

Focusing on What is Most Important: KEY BENEFICIAL USES AND KEY AREAS

HABITATS & ECOSYSTEMS: Marine, estuarine, freshwater, riparian

HABITATS & ECOSYSTEMS IS A KEY BENEFICIAL USE

Beneficial uses are the uses of water necessary for the survival or well-being of humans, plants and wildlife. These uses of water serve to promote our tangible and intangible economic, social and environmental goals. Habitats & ecosystems is the key beneficial use for which protection and restoration of the health of waters is most complicated and difficult. They span from the ocean to ephemeral headwater streams.

1. KEY BENEFICIAL USES

Key beneficial uses are the beneficial uses that are most critical to protecting human and environmental health.

2. KEY AREAS

Key areas are the places where protection and restoration of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of waters is most important for a key beneficial use.

3. APPLYING KEY BENEFICIAL USES AND KEY AREAS

Where the Board has flexibility, such as efforts to restore degraded waters, the key beneficial uses / key areas concept can help the Board decide which work to undertake. In programs with less flexibility, such as permitting, the concept can help the Board decide which aspects of that work warrant greater attention.

KEY BENEFICIAL USES OF WATERS IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

Drinking Water Supply

Fish & Shellfish Consumption

Recreation

HABITATS & ECOSYSTEMS

KEY AREAS in the San Diego Region for HABITATS & ECOSYSTEMS

KEY WATER BODIES	First (highest) Rank	Ocean San Diego Bay Lagoons & Estuaries Stream Systems		
	Second Rank	Mission Bay Stream Mouths		
	Third Rank	Ponds Harbors		
AREAS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE	Areas with habitats or ecosystems of special importance (or where such areas could be restored)		Areas used (or potentially used) by a special status or vulnerable native species	Designated areas with extra protection for habitats & ecosystems
	• e.g., areas with		e.g., areas used by	e.g.,
	- Vernal pools - Wetlands - Seagrass beds - Rocky intertidal - Subtidal rocky reefs, including kelp forests		- Endangered, threatened, rare, or special concern species - Bird species protected under federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act	- National wildlife refuges - National monuments - National estuarine research reserves - Critical habitat pursuant to federal Endangered Species Act - National Forests - Wilderness areas pursuant to federal Wilderness Act - State marine reserves - State marine conservation areas - State ecological reserves - State wildlife areas - State natural preserves & reserves - State beaches & parks - State water quality protection areas - University protected areas - County, JPA, special district, & city protected areas - Natural community & habitat conservation areas
	For examples of specific key areas, please see Tables 11 and 12 in the Report: Key Beneficial Uses and Key Areas: Focusing on What is Most Important (2017) .			

Identifying key beneficial uses and key areas is the beginning of helping the Board focus on what is most important. For more information see:

- [Practical Vision](#): Healthy Waters, Healthy People (2013)
- [Key Beneficial Uses and Key Areas](#): Focusing on What is Most Important (2017)