



MPA Baseline Program

Annual Progress Report



Principal Investigators - please use this form to submit your MPA Baseline Program project annual report, including an update on activities completed over the past year and those planned for the upcoming year. This information will be used by the MPA Baseline Program Management Team to track the progress of individual projects, and will be provided to all MPA Baseline Program PIs and co-PIs prior to the Annual PIs workshop to facilitate discussion of project integration. Please submit this form to California Sea Grant when complete (sgreport@ucsd.edu, Subject [Award Number, project number, PI, "Annual Report"].)

Project Information

Project Year	2014/15	MLPA Region	North Coast Study Region
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Project Title & Number	Citizen-scientist Monitoring of Rocky Reefs and Kelp Forests: Creating a Baseline for California's North Coast MPAs R/MPA-34
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PI name	Jan Freiwald	Co-PI name	Gregor Hodgson
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PI Contact Info

Co- PI Contact Info

(please list additional PIs and contact info in the "Project Personnel" section if necessary)

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Project Goals & Objectives

Reef Check California's (RCCA) objectives for the NCSR baseline monitoring are:

1. Provide a quantitative baseline characterization of the rocky reef and kelp forest ecosystem features in and outside of MPAs in the NCSR.
2. Assess the condition of the rocky reef and kelp forest ecosystem feature by analyzing RCCA's dataset and auxiliary data in the context of the new MPAs.
3. Analytically explore the baseline characterizations for potential indicators of the state of the kelp forest ecosystem (i.e. ecosystem indicators) and make recommendations for long-term monitoring.
4. Build capacity for cost-effective long-term MPA monitoring through the continued involvement of community members in the monitoring of MPAs.
5. Expand existing public online data dissemination and illustration tool (NED) to inform managers, stakeholders, policymakers and the public about the status of the marine environment in the NCSR.

Summary of Project Activities Completed to Date

Overview of Project Year 2014 Activities, including progress towards meeting goals & objectives

Providing a baseline of the rocky reef and kelp forest ecosystem at the time of MPA implementation in the NCSR
RCCA began baseline monitoring in 2014 by expanding its existing network of sites in Mendocino County and conducted surveys of 7 sites in the NCSR. Overall, 2014 was a successful survey season despite the fact that we did not survey all proposed sites. In this remote region it takes some time to build up a volunteer base. Further, ocean conditions made it difficult to survey all proposed sites in 2014 which is to be expected along the north coast (see below).

Provide pre-MPA implementation data and characterizations of potential indicators

RCCA's monitoring data from pre-existing sites from years prior to baseline monitoring project (2007-2013) are readily available and have been converted into a data format that is consistent with the data requirement in the other baseline monitoring regions in which RCCA has participated. Data analysis for this region is scheduled to commence later in the project period.

Capacity building for cost-effective long-term MPA monitoring

In 2014, RCCA trained 122 new divers and recertified 111 divers from previous years statewide. A 46% retention rate of previously trained volunteers demonstrates how RCCA's body of volunteers is maturing. For a program such as RCCA that requires intensive training, it is of critical importance to retain skilled volunteers.

In the spring of 2014 RCCA completed the proposed three trainings in the NCSR. One public training was held in Fort Bragg by Reef Check California regional managers. A second training was taught at Humboldt State University and a recertification of previously trained divers was conducted in Fort Bragg. All divers that completed the public trainings participated in a least one survey in the NCSR. We trained a total of 28 new volunteers in the study region. Additionally, several of our long-term volunteers, that in the past have mostly surveyed in central California have found interest in coming to the NCSR and participate in surveys here. This successful recruitment and retention has led to a very successful survey season and the new as well as seasoned volunteers will build the foundation for future long-term MPA monitoring in the study region. Having a permanent regional manager located in this region has been instrumental to building the volunteer base for the program.

Expand public online data dissemination and illustration tool (NED)

All of RCCA's statewide data is available online through Reef Check's public online Nearshore Ecosystem Database (NED). Data is available in interactive formats as soon as they are entered and proofed by RCCA staff. In 2014, NED has been updated to function as a Google Earth-based interface making it much more user friendly. The new interface now allows users to filter data by sites and species of their interest, generate their own graphs, and download data of interest to them (data.reefcheck.org).

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Highlights from project progress so far, such as successes achieved, new collaborations or partnerships, or interesting stories from the past year that may be suitable for a blog post or other media venue

A very important step towards a successful program in the NCSR was the addition of a full-time regional manager to our staff expanding Reef Check California's presence in the northern region of the state. Without this position we would have not been able to conduct surveys or build a volunteer base in this part of California.

Highlights from the 2014 survey are varied and numerous. RCCA staff was able to add four new sites in the NCSR and complete a successful community training following which all trainees participated in at least one survey. RCCA also made its presence known in the community by way of attending local events such as the Mendocino Crab Festival and World Champion Abalone Cook-Off and by beginning to work with local schools to educate children about MPAs and the marine environment.

RCCA's north coast regional manager began a blog on Oceanspaces.org where users can follow survey stories and progress of monitoring along the north coast. Further, the regional manager became involved in the MPA Collaboration Implementation Project group for Mendocino as a co-chair of this collaborative.

Description of any unforeseen events and substantial challenges, and resulting effects on project activities and progress. Please indicate any issues that may affect other PI's or require coordination with other Baseline partners (e.g., ME, DFG, Sea Grant).

Despite a very successful survey season minor setback did occur. Adverse ocean conditions caused us to cancel planned surveys several times. With a still small pool of volunteers available, it is difficult to reschedule surveys if they are canceled. It also was more difficult than expected to find commercial charter boats that are willing and equipped to take out divers for surveys of sites that are not accessible from shore. Due to these circumstances some of the proposed sites did not get surveyed in 2014. Nevertheless, we have identified a boat in Fort Bragg and have already scheduled dates for surveys in 2015. Therefore, we are confident that we will get to these sites this year. As mentioned above the buildup of the volunteer body was initially slow but we have already several sign-ups for our 2015 training in the region and the outreach events seem to be successful in recruiting new divers.

Data status (i.e., paper/raw format or digitized; if digitized, what format?)

Reef Check California's data from the NCSR has been entered into Reef Check's Nearshore Ecological Database (NED). Up-to-date data (2006-2014) are available through RCCA's online database. Since we have submitted data for all other baseline monitoring regions we have processes and program code in place to report the data in the required formats. Metadata according to the Metadata standards will be developed.

Activities Planned for following Project Year 2 (if applicable) – Please describe remaining work and approximate timelines for completing that work, including any anticipated budget variances necessary to complete the project.

RCCA will continue monitoring the current sites and add the additional proposed sites in 2015. In the spring of 2015, we will again train new citizen scientists and recertify previously trained volunteers to begin another year of monitoring. These trainings are already schedule for April and May. We will also continue our outreach efforts and hope to be instrumental in the development of the Community Collaborative project in Mendocino County.

Budget years	TASKS AND MILESTONES																								
	2015													2016											
	year 2													year 3											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Hire NCSR Regional Manager																									
Train NCSR Regional Manager																									
Purchase supplies for training and surveys		X	X	X										O	O	O									
Outreach & presentations by Regional Manager	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-		O	O	O	O								
Community Trainings & recerts				X	X	X	X	X								O	O	O	O	O					
Conduct surveys				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					O	O	O	O	O	O	O			
Data entry and QA/QC				-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X								O	O	O	O	O	
Distribute data	X	X									X	X	X	X											
Coordinate with collaborators			X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Data analysis														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Data, and reports																					X	X	X		

Many of the activities are ongoing throughout the entire baseline period. X -indicate times when certain aspects will take priority; Dashes (-) indicate ongoing activities; and circles (O) indicate activities for which no funding is requested because they are focused on the beginning long-term monitoring of the region.

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Project Personnel – Please indicate additional project personnel involved in your MPA baseline project, including students and volunteers, or additional PI contact information if necessary, as well as the nature of their assistance in the project project.

	<i>Staff</i>	<i>Student Volunteers</i>	<i>Nature of Assistance</i>
<i>Regional Manager</i>	1		<i>Conduct trainings and monitoring etc.</i>

Number of other Volunteers not counted above and the nature of their assistance in the project:

RCCA trains about 250 volunteer citizen scientists every year.

Additional PI contact info not listed on first page:

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Cooperating Organizations and Individuals - Please list organizations or individuals (e.g., federal or state agencies, fishermen, etc.) that provided financial, technical or other assistance to your project since its inception, including a description of the nature of their assistance.

<i>Name of Organization or Individual</i>	<i>Sector (City, County, Fed, private, etc.)</i>	<i>Nature of cooperation (If financial, provide dollar amount.)</i>
<i>Humboldt State University</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Trained divers, helped with RCCA surveys</i>
<i>California Department of Fish and Wildlife</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Staff participated in training and surveys</i>
<i>Campbell Foundation for the Environment</i>	<i>Private Foundation</i>	<i>Funding for California program part of which was used for monitoring in NCSR</i>
<i>RLFF</i>	<i>Private Foundation</i>	<i>Funding for California program part of which was used for monitoring in NCSR</i>
<i>Mead Foundation</i>	<i>Private Foundation</i>	<i>Funding for in NCSR Regional Manager salary</i>
<i>Clif Bar Family Foundation</i>	<i>Private Foundation</i>	<i>Funding for California program part of which was used for monitoring in SCSR</i>

Project Outputs and Materials: Please provide any other project-relevant information, such as descriptions of attached materials, media coverage your project has received, presentations, publications, images etc.