Gerstle Cove

AREA OF SPECIAL BIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

LOW LEVEL OF HIGH THREAT DISCHARGE

Area of Special Biological Significance = Zero Pollution Discharge

In the 1970s, to preserve biologically unique and sensitive marine ecosystems for future generations, California designated 34 regions along the coast as Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS). These areas support an unusual variety of aquatic life, and are important building blocks for a sustainable, resilient coastal environment and economy. Although the State Water Board's Ocean Plan prohibits all waste discharges into these areas, pollution continues to damage these important habitats.

With YOUR help, California Coastkeeper Alliance is working to ensure important marine ecosystems are protected from pollution.

Gerstle Cove is an unusually good place to photograph game animals. Normally, large fish such as lingcod (above) and cabezon are a bit skittish, but in the absence of spear guns, they have developed a complacent attitude toward divers. In the absence of fishing these animals grow big and healthy.

Gerstle Cove borders less than one mile of coast along the shore of Salt Point State Park. One of California's first underwater parks, this site includes 10 ocean acres brimming with exquisite marine life and intriguing history. Gerstle Cove boasts several species of rockfish, giant green sea anemones, lingcod and striped sea perch. Not to be outdone, the coastal geology bordering Gerstle Cove is packed with caverns and other geological jewels. The coastal rocks have holes from ships that anchored there to load sandstone for constructing the first streets of San Francisco.

Gerstle Cove teems with marine life that can be experienced through tide pool exploration.

Gerstle Cove ASBS overlaps with Gerstle Cove Salt Point State Marine Reserve. This is a type of marine protected area (MPA) established by the Fish and Game Commission to protect and preserve aquatic life. Visit: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/northcentralhome.asp for more information.

Pollution

Despite protection under California law, Gerstle Cove faces eight high threat pollution discharges from several sources, including stormwater runoff, parking lot and boat ramp runoff, waste from camping, fishing and local roadways, plus pollutants associated with the park recreational facility. Gerstle Cove is contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), oil, metals, bacteria and pathogens.

One Threat and Solution: Parking Lot Runoff

One pollution source that particularly threatens Gerstle Cove is polluted stormwater that runs off the parking lot. Rainwater washing off parking lot surfaces picks up a potentially toxic mixture of PAHs, a byproduct of fossil fuel burning and a key ingredient in parking lot sealants. When polluted stormwater flows into natural waterways it can poison aquatic plants and animals, particularly in sensitive marine ecosystems like ASBSs.

By incorporating Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, parking lots can work with nature to filter polluted stormwater. For example, parking lots can be constructed to funnel stormwater into landscaped elements called bio-swales that capture rainwater. Native plants in the bio-swales create habitat and naturally remove silt and pollution from stormwater before reaching the ocean.

Learn More

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/ocean/asbs_map.shtml
http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=453
http://www.cacoastkeeper.org/programs/clean-abundant/stormwater-runoff

Pollution Threats At A Glance

- **Number of High Threat Discharges: 8**
- **State Board Identified Contaminants: PAHs, Oil, Metals, Bacteria and Pathogens**
- **Pollution Sources: Stormwater runoff, parking lot and boat ramp runoff, waste from camping, fishing and local roadways, runoff from recreational facility**

Pollution data compiled from the State Water Resources Control Board.