mainland Bioregion</b>	<b>South Mainland Bioregion</b>
Beaches (linear mi)	40%	0%	26%	5%	16%
Rocky Shores (linear mi)	56%	0%	21%	0%	6%
Kelp (linear mi)	67%	0%	30%	0%	6%
Hard 0-30m proxy (linear mi)	50%	0%	40%	0%	0%
*Hard 0-30m (sq mi)	56%	0%	35%	0%	3%
Hard 30-100m (sq mi)	38%	0%	46%	0%	21%
Hard 100-200m (sq mi)	35%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Hard 200-3000m (sq mi)	35%	0%	6%	0%	0%
Soft 0-30m proxy (linear mi)	86%	0%	25%	4%	15%
*Soft 0-30m (sq mi)	88%	0%	18%	2%	24%
Soft 30-100m (sq mi)	80%	0%	18%	2%	13%
Soft 100-200m (sq mi)	71%	0%	10%	1%	6%
Soft 200-3000m (sq mi)	50%	0%	68%	0%	0%

\*Accuracy of area estimates for shallow substrate is limited by barriers to mapping nearshore habitats.

### **Ecological Characteristics of the Military Use Areas**

The military use areas include key habitats in each bioregion and, in some cases, significant amounts of certain key habitat types within a bioregion and even within the entire SCSR. Because of the amount of habitat captured within their boundaries and their unique biological features, the military use areas on San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands will certainly play important roles within their respective bioregions in meeting the objectives of the MLPA. The

military use areas on the mainland also might contribute to MLPA objectives depending on the location, size, and spacing of MPAs in submitted MPA proposals.

### ***San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands***

San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands are two of the eight offshore islands commonly known as the Channel Islands. A variety of metrics and published studies of marine communities have found that each of the eight Channel Islands and to a greater extent all of the islands of the San Diegan Province (the warmer parts or warm temperate waters of the SCSR that include Santa Catalina and San Clemente Islands) are unique (Seapy and Littler 1980, Engle 1993, Engle 1994, Pondella et al. 2005) and this distinctiveness is not a function of distance between the islands (Pondella et al. 2005). Each island differs in some degree from other islands, even those within the same bioregion, in terms of exposure to ocean thermal and circulation conditions, coastal topographic features such as shelf profile and substratum composition, exposure to wave action, and in the distance from influence of the densely populated southern California mainland; each island also supports different species, assemblages and species densities and biomass. Consequently, in developing MPA proposals to meet the objectives of the MLPA, the following points need to be considered when assessing the role of the military use areas on San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands:

*Distinct Geographic Features:* As indicated, each island has geographic features, related to shore and coastline topography and orientation and location with respect to prevailing swell patterns in the SCSR that contribute to its distinct character. These conditions affect the nature of the biological communities that characterize the islands.

- The eastern shoreline of San Clemente Island is protected from most prevailing swell patterns and generally receives little wave exposure. This 'lee' effect results in the structuring of species assemblages and the resultant warm-water, wave-protected communities are duplicated only on the lee side of Santa Catalina Island in the entire SCSR.
- The western or windward side of San Clemente Island includes substantial bedrock, has a more gradual slope, and receives more wave exposure compared to any other site in its bioregion. The western or windward side of Santa Catalina Island is different in character, containing less bedrock and more boulders and with a more steeply sloping shoreline.
- San Nicolas Island is farthest offshore and is more exposed to open ocean conditions than any of the Channel Islands. Its orientation with respect to the prevailing swell patterns create exposure to more severe sea states and wave conditions along both sides of the island. There are fewer coves and wave protected areas on San Nicolas Island.

*Distinct Biotic Features:* The placement in the ocean climate of SCSR makes these islands unique in terms of the biota they support within their bioregion. Both islands contain different mixtures of warm and cold temperate species distributed across their waters compared to other islands within their respective bioregions. The two islands also play important roles in

supporting bird and mammal populations in the SCSR (see Marine Birds and Mammals Section below). Selected examples include:

- The unique northern range extensions of Panamic species to San Clemente Island [e.g., Panamic arrow crab (*Stenorhynchus debilis*), Warty sea slug (*Pleurobranchus areolatus*), Arbacia sea urchin (*Arbacia incisa*), Guadalupe cardinalfish (*Apogon guadalupensis*), Pink cardinalfish (*A. pacificus*), Swallow damselfish (*Azurina hirundo*), Purple brotula (*Oligopus diagrammus*) (Engle and Richards 2001; Richards and Engle 2001)].
- The only consistent resident population of the Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) in the SCSR occurs on San Nicolas Island.
- The largest remaining remnant populations of the endangered black abalone (*Haliotis cracheroidii*) are found on San Nicolas Island. San Clemente Island once supported some of the highest densities of black abalone in the region along portions of its western coastline. Because of the availability of suitable habitat and its remoteness and inaccessibility, San Clemente Island represents a possible site for efforts to recover populations of this now rare species.
- San Clemente Island supports the largest known populations of the rare purple hydrocoral, excluding populations found on the Farnsworth Bank pinnacle.
- Populations of the only rock-based morph, and one of only two known locations for the sand-based morph, of Elk Kelp (*Pelagophycus porra*) in the Channel Islands (Miller and Dorr 1994, Miller et al. 2000) occur on San Clemente Island.
- Unusual, deep eelgrass communities (*Zostera marina*) are abundant on San Nicolas Island (Engle and Miller 2005).
- Large areal coverage of kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) communities occur on San Clemente and San Nicolas Islands. Together, these two islands have large kelp bed areas and together contribute 48.3% of the total kelp coverage for the Channel Islands. The kelp beds at San Clemente Island account for 88.9% of the kelp bed habitat in the East Channel Island Bioregion whereas San Nicolas Island kelp beds makes up 34.8% of the total kelp coverage in the West Channel Island Bioregion. These island kelp habitats occur in significantly deeper water than most kelp habitats due to water clarity.
- The entire waters of both San Clemente and San Nicolas Islands (including Begg Rock) were designated *Areas of Special Biological Significance* in 1974 to preserve their biologically unique and sensitive marine ecosystems for future generations.

*Remoteness and Accessibility:* San Clemente and San Nicolas Islands are the most isolated and remote islands in the SCSR. This isolation from the mainland makes them particularly important to the MPA process due to their reduced exposure to the abundant anthropogenic stressors common to SCSR coastal waters. To amplify:

- Their remote nature (distance from the mainland) makes these island habitats less accessible to fishing and fished species show signs of less fishing pressure [e.g., larger kelp bass (Young 1963) and sheephead (Hamilton et al. 2007), abundant giant seabass, and large lobsters are found on San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands].

- These island populations and communities are least likely to be influenced by the effects of mainland pollutants, which are readily carried offshore by runoff from storm events.
- These islands are the least impacted by invasive species, which generally have been brought into our region through shipping and often enter through mainland ports (e.g., the recent introduction of *Sargassum filicinum*) (Miller and Engle, in press).
- Because of their remoteness, these islands represent some of the better locations in the SCSR to evaluate the effects of anthropogenic stressors on marine populations and communities.
- They have unique larval sink and source processes (see section below on Ecological Linkages Between San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Islands and Other Southern California Mainland and Island Sites).

*Begg Rock*: Begg Rock, which is included in the San Nicolas Island military use area, is a unique, small island habitat that comes to the surface approximately 10 miles off the west coast of San Nicolas Island. It is characterized by its sheer, pinnacle-like profile and supports a unique invertebrate assemblage, which includes purple hydrocoral, shallow aggregations of *Metridium* and other anemones.

### **Mainland Military Use Areas**

Because the mainland military use areas account for much less of the habitat available in the North Mainland and South Mainland Bioregions, these regions will receive less attention here. In the North Mainland Bioregion, the single military use area around Point Mugu includes coastal wetlands habitat and provides important habitat for marine birds (see Marine Bird and Mammal section below). Four military use areas (Seal Beach, Camp Pendleton, ARPA Training Area, and San Diego) are located in the South Mainland Bioregion. Camp Pendleton, and the coastline to the north and south of this military use area, is characterized mostly by sandy beaches and intermittent low-lying soft rocky benches. These habitats support kelps and other hard-substratum inhabitants and are subject to more soft sediment influence than the better known, persistent rocky substratum communities that characterize headlands and other areas in the SCSR. As with Point Mugu, Camp Pendleton includes important coastal wetlands habitat. The offshore ARPA Training Area, although small in its overall extent, accounts for most of the hard 30-100m substratum contributing to the 21% of this habitat captured by the military use areas in the South Mainland Bioregion (Table 3). Similarly, the military use areas at North Island and Silver Strand, located near San Diego Bay, include the majority of the soft bottom habitat (0-30m depth) contributing to the 24% of this habitat type included within military use areas in this bioregion (Table 3). All military use areas in the South Mainland Bioregion provide important areas for marine birds (see marine bird and mammal section below).

## **Ecological Linkages between San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Island and Other Southern California Mainland and Island Sites**

Connectivity through larval movement was evaluated in the south coast study region through realistic model simulations using Regional Ocean Modeling System (ROMS)<sup>1</sup>. The model assumes larvae and some weakly swimming young life stages behave as particles, simply transported through ocean circulation. The circulation model is based on data gathered during the period of 1996 – 2003, including strong El Niño and La Niña events. Model simulations are done for several representative populations (see Table 4).

Modeling results (Table 4) suggest that there is limited recruitment from San Clemente Island to other areas of the SCSR. Most recruitment from San Clemente Island appears to be local, that is, the recruiting young were spawned by adults resident in suitable habitats around the island. For some species, including kelp bass and lingcod, adults from San Clemente Island contribute to local recruitment but not to recruitment in other locations in the study region. However, for lingcod, the model also predicts that San Clemente receives some recruits from populations at San Nicolas, Santa Barbara, and Santa Catalina islands. For cabezon and blue rockfish, the model predicts that adults on San Clemente Island also contribute a limited number of recruits to Santa Catalina Island. For rockfish, the mainland (particularly north from San Mateo Point to Santa Barbara) and most of the Channel Islands serve as sources of larvae that recruit at San Clemente Island. For species with longer pelagic larval duration, such as red sea urchin, the model predicts only limited local recruitment to San Clemente Island, plus limited recruitment from Santa Catalina, San Nicolas and Santa Barbara islands. Generally, San Clemente Island appears to have high local recruitment and tends to receive some larvae from other places in the study region, but the dispersal model suggests that this island has a limited role as a source of larvae to other places in the study region, with the strongest connections to Santa Catalina, which lies within the same bioregion (East Channel Islands).

Modeling results suggest that San Nicolas Island is connected to some of the other Channel Islands though the exchange of larvae and also receives larvae that originate along the mainland coast (Table 4). For some representative species, such as cabezon, lingcod and blue rockfish, adults on San Nicolas Island may produce young that recruit locally, while some young may be transported to nearby islands, including Santa Barbara, San Clemente and Santa Catalina Islands. Adults of species such as cabezon from San Nicolas Island also produce young that may be transported to San Miguel Island, which is in the same West Channel Islands Bioregion. Young of these species (represented by cabezon, lingcod and blue rockfish) produced in other locations, particularly the mainland coast north of San Mateo Point, may be carried on currents to San Nicolas Island where they may settle and grow. For some species, such as kelp bass, local recruitment is limited, but populations on San Nicolas Island receive young that originate from the mainland coast, primarily between San Mateo Point and Port Hueneme, and on the northeastern side of Santa Catalina Island. For species with longer pelagic larval duration, such as red sea urchin, the model suggests that local adult populations

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<sup>1</sup> Researchers are S. Mitarai, D. Siegel, J. Watson of University of California, Santa Barbara and C. Dong & J. McWilliams of University of California, Los Angeles



contribute to recruitment at Santa Catalina and Santa Barbara Islands, but local recruitment from San Nicolas Island and recruitment from other areas of the south coast study region are limited. However, because the dispersal model does not fully incorporate the effects of nearshore circulation processes, local recruitment may be underestimated – for both San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands.

**Table 4. Larval Connectivity for San Clemente Island (SCI) and San Nicolas Islands (SNI). Listed are Modeling Results for Several Representative Species.**

<b>San Clemente Island</b>		
<i>Species</i>	<i>From SCI</i>	<i>To SCI</i>
Kelp Bass	To SCI only	From SCI only
Lingcod	To SCI only	Limited from southern islands: SCI, SNI, Santa Barbara I. and Santa Catalina I.
Red Sea Urchin	A tiny bit of recruitment to SCI	A small amount of recruitment from Santa Catalina I., SCI, SNI and Santa Barbara I.
Cabezon	To SCI and a bit to Santa Catalina I	From mainland from San Mateo Pt to Santa Barbara and all islands except San Miguel and Santa Rosa I.
Blue Rockfish	To SCI, a bit to Santa Catalina I.	From mainland north of San Mateo Pt, from islands but not S Rosa
<b>San Nicolas Island</b>		
<i>Species</i>	<i>From SNI</i>	<i>SNI</i>
Kelp Bass	Very little local recruitment	From NE Santa Catalina I. and mainland coast from San Mateo Pt to Port Hueneme
Red Sea Urchin	To Santa Catalina I. and Santa Barbara I. mostly	From no locations in the south coast study region.
Lingcod	To all southern islands: SNI, Santa Barbara I., SCI and Santa Catalina I.	From mainland from Santa Monica Bay to Santa Barbara, a bit from islands: Santa Cruz I., Anacapa I., SNI and Santa Barbara I.
Cabezon	To San Miguel I. and all southern islands (SNI, Santa Barbara I., SCI, Santa Catalina I.)	From mainland from San Mateo Pt to Santa Barbara and some islands: Santa Cruz I., Anacapa I., N Santa Rosa I., SNI, and Santa Barbara I.
Blue Rockfish	To all southern islands: SNI, Santa Barbara I., SCI and Santa Catalina I.	From mainland from Palos Verdes Pt to Pt Conception, and islands: Santa Cruz I., Anacapa I., N Santa Rosa I., SNI, and Santa Barbara I.

## Marine Birds and Mammals

There are seven species of marine birds and four species of marine mammals that breed, rest and forage in the military use areas in the SCSR. The birds are: Brandt's cormorants (*Phalacrocorax penicillatus*), western gulls (*Larus occidentalis*), California least terns (*Sternula antillarum browni*), western snowy plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), black oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*), ashy storm-petrels (*Oceanodroma homochroa*), Xantus's murrelets (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*). The marine mammals include: California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), Pacific harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina richarii*), northern elephant seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*) and southern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris nereis*).

Brandt's cormorants are endemic to marine habitats along the west coast of North America (Wallace and Wallace 1998) while western gulls are endemic to the California Current System (Pierotti and Annett 1995). Neither species is listed under state or federal endangered species acts. However, Brandt's cormorants were listed in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Seabird Conservation Plan as having a moderate conservation concern due to their vulnerability to human-caused disturbance (USFWS 2005). California least terns were listed as endangered under both the U.S. and California Endangered Species Acts after losing much of their breeding habitat to coastal development and increased use of coastal beaches in the 1950s and 1960s (Thompson et al. 1997). Western Snowy Plovers require breeding habitat similar to that of least terns and have been listed as a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (Powell and Collier 2000).

Black oystercatchers are listed as a species of conservation concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and named a focal species for priority conservation action (Tessler et al. 2007). Ashy Storm-Petrels are considered a species of conservation concern by both the UFWS and California Department of Fish and Game (Brown et al. 2003) and a petition to list the bird as threatened or endangered has been submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Interior (Wolf 2007). Xantus's murrelets are listed as threatened under California's Endangered Species Act and are candidates for listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (Burkett et al. 2003).

A resident population of the southern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris nereis*), listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973, occurs on San Nicolas Island. Except for southern sea otters, none of the other marine mammals listed in this document are listed under state or federal endangered species acts. However, all marine mammals are protected under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Table 4 lists the species utilizing habitat on each military property in southern California and shows the percent that each area's bird and mammal populations contribute to the total populations for the respective MLPA bioregion and the SCSR.

- San Nicolas Island supports the majority of the western gulls and western snowy plovers and a large proportion of the California sea lions, Pacific harbor seals and northern elephant seals for the West Channel Islands Bioregion. It also supports a

large proportion of the SCSR's western gull, California sea lion, and northern elephant seal populations and the only consistent resident population of the southern sea otter.

- San Clemente Island supports all of the Brandt's cormorants and black oystercatchers, the majority of the ashy storm-petrels and western gulls, and a large proportion of Xantus's murrelets and Pacific harbor seals for the East Channel Islands Bioregion.
- Point Mugu supports a large proportion of the California least terns and western snowy plovers for the North Mainland Bioregion and a large proportion of the western snowy plovers from the SCSR.
- Camp Pendleton and the Navy's property in San Diego Bay support large proportions of the California least tern and western snowy plover populations for both the South Mainland Bioregion and the SCSR.

Marine mammal rookeries (breeding sites) are not included in Table 3 because data on population estimates for these rookeries were not available. However, the location of rookeries within the SCSR has been well documented.

- San Clemente Island supports all of the California sea lion and northern elephant seal rookeries for the East Channel Islands Bioregion and 15% and 3% for the SCSR, respectively.
- San Nicolas Island supports 12% of the California sea lion and 32% of the northern elephant seal rookeries for the West Channel Islands Bioregion and 12% and 26% for the SCSR, respectively.
- Point Mugu supports one of two Pacific harbor seal rookeries in the North Mainland Bioregion, with only three existing for the entire SCSR.

**Table 4. Breeding and haul-out population estimates for marine birds and mammals, dependent on military properties in southern California, categorized within MLPA bioregions. Also shown are the percent that each local population contributes to the total bioregion population and total population for a given species in the SCSR.**

Bioregion	Population	% of Bioregion Population	% of SCSR Population
<b>West Islands Bioregion</b>			
<b><i>San Nicolas Island</i></b>			
Brandt's Cormorant	290	5.37	4.98
Black Oystercatcher	2	3.77	2.44
Western Gull	2,800	70.74	28.11
Western Snowy Plover	44	89.80	9.46
California Sea Lion	51,397	44.43	41.02
Pacific Harbor Seal	784	20.33	10.19
Northern Elephant Seal	11,301	36.68	36.58
<b>East Islands Bioregion</b>			
<b><i>San Clemente Island</i></b>			
Ashy Storm-Petrel	<100	~50.00	3.19
Brandt's Cormorant	40	100.00	0.69

<b>Bioregion</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% of Bioregion Population</b>	<b>% of SCSR Population</b>
Black Oystercatcher	4	100.00	4.88
Western Gull	112	68.29	1.12
Xantus's Murrelet	20	28.57	1.13
Pacific Harbor Seal	104	35.02	1.35
<b>North Mainland Bioregion</b>			
<b>Point Mugu Navy</b>			
California Least Tern	760	40.00	5.52
Western Snowy Plover	60	40.27	12.90
<b>South Mainland Bioregion</b>			
<b>Seal Beach Navy</b>			
California Least Tern	332	2.80	2.41
<b>Camp Pendleton</b>			
California Least Tern	3,208	27.04	23.30
Western Snowy Plover	117	43.82	25.16
<b>San Diego Navy (all)</b>			
California Least Tern	2,948	24.84	21.42
Western Snowy Plover	56	20.97	12.04

## Summary

### *Habitat Features*

Together, the military use areas represent a total of 414 mi<sup>2</sup> or 18.0 % of the 2297 mi<sup>2</sup> of mapped habitats available in state waters in the SCSR. The military use areas including the greatest amount of area are Camp Pendleton (63.8 mi<sup>2</sup>), San Clemente Island (188.0 mi<sup>2</sup>) and San Nicolas Island (134.0 mi<sup>2</sup>). The two islands account for 322 mi<sup>2</sup> or 77.8 % of the state waters used by the Military.

Military use areas account for the greatest percentage of mapped habitats in the East Channel Islands Bioregion (44.9 %) and the West Channel Islands Bioregion (26.9 %) (Table 3). The total mainland area assigned to military use amounts to only 9.0 % of mapped habitats, with more than two-thirds of this located in Camp Pendleton in the South Mainland Bioregion.

The military use areas in the East Channel Islands Bioregion and the West Channel Islands Bioregion, which include San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Island respectively, include large percentages of certain habitat types. No military use areas were selected for analysis from the Mid Channel Islands Bioregion.

In the East Channel Islands Bioregion, more than 50% of the beaches, rocky shores, kelp, hard bottom habitats at 0-30m proxy, 0-30m, 100-200m, and 200-3000m, and soft bottom habitats at all depths (0-30m proxy, 0-30m, 30-100m, 100-200m, and 200-3000m) are included in the San Clemente Island military use area. More than 50% of soft bottom habitat at 200-3000m and more than 25% of beaches, kelp, hard bottom habitats at 0-30m (proxy), 0-

30m and 30–100m depth and soft bottom habitats at 0-30m (proxy) are located within the San Nicolas Island military use area.

The military use areas contribute no more than 5% of any habitat type within the North Mainland Bioregion and no more than 24% within the South Mainland Bioregion (Table 3). Habitat types with the greatest representation in military use areas in the South Mainland Bioregion include soft bottom habitat at 0-30m depth (24%), hard bottom habitat at 30-100m depth (21%), and beaches (16%).

The offshore ARPA Training Area accounts for 21% of the hard bottom at 30-100m depth and the military use areas at San Diego Bay, including North Island and Silver Strand, includes 24% of the soft bottom habitat at 0-30m depth in the South Mainland Bioregion.

Because of their geological makeup and geographic features (e.g., ocean circulation and thermal conditions, shore and coastline topography and orientation, and location with respect to prevailing swell patterns), San Clemente Island and San Nicolas Island contain important and sometimes large amounts of habitat that is often unreplicated or poorly replicated in the SCSR.

Their large distances from the mainland reduce exposure of these islands to the abundant anthropogenic stressors common to SCSR coastal waters.

### ***Biotic Features***

These islands are unique in terms of the biota they support within their bioregion. Both islands contain different mixtures of warm and cold temperate species distributed across their waters compared to other islands within their respective bioregions.

The entire waters of both Islands (including Begg Rock) are *Areas of Special Biological Significance* in recognition of their biologically unique and sensitive marine ecosystems.

San Nicolas Island supports the only resident population of the Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) and the largest remaining remnant populations of the endangered black abalone (*Haliotis cracheroidii*) in the SCSR and supports unusual, deep eelgrass communities (*Zostera marina*).

San Clemente Island supports the largest known populations of the rare purple hydrocoral, excluding populations found on the Farnsworth Bank pinnacle and populations of the only rock based morph and one of only two known locations for the sand-based morph of the Elk Kelp (*Pelagophycus porra*).

The kelp beds at San Clemente Island account for 88.9% of the kelp bed habitat in the East Channel Island Bioregion whereas San Nicolas Island kelp beds makes up 34.8% of the total kelp coverage in the West Channel Island Bioregion. These island kelp habitats occur in significantly deeper water than most kelp habitats due to water clarity.

### ***Linkages and Connectivity***

Modeling results suggest San Clemente Island has high local recruitment and tends to receive larvae from other places in the study region, but has a limited role as a source of larvae to other places in the study region, with the strongest connections to Santa Catalina Island in the same East Channel Islands Bioregion.

Modeling results suggest that San Nicolas Island is connected to some of the other Channel Islands through the exchange of larvae and also receives larvae that originate along the mainland coast.

### ***Marine Birds and Mammals***

San Nicolas Island and San Clemente Island include important habitats and rookeries for marine birds and mammals.

San Nicolas Island supports the majority of the western gulls and western snowy plovers for the West Islands Bioregion and also supports a large proportion of the SCSR's western gull population. It also supports a large proportion of the SCSR's California sea lion, and northern elephant seal populations.

San Clemente Island supports all of the Brandt's cormorants and black oystercatchers, the majority of the ashy storm-petrels and western gulls, and a large proportion of Xantus's murrelets and Pacific harbor seals for the East Islands Bioregion.

San Nicolas Island supports 12% of the California sea lion and 26% of the northern elephant seal rookeries and San Clemente Island supports 15% of the California sea lion and 3% of the northern elephant seal rookeries in the SCSR.

The military use area around Point Mugu includes coastal wetlands habitat and one of three Pacific harbor seal rookeries in the SCSR.

Camp Pendleton includes coastal wetlands habitat and the coastline to the north and south of this military use area, is characterized mostly by sandy beaches and intermittent low-lying soft rocky benches.

The military use area around Point Mugu and all military use areas in the South Mainland Bioregion provide important areas for marine birds. Point Mugu supports a large proportion of the western snowy plovers, and Camp Pendleton and the Navy's property in San Diego Bay support large proportions of the California least tern and western snowy plover populations for the SCSR.

### **Conclusions**

Because the military use areas include large amounts of key habitat and contain unique biological communities within the SCSR, these areas will play significant roles in meeting the science objectives of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA).

The military use areas on San Nicolas Island (including Begg Rock) and San Clemente Island are particularly important to meeting MLPA objectives within the West Channel Islands and East Channel Islands Bioregions.

Contributions to the MLPA made by any proposed closures in military use areas can best be determined in the context of the alternative MPA proposals for the entire SCSR. Consequently, the SAT recommends that any proposed closures in military use areas be considered as part of the full SAT evaluation of these alternative MPA proposals. The full SAT evaluation is needed to assess the contribution of proposed closures in military use areas to ecosystem protection within each bioregion and the entire SCSR, and to determine the role of proposed closures in military use areas as part of an integrated regional network of MPAs.

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