

How healthy is the Morro Bay estuary? In this report, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) addresses this complex issue by breaking it down to a series of focused questions. Is the water safe for people and wildlife? Is the bay filling in? Are important habitats being protected or restored?

The goal of this report is to provide the community with important information about the health of the estuary today, and to create a framework to guide our efforts and measure our success as we work together to protect and restore this estuary of national significance.

What's Inside This Report

Is the bay clean enough to support commercial shellfish farming?	Page 1
Are the creeks and bay safe for swimming?	Pages 2-3
Does creek and bay water quality support aquatic life?	Pages 4-5
Does the bay support healthy eelgrass beds?	Pages 6-7
Is the bay filling in at an unnatural rate?	Pages 10-11
Are important habitats being protected and restored?	Pages 12-13
Are bay bird populations stable?	Pages 14-15
Do the estuary and watershed support a healthy population of steelhead trout?	Page 16

Why is the Morro Bay Estuary's Health Important?

Morro Bay is an estuary, a place where freshwater from creeks mixes with the ocean's salty tides. Healthy estuaries are among the most productive environments on earth. Like other wetland and coastal habitats, many estuaries have been lost or severely degraded by intensive development. Morro Bay is one of the largest and least disturbed estuaries in Central and Southern California. Its sheltered waters, salt marshes and eelgrass beds provide rare and important habitat

for a diverse array of fishes, birds, shellfish, and other life.

The estuary is also a center of activity for people and contributes significantly to our local economy. As a working harbor, the bay supports commercial and sport fishing as well as recreational boating. More than 25,000 people make their homes along the bay's shore and thousands more visit the bay each year to take in its beauty and participate in fishing, boating, bird watching and hiking.

