

Staff Summary for April 15-16, 2026

7B. Marine Resources Committee (MRC)**Today's Item**Information Action

Receive summary and consider approving recommendations from the March 12, 2026 Committee meeting. Discuss referred topics and consider revisions to topics and timing.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Previous MRC meeting March 12, 2026; MRC
- **Today consider MRC recommendations** **April 15-16, 2026**
- Next MRC meeting July 16, 2026; MRC

Background

MRC works under Commission direction to set and carry out its work plan (Exhibit 1). Today, the Commission will receive a report on the most recent MRC meeting and its recommendations, and is asked to provide direction on any referred topics or revisions to MRC topics and timing.

Previous Committee Meeting

MRC met on March 12 in Sacramento. Official meeting minutes (video) are posted on the [Commission's YouTube page](#) with a link also available on the Commission's website (fgc.ca.gov/Meetings/2026). An abbreviated summary is included in this document. Detailed overviews, exhibits, and presentations are available in the [MRC meeting materials](#).

State Aquaculture Action Plan

California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) staff presented an overview of the draft state aquaculture action plan, developed with Department and Commission staff contributions through the State Aquaculture Leadership Team. The draft is expected to be released in June for OPC and public review, with potential OPC adoption later in the year.

Marine Aquaculture on State Water Bottom Leases**(A) Status of Existing Leases and Pending Requests**

The Department provided an update on existing leases, pending requests, and new applications, noting substantial current and upcoming workload. Public and committee discussion highlighted concerns about processing delays and communication, the need for clearer renewal reminders, and the broader need for additional staff capacity to meet aquaculture program demands.

(B) Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Staff summarized the history of BMP planning and outlined challenges to advancing BMP requirements given current obligations, upcoming 2027 renewals, and multiple active lease actions. Meeting participants supported progressing BMP planning, sharing existing industry practices, and addressing both macro- and micro-pollution; committee discussion emphasized balancing this work with competing priorities. The MRC concluded with a recommendation regarding how to prioritize BMP planning relative to current mandates.

Staff Summary for April 15-16, 2026

White Seabass Fishery Management

The Department outlined its plan for reviewing management of the white seabass fishery and recommended an interim size-limit increase based on updated maturity data. Discussion raised concerns about shore-based access under a higher size limit, interest in alternative bag limit structures, the need for updated scientific information, and questions about capacity to complete future stock assessments.

MRC developed a recommendation regarding an interim size limit change.

Evaluation of Bycatch in the California Halibut Trawl Fishery

The Department provided an update on its evaluation of bycatch in the California halibut trawl fishery, which supports the broader fishery management review. The discussion highlighted data gaps, the need to account for socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable communities, and the value of qualitative information when quantitative data are limited.

Recreational Tuna Fishery Gear Regulations

The Department recapped its recommended regulatory amendments, which would allow recreational use of hand-held harpoons and flying gaffs to assist anglers in landing tuna. MRC developed a recommendation.

Staff and Agency Updates

- The Department's Law Enforcement Division provided two presentations: (1) the Marine Enforcement District's 2025 MPA enforcement statistics; and (2) an overview of new and upcoming enforcement data-collection tools (exhibits 2 and 3).
- Marine Region provided its annual "Marine Region by the Numbers" update (Exhibit 4).
- The Department's R3 (California Hunter and Angler Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation) Initiative manager reported on recent trends in sport fishing license sales, as previously requested by MRC (Exhibit 5).

Committee Work Plan

The current MRC work plan (Exhibit 1) outlines Commission-referred topics and timing. No changes were identified during the March 2026 MRC meeting, nor are any proposed by staff or the Department for consideration today.

MRC Recommendations

There are three MRC recommendations for Commission consideration today related to marine aquaculture, white seabass fishery review, and recreational tuna fishery gear.

1. *Marine Aquaculture on State Water Bottom Leases*

(a) Support the current suite of aquaculture-related commitments:

- Prepare for 2027 lease renewals
- Complete pending requests to amend existing leases
- Engage with growers to address compliance concerns and ensure accountability

Staff Summary for April 15-16, 2026

- Participate in developing and, upon OPC adoption, implementing the statewide aquaculture action plan
- Complete and deploy an improved financial surety template
- Advance current and new lease applications through the enhanced leasing process.

(b) Direct staff to initiate an update to the aquaculture lease template related to compliance accountability, as recommended by staff.

2. *White Seabass Fishery Management Review*

Request that the Department develop a proposed interim white seabass size limit for potential committee recommendation at the July 2026 MRC meeting.

3. *Recreational Tuna Fishery Gear Regulations*

Advance to rulemaking proposed changes to recreational tuna gear regulations, schedule a rulemaking notice for June 2026, as recommended by the Department, and authorize removing the topic from the MRC work plan.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve the MRC recommendations.

Exhibits

1. [MRC Work Plan](#), updated March 30, 2026
2. LED presentation: [2025 MPA network enforcement statistics](#)
3. LED presentation: [New and future enforcement data collection tools](#)
4. Marine Region: Overview of [2025 By the Numbers](#)
5. Office of Communications, Education and Outreach R3: [Recent trends in sport fishing license sales](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission approves the recommendations from the MRC meeting.

**California Fish and Game Commission
Marine Resources Committee (MRC) Work Plan**

Updated March 30, 2026

Topics	Category	Nov 2025	Mar 2026	Jul 2026
Planning Documents, Fishery Management Plans (FMP)				
MLMA Master Plan for Fisheries – Implementation Updates	Plan Implementation			
Red Abalone Restoration Plan (statewide) Development	Restoration Plan	*		
CA Halibut Review – Bycatch Evaluation for Trawl Gear	Management Review	X	X	X
Kelp Restoration and Management Plan (KRMP) Development	Restoration/ Management Plan	X		X
White Seabass Fishery Management Review	Management Review		X	
Regulations				
Commercial Coonstripe Shrimp Fishery Management, Phase 2	Commercial Take			X
Recreational Use of Hand-Held Harpoons and Flying Gaffs to Assist Anglers with Landing Tuna	Recreational Take	X	X/R	
Method of Determining Recreational Legal Size	Recreational Take	X	*	
Marine Aquaculture and State Water Bottom Leases				
Statewide Aquaculture Action Plan	Planning Document	*	X	
Status of Existing Leases and Leaseholder Requests	Current Leases		X	
Applications for New Leases - San Andreas Shellfish Company (Tomales Bay)	Lease Applications			
Lease Best Management Practices Plans (Hold, TBD)	Leases – Regulatory		X	
Special Projects, Informational Topics, and Emerging Management Issues				
Coastal Fishing Communities Project	MRC Project	X/R		X/R
Kelp Restoration and Recovery Tracking	Kelp			
Barred Sand Bass Working Group	Informal Advisory Body	X		X
Nearshore Groundfish Management Process	State/Federal Fisheries			X
Experimental Fishing Permit (EFP) Program				
Box Crab Exploratory Fishing	EFP			
Pop-Up Gear in State-Managed Fisheries	EFP			

Key: X = Discussion X/R = Recommendation and may move to Commission * = Written or oral agency update



MPA Enforcement Report

March 2026

Assistant Chief Eric Kord

Marine Enforcement
District



MPA Enforcement Stats – 2025 Totals

MPA Patrol effort from eDARs & PAL

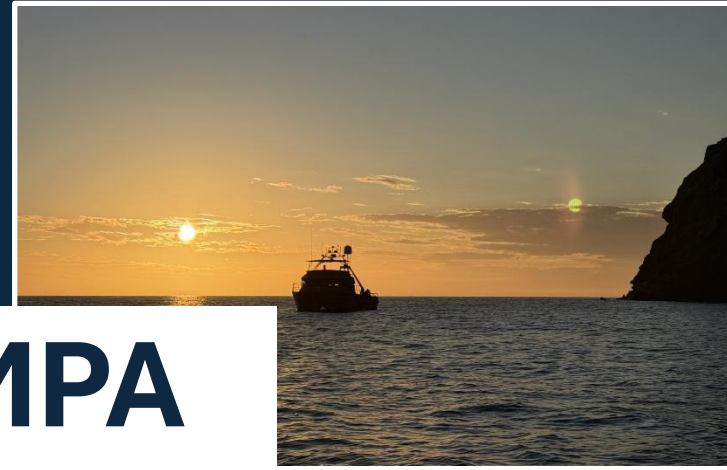
- Patrol Hours – 27,227 Hrs.
- Contacts – 34,892
- Warnings Given – 1,546
- Citations Issued on MPA Patrol – 1,100(eDAR)



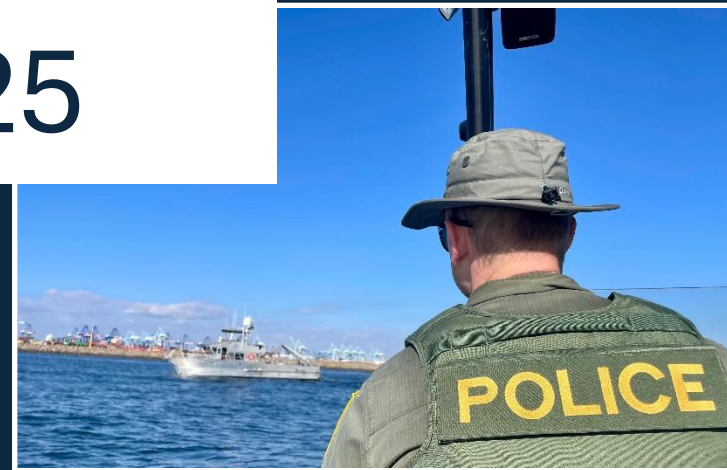
RMS Data

- Total Ocean Citations – 3,810
- Total Ocean Violations – 5,165
- Citations in MPAs – 510
 - Violations in MPAs - 722



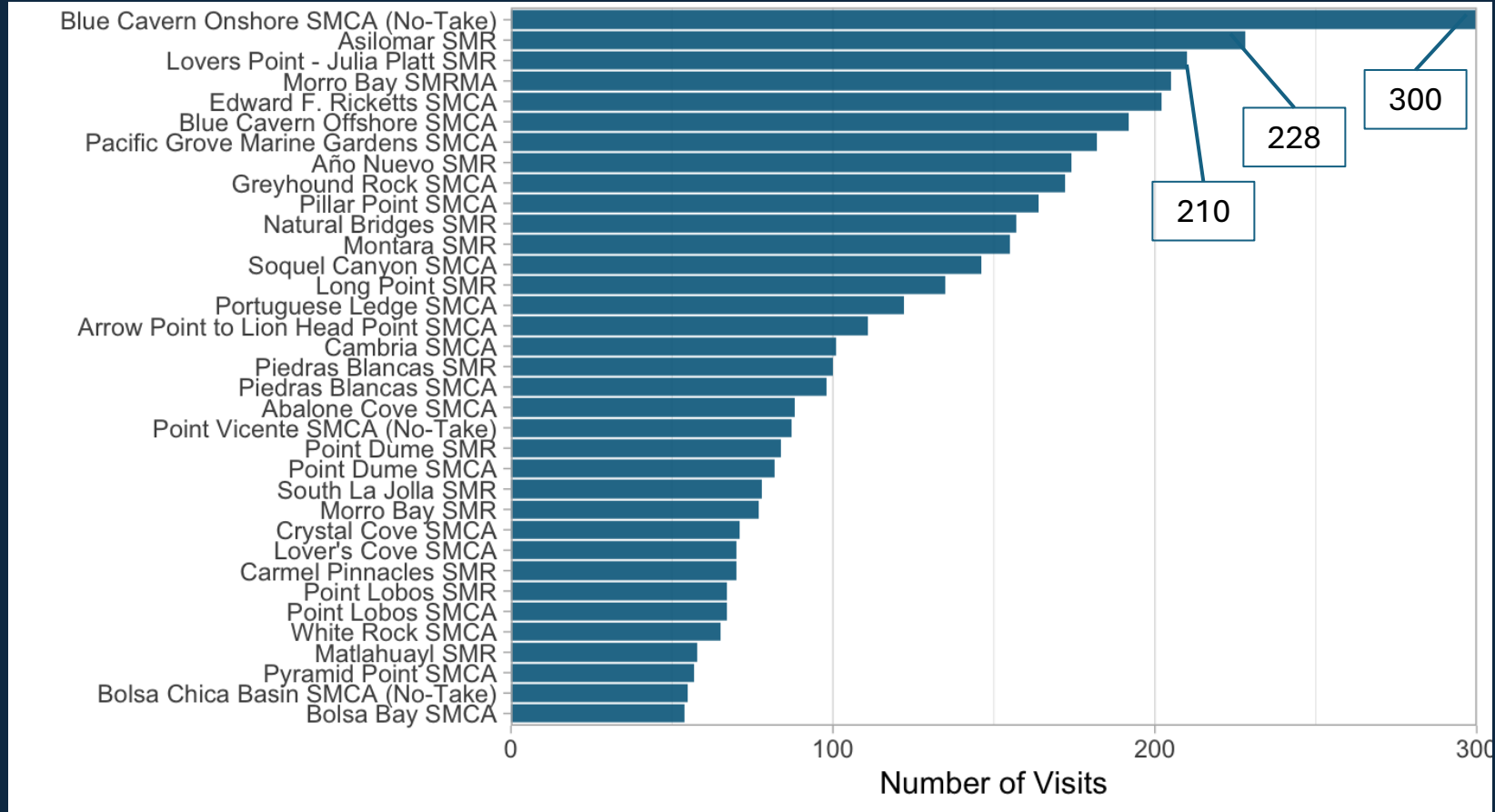


**7,388 MPA
Visits
(eDAR+PAL)
Statewide
in 2025**

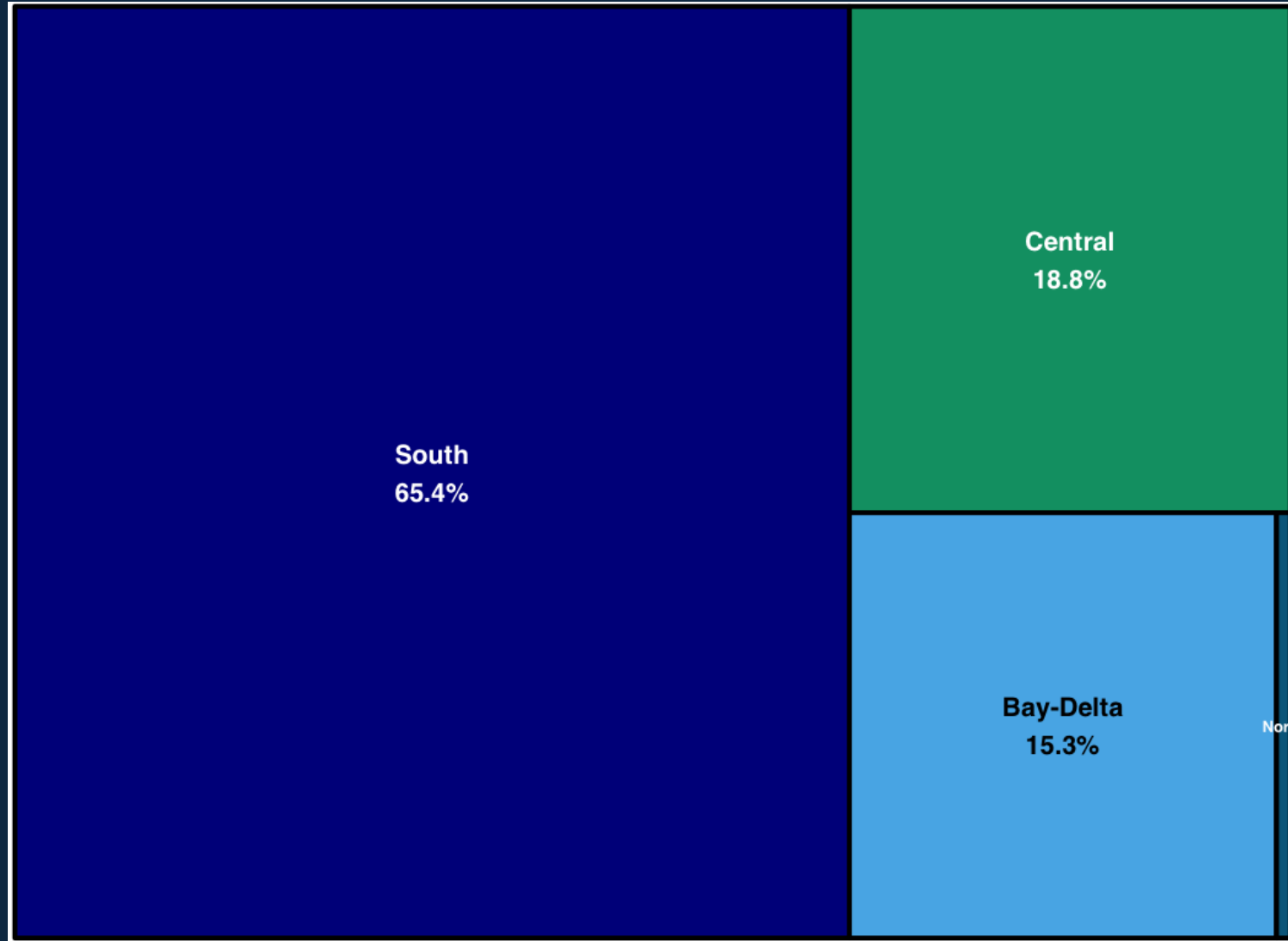


Total MPA Visits (eDAR)

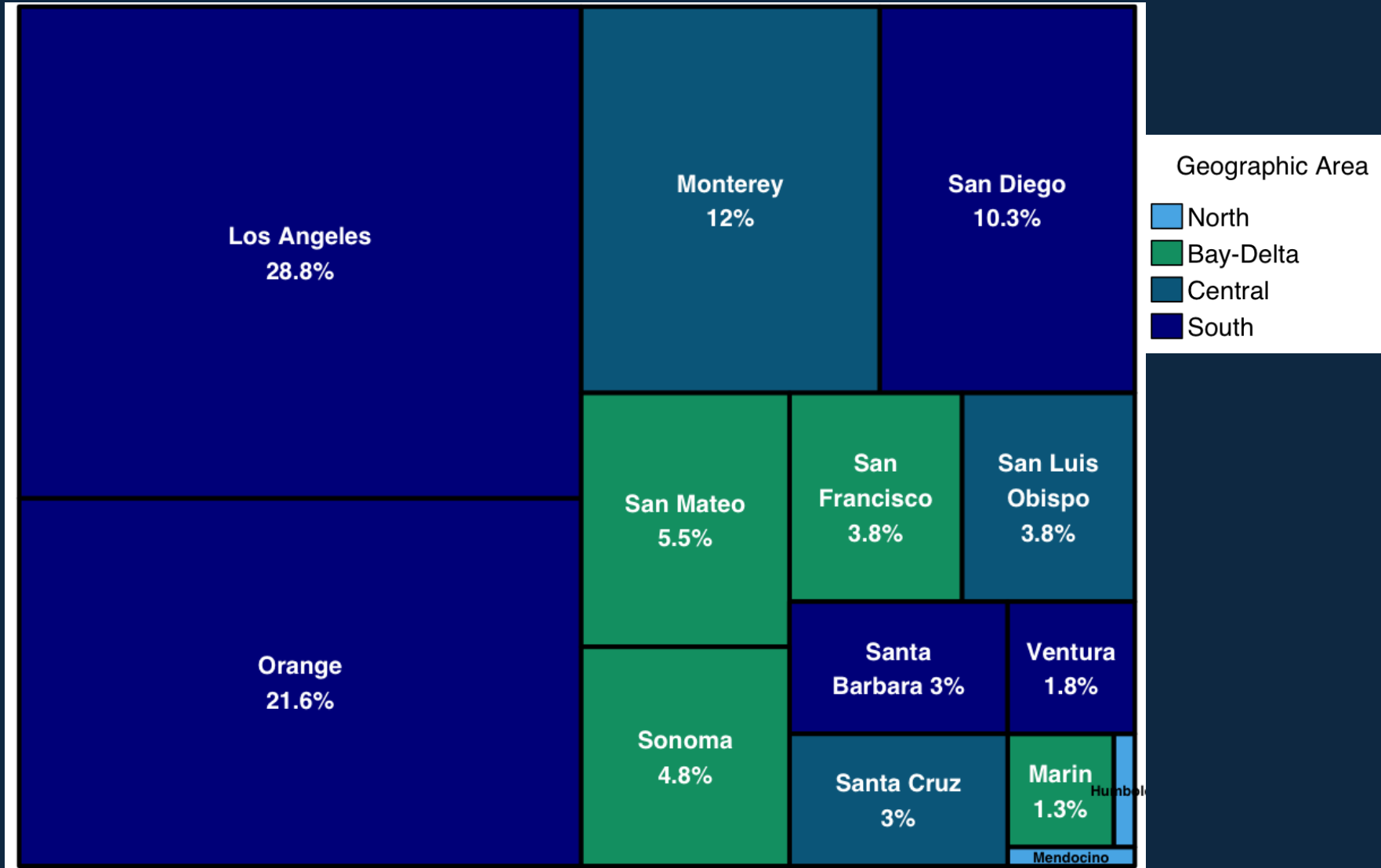
Top 35 MPAs



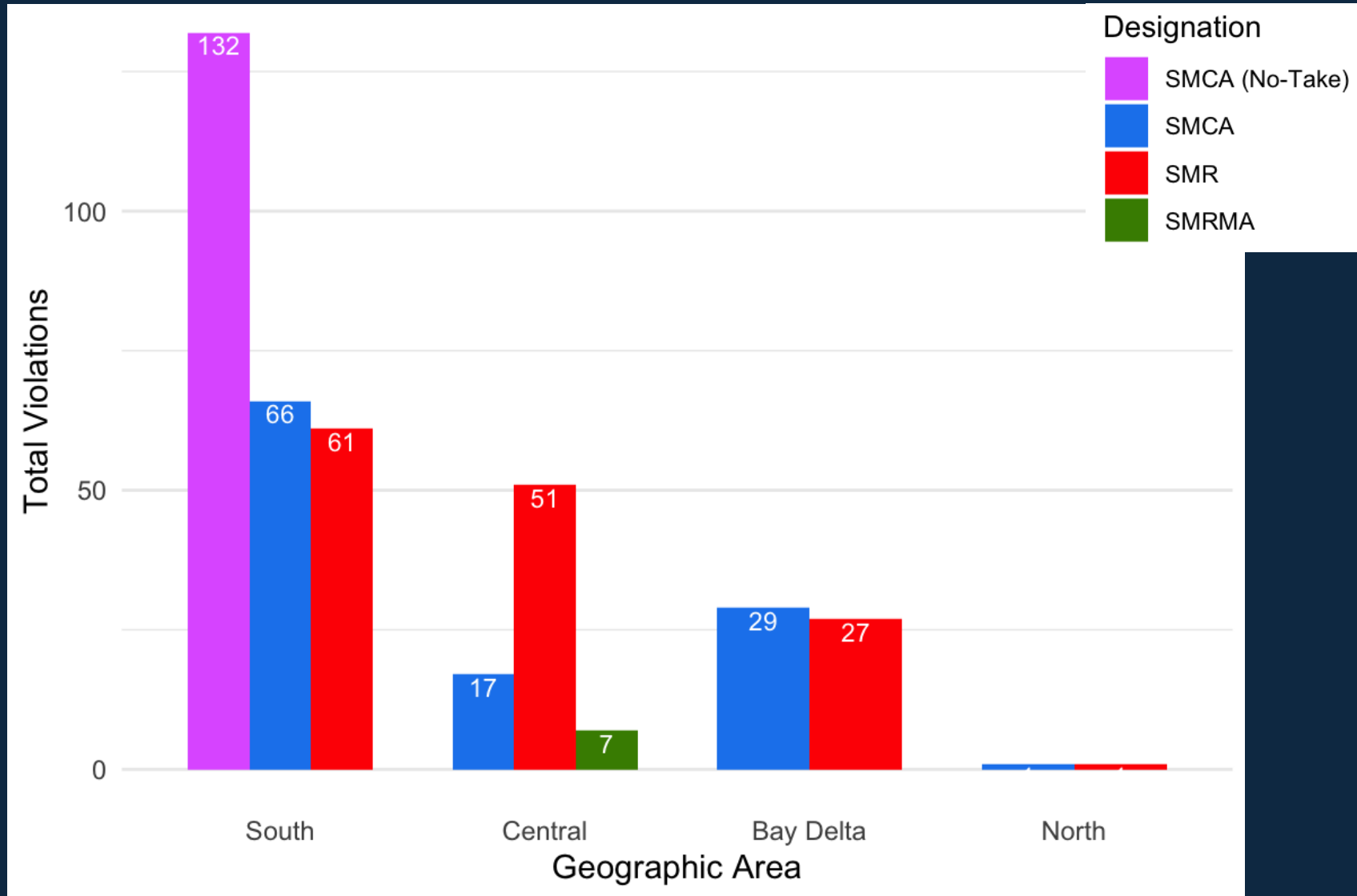
MPA Violations (T14-632) by Geographic Area



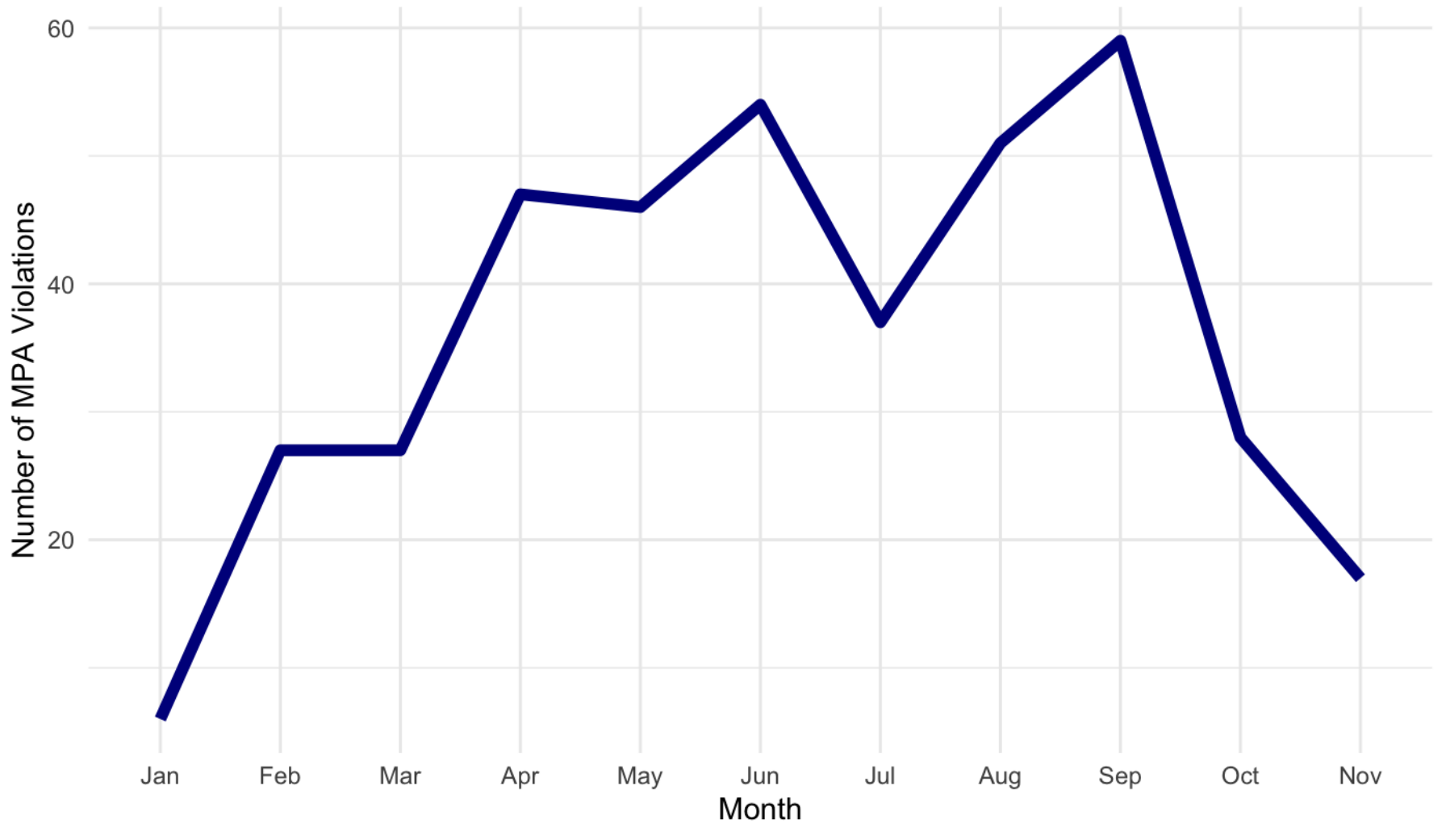
MPA Violations (T14-632) by County



Total Violations (T14-632) by MPA Designation

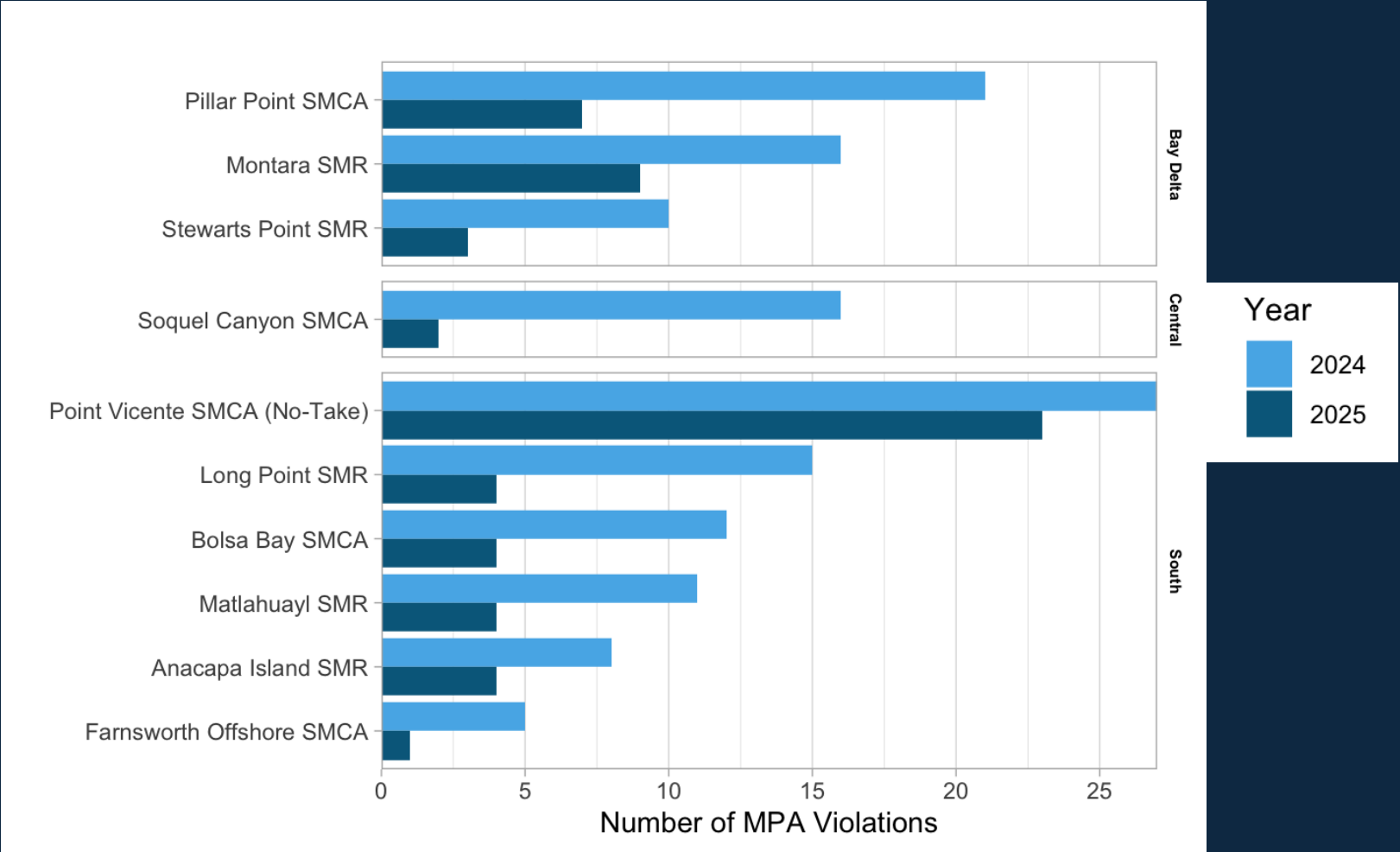


Statewide MPA Violations (T14-632) by Month



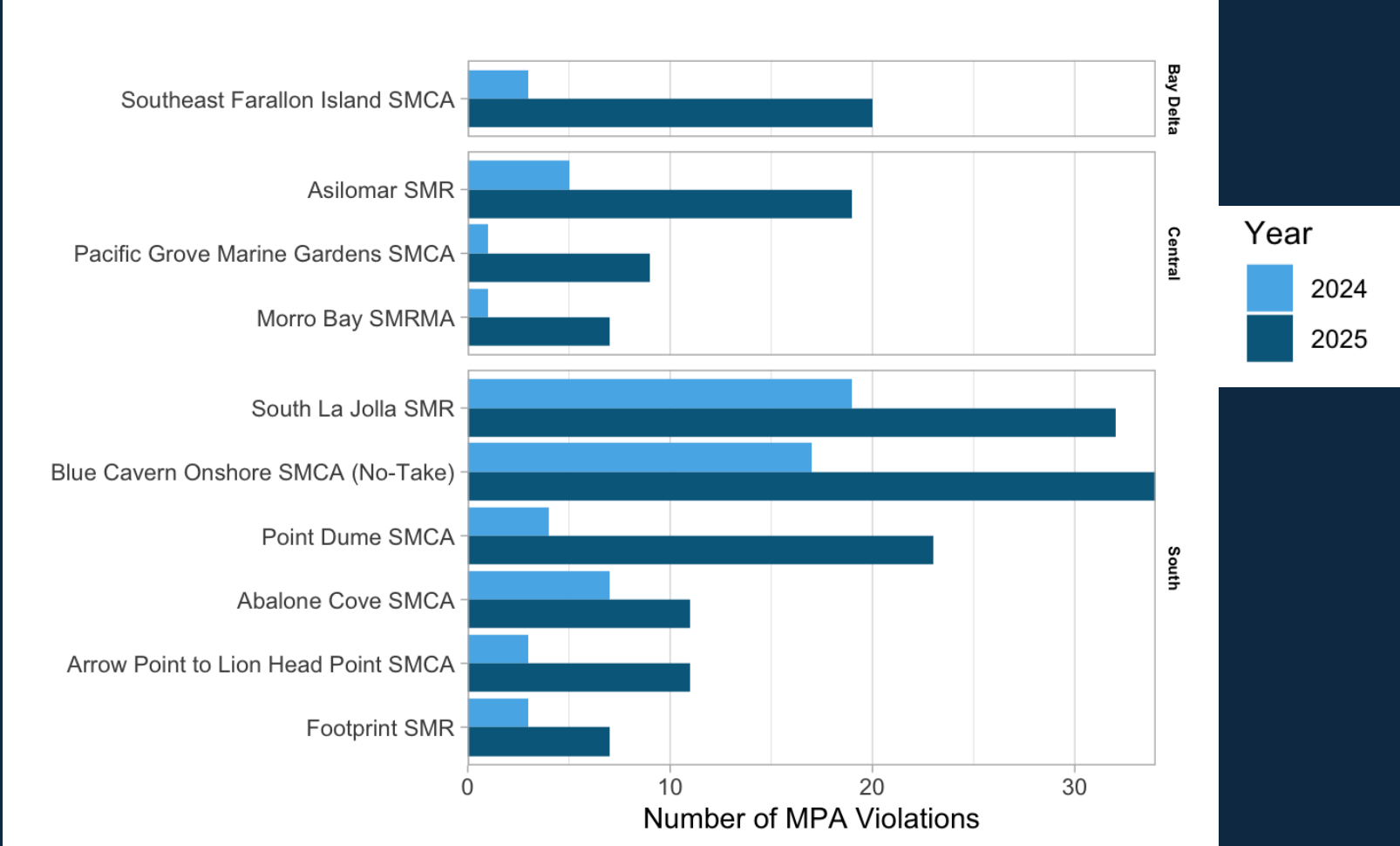
MPAs with largest *decrease* in number of violations (T14-632)

From 2024 to 2025



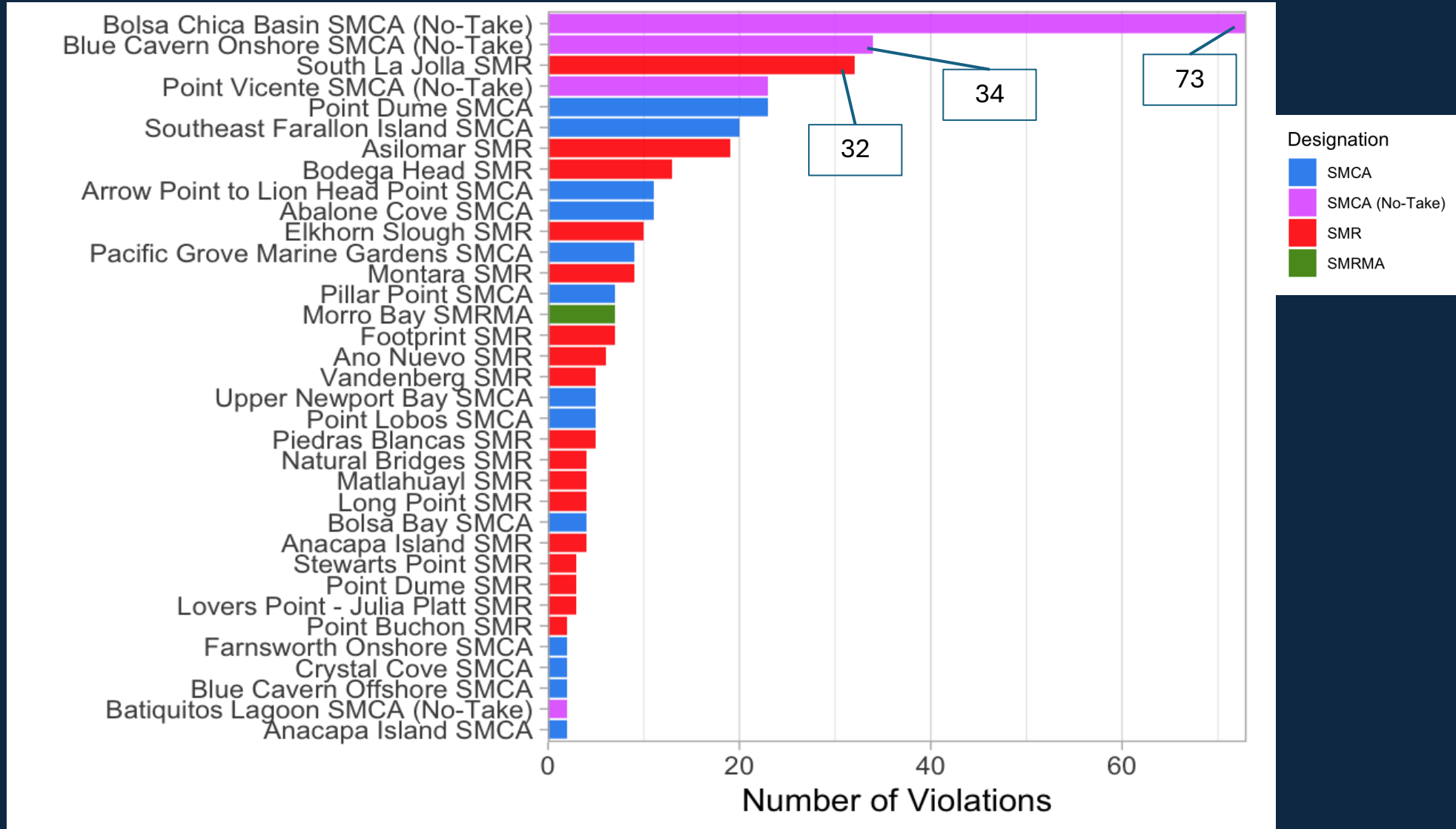
MPAs with largest *increase* in number of violations (T14-632)

From 2024 to 2025



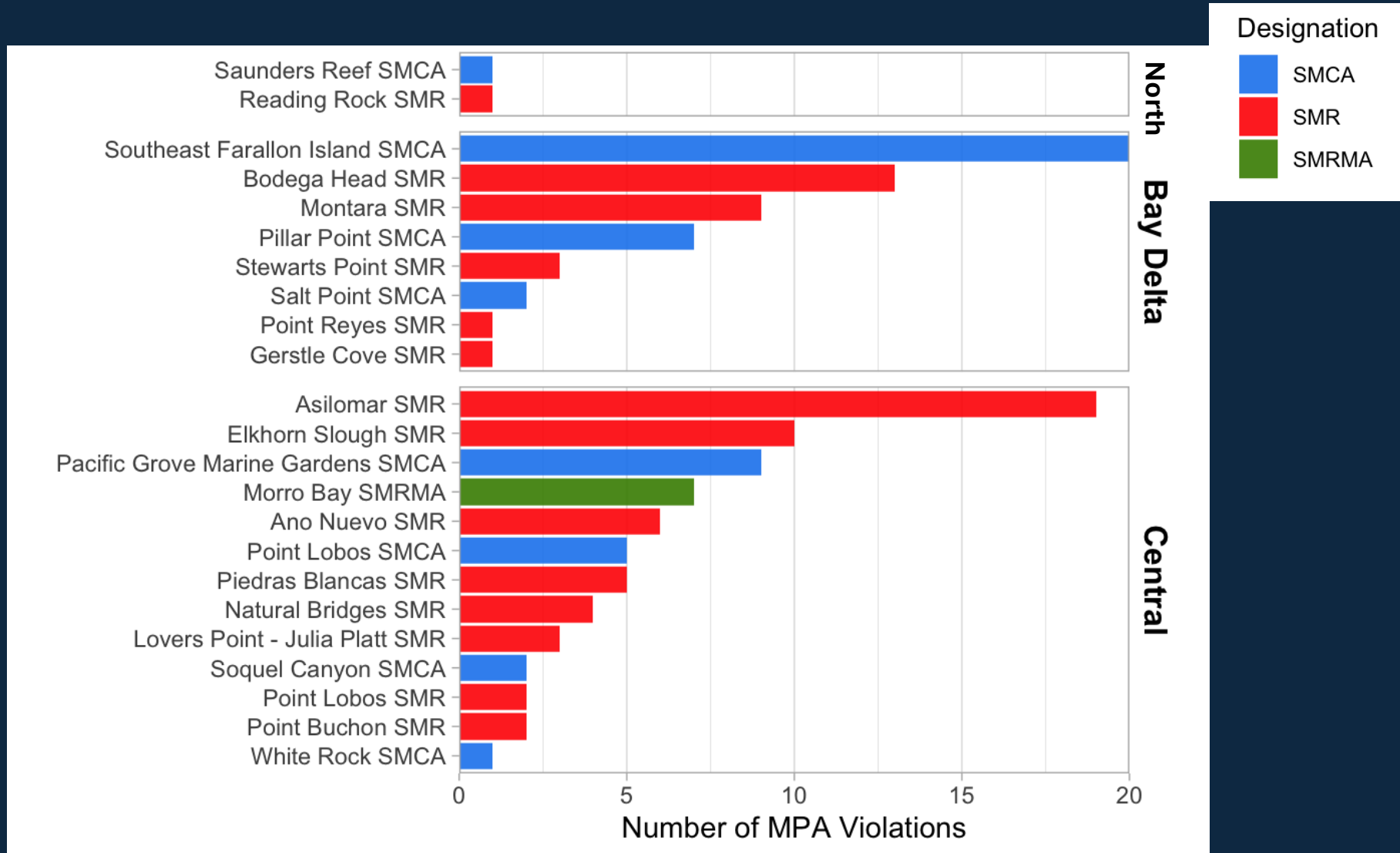
MPA Violations (T14-632)

Top 35 MPAs



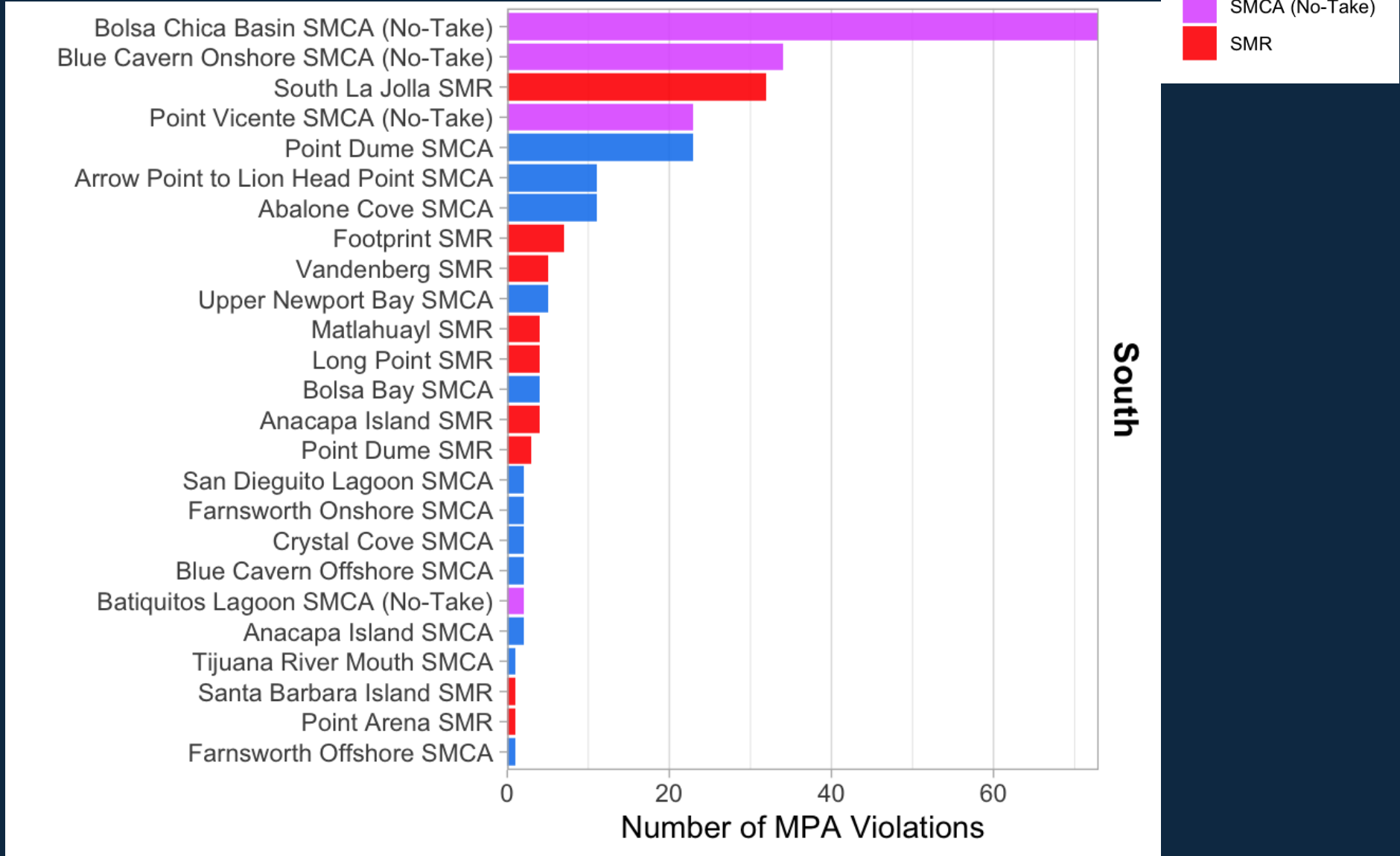
MPA Violations (T14-632)

By Geographic Area: North - Central



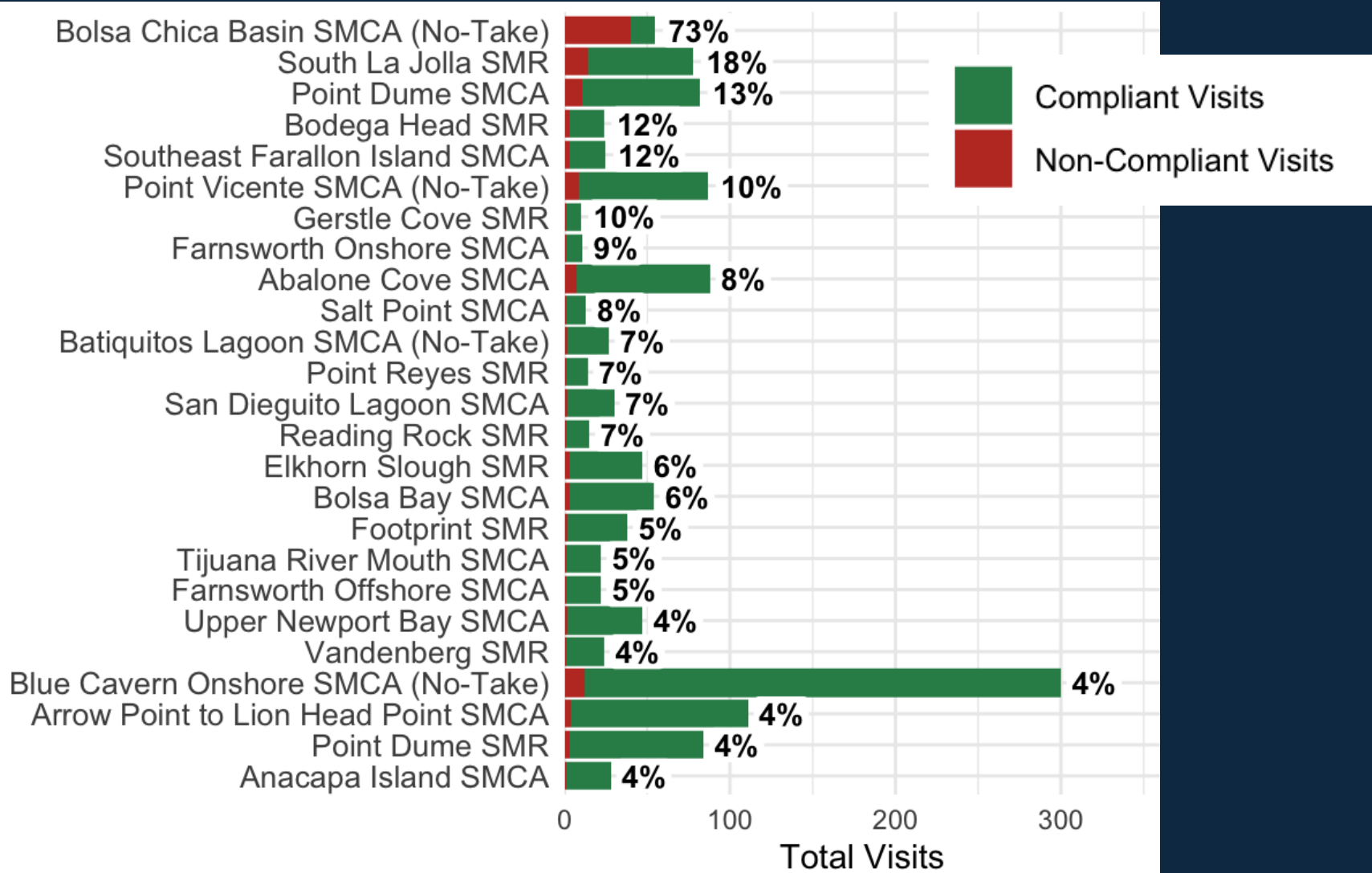
MPA Violations (T14-632)

By Geographic Area: South

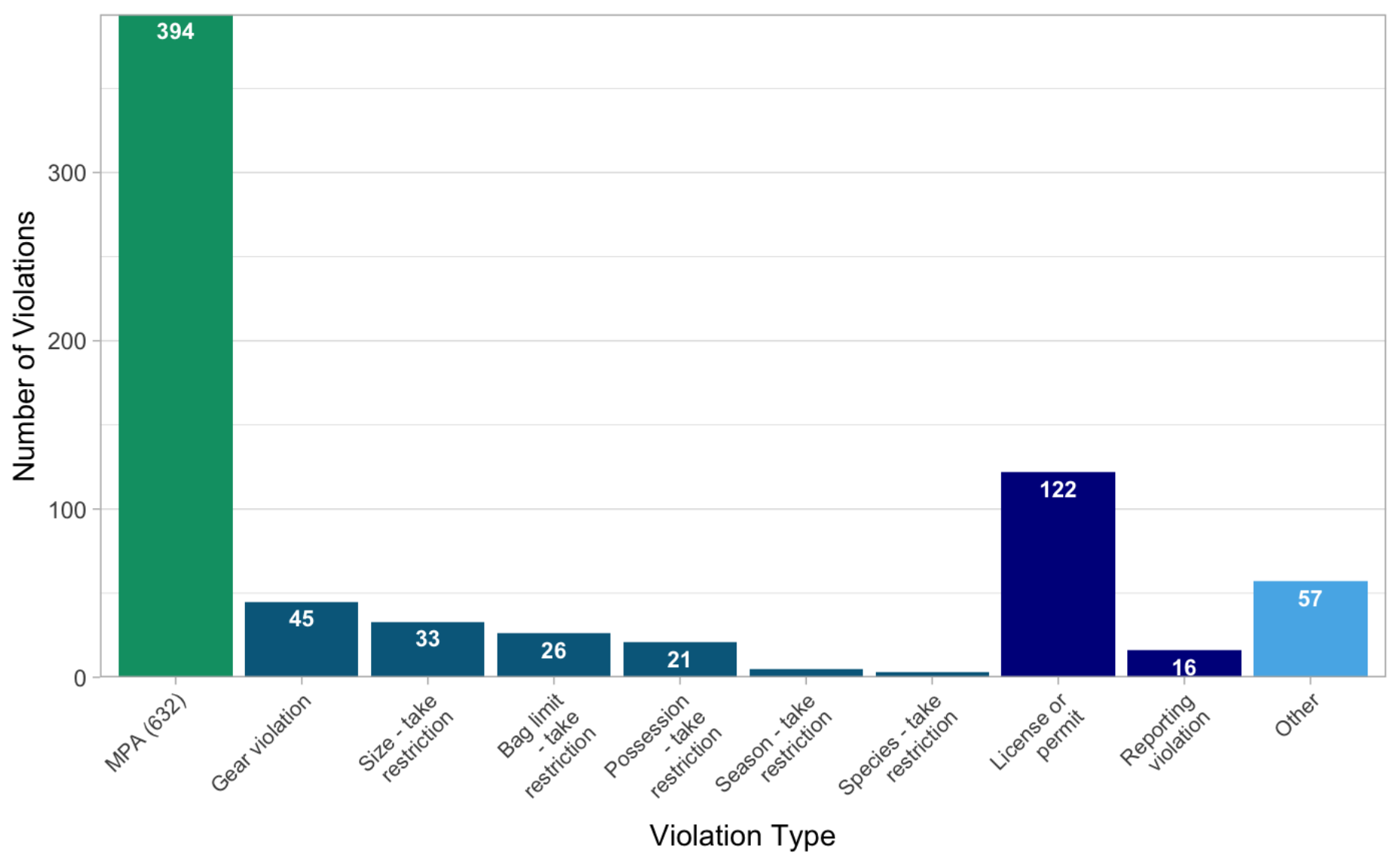


MPA Compliance Rates

Ratio of Compliant to Non-Compliant (MPA (632) Violation) MPA Visits

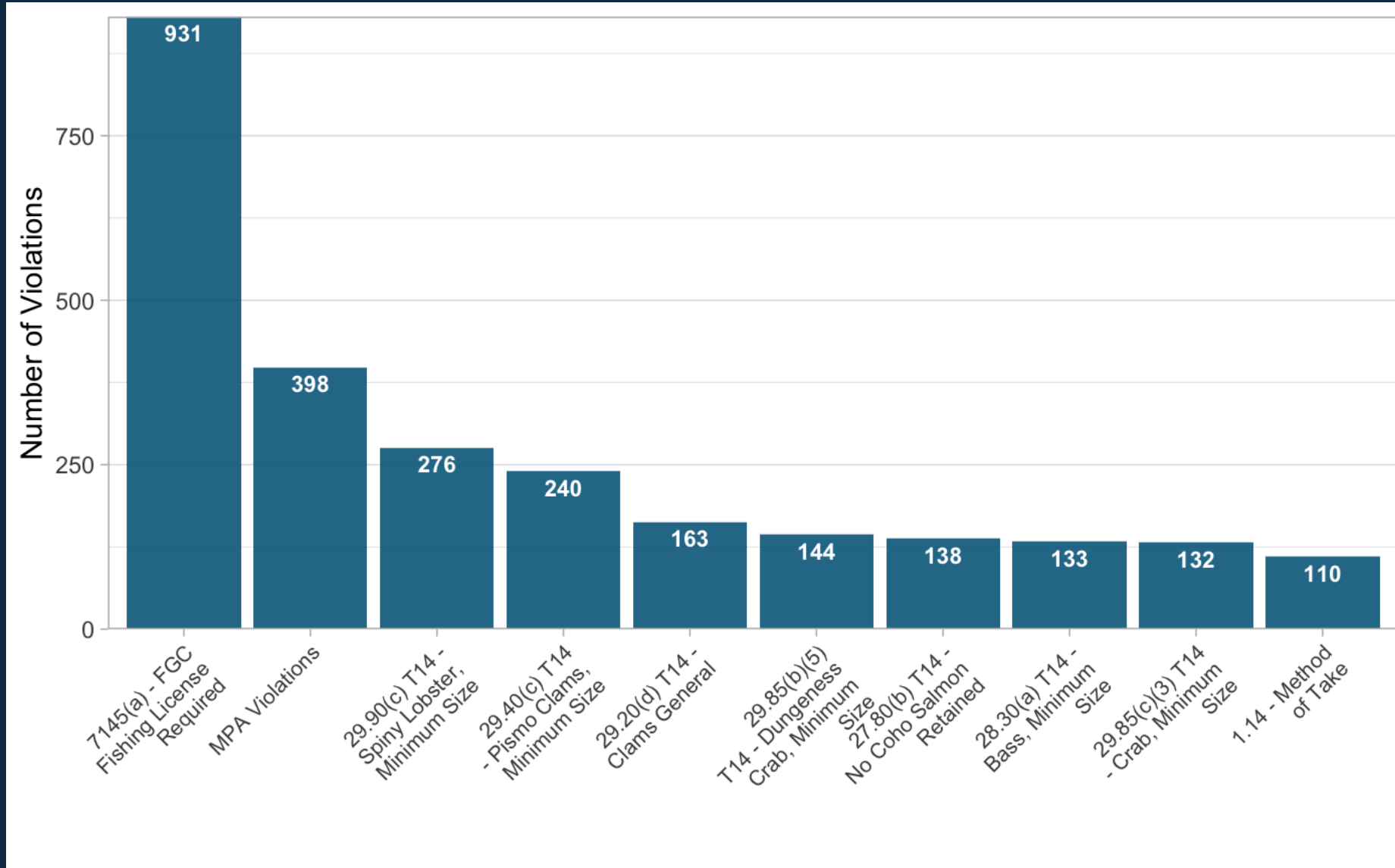


Categories of Violations in MPAs



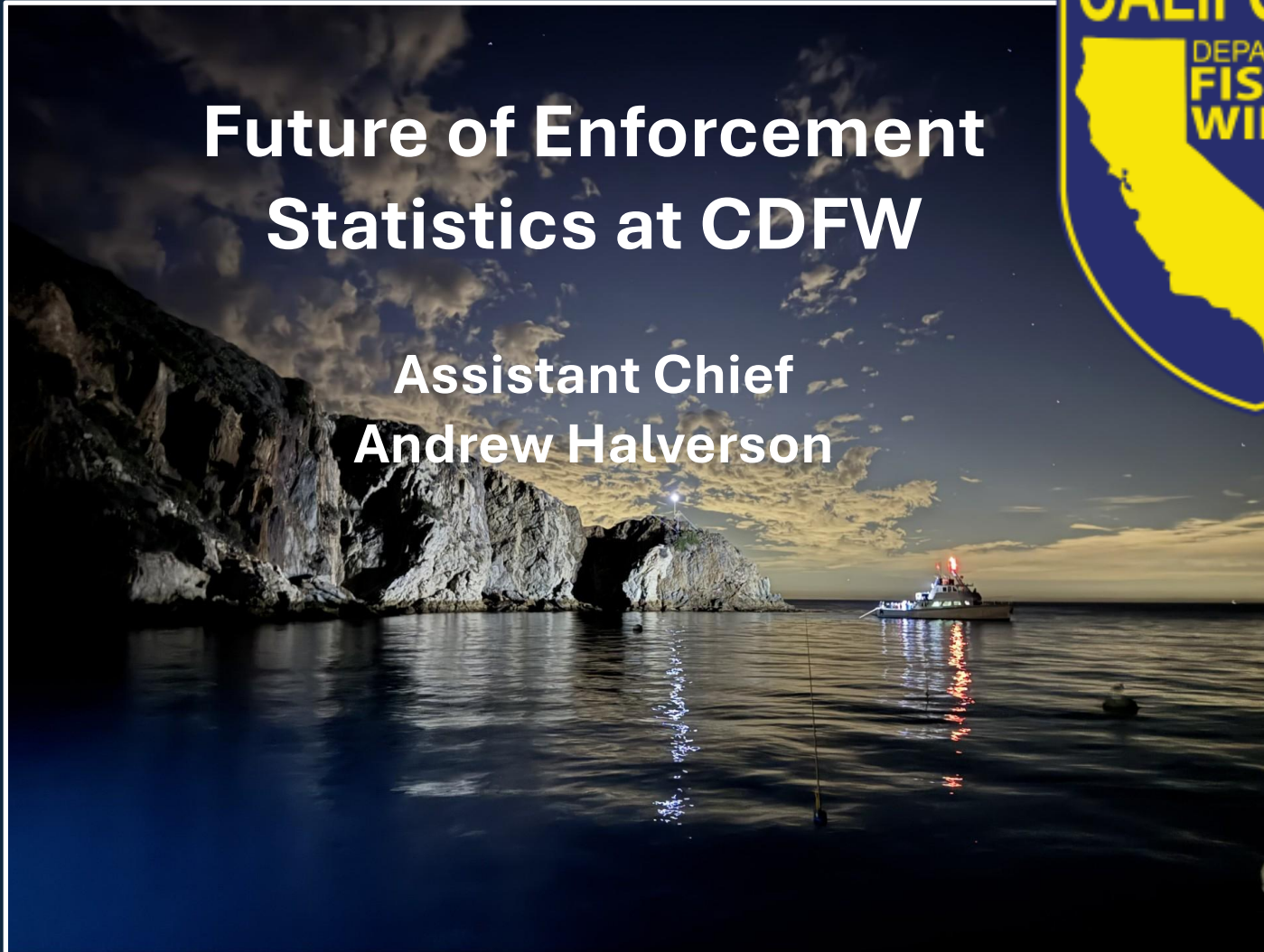
Top 10 Ocean Violations

5,165 total ocean violations



Future of Enforcement Statistics at CDFW

Assistant Chief
Andrew Halverson







Future of Enforcement Statistics at CDFW

March 2026

Assistant Chief Andrew Halverson



Marine Protected Areas



Marine Protected Areas

Date

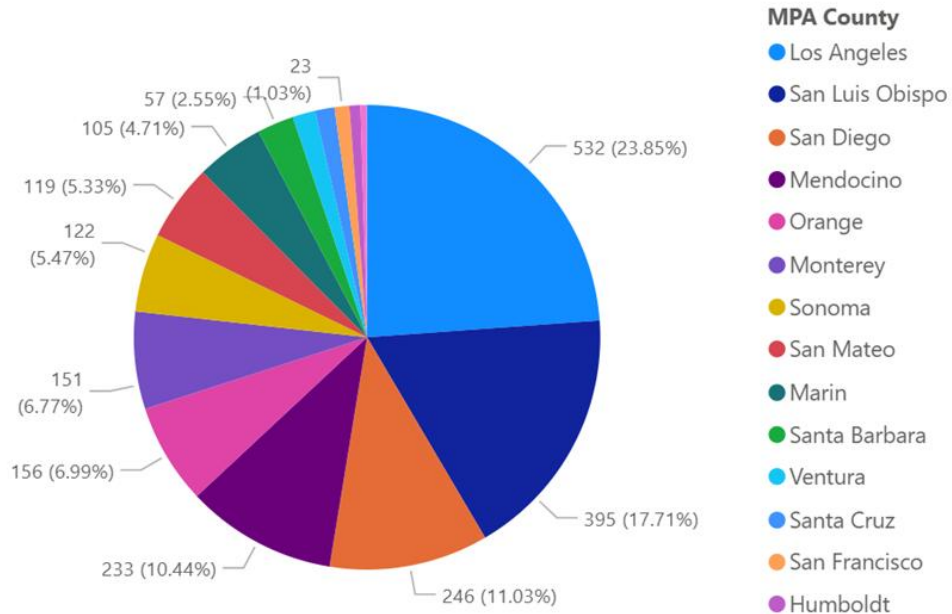
1/1/2026

3/10/2026

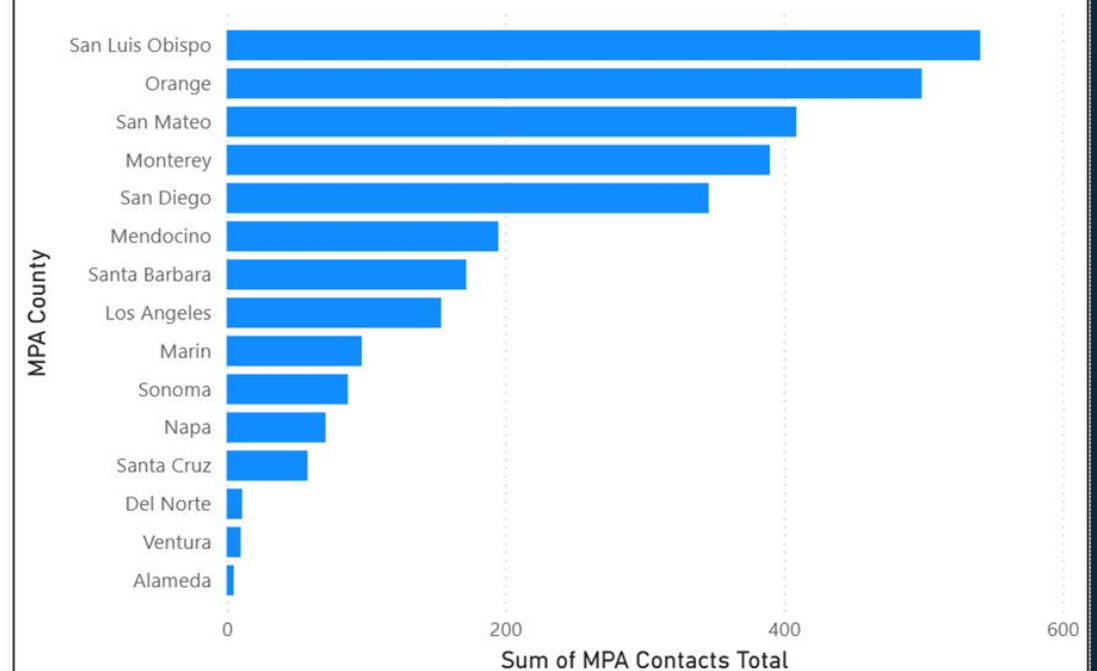
Number of MPA Patrols:
2231

Number of Contacts:
3046

Number of Patrols



Number of Contacts

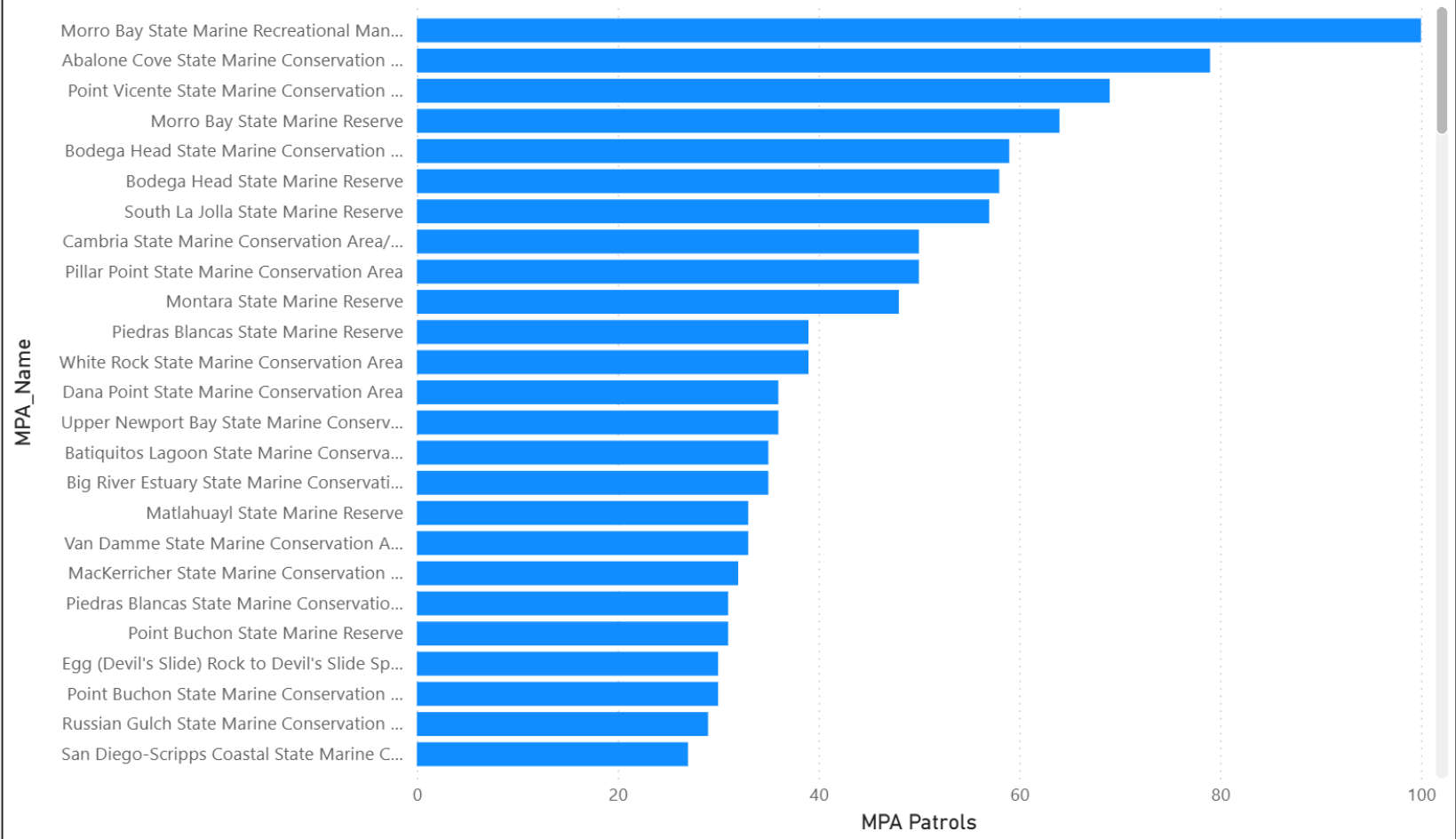


Individual Marine Protected Areas



Individual Marine Protected Areas

MPA Patrols by MPA_Name



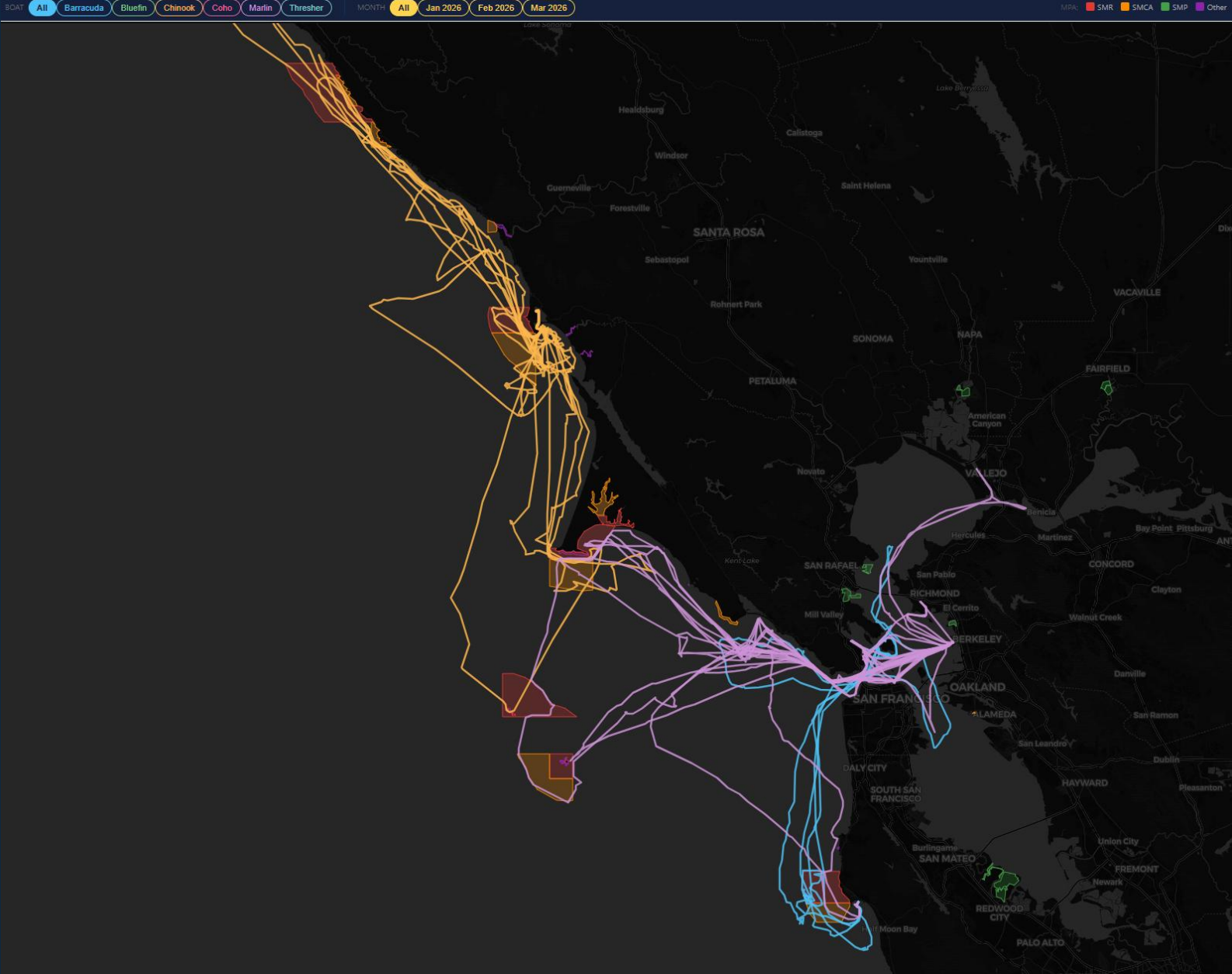
MPA County

- Alameda
- Del Norte
- Humboldt
- Los Angeles
- Marin
- Mendocino
- Monterey
- Orange

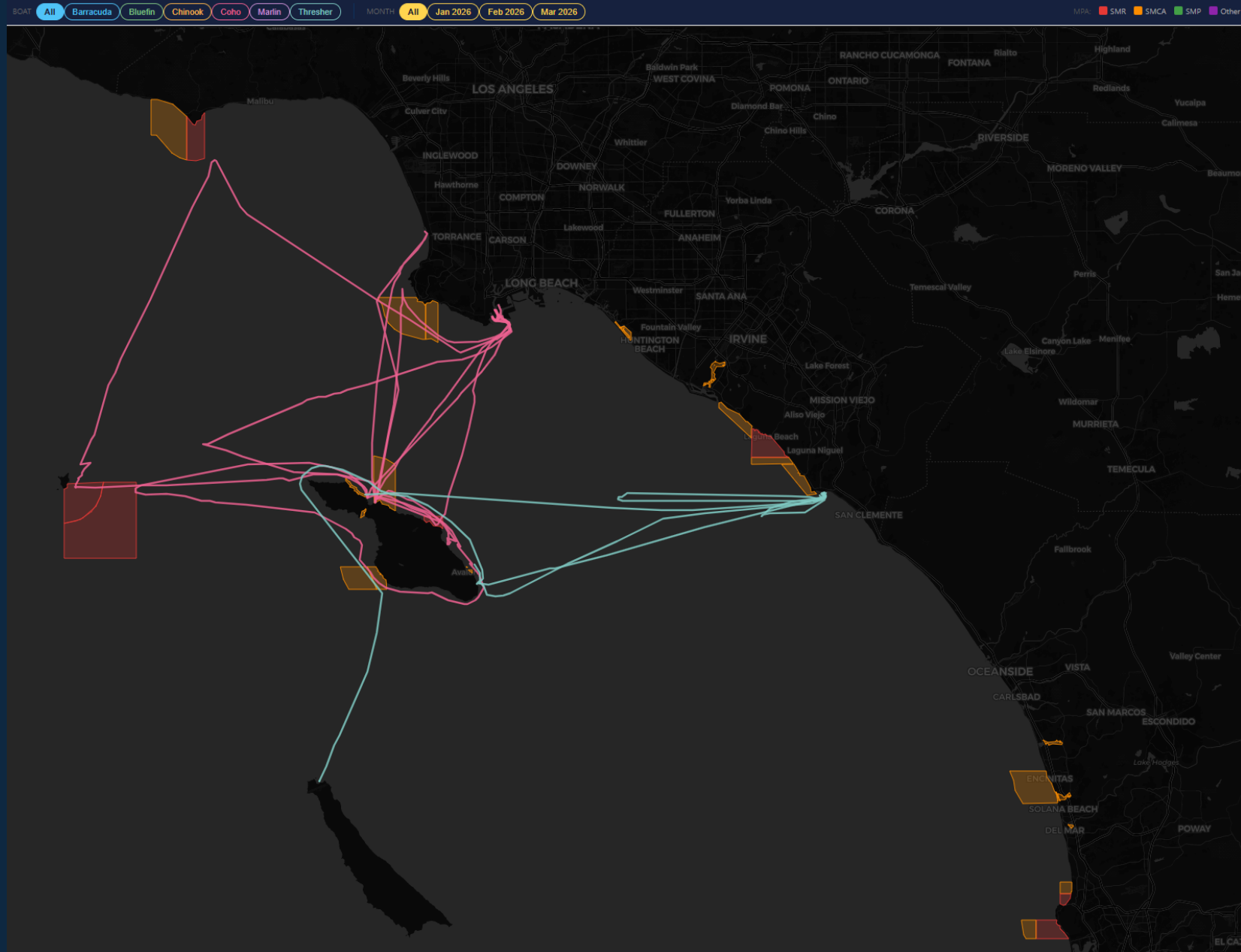
Month

January	July
February	August
March	September
April	October
May	November
June	December

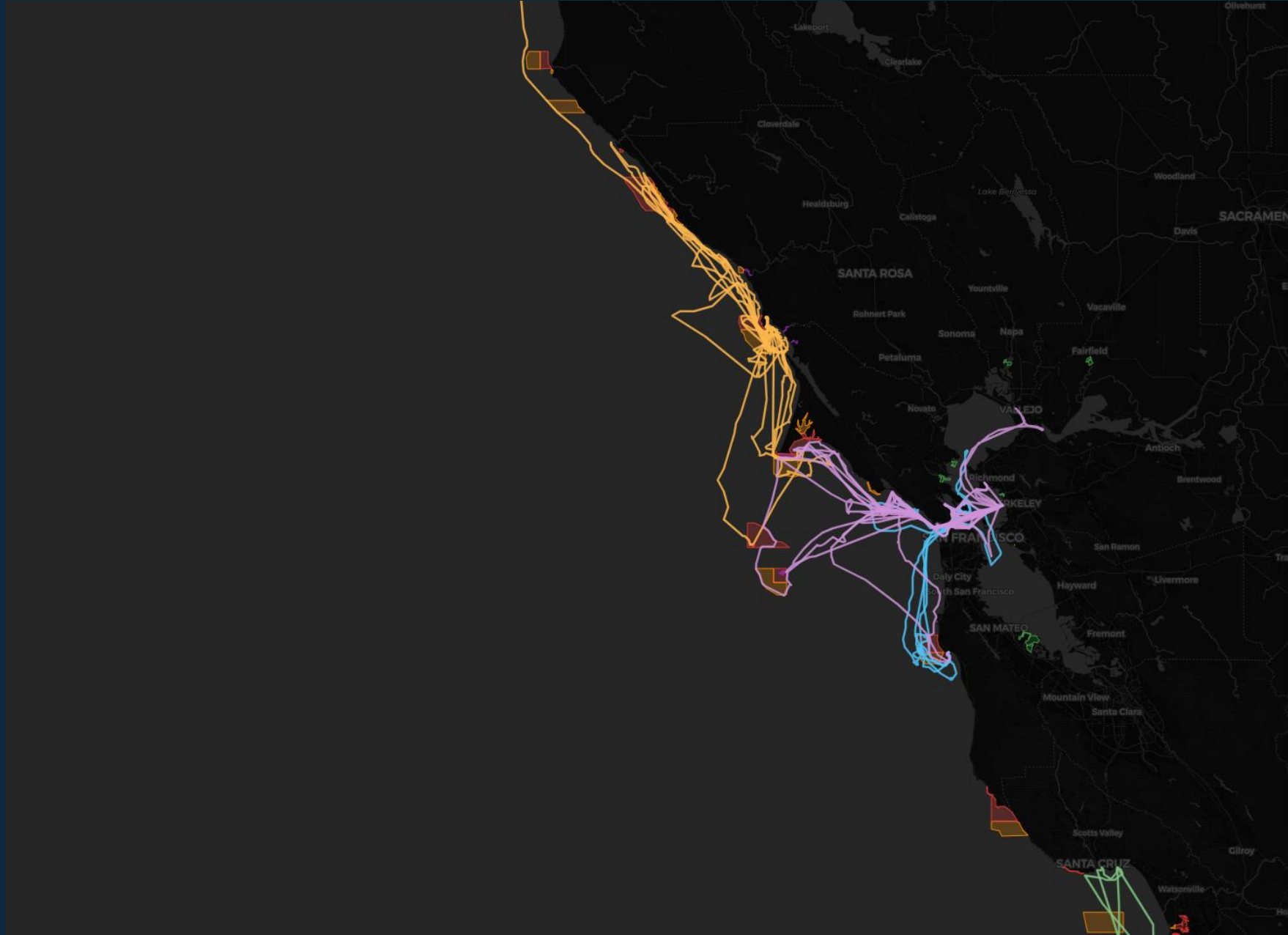
Passive Vessel Location Data Collection



San Francisco Bay MPA Location Data



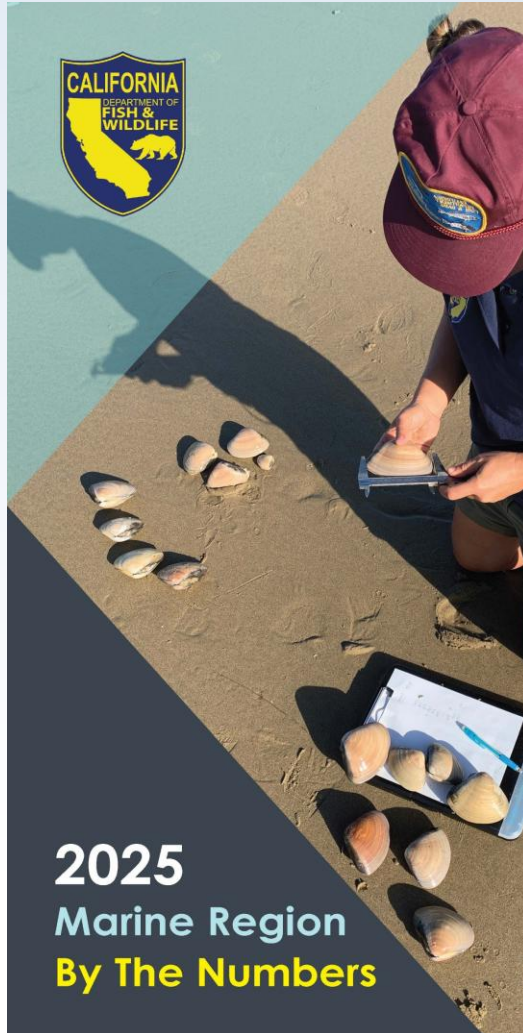
Marine Protected Areas Patrol – North Central







Marine Region 2025 By the Numbers Report



Commercial Fishing

Weight and Ex-Vessel Value¹ of Commercial Landings by Port Area²

Port Area	Pounds	Ex-Vessel Value
Santa Barbara	83,667,611	\$61,252,689
Los Angeles	86,715,792	\$49,500,651
Eureka	9,150,963	\$41,531,813
San Francisco	7,928,538	\$19,427,418
Monterey	16,686,737	\$11,472,086
San Diego	4,694,616	\$10,179,073
Bodega Bay	1,498,737	\$7,257,252
Fort Bragg	4,996,673	\$7,173,729
Morro Bay	1,552,849	\$4,530,552
TOTAL	216,892,517	\$212,325,262

¹Ex-Vessel Value is the amount paid to the fishermen at the dock.
²Port Area includes multiple ports in the same geographic region. A full list of the ports included in a given Port Area can be found in the Port Reference Table.
 Data as of 02/12/2024. Data Source: Department's Marine Region, Marine Fisheries Statistical Unit

Top 2025 Commercial Fishery Numbers

Total Commercial Landing Fees
 Collected for all Fisheries:
\$1,373,425

Top Ex-Vessel Value:
\$82,883,790 Market squid

Top Weight:
174,231,738 lbs Market squid



Freshly landed market squid (*Doryteuthis (Loligo) opalescens*). CDW J. Sellen. Illustrations by CDW C. Makeyev



<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/Marine/By-the-Numbers>



Recent Trends in Sport Fishing License Sales

MARCH 12, 2026

California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Recruit | Retain | Reactivate

Taylor Williams
R3 Manager



Recruit | Retain | Reactivate

What is R3?

Recruit.

Retain.

Reactivate.

•

CDFW's R3 Initiative aims to increase statewide participation in hunting, fishing, foraging and shooting sports by transforming barriers into opportunities.



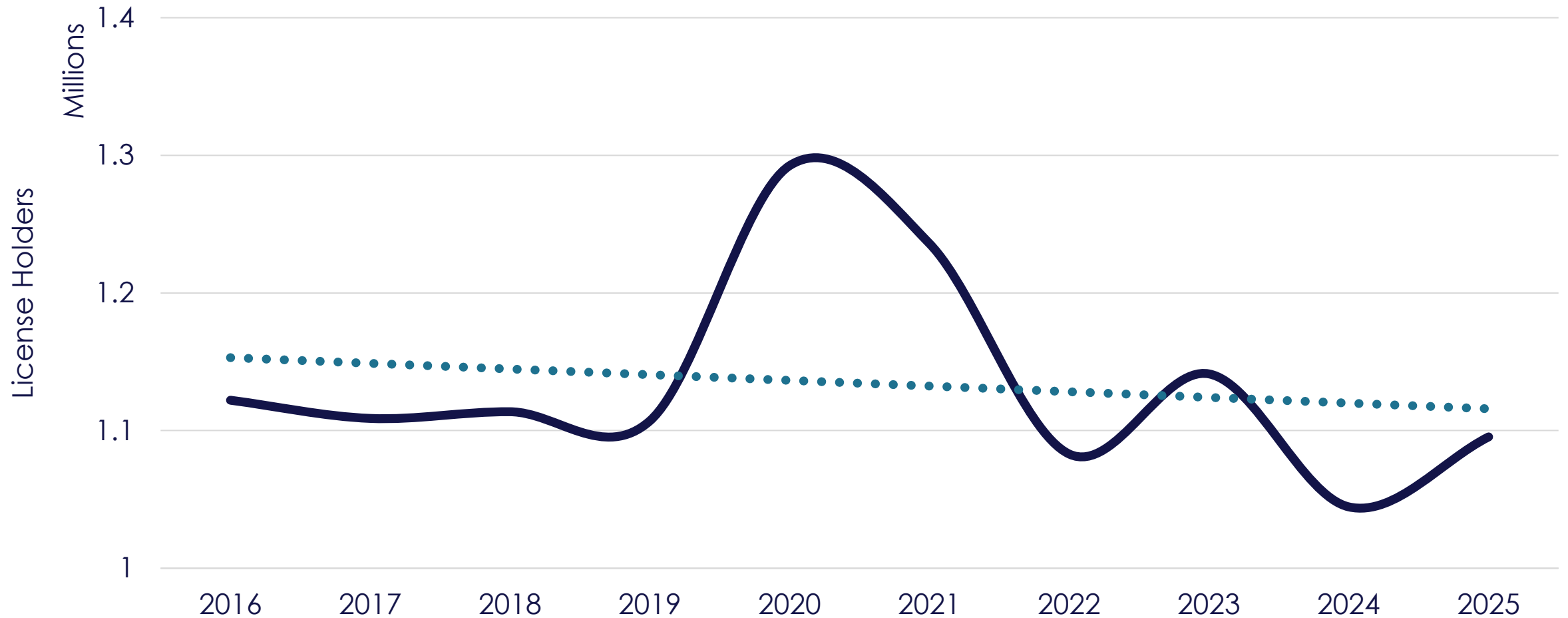
What We'll Cover

- Multi-year license sales trends
- Regional participation patterns
- Cost trends
- R3 metrics
- Auto-renewal
- Marine participation indicators
- Pier & jetty fishing
- National context

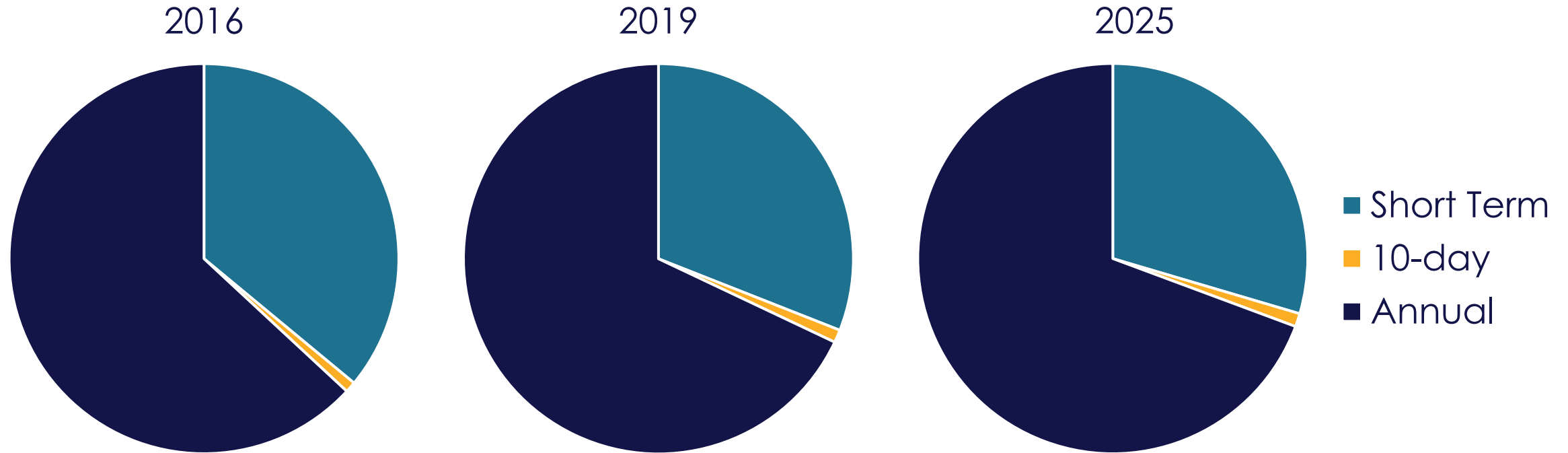


Fishing License Sales

Annual Fishing License Sales

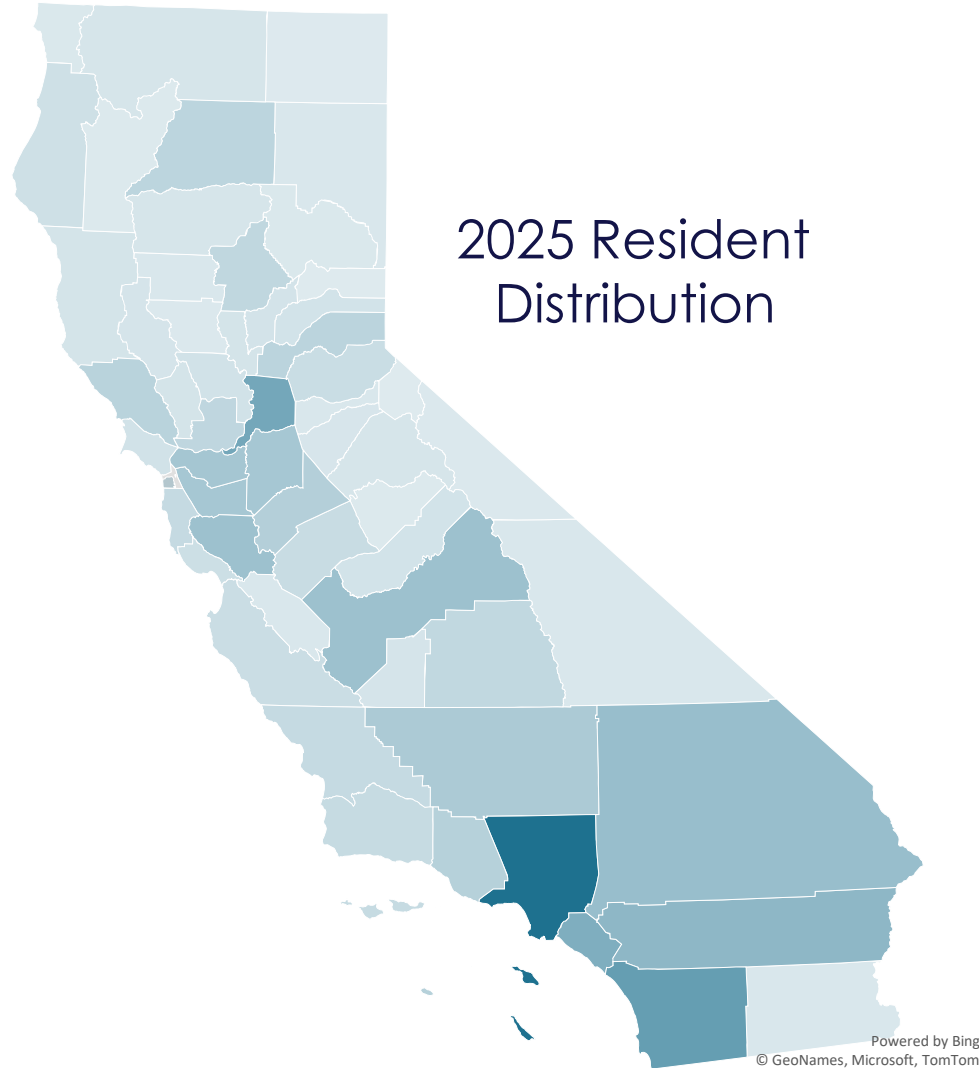


Annual vs. Short-Term



- The **introduction of 365-day licenses** brought a **3% increase** in annual sales in 2023, compared to 2019 (pre-pandemic).
- Approximately **one third of all short-term license purchasers** are nonresidents.

Annual License Distribution



- Over the last 10 years, an average of **2.2% of annual sport fishing license purchasers were non-residents.**
- There has been a **~4% increase in Southern California anglers** since 2016.

Sport Fishing License Cost Trends

Annual Licenses

- Annual Resident License:
 - \$43.50 in 2016 → \$58.25 in 2025 (+34%)
- Annual Non-Resident License:
 - \$117 in 2016 → \$157.25 in 2025 (+34%)

Short-Term Licenses

- 1-Day:
 - \$14 in 2016 → \$19 in 2025 (+36%)
- 2-Day:
 - \$21.75 in 2016 → \$29.25 in 2025 (+34%)



Are Licenses More Expensive?

- From 2016-2025 **license prices increased ~34%**, across resident, non-resident and short-term license types.
- Over the same period, **California's cost-of-living and inflation increased by 38%**.
- Licenses are not outpacing the cost of living. Adjusted for inflation, **they cost about the same or slightly less than in 2016**.
- For less than the price of a tank of gas or trip to the grocery store, anglers can get a full year of fishing access and contribute to conservation.

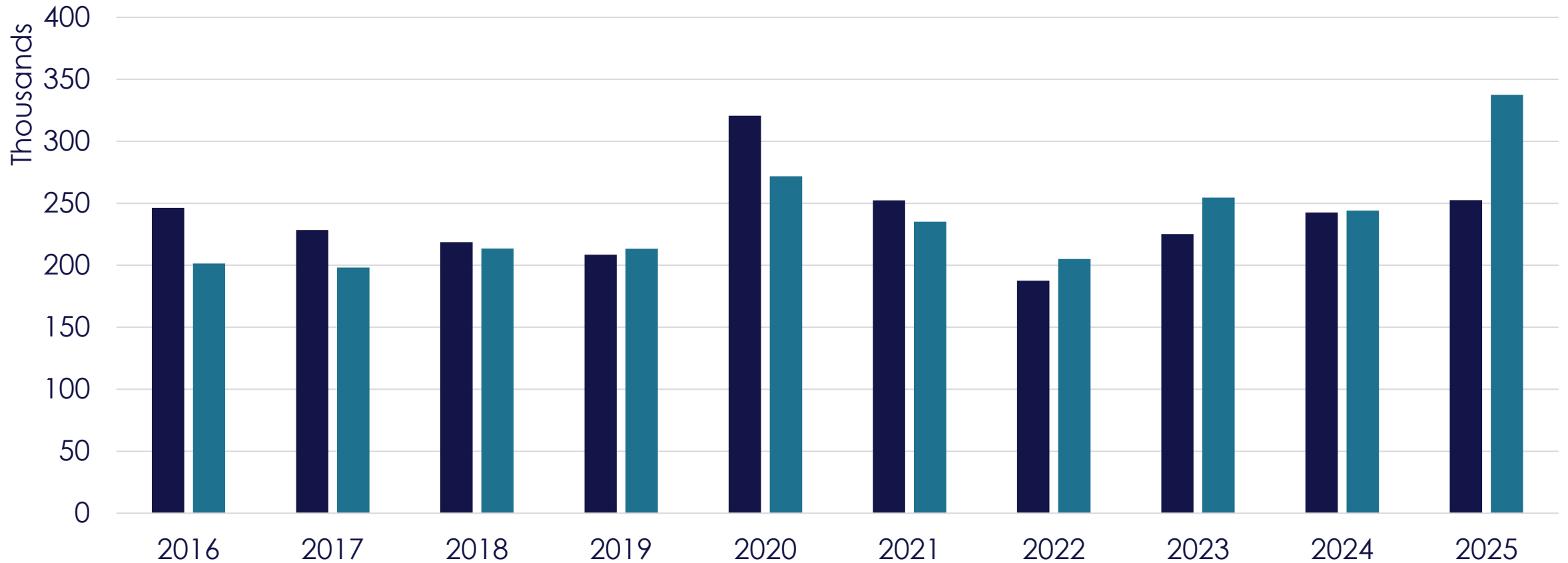


Source: California Consumer Price Index, California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), Research Unit. "California Consumer Price Index 1955–2025 (All Urban Consumers)."

R3 Metrics

New & Returning Anglers

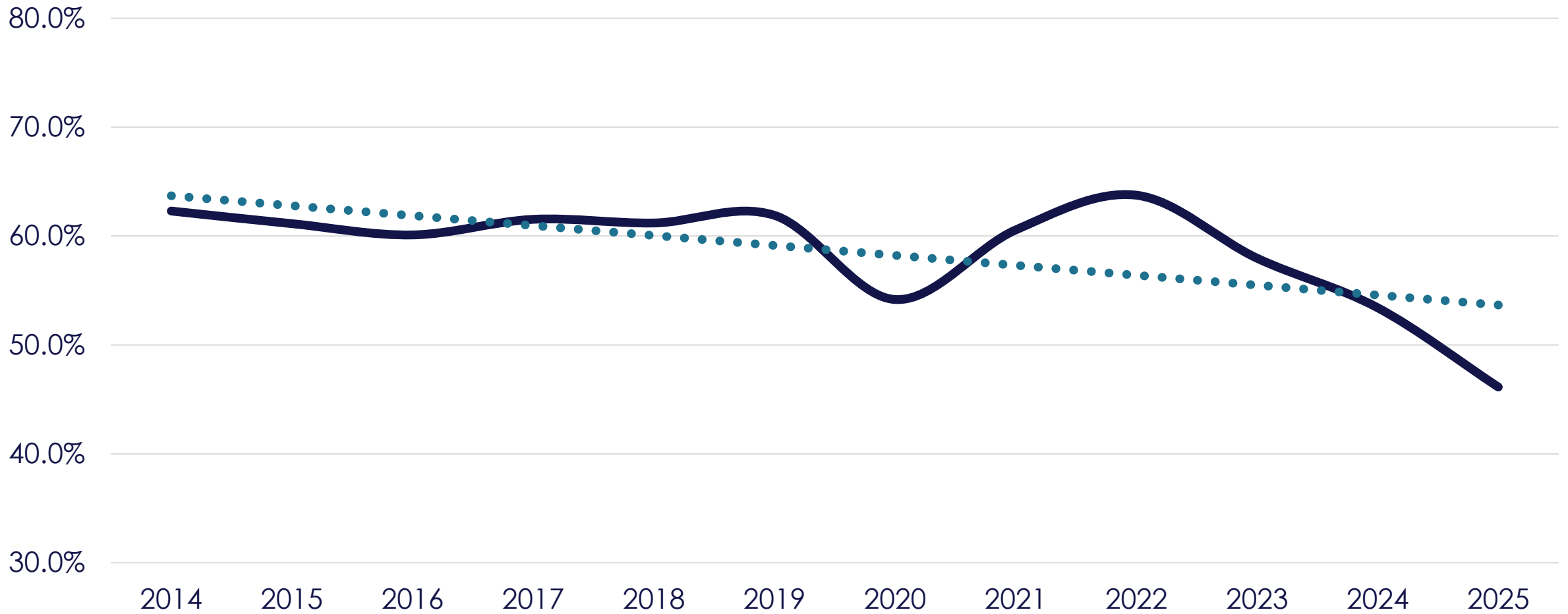
■ Recruitment ■ Reactivation



Data based off annual license sales

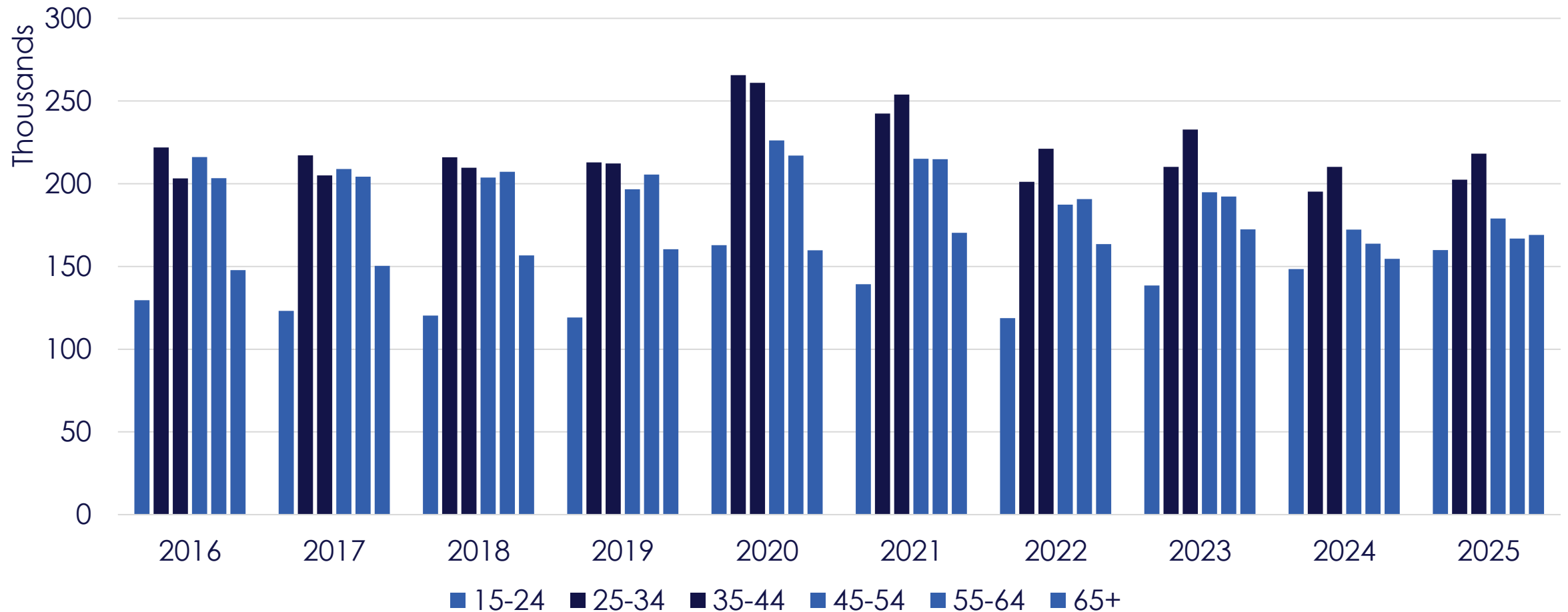
R3 Metrics

Annual Retention Rates

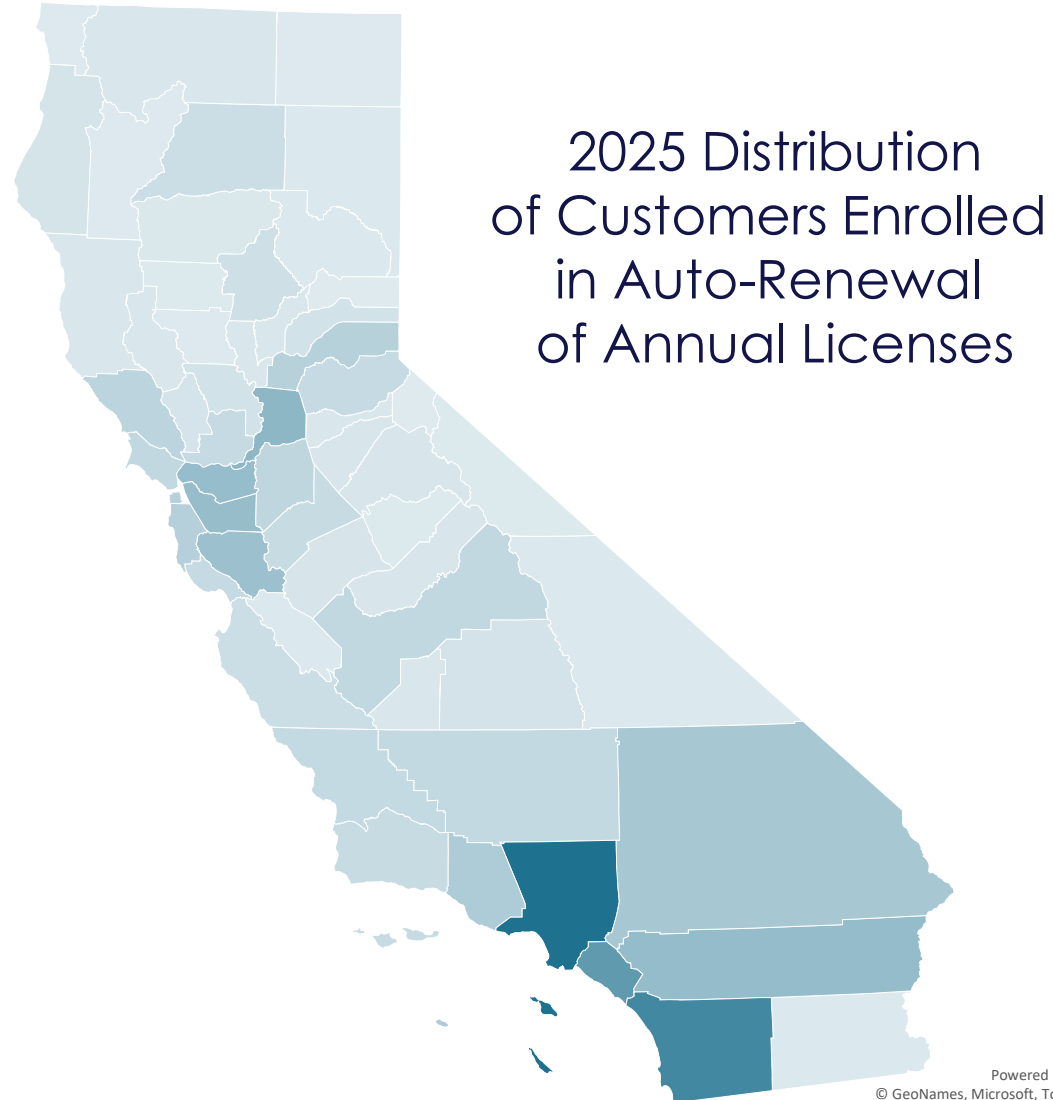


R3 Metrics

Annual Fishing License Sales by Age

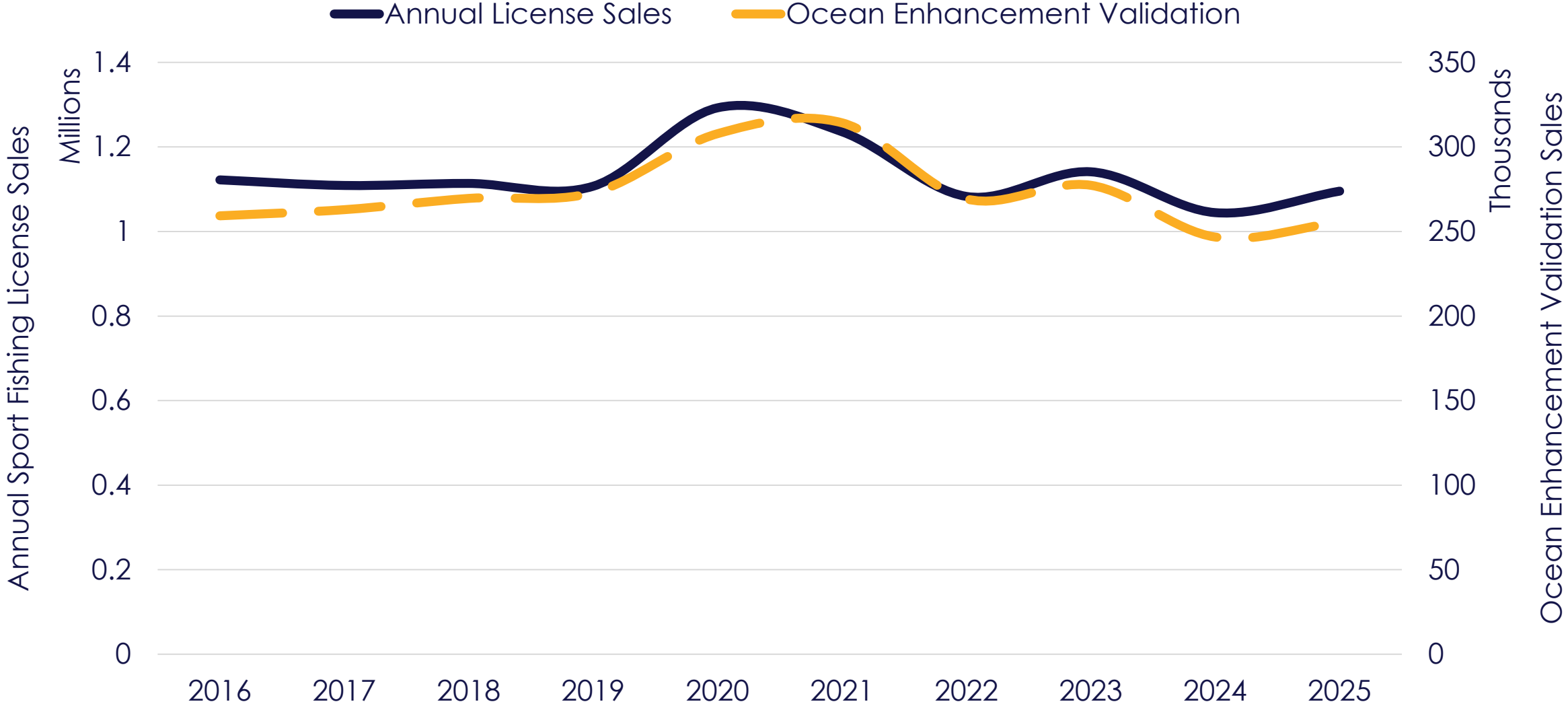


Auto-renewal Density Map



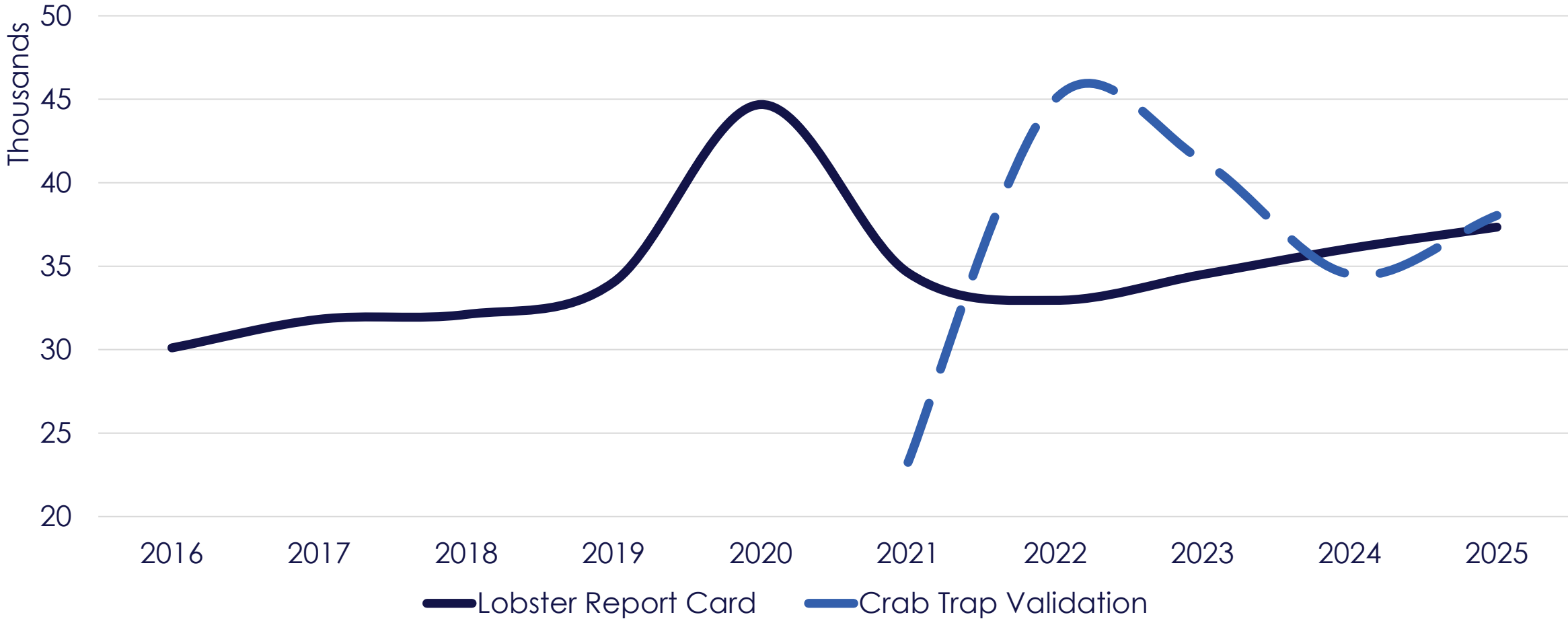
- Various licenses, report cards and validations can be set up for auto-renewal.
- Only ~6% of annual sport fishing license holders are enrolled in auto-renewal.

Marine Participation Indicators



Marine Participation Indicators

Specialty Item Sales



Pier & Jetty Fishing

What we know:

- **24% of U.S. anglers** claim they **fish from piers/jetties**, underlining non-licensed pier use is a major national activity.
- Piers can **attract R3-priority audiences**: families and social groups, newcomers (low-cost access), casual/low-frequency anglers.

What we don't know:

- California is unique in **providing free fishing opportunities** from designated piers and jetties at no cost. Unfortunately, participation cannot be measured through license sales due to design.



Source: "2025 Special Report on Fishing." American Sportfish Association, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.

National Trends Reinforce California Participation

- **Fishing participation** nationally reached **57.9M people** in 2024, the **highest on record**, showing sustained interest in the activity (despite economic variability).
- U.S. **angler churn remains high**, with **16.9M new/returning anglers** and **16.6M leaving**.
- **First-time participation** is growing nationally: **5.1M new anglers** in 2024 (up from 4.2M in 2023), aligning with CA's adult-onset recruitment.
- Top motivators for new anglers – family time, nature, relaxation – align with California's R3 focus areas.



Source: "2025 Special Report on Fishing." American Sportfish Association, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation.

Summary

- License sales are declining at a slow rate, and the impacts of switching to 365-day licenses are still largely unknown.
 - The largest decline seen in the last decade is in short-term license sales.
 - Annual license purchasers make up a majority of all license purchasers.
- License prices have risen *slower* than inflation, adjusted for cost-of-living increases, the cost of a fishing license has remained stable in the last decade.
- R3 Metrics:
 - California has seen a surge in reactivated anglers in recent years.
 - Retention rates are down after the introduction of 365-day licenses.
 - 25–44-year-olds are the largest cohort of license purchasers.
- Ocean specific participation is following similar trends as annual licensing.



Questions?

Taylor Williams
R3 Manager

Taylor.Williams@wildlife.ca.gov



Recruit | Retain | Reactivate