

State Water Resources Control Board
Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBSs) within the
Marine Life Protection Act North Central Coast Study Region
reasons for designation and unique features

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North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 1)

ASBS 2: Del Mar Landing

- Recommended by regional board; supported by California Department of Fish and Game. No opposition submitted. Area is an ecological reserve, whose primary purposes are to preserve land, or land and water areas and protect the aquatic organisms and wildlife present.
- Ecological reserve designation in 1972. Its primary purpose for this designation is to preserve land, or land and water areas so designated in a natural condition and to protect the aquatic organisms and wildlife found here for public observation and study. Fin fish are the only type of fish that are allowed to be fished for in this area.

ASBS 3: Gerstle Cove

- Recommended by regional board; This is inclusive of a reserve and underwater park for the use of divers and nature observers.
- The ASBS is a relatively pristine cove that is representative of the natural marine environment of Sonoma County. Gerstle Cove is also an ecological reserve. It serves as an underwater sea park, primarily for observation and enjoyment by skindivers. Fishing activities are limited by Fish and Game and the removal of marine life to such an extent that no fish, mollusks, crustaceans, or other invertebrates may be taken within 60 feet of the high water line in the most northerly portion of the cove may be taken without a written permit. This restriction was adopted by the California Fish and Game in 1972.

ASBS 4: Bodega Marine Life Refuge

- Recommended by regional board; supported by California Department of Fish and Game, and University of California Bodega Marine Laboratory. No opposition submitted. This was considered inclusive of the finest rocky headland habitat in Sonoma County.
- Is the northern-most exposure of granitic rock along the CA coast; it is a transition zone between temperate zone spp and typically boreal fauna; it is designated "type" locality for several marine species described in the 1970s. Bodega Rock is classified as a major seabird rookery by the California Department of Fish and Game, including presence of either rare species or more than 100 nests. A large breeding area for Brandt Cormorants in the early 1970s.

ASBS 5: Saunders Reef

- Recommended by regional board; supported by California Department of Fish and Game. No opposition submitted.
- Localized high population densities and large size of individual red abalone, offshore reef surrounded by a forest of bull kelp, *Nereocystis luetkeana*. This area is relatively undisturbed by man.

San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 2)

ASBS 9: James V. Fitzgerald

- Recommended by regional board; supported by California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Parks and Recreation and Sierra Club. No opposition submitted.
- Large boulders often protrude from the base of the reefs where dense stands of bull kelp are found along with red algae. A diverse array of invertebrates inhabit the broad reefs such as sea stars, starfish, crabs, chitons and purple urchins. There are three types of subtidal habitat.

ASBS 10: Farallon Islands

- Recommended by regional board; supported by Point Reyes Bird Observatory. No opposition submitted.
- The biota of the ASBS are extremely rich and diverse, reflecting the variety of habitat in the area. Important marine organisms were identified in the survey including elephant seals, California sea lions, harbor seals, and Stellar sea lions. This region is unique in the large diversity of bird and marine mammal wildlife present. Several rare and endangered species inhabit this ASBS.

ASBS 11: Duxbury Reef

- Recommended by regional board; supported by California Department of Fish and Game and Dr. Gordon Chang. No opposition submitted.
- The Reef contains a rich intertidal biota which has several unique components of sea slugs, rock inhabiting clams and worms, a parasite of the California mussel, a rare rock burrowing anemone and a unique acorn worm. The reef is the largest shale reef in California. Approximately 47 species of opisthobranch mollusks have been recorded from the area, 20 of which are either unique to the area or to one of the surrounding range extremes.

ASBS 12: Point Reyes Headlands

- Recommended by regional board; supported by Point Reyes Bird Observatory. No opposition submitted. This survey was conducted over 15 years from 1963 to 1978.
- The subtidal community at the ASBS is one of the most diverse in the San Francisco Bay region. The intertidal zone also has great species diversity including California mussel, gooseneck barnacles, acorn barnacles and red abalone. There is a year-round population of California and Stellar sea lions. This is the largest breeding site of common mure in Marin County. Several species of birds also breed in abundance in this area. Red abalone is in abundance in this area and is protected as well. This mollusk is known to grow to large sizes, some over 10 inches in length.

ASBS 13: Double Point

- Recommended by regional board; supported by Point Reyes Bird Observatory, Robert Jones of U.C. at Berkeley, and Sierra Club. Documentation by California Department of Fish and Game answered the staff questions as to qualifications of the area. No opposition submitted.
- There are extensive intertidal reefs at both North and South Points with lush algal and marine life. There is a large population of harbor seals that reside at Double Point. This population of harbor seals is one of the largest in the world. This is also a nesting and breeding ground for birds. Stormy Stack at North Point is the second largest marine bird refuge in Marin County.

ASBS 14: Bird Rock

- Recommended by regional board; supported by Point Reyes Bird Observatory, People for a Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Sierra Club. No opposition submitted.
- The diversity of marine invertebrates, fish, birds, and mammals provides this ASBS locality with one of Northern California's most unique ecosystems, deserving of ASBS recognition; contains one of the most diverse invertebrate populations in N. California. The California sea lion and the harbor seal occupy the reefs of Bird Rock. Marine birds have also been observed feeding and creating a habitat in the reefs at Bird Rock. Red abalone is abundant in the subtidal area, though small in size. This area is also considered a hot spot for the white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.