

# Underwater Areas

There's a little-known part of the California State Park System that's completely under water.

It's the underwater areas.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation's underwater areas program was established in 1968 to preserve the best and most unique representative examples of California's natural underwater ecosystems found in coastal and inland waters. The program also aims to provide a variety of underwater recreational opportunities, especially in areas near metropolitan centers.

These underwater areas offer scenic diving and related activities, such as underwater photography and spear fishing.

The areas are designed for divers and non-divers, with interpretation for both in visitor centers, kiosks, and exhibit boards. Some areas have safe, convenient access for divers, often with many facilities, including fresh water wash-down showers and restrooms.

State Park underwater dive areas are well studied and detailed. Divers are often able to enter a quiet cove with no large, breaking waves. The areas are clearly marked with information about the unit's scenic resources and any necessary precautions that might be needed. Also, in some areas, such as Point Lobos State Reserve and Salt Point State Park, there are Department dive teams available to assist with any problems that might be encountered.

The underwater areas can provide a threshold experience to divers. For new divers, these areas can provide information on what they can expect when they dive, making the experience less formidable.

As for the future of the underwater areas program, a Ranger said, "Watch us grow."

Underwater areas can be found at the following parks:

- Cardiff State Beach is located north of San Diego, one mile south on Old Highway 101. Phone: (760) 753-5091.
- Crystal Cove State Park is located between Corona del Mar and Laguna Beach on Highway One. Phone: (949) 494-3539 or (949) 492-0802. Visitors can watch State Park divers interpreting marine ecosystems with live two-way communication and view divers by live video feed.
- D.L. Bliss State Park is located 17 miles south of Tahoe City on Highway 89. Phone: (530) 525-7277 or (530) 525-7232.
- Doheny State Beach is located near the intersection of I-5 and Highway One at the entrance of Dana Point Harbor. Phone: (949) 496-6171 or (949) 492-0802.
- Emerald Bay State Park is located 22 miles south of Tahoe City of Highway 89. Phone: (530) 541-3030 or (530) 525-7277.
- Fort Ross State Historic Park is located 12 miles south of Jenner on Highway One. Phone: (707) 847-3286 or (707) 865-2391.
- Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park is located 37 miles south of Carmel on Highway One. Phone: (831) 667-2315. Diving is restricted due to dangerous conditions.
- Lake Perris State Recreation Area is located 11 miles southeast of Riverside. (From Highway 60, take Moreno Beach Drive off-ramp; from I-25 take Ramona Expressway off-ramp) Phone: (909) 940-5608.
- MacKerricher State Park is located 3 miles north of Fort Bragg on Highway One. Phone: (707) 964-9112 or (707) 937-5804.

- Manchester State Park is located 7 miles north of Point Arena on Highway One. Phone: (707) 937-5804.
- Point Lobos State Reserve is located 3 miles south of Carmel on Highway One. Phone: (831) 624-4909.
- Russian Gulch State Park is located 2 miles north of Mendocino on Highway One. Phone: (707) 937-4296 or (707) 937-5804.
- Salt Point State Park is located 25 miles north of Jenner on Highway One. Volunteers have built and rebuilt and access stairway for divers at this park. Phone: (707) 847-3221 or (707) 865-2391.
- San Elijo State Beach is located on old Highway 101 in Cardiff. Phone: (760) 753-5355 or (760) 753-5091.
- Van Damme State Park is located 3 miles south of Mendocino. Phone: (707) 937-5804.