

In October 2025, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) completed a survey of California voters to better understand how they feel about California’s Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and their views on creating new MPAs, specifically proposals for two new MPAs in Santa Barbara County.¹ **The survey shows that Californians across party lines and around the state broadly and strongly support state Marine Protected Areas generally and in specific places in Santa Barbara County. And a plurality of voters would have a more favorable view of Governor Newsom if he supported new Marine Protected Areas at Point Sal and Mishopshno.**

Key findings include:

- **California voters broadly and strongly support Marine Protected Areas.** Four in five voters support MPAs given a brief description, and more than half (59%) “strongly support” them. Notably, just 5% oppose MPAs in concept. In Santa Barbara County, 82% support MPAs and just 5% oppose them.

Figure 1: Support for Marine Protected Areas

California’s Marine Protected Areas are like underwater state parks. They are created and managed by the state’s Fish and Game Commission to restore healthy fish and wildlife populations and protect important habitats in coastal waters. These underwater areas are within three miles of shore. Diving, kayaking, swimming, surfing, and some traditional tribal uses like fishing are allowed in California’s marine protected areas. Industrial development like oil and gas drilling, and commercial fishing, is not allowed. Recreational fishing is carefully restricted where it is allowed. In general, do you support or oppose California’s Marine Protected Areas?

Opinion	MPAs
Total Support	79%
Total Oppose	5%
Don’t Know	15%

Support for Marine Protected Areas cuts across several key demographics, including:

- ✓ 83% of voters ages 18-49 and 76% of voters ages 50 and older;
- ✓ 85% of women and 74% of men;
- ✓ 93% of Democrats, 74% of independents, and 61% of Republicans;
- ✓ More than seven in ten respondents support MPAs across race and ethnicity (81% of white voters, 81% of Latino voters, 71% of Asian and Pacific Islander voters, and 77% of all voters of color);
- ✓ 87% of residents in the Bay Area, 82% in LA County, 79% in the Central Valley and Coast, 76% in counties adjacent to LA, 76% in Sacramento County and the far north, and 70% of San Diego County residents.

- **They also strongly support specific Marine Protected Areas at Point Sal and Mishopshno.** Figure 2 shows levels of support for specific potential new MPAs: Point Sal and Mishopshno. In both cases, support exceeds two-thirds, with another one-quarter of voters undecided. Fewer than one in ten (8% in both cases) even lean toward opposing these specific proposals. Support for these MPAs is statistically the same in Santa Barbara County as it is elsewhere in the state – 69% and 65%, respectively.

Figure 2: Support for MPAs at Point Sal and Mishopshno

Some people have proposed a new Marine Protected Area at Point Sal in Santa Barbara County, roughly 50 miles to the northwest of Point Conception. The 14-square-mile ocean area is undeveloped and relatively remote. Protecting the area would ensure healthy fisheries, conserve juvenile fish, protect kelp forests, and provide important habitat for sea otters, sea lions, seals, whales and porpoises.

Some people have proposed a new Marine Protected Area called Mishopshno, south of Carpinteria State Beach. Protecting this 9-square-mile ocean area would ensure healthy fisheries, protect kelp forests, and provide important habitat for juvenile white sharks, egrets, and harbor seals.

Opinion	Point Sal	Mishopshno
Total Support	70%	67%
Total Oppose	8%	8%
Don't Know	22%	25%

- **A plurality of voters – including two-thirds of Democrats – would have a more favorable view of Governor Newsom if he supported these new Marine Protected Areas.** Fully 44% of California voters say they would have a “more favorable” view of Gov. Newsom if he supported the creation of new MPAs, while just 14% say they would have a less favorable view. Two-thirds (65%) of Democrats and 41% of independents share the sense that this would improve their perception of the governor.
- **Voters especially value Marine Protected Areas as places for fish and wildlife to recover and thrive.** Nearly four in five (78%) say that “providing a place for fish and wildlife to recover and thrive” is an extremely or very important specific benefit of MPAs.

In summary, **Californians broadly and strongly support Marine Protected Areas – broadly as well as specifically at Point Sal and Mishopshno.** A plurality of voters would see Gov. Newsom more favorably if he supported the establishment of MPAs at Point Sal and Mishopshno.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From Sept. 28-Oct. 5, 2025, FM3 completed 635 online and telephone interviews with California voters statewide, along with an oversample of 212 in Santa Barbara County. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level for the main sample and +/-6.9 in Santa Barbara County; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.