
SURFRIDER FOUNDATION
HAWAI'I REGION

2023
ANNUAL
REPORT

www.hawaii.surfrider.org

A NOTE FROM THE HAWAI'I REGIONAL MANAGER

UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES PROVE THE STRENGTH OF OUR COMMUNITY & SURFRIDER NETWORK

2023 started off strong, with victories for beach access (Ho'okipa Beach Park on Maui) and successful state level coastal protection bills. In March, nine Surfrider volunteers from the O'ahu, Maui, and Kaua'i chapters traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for clean water and plastic reduction at the federal level. Momentum on each island was moving back to pre-pandemic levels with more outreach events, beach cleanups, and community engagement.

Then, on August 8, a fire ravaged the town of Lāhainā on Maui, while also destroying homes and forested areas in Kula. This unprecedented tragedy rocked the very core of our Maui community. Four months later and the West Maui community is still dealing with chronic trauma from the fire, securing housing, and confronting a mental health crisis amongst its residents.

The environmental impacts and fall outs from the fires are also still being realized. The temporary toxic waste disposal site, for example, sits across the road from the ocean and there are concerns about the longterm public and environmental health consequences of the toxic ash.

The fires also elevated discussion around critical issues like water rights, corporate greed and unsustainable development, disenfranchisement of Native Hawaiians, and loss of native ecosystems.

As an environmental organization, we have navigated the aftermath of the fires to best align with our mission of the protection and enjoyment of our ocean, waves, and beaches. To that end, our Surfrider Maui volunteers came together to expand water quality monitoring along West Maui, push the County and State on Best Management Practices and run off control, advocate for increased coastal water testing that is directly related to human health and recreation, and partner with fellow organizations to support our community in the ways we are best equipped.

The outpouring of support from our fellow Surfrider Foundation chapters, both in Hawai'i and as far away as Japan and the East Coast, was profound. Our Surfrider community truly rallied behind our Maui family.

Here's to looking ahead towards the opportunities, community building, advocacy, and partnerships that 2024 holds in store.

Lauren

2023 HAWAII REGION

OVERVIEW & HIGHLIGHTS

The Hawai'i Region includes three volunteer-based Chapters (Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui) and 5 active student clubs that are part of the worldwide Surfrider Foundation network based in San Clemente, California. Chapter programs and campaigns focus on five initiatives: Plastic Pollution, Ocean Protection, Clean Water, Beach Access, and Coastal Preservation. The August 8 fires that ravaged Maui proved to be a major turning point in the year, testing the resilience of our Maui Chapter. Since August, we have made incredible progress in expanding water quality monitoring along West Maui and remaining committed to the long-term rebuilding process.

2023 Highlights

- Won 4 major campaign victories focused on beach protection and beach access.
- [North Shore Coastal Resilience Working Group](#) (NSCRWG) was awarded the 2023 Community Based Planning Award by the American Planning Association Hawai'i Chapter.
- Expanded the North Pacific Eel Trap to include partners in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea
- Pivoted to respond the Maui fires and expand West Maui water quality monitoring
- Continued advocacy against illegal shoreline structures and the protection of our public beaches



Lauren Blickley
Hawai'i Regional Manager



Hanna Lilley
Maui Fire Response Coord

Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit, grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's ocean, waves, and beaches, for all people, through a powerful activist network.

PROGRAMS

Surfrider Foundation achieves its mission through five programs. These programs help focus our work, not only in Hawai'i but across the Nation. Individual chapters incorporate programs according to the immediate needs and opportunities present in their communities.



Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) labs are active on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui. Volunteers test local beaches for fecal indicator bacteria levels and compare them to water quality standards set to protect public health.



The Ocean Friendly Restaurants program promotes plastic reduction and sustainable practices throughout the restaurant industry.



Rise Above Plastics raises awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution. Surfrider Foundation Chapters have been instrumental in passing single-use plastic bans across Hawai'i.



Beach cleanups and Net Patrols are a staple of Hawai'i Chapters and remove over a hundred thousand pounds of rubbish off Hawai'i shorelines every year.



The Ocean Friendly Gardens program sees yards and landscapes as solutions to water pollution.

MAUI FIRE RESPONSE

The August 8 fires proved a significant turning point for our Maui Chapter. The collective grief and trauma to our community remains palpable, even months later. This unprecedented tragedy has proven the resilience of our Maui community and the Surfrider Maui Chapter that has been advocating for the island's ocean, waves, and beaches for nearly 30 years.



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

In the immediate days after the fire, the Maui Chapter rallied with the rest of the island community to get much needed help, supplies, and food directly to West Maui residents. As an environmental nonprofit, we spent these early days pivoting to help in any way we could - including donating the Chapter's towels, clothing, and reusable water bottles to people in need. Our Surfrider volunteers manned food distribution lines, fostered animals, packed boxes, checked on our West Maui & Upcountry Surfrider members, and served in a number of roles to aid the West Maui community. As the immediate human needs were increasingly taken care of, the Chapter shifted back to addressing the environmental and human health concerns related to post fire contaminants, debris removal, and minimizing toxic runoff.

INCREASING CAPACITY

In November 2023, the Maui Chapter was awarded a \$48,000 grant to support expanded water quality monitoring and coordination across West Maui. This funding has allowed us to hire Hanna Lilley as the Maui Fire Response Coordinator. Her role is a critical part of increasing the Maui Chapter's ability to respond to the coastal and environmental impacts of the fire, while also building partnerships that will help ensure that environmental and human health considerations remain top of mind during debris removal and rebuilding.

EXPANDED WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Since August 8, Surfrider has consistently fielded questions from the community about where it is safe to get in the ocean. The Maui Chapter is working to expand its monthly Blue Water Task Force testing to 15 sites along the entire West Maui coastline. We have also partnered to get samples from the Lāhainā area to test for additional contaminants. The results are forthcoming.

Learn more about the Maui Fire Response at www.maui.surfrider.org/wildfire

COASTAL RECREATION HILL DAY

In March 2023, nine volunteers from the O'ahu, Maui, and Kaua'i Chapters joined fellow Surfrider activists for Surfrider Foundation's 7th annual [Coastal Recreation Hill Day](#) in Washington, D.C.



ADVOCATING FOR OUR HAWAII OCEAN & BEACHES

The Hawai'i delegation met with Hawaii's four federal representatives (Senator Brian Schatz, Senator Maize Hirono, Representative Ed Case, and Representative Jill Tokuda). During these meetings, our volunteers outlined our local programs to improve coastal water quality and reduce plastic pollution. We provided representatives with our Annual Blue Water Task Force Report that highlights the chronic pollution plaguing coastal areas on Kaua'i and O'ahu. We further reiterated the importance in taking leadership on plastic pollution - especially derelict fishing gear.

WE URGED OUR REPRESENTATIVES TO:

- Increase federal appropriations to \$15 million for the BEACH Act that provides the funding for the Hawai'i Department of Health to maintain its coastal water quality monitoring program.
- Maintain funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund that invests in upgrades to our aging wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and reduce sewage spills
- Take international leadership in addressing and reducing derelict fishing gear
- Support nature-based and ocean climate solutions legislation



REGIONAL PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

Chapters within the Hawai'i Region work together to support regional programs, events, and educational campaigns.



ADVOCATING FOR COASTAL PROTECTIONS

Over the past few years, the O'ahu Chapter has become a strong advocate for upholding shoreline protections holding coastal property owners accountable for their actions along the public beach. This continued pressure on state agencies resulted in the passage of [SB1391](#) that places liens on properties with unauthorized shoreline structures. As of 2023, the state is also limiting permits for emergency shoreline hardening and levying hefty fines against property owners who violate shoreline regulations. The Chapter's [North Shore Coastal Resilience Working Group](#) (NSCRWG) was awarded the [2023 Community Based Planning Award](#) by the American Planning Association. The Maui Chapter is complimenting the O'ahu efforts with its recent appeal of a permit issued to Kahana Sunset Resort for seawall repairs.

KAUA'I SUCRALOSE STUDY CONFIRMS CESSPOOL POLLUTION

In July, the Kaua'i Chapter published results from its [sucralose stream study](#). An artificial sweetener, sucralose has been used worldwide to indicate the presence of human sewage in waterways. Sucralose was detected in 19 of the 24 Kaua'i streams sampled. All 24 streams exceeded state standards for enterococcus bacteria (a fecal indicator bacteria). The results from the sucralose testing supports the chronic water pollution that Surfrider Kaua'i has been tracking in streams across the island since 2008.

EEL TRAP PROJECT EXPANDS TO ASIAN PARTNERSHIPS

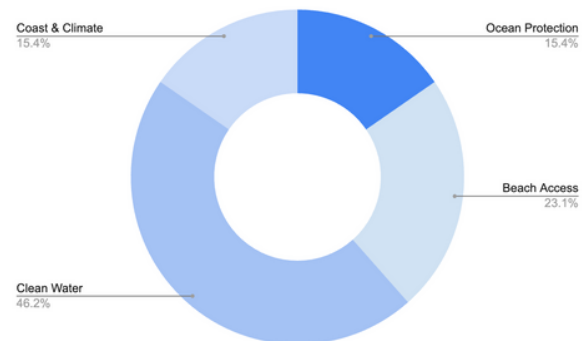
In 2023, Surfrider Foundation was awarded a grant by the Global Ghost Gear Initiative to expand the North Pacific Eel Trap Project into Asia. Through this grant award, we were able to contract partners in Japan (Surfrider Japan), Taiwan (IndigoWaters) and South Korea to provide additional insight into the eel fishing industries in these countries. In July, Dr. Carl Berg of the Kaua'i Chapter spent time in each country visiting fishermen, marine supply stores, and eel trap manufacturers. Much of our data points to China as likely being the major source of derelict eel traps washing up on Hawai'i shorelines. We are also engaged with researchers at UCSB and URI in developing a eel trap prototype that is biodegradable in the ocean.

Learn more about Hawai'i Programs at www.hawaii.surfrider.org/programs

ACTIVE CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns are how Surfrider Foundation measures and tracks our efforts. We define campaigns as a yes/no decision by a governing body or agency. In 2023 Hawai'i Chapters maintained 13 active campaigns.

12 ACTIVE CAMPAIGNS



REGIONAL

1. Improve water quality testing & notification at Hawai'i Beaches
2. Reduce the Impact of Cesspools on Coastal Waters
3. Designate a Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Sanctuary

KAUA'I

1. Stop Kīkīaola Ditch Pollution
2. Stop Shrimp Farm Water Pollution

O'AHU

1. Protect free parking access at Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor
2. Reduce Lead Contamination at Pu'uloa Beach
3. Protect 'Ewa Beach from Shoreline Hardening
4. Restore Ka'apuni Drive Public Beach Access

MAUI

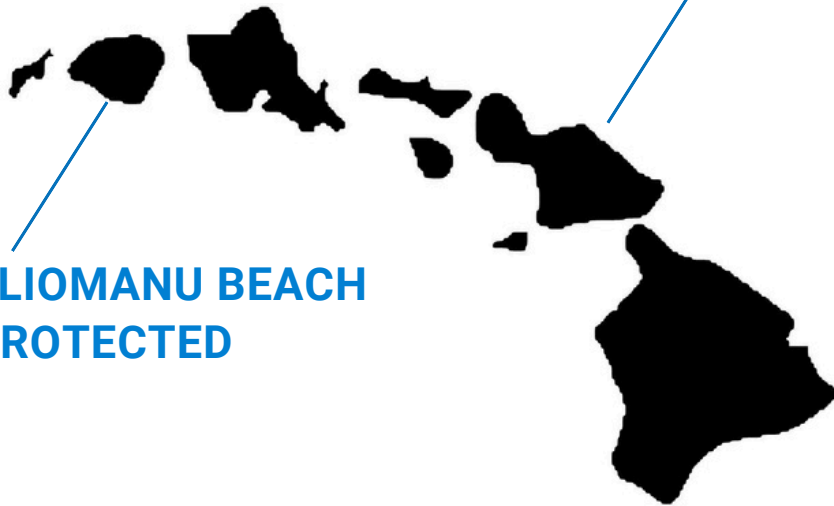
1. Stop Seawall Repairs at Kahana Sunset Resort
2. Improve Public Water Quality Notifications on Maui
3. Protect Public Parking at Keawakapu Beach

CAMPAIGN VICTORIES

In 2023, Surfrider Foundation Hawai'i Chapters won **four** major campaign victories related to beach protection and beach access. Highlights include:



MAUI: SECURED EARLY MORNING OPENING OF GATES AT HO'OKIPA BEACH PARK



KAUA'I: 'ALIOMANU BEACH ACCESS PROTECTED



REGIONAL: CLEANING UP UNAUTHORIZED SHORELINE STRUCTURES

Act 236 ([SB 1391](#)) authorizes the Board of Land and Natural Resources to place a lien on properties that have unauthorized shoreline structures that encroach on public lands (e.g. sandbags) or other noncompliance related to land use violations. SB1391 is an important step towards dissuading private property owners from taking illegal and unauthorized actions on the public shoreline.



REGIONAL: LIMITING EMERGENCY SHORELINE HARDENING PERMITS

In the past year, the state Office of Conservation and Coastal Lands (OCCL) has reversed its previous position of issuing emergency shoreline hardening permits to coastal homeowners in cases of chronic erosion. Between 2020-2021, the media outlet ProPublic released a series of investigative reports that found most of the emergency permits had expired, though the materials (e.g. sandbags, tarps, etc.) remained on the public shoreline - sometimes in excess of a decade. Left on the beach, these materials contribute to accelerated coastal erosion, threaten public safety, and impact the natural environment.

KAUA'I

kauai.surfrider.org | [@surfriderkauai](https://twitter.com/surfriderkauai)

The Kaua'i Chapter maintained its momentum to tackle plastic pollution and derelict fishing gear. In June, the Chapter was awarded a grant from the Global Ghost Gear Initiative to expand the Eel Trap project into Asia. The Chapter also celebrated 10 years of weekly Net Patrol cleanups led by Scott McCubbins. The sucralose stream study released in June further supported the Chapter's decades long effort to address water quality issues along the coastline. The Kaua'i Chapter continues to be a powerhouse when it comes to beach cleanups, keiki education, and community outreach.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chair - Gordon LaBedz
- Vice Chair - Rob Brower
- Treasurer - Scott McCubbins
- Secretary - Cynthia Welti
- Ocean Friendly Restaurants Coord. - Ruta Jordans
- Ocean Friendly Visitors Coord. - Barbara Levin
- Senior Scientist - Dr. Carl Berg
- Education Program Coord.- Barbara Wiedner
- Marine Debris Pgm Coords. - Barbara Wiedner & Scott McCubbins



BY THE NUMBERS

49,788 POUNDS

of debris removed from Kaua'i shorelines, with 39,581 pounds representing derelict fishing gear

18 WATER QUALITY MONITORING SITES

sampled once a month across the island for fecal indicator bacteria.

1 CAMPAIGN VICTORY

restoring public beach access at 'Aliomanu bay

1,555 SCHOOL CHILDREN ENGAGED

through 56 outreach and educational events

O'AHU

oahu.surfrider.org | [@surfrideroahu](https://twitter.com/surfrideroahu)

The O'ahu Chapter continued to capitalize on the momentum from its North Shore Coastal Resilience Working Group, Pu'uloa Shoreline Lead Testing campaign, and expanded Wai'anae water quality sampling. The Chapter has been a key voice in advocating for beach protection along the North Shore and hold private property owners accountable for illegal shoreline structures and sandbags. In early 2023, the Chapter also joined Save Surf Parking to defend the last 300 remaining free parking stalls at the Ala Wai Small Boat Harbor in Waikīkī. Nature-based solutions to address coastal erosion is becoming a high priority. The Chapter continues to maintain a robust Blue Water Task Force water quality monitoring program and an 11,000 square foot Ocean Friendly Garden in Kaka'ako.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chair - Elizabeth Benyshek
- Vice Chair - Brittany Kamai
- Treasurer - Jay Whelan
- Secretary - Jen Ballou
- Policy Coordinator - Camile Cleveland
- Beach Protection - Mike Foley
- Outreach Coord. - Natalie Wohner
- BWTF Co-Coord. Arleen Velasco

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

- Blue Water Task Force - Dr. Dan Amato
 - Ocean Friendly Restaurants - Ryan Dadds
 - Ocean Friendly Gardens - Lauren Kaiser
 - Beach Cleanups - Karissa Mauro
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BY THE NUMBERS

24 WATER QUALITY MONITORING SITES

sampled twice a month across the island for fecal indicator bacteria.

5 COMMUNITY GARDEN WORK DAYS

plus 2 public workshops and 8 private group work days to support and maintain the 11,000 sq ft. Ocean Friendly Garden in Kaka'ako

1 AWARD

recognizing the accomplishments of the North Shore Coastal Resilience Working Group

2 GRANTS AWARDED

for water quality research and a new BWTF lab at Wai'anae High School

MAUI

maui.surfrider.org | [@surfridermaui](https://twitter.com/surfridermaui)

The Maui Chapter spent 2023 expanding its public meetings, winning campaigns for beach access, and quickly pivoting to best respond to the Maui fires on August 8. Water quality continues to remain a high priority for the Chapter, particularly along West Maui and the Lāhainā area. Partnerships with the Hui o Ka Wai Ola have helped the Chapter expand its water quality sampling to these areas and collect valuable water quality data.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Vice Chair - Janeen Bittmann
- Treasurer - Charlie Quesnel
- Secretary - Jill Wirt
- Volunteer Coord. - Maureen Brock
- BWTF Coord. - Greg Masessa
- Marketing Coord. - Nicole Rosen
- Program - Petar Kovacic

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

- Beach Cleanups - Jan Konjikusic
- BWTF Co-Coord. - Kristina McHugh



Maui Chapter volunteers unpack donations for West Maui fire survivors

BY THE NUMBERS

1 CAMPAIGN VICTORY

to open the gates at Ho'okipa Beach Park at 5:30am, allowing safer parking and beach access for early morning beach users.

1 NEW CAMPAIGN

to stop seawall repairs at the Kahana Sunset condos

16 BEACHES

monitored monthly for for enterococcus bacteria levels, a measure of water quality.

7 LĀHAINĀ BEACHES

added for monthly for sampling of enterococcus bacteria levels.

6 BEACH CLEANUPS

removing ~9,000 pounds of trash from Maui beaches

STUDENT CLUBS

The Surfrider Foundation launched the Student Club Network in 2008. Our Student Club Network creates a platform to meet the demand by young people for opportunities to influence environmental action through service, leadership development, civic engagement and direct action organizing. In Hawai'i, student clubs currently exist on O'ahu and Maui.

YOUTH CLUB HIGHLIGHTS

REVITALIZED CAMPUS GARDEN

UH Mānoa Club leaders, in partnership with the O'ahu Chapter, revitalized an Ocean Friendly Garden on campus

5 ACTIVE YOUTH CLUBS

Spanning middle school through college across Maui and O'ahu



UH MĀNOA CLUB

The University of Hawai'i Mānoa student club is one of the most active student clubs in Hawai'i. In 2023, the club continued to host beach cleanups and sent two representatives to Washington, D.C. to participate in Surfrider Foundation's annual Coastal Recreation Hill Day event. In addition to their annual Mānoa Stream Cleanup, the Club also revitalized an overgrown Ocean Friendly Garden on Campus with the help of volunteer Lauren Kaiser the O'ahu Chapter. The club has welcomed new members and continues to expand its presence on campus, rebuild its core team, and support local policy action.

2024 REGIONAL PRIORITIES

In addition to programs, legislation, and campaigns at the local level, Surfrider Foundation coordinates statewide on priority policy and programmatic efforts.



PRIORITY: MAUI POST-FIRE RESPONSE

- Test for post-fire contaminants along the Lāhainā shoreline to inform human health and safety concerns
- Advocate for proper and safe disposal of fire debris that has minimal environmental and human health impacts
- Support sustainable and community-based rebuilding efforts in West Maui

PRIORITY: CLEAN WATER

- Pass statewide legislation to improve the Department of Health's water quality testing program & public notification at Hawai'i Beaches
- Expand Blue Water Task Force water quality monitoring partnerships to Wai'anae High School (O'ahu) and Hāna High School (Maui)

PRIORITY: COASTAL PRESERVATION & BEACH ACCESS

- Protect shorelines and beaches across Hawai'i by supporting county and state policies that limit emergency shoreline hardening, support managed retreat, and promote coastal restoration
- Increase statewide, public awareness about coastal erosion & sea level rise
- Protect and ensure public beach access is maintained throughout the islands
- Support the next steps and recommendations outlined in the North Shore Coastal Resilience Working Group's final report

PRIORITY: PLASTIC POLLUTION

- Through the North Pacific Eel Trap Project, collaborate with fishers to identify and implement solutions to reduce trap pollution and monk seal entanglement.
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MAHALO TO OUR SUPPORTERS



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