

# Consideration for Special Closures in the MLPA Central Coast Study Region



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# Interest Group

- **Facilitated by the Seabird Protection Network**
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**
- **BLM - California Coastal National Monument**
- **NOAA - Monterey Bay & Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuaries**
- **CDFW**
- ***Torch/Platform Irene* Oil Spill Trustee Council (USFWS, NOAA, CDFW, CSLC, DOD)**
- ***Luckenbach* Oil Spill Trustee Council (DOI, NOAA, CDFW)**

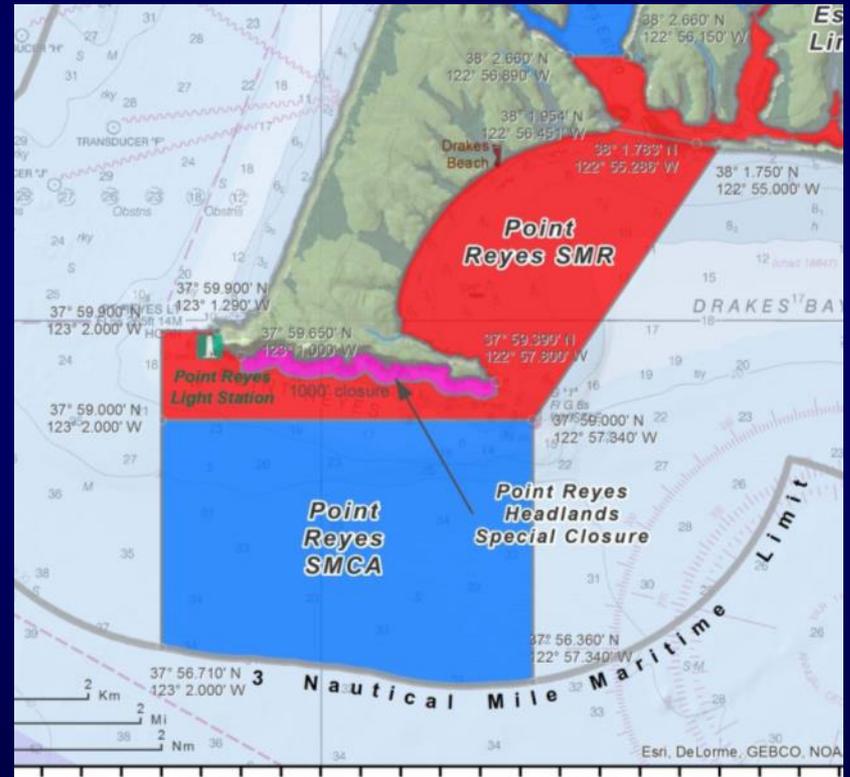
# What is a Special Closure?

“An area designated by the Fish and Game Commission that prohibits access or restricts boating activities in waters adjacent to sea bird rookeries or marine mammal haul-out sites.”



# Special Closures

- Small areas: 300 to 1,000 feet from sensitive resources



# Purpose of Special Closures

- **Special Closures help protect seabirds and marine mammals from human disturbance.**
- **Satisfy Goal 2 of MLPA:**  
“**Help sustain, conserve and protect marine life populations...**”
- **Help implement other protections:**
  - **Marine Mammal Protection Act**
  - **Migratory Bird Treaty Act**

# Impacts of Human Disturbance

- **Chronic disturbance: Reduced productivity, energetic costs, eventual abandonment of site;**
- **Large-scale events: catastrophic nest loss, separation and/or abandonment of pups, abandonment of site;**
- **Impacts are additive to other factors: food shortages, predators, pollution**

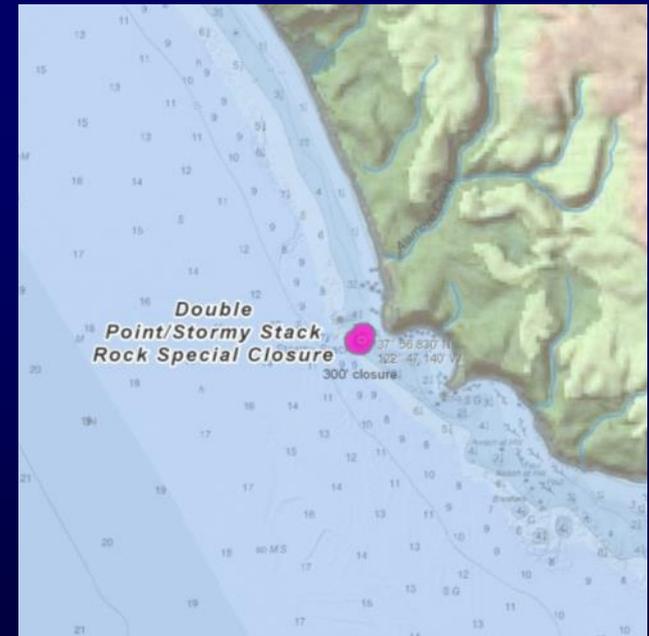


# Human Disturbance can equal nest abandonment



# Current State Special Closures

- **South Coast:**
  - 2 Special Closures
  - Implemented in 2005 (separate from MLPA)
- **North Central Coast:**
  - 6 Special Closures
  - Implemented in 2010
- **North Coast:**
  - 7 Special Closures
  - Implemented in 2012

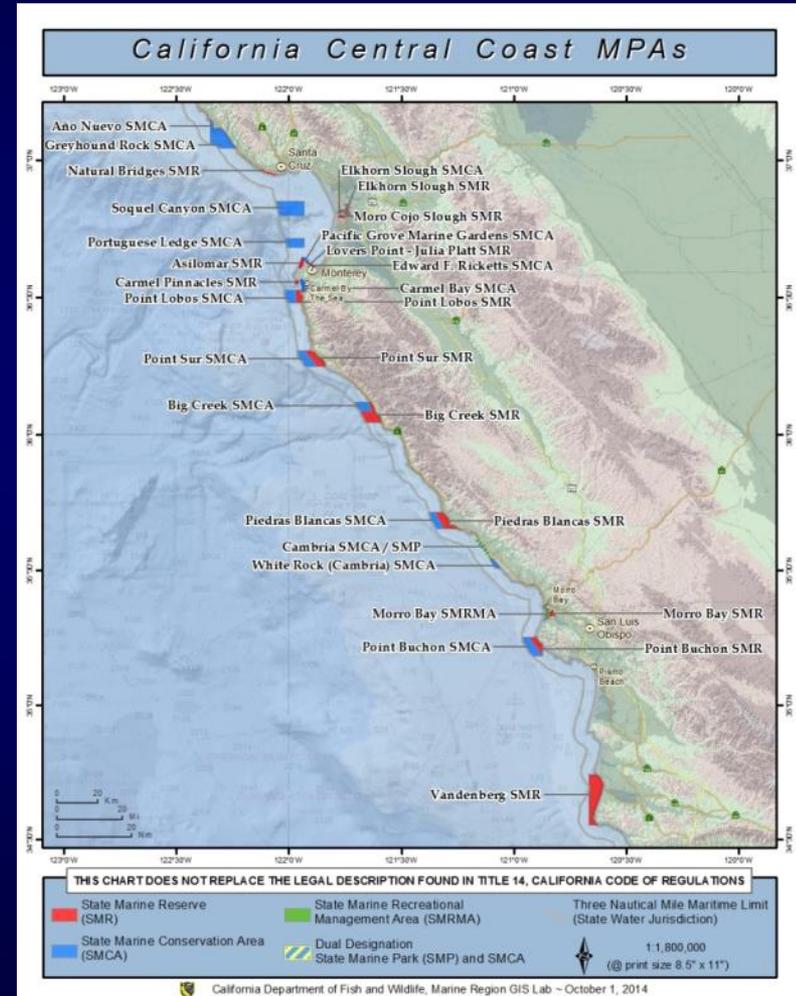


# Current State Special Closures

- **Central Coast:**
  - **0 Special Closures**
  - **Implemented before protecting seabirds and marine mammals were identified in the MLPA goals and objectives**

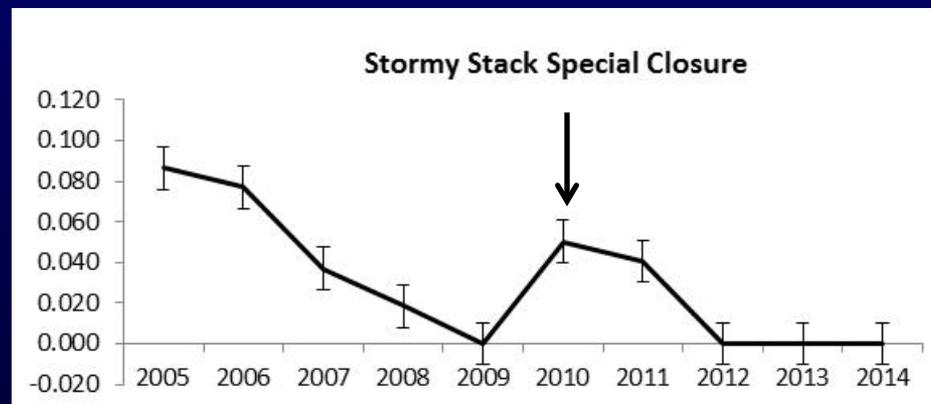
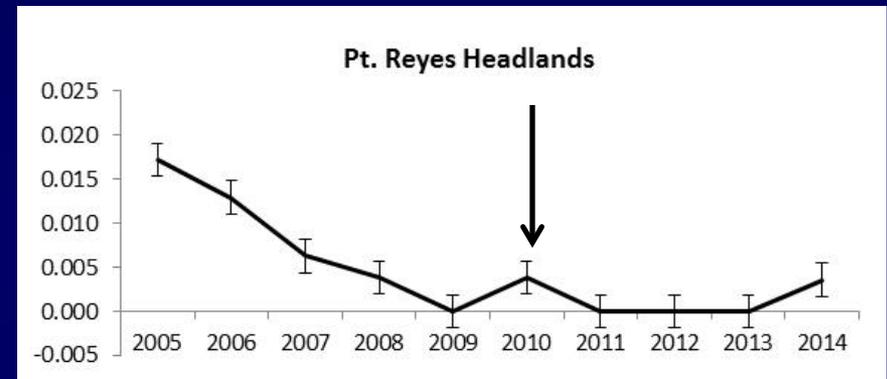
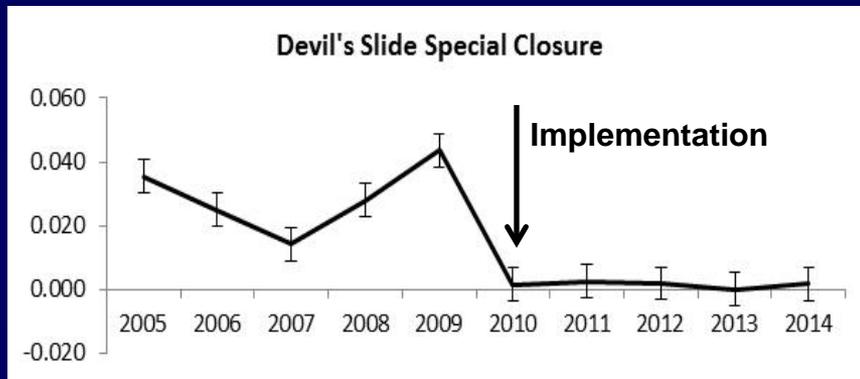
# So, what about the Central Coast?

- Special Closures would provide additional protections to seabirds and marine mammals.
- Would be consistent with North Central and North coasts.



# Changes Since Special Closures Implemented

## Watercraft Disturbances to Seabirds North Central Coast Study Region



**Y-axis:  
Disturbances  
per hr**

**USFWS,  
unpubl. data**



# Identifying Potential Special Closures, CCSR

- Seabird colony data: USFWS, Pt. Blue Conservation Science
- Seabird colony monitoring, including disturbance:
  - USFWS, Pt. Blue
  - 4 areas
- Marine mammal rookery data: NMFS

# Central Coast Study Region

- **Seabirds:**
  - **About 50,000 breeding birds**
  - **10 breeding species**
  - **About 130 colonies**
  - **Thousands more visit, roost; e.g., Brown Pelican**

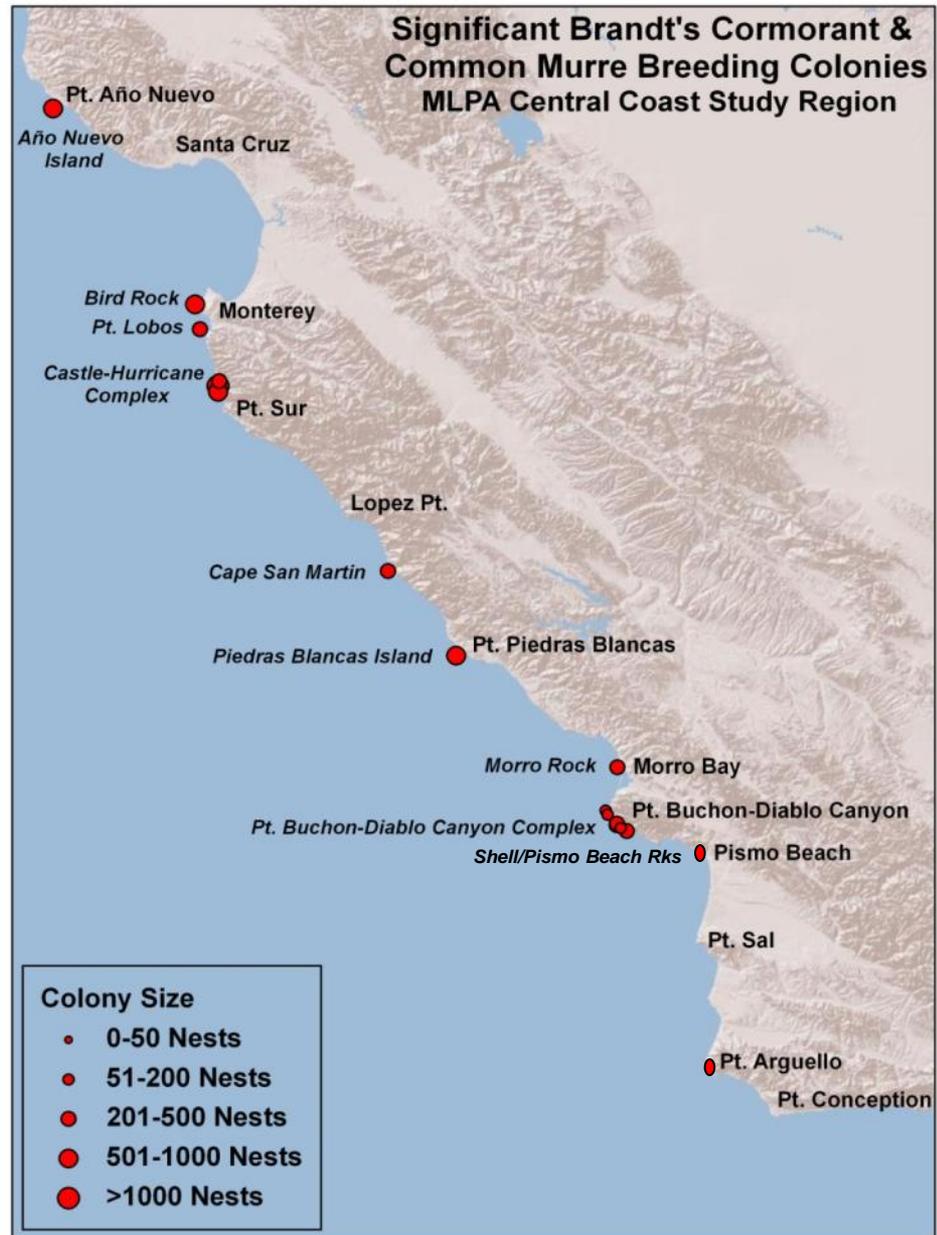


# Central Coast Study Region

- Marine Mammals (seals, sea lions):
  - Tens of thousands of animals breed, haul-out;
  - 4 species.



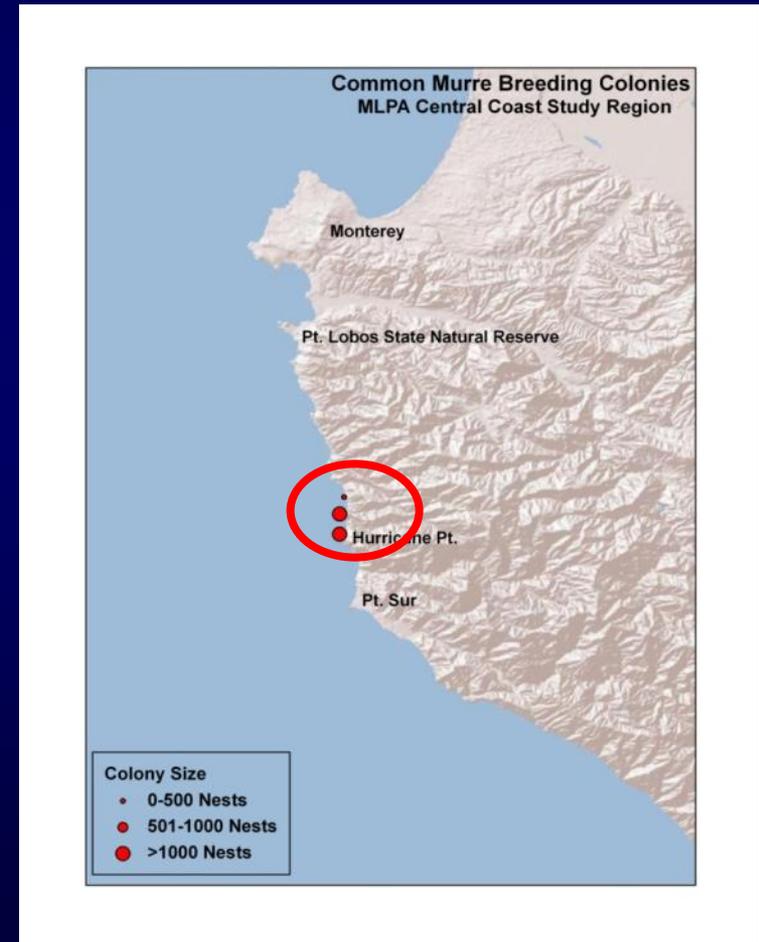
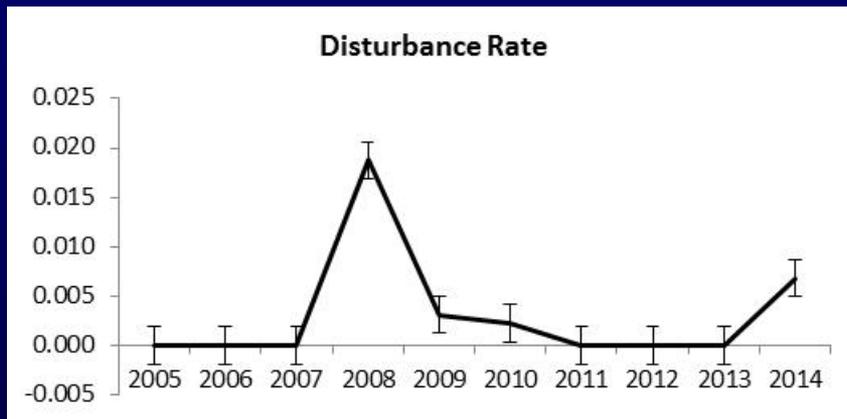
# CCSR: Significant Seabird Colonies



# Seabird Monitoring Data



- Castle-Hurricane colonies
- Important for several seabird species
- Monitored since 1996 by USFWS
- Issues with boat disturbance in late 1990s-early 2000s, but little in recent years.

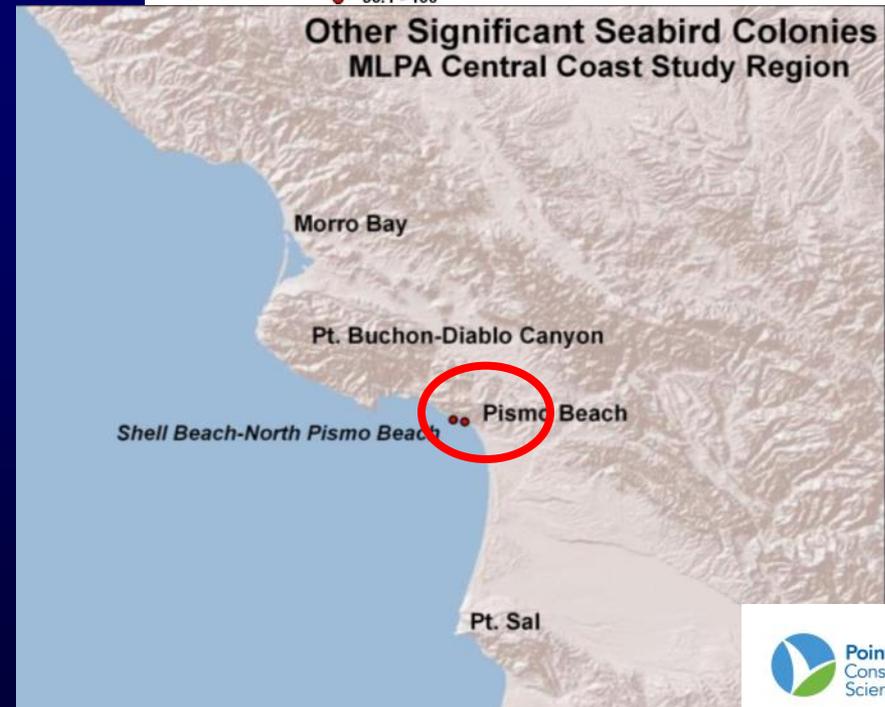
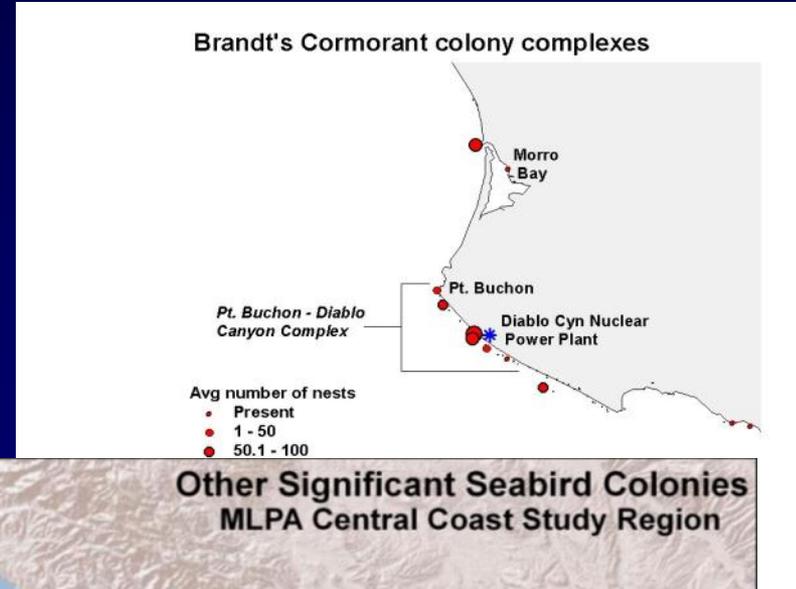


# Seabird Monitoring Data (con't)

- Pt. Buchon/Diablo Canyon, Shell/N. Pismo Beach Rocks
- Monitored in 2011-2013 by Pt. Blue Conservation Science
- Important for nesting and roosting seabirds, harbor seals.
- Disturbance by recreational watercraft.



photo: <http://www.pismo beachesurfshop.com/>



# Seabird Monitoring Data (con't)

- Point Arguello
- Monitored since 1999 by Pt. Blue
- Important for nesting and roosting seabirds.
- Adjacent of Marine Reserve.
- Waters hazardous.
- No watercraft disturbance.



# Special Closure Considerations

- Año Nuevo Island
- Bird and Seal Rocks (Pebble Beach)
- Point Lobos Complex
- Castle-Hurricane Rocks Complex
- Piedras Blancas Complex
- Point Buchon Rocks Complex
- Diablo Canyon Rocks Complex
- Shell Beach/North Pismo Beach Rocks
- Point Arguello



# Considered But Dismissed

- Plaskett Rock
- Cape San Martin
- Morro Rock



# Summary

- **The CCSR is important for breeding seabirds and marine mammals.**
- **Data from NCCSR indicate benefits of Special Closures .**
- **Limited data indicate watercraft disturbance is a current problem at some CCSR sites but not others.**
- **Disturbance can impact breeding marine wildlife now and in the future.**
- **Special Closures would provide long-term protections from human disturbance at key breeding locations.**