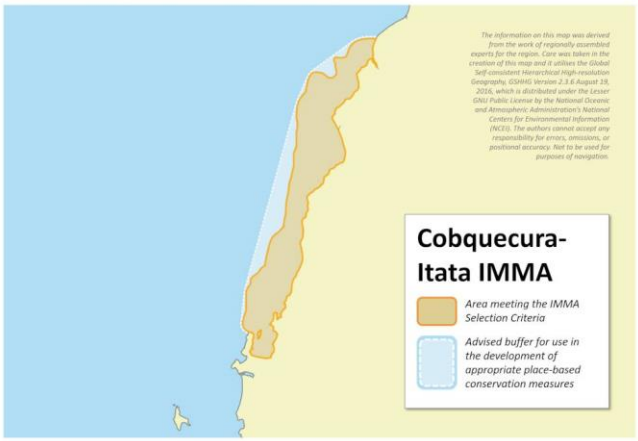

Area Size

2 995 km²

Qualifying Species and Criteria

South American sea lion – *Otaria byronia*

Criterion C (1)

Chilean dolphin – *Cephalorhynchus eutropia*

Criterion A; B (1)

Marine Mammal Diversity

Lontra felina, Phocoena spinipinnis, Balaenoptera borealis, Orcinus orca, Megaptera novaeangliae, Eubalaena australis

Summary

The coastal zone of the Cobquecura-Itata IMMA is influenced by seasonal coastal upwelling originating from an area offshore of Concepción, which is one of the most productive zones in the Humboldt Current System. It is further influenced by the Itata river, which introduces freshwater into a critical habitat for a genetically distinct population of Chilean dolphins (*Cephalorhynchus eutropia*). Two species of marine mammals satisfy criteria for this IMMAs status: the Chilean dolphin, which is classified as 'Vulnerable' under Chilean regulations, and the South American sea lion (*Otaria byronia*). Though classified as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened

Cobquecura-Itata IMMA

Summary, continued.

Species, the sea lion colony of Cobquecura is the most important breeding colony for the South American sea lion in the region, with an annual pup production that represents more than 50% of the total pup production for Central Chile. The risk of mortality of pups of this species is increasing due to the regular frequency of coastal storms.

Description:

The main oceanographic feature that influences this area is the Humboldt Current System, which is often described as cold nutrient-rich waters being transported northward and nutrient-enriched subsurface waters upwelled along the shorelines (Thiel et al., 2007). This area in particular is influenced by seasonal coastal upwelling from the area off Concepción, which is one of the most productive zones in the Humboldt Current System (Iriarte et al., 2012; Daneri et al., 2000). The area is strongly influenced by the Itata river (36°S), with a discharge of 338.2 m^3/s, which in turn influences the coastal Chilean dolphin, because it is a preferred habitat for this cetacean (Goodall et al., 1988; Goodall, 1994).

Criterion A: Species or Population Vulnerability

Chilean dolphins are listed as Near Threatened (NT) on the IUCN Red List (Heinrich & Reeves, 2017) but are listed as Vulnerable (VUc1) in the northern part of the distribution of this species under the Chilean Regulation for the Classification of Wild Species (https://clasificacionespecies.mma.gob.cl). The range-wide abundance is not known but the species is thought to number in the low thousands which, if

confirmed, would meet the criteria for Vulnerable status (Heinrich & Reeves, 2017). Concerns about bycatch (Pérez-Alvarez et al., 2021), and the existence of two genetically distinct meta-populations north of Chiloé Island and in the southern fjord region (Pérez-Alvarez et al., 2015) also support a potential revision of the species' global conservation status.

Criterion B: Distribution and Abundance Sub-criterion B1: Small and Resident Populations

Chilean dolphins are the species most frequently documented within the IMMA, with group sizes ranging from 15-20 individuals in different locations within the IMMA (Quiñones et al., 2015; Pavez et al., 2020). In 2012, an adult and a calf of this species was also observed. Although there are no photo-identification or other studies providing definitive evidence that the same individuals are resident in the IMMA, the species' restricted range to nearshore coastal and estuarine waters (e.g. Dawson, 2018), it can be assumed that at least one population or community of the species is resident within the IMMA year-round. Chilean dolphins from Valparaiso to north of Chiloé (the northern portion of the species' range in the open coast) are considered genetically distinct from those of the fjord region south of Puerto Montt (Pérez-Alvarez et al., 2015).

Criterion C: Key Life Cycle Activities Sub-criterion C1: Reproductive Areas

The sea lion breeding colony of Cobquecura is the most important colony for South American sea lions in Central Chile (Oliva et al., 2020). The colony population is estimated to be 3,204 +/- 77 individuals, producing around 550 pups annually, which in turn represents 50.5% of the total pups born in Central Chile during the summer of 2019 (Oliva et al., 2020). Sea lions are found year-round in the area, although seasonal and daily variations occur (Sepúlveda et al., 2012, 2021). A positive abundance trend has been observed from 2008 to 2020 in this colony (Sepúlveda et al., 2021).

Supporting Information

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