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July 11, 2023

Dear Editors,

On behalf of the author team, I am pleased to resubmit our paper, "If you build it, they will come: coastal amenities facilitate human engagement in marine protected areas", for consideration as a Research Article in *People and Nature*.

There are increasing calls for using marine protected areas (MPAs) to achieve goals for conservation, fisheries, and other cultural uses. While the conservation and fisheries impacts of MPAs have been relatively well studied, impacts on other dimensions of human use have received less attention. Understanding how humans engage with MPAs and identifying traits of MPAs that promote engagement is critical to designing MPA networks that achieve multiple goals effectively, equitably, and sustainably.

In this paper, we characterize human engagement in California's MPA network, the largest scientifically-based network of MPAs in the world (124 MPAs spanning 16% of state waters and 1,700 km of coastline), and identify traits associated with higher human engagement. We assemble and compare diverse indicators of human engagement that capture recreational, educational, and scientific activities across California's MPAs. We find that engagement with MPAs is generally correlated to nearby population density and that "site charisma" can expand engagement beyond what would be predicted by population density alone. Charismatic sites are near tourist destinations and are often adjacent to state parks and associated amenities.

These results have important management implications. First, engagement in MPAs can be promoted by developing land-based amenities that eases access to coastal MPAs. Second, managers may prioritize monitoring, enforcement, education, and outreach programs in MPAs with traits that predict high human engagement. Understanding the extent to which human engagement impacts the conservation performance of MPAs is a critical next step to designing MPAs that minimize tradeoffs among potentially competing objectives.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, on behalf of all authors,
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