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Loreto Bay National Marine Park and the new Management Program

Loretanos designing
the future of Loreto



EDITORIAL

Everyone benefits from the Loreto Bay National Park



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DIRECTOR

Directly or indirectly all Loretanos depend on The Loreto Bay National Park (PNBL), Loreto's main tourist attraction. Aware of this, in 1996, Loretanos decided to protect their natural wealth, and requested the creation of a Natural Protected Area (NPA). The Park was established by Presidential Decree published in the Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) on July 19, 1996.

The Park covers an area of 206,580

hectares, of which 88% is marine and 12% terrestrial, and composed of several islets and five islands: Carmen, Catalana or Santa Catalina, Coronado, Danzante and Monserrat. It has three important international designations including, since 2005, recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Park has environmental features that are notable for their recreational value, due to scenic beauty and biological diversity. In the Park it is possible to observe various species of

whales such as: Blue Whale, Humpback, Fin, Sperm Whale, among others. Sports and commercial fishing are also practiced inside and outside the Park as well as low impact tourism such as hikes on the islands, observation of flora and fauna, camping and kayaking. Because of its great marine biodiversity, diving opportunities are extraordinary. The municipality of Loreto is considered an important international tourist destination. It is the third largest destination in Baja California Sur based on

the number of tourists it receives and the economic benefits it generates annually.

Another of the environmental benefits, both for local communities and the entire region, are wetlands and mangroves, which protect the coastline from extreme weather events such as tropical storms, cyclones and hurricanes, cushioning their effect and reducing the damage caused inland.

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PNBL and the management program

Richard Jackson

The Plan includes new zoning and bans harpoon fishing, fishing with traps, and the use of jet skis within the Park

With the objective of strengthening the conservation of ecosystems and their biodiversity, as well as promoting the sustainable development of communities, the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas announced on April 23, 2019, the publication of

the PNBL Management Program, which is a modification of the one published in 2003.

The update relied on the active participation of users in the area (fishermen, service providers, academics, civil society organizations and the general public). The Management Program was a necessary response to the new socioeconomic reali-

ties of the area.

In 2009, the Park Management Program was revised. At least 40 representatives from different sectors met and worked for more than five months analyzing the modifications. The opinions and suggestions obtained in these work shops were incorporated into a learning and negotiation process, to build a shared vision and ensure the health of the Park as a tourist destination.

The Management Program (MP) was revised again in 2019 and includes new rules and zoning. The

most important change is an increase in the size of no fishing areas from 108.4 hectares to 6,219.3 hectares. The MP also prohibits spear fishing, fishing with traps, the use of jet skis, whale watching with boats larger than 12 meters and adds restrictions on the use of drones.

The MP includes new Fishing Recovery Areas exempt from any harvesting or alteration activity, to ensure that resources survive and thrive over time and thereby ensure the continuity of the rich marine environment. The

participants in this process agreed that, without a healthy National Park, Loreto would not be able to sustain tourist demands

in the future, and would risk losing its main source of income. Loreto's future depends on the recovery of the health of the Park.





Objectives of the Loreto Bay National Marine Park Management Program

A Management Program is the main planning and regulation document for any Natural Protected Area. The document is based on the knowledge of the problems faced by the Park, its natural resources and their use. It contains actions to be carried out in the short, medium and long term. The actions implemented must be adapted and based on the best management and conservation policies and practices that guarantee the objectives set for the creation of the Natural Protected Area.

The general objective of the Management Program is to be the guiding instrument of planning and regulation of the Loreto Bay National Park. It establishes the activities, actions and guidelines for management and administration. The specific objectives of the Park are:

Protection: To preserve the biodiversity of the National Park, to stop the deterioration of the ecosystems.

Operation: Through sustainable projects conserve, protect, and restore the Park, and provide environmental training and education about

the National Park.

Restoration: Recover and restore the ecological conditions which existed prior to the influence of human activities, allowing for the continuity of natural processes in ecosystems.

Knowledge: Generate, recover and disseminate traditional or new knowledge, practices and technologies, which support the preservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity of Loreto Bay National Park.

Culture: Encourage the support of the surrounding communities of the Loreto Bay National Park for



conservation and sustainable practices through environmental education.

Management: Establish the ways in which the administration of the National Park can be organized to encourage the active participation of people, surrounding

communities, institutions, groups and social organizations interested in the conservation and sustainable use of the Park.



Land Preservation Subzones (PreTI)

These zones are located in areas of the National Park that have suffered zero or minimal alteration of the habitat and have high ecological value such as: biodiversity, presence of endemic species, significant contribution to other ecosystems due to their high productivity or because they are areas of importance as a genetic reservoir and a source of reproductive material.

Islets and Catalana Island

This subzone covers a total area of 3,957.60 hectares. It includes the islets: La Isleta, La Mestiza, Blanco, Las Islitas, Candeleros, Tijeras, Pardo, Las Galeras I and Las Galeras II. The islets are nesting sites for numerous birds and very vulnera-

ble to human disturbance.

The subzone also includes **Catalana Island**. It covers an area of 3,938.40 hectares. On the island there is a great diversity of flora and fauna, characterized by giant biznagas cactus (*Ferocactus diguetii* var. *Diguetti*), the highest in the entire Gulf of California. Another endemic species is the critically



endangered rattlesnake without rattles (*Crotalus catalinensis*). Therefore, it is important that the activities in these locations encourage protection and preservation.

Allowed activities: Scientific research and environmental monitoring, filming, photography and sound recording and scientific collection of wildlife.

The Park may install signs for administrative and management purposes.

Activities not allowed:

- a) Landing is not permitted except for scientific research and management activities of the National Park and refuge for fishermen on Catalina Island;
- b) Cleaning, processing or disposing of products from fishing activities;
- c) Installing tourist and fishing camps;
- d) Attaching boats to the rocks of the islets as an anchoring method;
- e) Constructing public and private structures;
- f) Opening of new trails;
- g) Introducing exotic species, including invasive ones; and
- h) Making fires or any type of burning.



Marine and Wetland Preservation Subzone (PreMH)

This subzone covers an area of 6,219.30 hectares. It comprises different marine ecosystems such as rocky reefs and wetlands. These environments are important because numerous species of commercial and ecological importance congregate in these areas. They are places where there are ideal conditions for species to live, multiply, and exchange genes and disperse and colonize new sites. Once they reach maturity, they can move to other areas where they can be harvested, in addition to providing nutrients to other

ecosystems.

Wetlands Preservation Subzones

Mangroves of the Meta-tes: comprises an area of 2.94 hectares, located west of Coronado Island.

Punta El Bajo: covers an area of 14.06 hectares and is located in the southwest corner of Coronado Island, and contains mangrove patches with black mangrove species (*Avicennia germinans*).

Estero las Garzas: covers an area of 10.30 hectares located in the peninsular area, south of the population center of



the city of Loreto, adjacent to the population of the Zaragoza neighborhood. This area corresponds to one of the rain tributaries that flows into the Natural Protected Area, includes relics of what was the wetland where Loreto's mission was founded, and receives one of the most important freshwater flows in the region during the rainy season.

Mangroves of Ligüi: comprises an area of 6.56 hectares, located at

the southern end of the coastal portion of the National Park. In this area the main vegetation is mangroves.

Estero de Bahía Balandra: covers an area of 6.07 hectares, is located to the Northwest of the Carmen Island, and includes extremely small mangrove patches which have a high ecological importance since they are the breeding habitat of numerous species of commercial interest.





Marine Preservation Subzones

Marine Preservation areas, also called fishery recovery or non-fishing zones, are intended to maintain the conditions of representative ecosystems. They have ecosystems represented by their high productivity and contribution of propagules (larval stage, fry, juveniles and adults). It includes sites that serve as habitat and refuge for numerous species of fish, mollusks and crustaceans, mainly

during the first larval stages of numerous marine species. Marine Preservation areas provide opportunities for the observation of flora and fauna.

Due to the characteristics described above, the Preservation sub-areas are those areas in good condition that contain relevant or fragile ecosystems. Any activities in these areas require careful management to ensure preservation. The activities allowed and not allowed

in these areas are:

Allowed activities: Environmental education, scientific research and environmental monitoring, boat transit, and tourism with low environmental impact.

Activities not allowed: All types of fishing, extraction of seawater, aquaculture, anchoring in the reefs, dredging or other activities that disturb sediment, and wildlife extraction except for scientific collection.

The geophysical characteristics of the subzone provide areas for refuge and rest of fishermen in bad weather; however it is important to specify that fishing is not allowed in this subzone. These environments are important as areas where species congregate.



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New zoning of the Loreto Bay National Park

Zoning is a tool for managing Natural Protected Areas. Zoning organizes Park territory according to the degree of conservation required and characteristics of the ecosystems. The Loreto Bay National Park determined the need for zoning in 2003 as part of the Management Program. The new Management Program modified and expanded that zoning, to fit the current needs of the Natural Protected Area.

In the creation of the zoning in the Management Program **ecological and use criteria** were considered. For **ecological purposes** the Park ecosystems were considered emphasizing the degree of conservation, the presence of endemic species and the aggregation areas occupied by species for their reproduction, feeding or nesting. The **use criteria** respond to the needs of the different sectors of the population that use areas within the National Park, such as fishermen (commercial and sports), service providers, tourists, visitors and researchers.

Subzones

Based on the ecological and usage criteria, there are zones where the activities carried out in the Loreto Bay National Park are restricted:

Islets and Catalana Island (PreTI). Boats are not allowed to land on shore or carry out any type of tourism activities.

Marine and Wetland Preservation (PreMH). Fishing by any means is not allowed. Tourism with low environmental impact is allowed.

Islas (UTT). Tourism with low environmental impact is allowed.

Marina I (UTM-I). Only line fishing is allowed, tourism with low environmental impact is allowed.

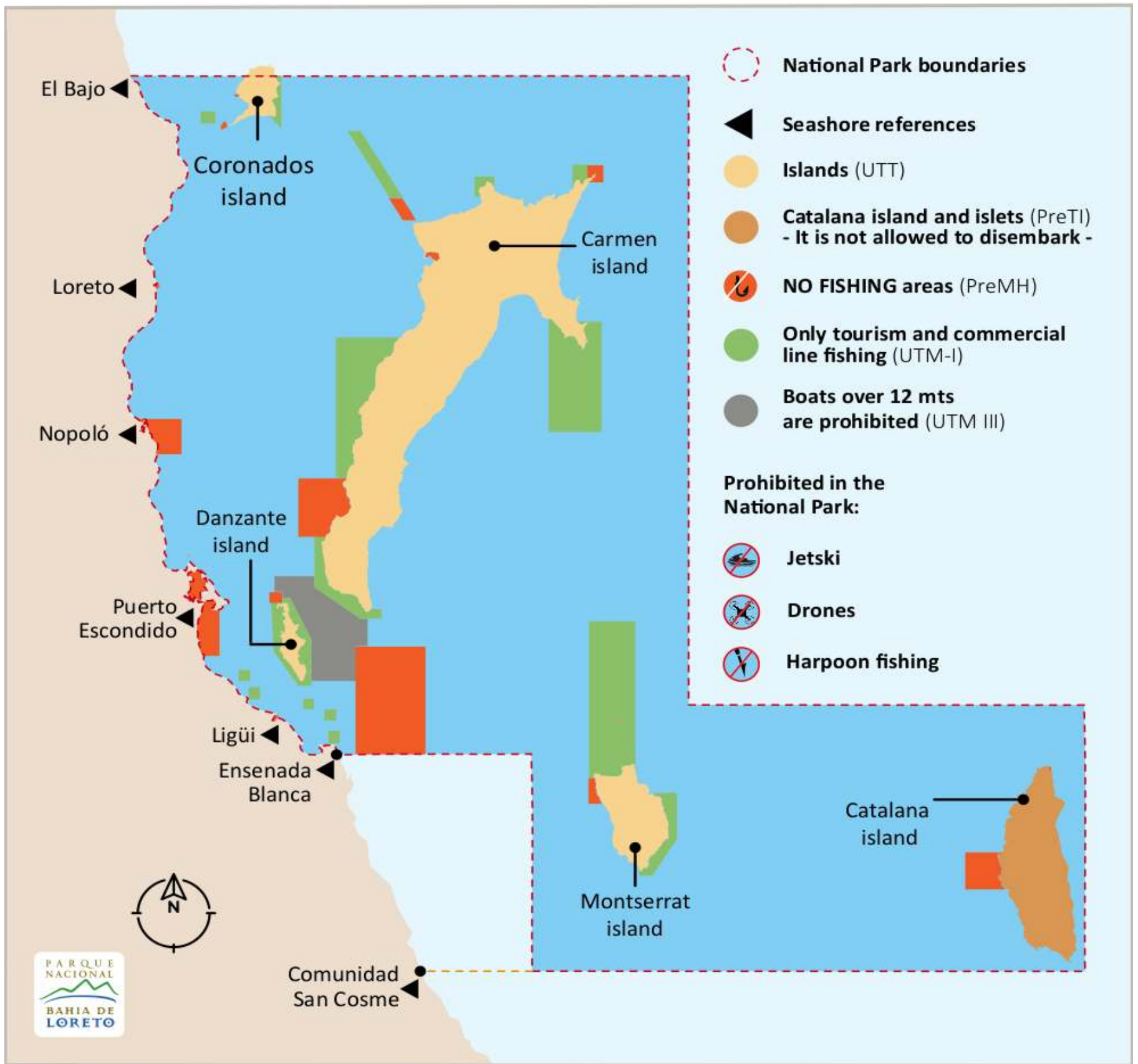
Marina III (UTM-III). Sport-recreational fishing, only through the use of hook and line. Boats over 12m are prohibited.

Area within the National Park boundaries (ASRNM). Aquaculture and commercial fishing is allowed, only through the use of line and hook, jigs, as well as the use of single gillnets and light nets with mesh greater than 4 inches. Sport-recreational fishing, only with line and hook.



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No Fishing Areas

ESTERO NOPOLÓ-LOS NIDOS

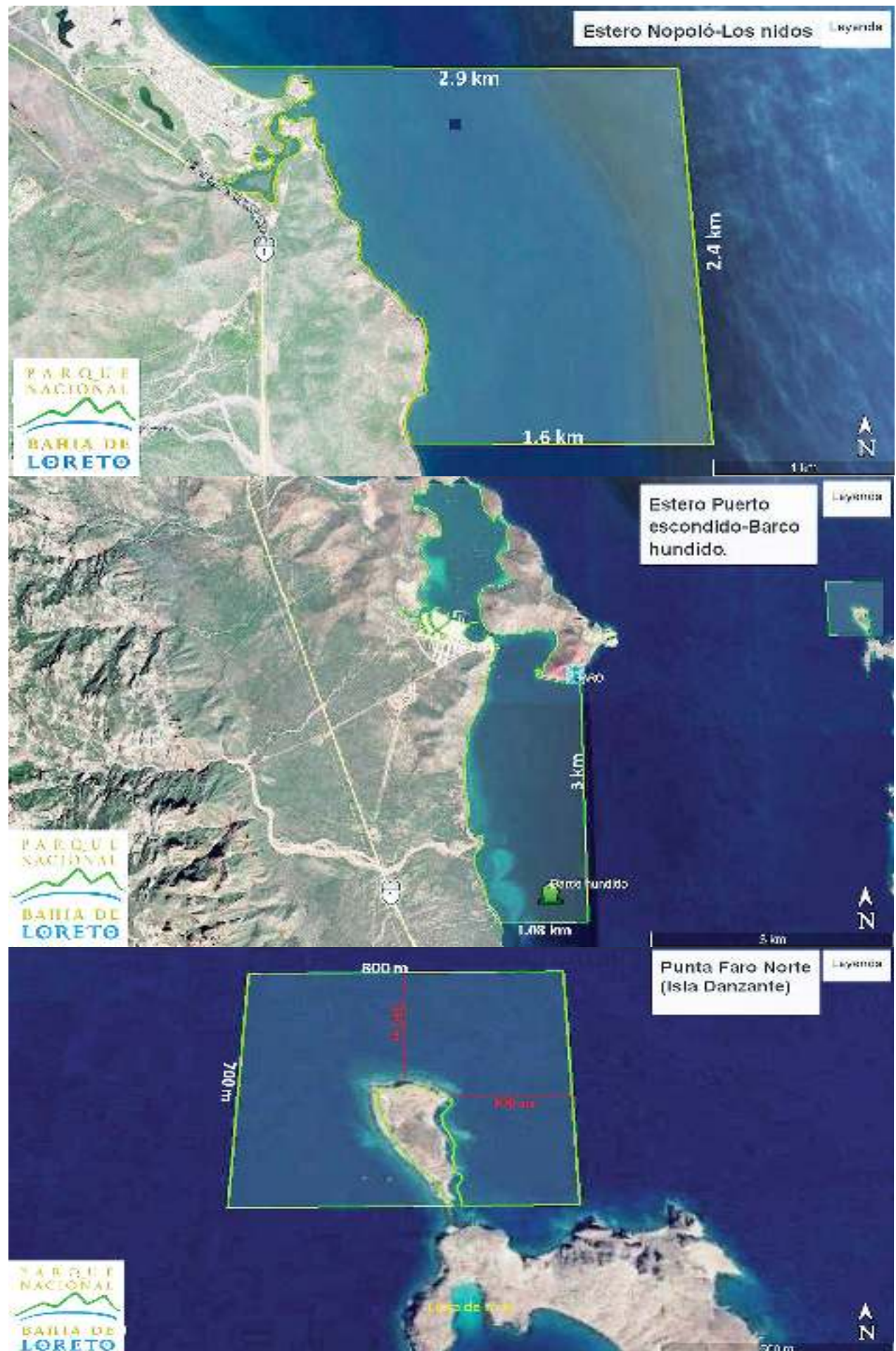
Covers an area of 460.20 hectares, located south of the city of Loreto and adjacent to the tourist complex of Nopoló. It includes a set of intertidal and subtidal coastal ecosystems of great ecological and economic importance, and a small estuary with three mangrove species that characterize Loreto wetlands. The rocky reef called Los Nidos is also located there.

ESTERO PUERTO ESCONDIDO - BARCO HUNDIDO

Covers an area of 613.20 hectares, located approximately 17 km south of the city of Loreto. It represents one of the largest and best preserved estuaries of the Loreto Bay National Park. Due to its size, this area plays a very important role as a breeding habitat for numerous marine species. It is the habitat of numerous species of fish and invertebrates of commercial interest in their juvenile and larval states which take refuge in the mantles of rhodoliths, sargassum and mangroves. It should be noted that this area includes an artificial reef, made up of a navy ship that was sunk at the beginning of the century.

PUNTA FARO NORTE, DANZANTE

Comprises an area of 52.23 hectares, located in the north end of Danzante Island. It represents one of the areas with the most complex habitat in the region. Due to its steep formations and rapid bathymetric inclination, this tip has one of the most important populations of black coral (*Antiphatés galapagensis*).



No Fishing Areas

PUNTA LOBOS (CARMEN ISLAND)

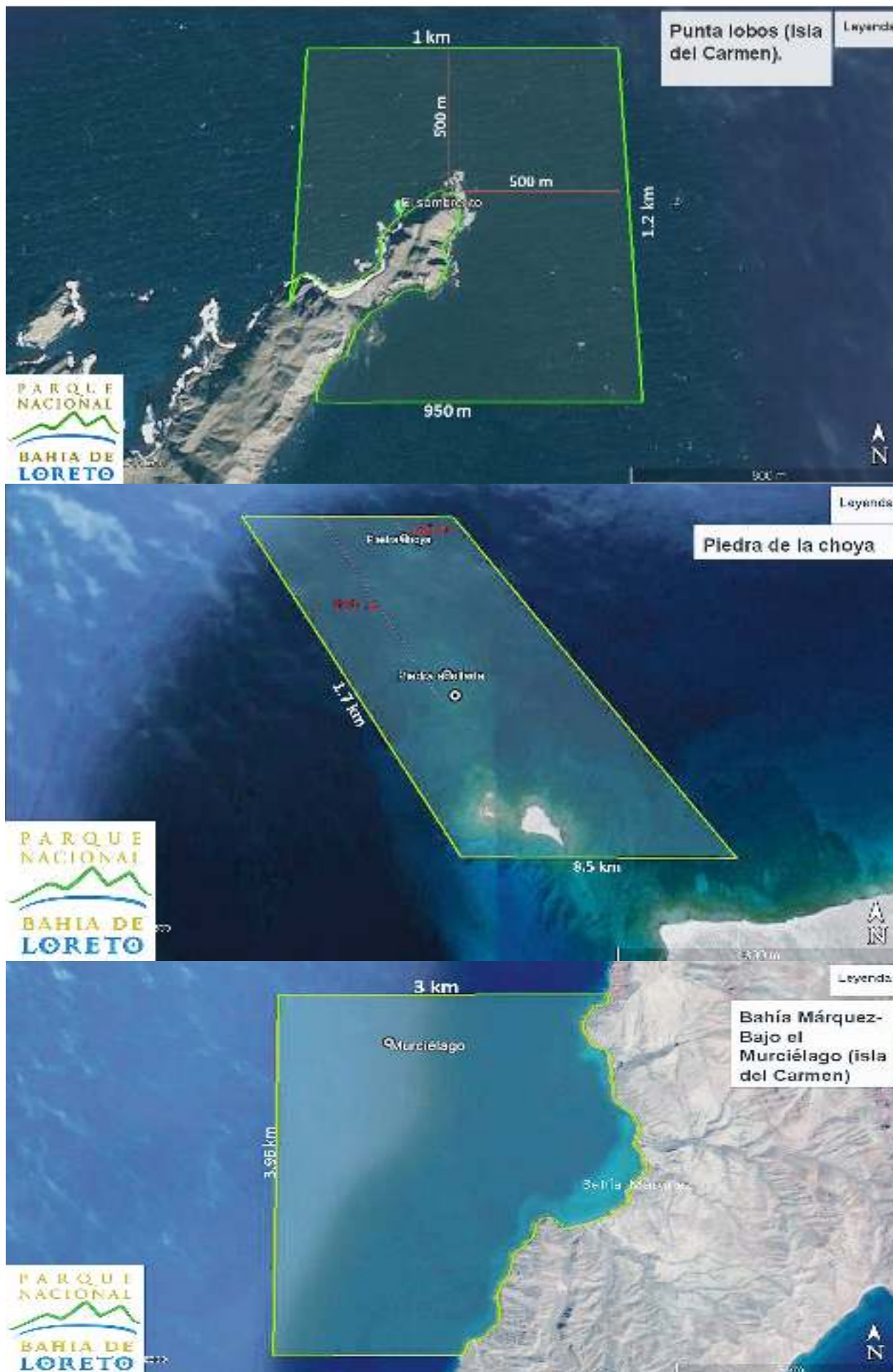
Covers an area of 102.40 hectares. It comprises one of the sites with the greatest populations of Gulf Grouper (*Mycteroperca jordani*), a species whose reproductive populations are located in the rocks at depths greater than 30 meters. This site has the potential to help this endangered species to recover and migrate into the surrounding area. This area comprises an exceptionally rich site for reef fish, and it is also one of the most important colonies of the California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*).

PIEDRA DE LA CHOYA

Covers an area of 121.99 hectares, located on the northeast tip of the Carmen Island, it is one of the most productive underwater formations of the Loreto Bay National Park, with a reef that runs from north to south. It is a site of great importance for species considered vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature such as Gulf Grouper (*Mycteroperca jordani*), the Sawtail Grouper (*Mycteroperca prionura*) and the Leopard Grouper (*Mycteroperca rosacea*). It is also an area of great importance for ornamental fish listed as species subject to special protection such as the King Angel (*Holacanthus passer*), the Blue and Yellow Damsel, and the Mexican Castanet (*Chromis limbaughi*). This area also includes the islet known as La Choya.

BAHÍA MÁRQUEZ – BAJO EL MURCIÉLAGO

Covers an area of 1,032.77 hectares, located in the southwest portion of the Carmen Island. It includes two unique and important underwater areas in the Loreto Bay National Park: the Picachos and the Bajo del Murciélago. The Picachos area is a site of spectacular beauty for recreational diving activities. Also, in this subzone is Bajo El Murciélago, a surrounding site about 30 meters deep.



No Fishing Areas

BAJO EL CURRIGAN

Comprises an area of 3,146.34 hectares, located to the south of Carmen Island and to the southwest of Danzante Island, also known as the Bajo del Finado Cuco. It is an underwater mountain range of more than six kilometers. On its west side it has a depression more than 800 meters deep that separates Carmen from Danzante Island. These bathymetric characteristics result in a site of important nutrient blooms, an important food source for species that visit the site. Large families of Common Dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*), Blue Whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*), Fin Whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), Bryde Whales (*B. edeni*), Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaengliae*), among others, are frequently found feeding in the area.

BLANQUIZAL (MONTSERRAT ISLAND)

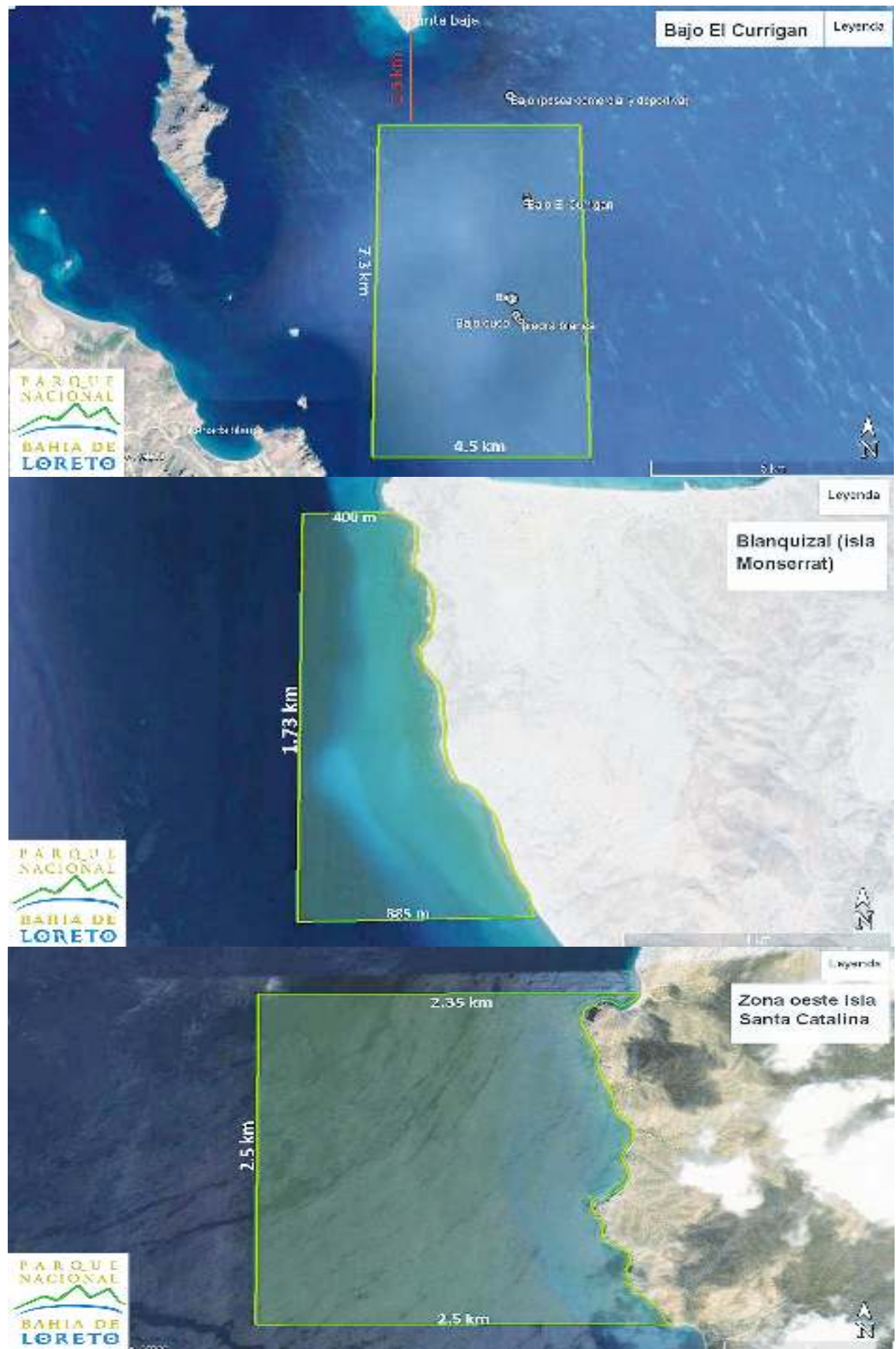
Covers an area of 103.98 hectares, located west of Montserrat Island. It is a sandy area that represents one of the last refuges of the Queen Clam (*Megapitaria aurantiaca*) and the Donkey Snail (*Strombus galeatus*). Both species are reported in studies of regional environmental history as abundant in the past and very scarce in the present.

ZONA OESTE ISLA SANTA CATALINA

Covers an area of 542.43 hectares, located west of Catalina Island. It represents the only site in the region where the Solitary Coral (*Fungia distorta*) belonging to the genus *Fungia* is found.

LA LOBERA, ISLA CATALINA

Covers an area of 3.83 hectares, located at the northeast end of the Catalana Island. It is the second important colony of California Sea Lions (*Zalophus californianus*) in the Park.





Tourism and commercial line fishing (UTM-I)



The subzone comprises a total of 9,702.48 hectares, consisting of 16 areas which are sites of great importance for sport, commercial and tourism fishermen. Also, this subzone includes sites where numerous species congregate including fish, molluscs, crustaceans, marine mammals, and birds.

The areas of this subzone are: East Coronado, La Islita (Coronado), Bajo de La Choya (Northwest Carmen Island), Punta Tintorera (North Carmen Island), Puerto La Vaca (North Carmen Island), North Bahía Márquez (Carmen Island), Punta Perico (East of Carmen Island), Punta Baja (Southwest Carmen Island), Danzante Island, White Islet (Southwest of the tip of Danzante Island), Las Islitas (Danzante), Islotes Los Candeleros (South from Danzante Island), Islotes las Tijeras (Danzante), Isote Pardo (South of Danzante Island), El Cochi (North of Montserrat Island and surrounding the islets of Las Galeras) and Punta Cuervitos-Faro (East Coast of Montserrat Island).

Given the oceanographic conditions that exist in the submarine points and bays of this

subzone such as strong currents and wave energy, these surfaces are dominated by rocky and steep reefs. As a result of these physiographic characteristics, fishing nets can be lost in the rocks and remain for many years where different species of fauna, including marine mammals, can be trapped.

Only scientific research, environmental education and tourism activities with low environmental impact can be carried out in these locations. Where appropriate, subsistence and traditional fishing is permitted only with hook and line as well as sport-recreational fishing.





Islands (UTT)

This subzone comprises a total area of 17,307.20 hectares. It includes the islands Coronado, Carmen, Danzante and Monserrat. Due to the characteristics of the islands, and to maintain their ecological conditions, only vessels of up to 12 meters in length will be allowed to anchor. Allowing the anchoring of boats of greater length increases the risks of impacts on these islands through grounding.

The islands have attractive beaches for sun and beach tourism. Given the tourist growth in recent years in Loreto and the high visitation to these beaches,

especially to Coronado Island, the Management Program has limits on the capacities for each of the beaches.

The island beaches, especially on Danzante and Carmen, are popular for camping. Rules have been implemented that limit stays to no more than two nights and three days per beach, per group. Registration is required prior to departure to reserve the beach for camping. Registration is required for self-guided groups, individuals and tour operators.

MARINE AREA AROUND CATALANA (UTM - II)

This sub-area covers a total area of 7,803.24 hectares. Traditionally fishing is done by communities settled in the areas surrounding the Park (area of influence). Sports-recreational fishing occurs in this area due to the presence of migratory fish species such as Dorado, Swordfish and Sailfish. It is a Mackerel aggregation site, which allows fishermen to take advantage of migration runs. For commercial fishing, light nets with mesh larger than 4 inches should be used to prevent impact on other marine resources and reducing the risks of harming non-target species such as sea turtles.



General rules

Drones: Drones may be used for recreation purposes, except in proximity to sea lion colonies, bird nesting sites and near whales. With a permit, drones can be used for scientific studies. With a permit, the permitted approach distance for drones is not less than:

- 10 meters for whales, for catching spout samples, not more than twice a day per individual;
- 50 meters for sea lion colonies; and
- 100 meters for bird nest colonies.

Sport fishing: Sports-recreational fishing will only be done through the use of line and hook. Fishing with harpoon or spear fishing is not allowed anywhere in the Park.

Commercial fishing: Only by line and hook and with nets with mesh larger than 4 inches.

Jet skis: In order not to impact the species of mammals and sea turtles present in the National Park, jet skis are not permitted.

Whale Watching: Whale watching can be done only with authorized boats. No vessel

greater than twelve meters long may be used for whale watching.

Disembarkation in Islets and Catalina Island: It is not allowed.

The Management Program and its Administrative Rules are based on the provisions of the Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico. The Administrative Rules establish a series of provisions that visitors and users must observe during their activities within the Park. It should be noted that there are communities that traditionally carry out their productive activities in the Natural Protected Area and have also participated in its conservation. It is necessary that these activities continue as long as they are strictly compatible with the objectives, criteria and programs of sustainable use.

For more information consult the official document in the links that appear on the following page.





Loretanos for a Sea Full of Life

The Directorate of the Loreto Bay National Park thanks the academic institutions, civil society organizations, fishermen, service providers, developers, and all the people who helped complete this new Management Program: a guiding instrument to ensure long-term conservation.

The conservation of this National Park, of the natural resources and of the services it provides is a shared responsibility of all those who are connected in one way or another with the Park. This task includes the activities that we jointly develop to improve our practices and behaviors, the innovations of the products that we harvest, and the determination to make this area a source of pride for Loretanos and all of Mexico.

The summary of the Management Program and the complete plan can be found at the following web addresses:

<https://www.conanp.gob.mx/programademanejo/resumenes/ResumenBahiaDeLoreto.pdf>

<https://www.conanp.gob.mx/programademanejo/PMBahiaDeLoreto.pdf>

<https://simec.conanp.gob.mx/ficha.php?anp=31®=1>

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THE OCEAN FOUNDATION

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