

SURFRIDER
FOUNDATION.

40 YEARS
OF OCEAN
PROTECTION

THE DROP | FALL 2024



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

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LETTER FROM OUR CEO

A Simple Yet Powerful Idea

The idea that sparked the Surfrider Foundation back in 1984 came from a confluence of events. The Los Angeles Olympics had just wrapped up and highlighted a stark contrast between celebrated athletes and the plight of surfers. Surf spots, like Killer Dana and Stanleys, were being destroyed, and others were threatened. Surfrider Beach in Malibu, arguably the most iconic surf spot in the world, was regularly polluted and mismanaged with little regard for surfers or the surf. Three Malibu surfers decided it was time for a change.

Sitting in the Surfrider Hotel on August 22, 1984, Glenn Hening, Lance Carson, and Tom Pratte formally founded the Surfrider Foundation with a simple yet powerful idea: if we can channel surfers' passion, love, and commitment to our ocean and coasts and convert it into focused action, then there is nothing we can't accomplish. They were right.

Forty years later, their vision has become a global movement, with over 240 chapters and clubs in the US and international affiliates on every continent. Surfrider has protected hundreds of waves, opened beaches to the public, halted destructive projects, and preserved marine ecosystems. Tens of thousands of volunteers have participated in our coastal conservation efforts, and millions of pounds of trash have been hauled off our beaches. Surfrider's grassroots approach to building and organizing community is not only a remarkably effective way to protect our coasts and ocean, it is in fact the most effective way (for more on this, check out my recent TEDx talk, "How To Scale Community-Led Advocacy").

Today, we face unprecedented challenges with the explosive trajectory of plastic pollution, impacts of climate change, and political uncertainty. Yet, we can be confident that Surfrider's resilient activist network will continue to effect positive change for our ocean, waves, and beaches today, tomorrow, and long into our future.

Thanks, Glenn, Lance, and Tom, for sparking an idea that has resonated with so many ocean lovers and continues to make a real, tangible impact day in and day out 40 years later. Like the waves, it shows no sign of stopping.

For clean water and healthy beaches,



Dr. Chad Nelsen
CEO, Surfrider Foundation



MAKING WAVES

40+ Years of Coastal and Ocean Conservation: Surfrider's Past, Present, and Future

By: Zach Plopper, Sr. Environmental Director

On a sunny spring morning earlier this year, I shared waves with Glenn Hening, co-founder of the Surfrider Foundation, at Rincon Point in Ventura, California. Between long peeling rides, we talked about the incredible growth and impact of the organization over the past four decades since its humble beginnings down the coast in Malibu in 1984. I asked Glenn if he ever imagined Surfrider operating at the scale it does today, with its 14,000 volunteers, 226 chapters and student clubs in 26 states and Puerto Rico, seven international affiliates, and conservation wins on all coasts.

When I asked the question he paused, and then replied, "Surfrider just had a big advocacy event in D.C., right?"

"Yep," I remarked proudly. "That was our eighth annual Coastal Recreation Hill Day. We had more than 300 participants this year!"

"But last night you had a chapter meeting in Ventura," continued Glenn. "And I saw that massive beach cleanup you did last weekend...and you guys are doing this all over the country?"

"That's right," I said.

Glenn looked at me inquisitively, "But how?"

Surfrider has clearly become something bigger than ever imagined in those early days of the organization. What started as a local effort to save Malibu's coast from escalating development, Surfrider is today the leading grassroots organization dedicated to coastal protection.

With more than 900 coastal campaign victories, the organization has become an advocacy powerhouse – we've ensured federal funding programs since 2000 for water quality monitoring on our nation's beaches and defended marine habitats against new offshore oil drilling. At the state level, Surfrider has become a leading voice for our coasts and ocean in capitol buildings across the country. Our chapters have helped pass more than 230 state bills that curb single-use plastic pollution, including the first statewide ban on single-use plastic bags in California in 2014. Over the ten years since, with our help, nine more states have followed suit.

In 2024, Surfrider celebrates four decades of volunteers and staff speaking before councils and commissions, submitting comments, and generating public awareness on local coastal issues. From ensuring beach access for surfers in Chicago to addressing local pollution issues in Hawai'i to municipal balloon release bans in Florida, Surfrider's grassroots voice has been and continues to be a core superpower.



Volunteers and staff gather to meet with their elected officials in Congress to discuss the Surfrider Foundation's federal priorities during our annual Coastal Recreation Hill Day.

To complement these policy efforts, Surfrider's stewardship programs, which began in 1990 with the Blue Water Task Force, continue to gain strength and make change every day on our coasts. The Healthy Beaches Program has grown to operate at an unprecedented scale, removing more than 1.3 million pounds of trash from our coasts. Meanwhile, we continue to evolve

What started as a local effort to save Malibu's coast from escalating development, Surfrider is today the leading grassroots organization dedicated to coastal protection.

to address the most urgent threats to our coasts, including climate change. This year, Surfrider launched its Climate Action Program to restore coastal ecosystems like carbon-sinking mangrove forests and coastal dunes, as a front-line defense against climate change and erosion.

After my conversation with Glenn, I couldn't help but wonder what the next 40 years will look like for Surfrider. What will the new threats be? What will be our most important victories? Although much has changed in the world as well as within the organization since 1984, the mission and genuine passion for protecting our coasts and ocean have persisted. With the energy that our network possesses today, I am confident that this dedication will continue in the decades to come. Like Malibu was for Surfrider's co-founders, our coasts are too important for us to lose.



ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Un Mar de Colores

By removing financial and logistical barriers, we ensure that everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status, can experience the joy of surfing.

Can you tell us about Un Mar de Colores, its origin, and why the organization was founded?

Un Mar de Colores was founded in Encinitas, California, to bridge the gap between underserved youth and the ocean, fostering connections through surf therapy, environmental education, and mentorship. We wanted to create a space where diverse communities can access the healing and empowering benefits of the ocean, build an inclusive community, and develop a sense of environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

How and when did you become involved with the Surfrider Foundation?

We came together with the Surfrider Foundation in the fall of 2023 to partner against the environmental injustices that were plaguing our Southern San Diego communities. This partnership has been instrumental in advocating for a cleaner and healthier ocean, specifically for those affected by the Tijuana River, which is on the list of America's Top 10 Most Endangered Rivers of 2024.

In your opinion, why is surfing so therapeutic?

Surfing offers a unique blend of physical activity, connection with nature, and mindfulness. The rhythm of the waves, the challenge of riding them, and the serene environment can build self-esteem, reduce stress, and instill a sense of accomplishment.

In the words of 13-year-old participant Isabella Aguilar, "My first time surfing was kind of hard since I didn't know how to surf; I didn't even know how to swim. It was difficult to reach the goal of standing, but then I did it," she said. "You have to keep pushing to your goal. That's what I've been doing in school – pushing to get to my goals like I did on this board."

How does your organization work to create a surf culture that is welcoming to all people?

We actively work to welcome all people by providing access to surf equipment, offering sports scholarships, and fostering a supportive community. Our programs celebrate diversity and encourage participation from individuals of all backgrounds. By removing financial and logistical barriers, we ensure that everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status, can experience the joy of surfing.

What's on the horizon for Un Mar de Colores?

Looking ahead, Un Mar de Colores aims to deepen partnerships, enhance its curriculum to further integrate the intersection of environmental and social education, and help end the pollution of the Tijuana River.

We envision a future where every young person, regardless of background, has the opportunity to experience the transformative power of a healthy ocean.

From Headwaters to the Sea: Undamming the Beach in Ventura, CA

By: Paul Jenkin, Surfrider Ventura Campaign Coordinator

In 1991, a handful of inspired surfers launched the Ventura County Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation. Larry Manson, one of the founders who also served on the National Board of Directors, always opened chapter meetings with, “You bring what you know to the Surfrider Foundation.” These words ignited a fire that burns to this day.

From its onset, the chapter has always attracted passionate individuals who are well-versed in the significance of Ventura as a surf mecca. Early one morning in 1992, Rex Thomas, the first Chairman of the Ventura County Chapter, watched as the driver of a dump truck unlocked the gate to the upper parking lot at Surfers’ Point. Seeing the boulder-laden truck heading for the beach, Rex jumped into action.

What ensued was an epic David and Goliath struggle, ending with the driver turning around and leaving the beach rather than risk injury to the unwanted passenger yelling at him from a desperate perch atop

his cargo. Later that day when more trucks returned to pile rocks along the shore, Rex scoured the phone book and called any official he could find to alert them to the crime underway. Denied emergency permits, the City had decided to take matters into their own hands. The dumping stopped, but only after a few hundred feet of beach had been buried. For years, the rocks focused wave energy on the growing void in the parking lot while government agencies wrangled.

By 1994, I discovered the dedicated work that Manson, Thomas, and the rest of the chapter were doing to protect waves and beaches facing an urgent real-world issue. Inspired by Surfrider’s “Keepers of the Coast” film, I created a slideshow illustrating the flow of sand along the coast and the impacts of coastal development. The aim was to build support for “managed retreat,” making space for the natural beach by relocating the cause of the problem a short distance inland.

Larry Manson, one of the founders who also served on the National Board of Directors, always opened chapter meetings with, “You bring what you know to the Surfrider Foundation.” These words ignited a fire that burns to this day.





Damaged bike path at Surfers' Point prior to the Surfers' Point Managed Shoreline Retreat project.

Surfrider was given a seat at the table as the various agencies tried to work it out. And when another ill-hatched plan was presented in public, a hundred local beachgoers showed up to support the "Surfrider Alternative." The strategy paid off, and the proposal was adopted as the "Surfers' Point Managed Shoreline Retreat" project.

Around that time, we learned of several obsolete dams inland from two of Southern California's premier point breaks. One of the

dams, known as Matilija, had trapped over six million cubic yards of sediment that would have naturally flowed downstream to beaches over the span of a 50-year period. Using my calculations, it had the potential to trap another three million cubic yards over the next 30 to 40 years, making coastal erosion even worse. Finally, its presence blocked native fish from swimming upstream, which wreaked havoc on the local ecosystem.

It became clear that removing the dam would increase the river deposits by about a third, helping to reverse the long-term trends of beach erosion along the river delta. In order to raise public awareness about the negative impact of the dam, the Ventura Chapter created a bumper sticker saying, "Give a Dam, Free the Sand, Grow the Beach." I was able to build political support and work with government agencies, with whom I shared the research I was acquiring. Eventually, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the Feasibility Study in 2004 that outlined a plan to remove Matilija Dam. Deconstruction began in 2010, with this project being a first for California and one of the biggest dams ever removed.



Abandoned and obsolete Matilija Dam and outbuildings in Ojai, California.



Relocated bike path at Surfers' Point following completion of Phase 1 restoration.

The second half of the managed retreat project at Surfers' Point is finally slated for construction in 2024. Funding limited the first phase in 2010, and Surfrider filled the gap by adopting the dune portion of the project. Relocating the damaged infrastructure while bolstering the backshore with river cobble and dunes has become the gold standard for coastal management. Meanwhile, increasing erosion of the remaining bike path finally forced the decision to complete the retreat.

Removing a dam is far more ambitious than moving a bike path. The fate of millions of tons of sediment currently trapped behind Matilija Dam has led to endless bureaucratic hand-wringing. As is typical, the same agency that built the structure also permitted development in the floodplain. Built for just over three million dollars in 1948, tens of millions of dollars have been spent since 1999 assessing how to remove the dam. So far one bridge has been replaced and engineering is underway for reconstructing the other aging

downstream infrastructure. Ideally, these preparations will be complete and enable the dam removal in 2030. Then, timing the perfect storm will be critical to ensure that the "first flush" will whisk the fine silt backed up behind the dam all the way to the ocean. Only then may the 200-foot concrete structure be dismantled to allow future floods to restore the natural transport of sand and cobble downriver to the coast.

It is clear that many of our coastal problems originate upstream. These two campaigns, the restoration of Surfers' Point and the removal of the Matilija Dam, form the foundation of the Ventura River Ecosystem project which documents watershed management for a resilient future at VenturaRiver.org. When the work is finally complete, the Ventura County coast will be seen around the world as a place where local grassroots activism helped turn the tide of environmental degradation by undoing some of the mistakes of the past.



ACTIVIST PROFILE

Bianca Valenti

I see the future of surf culture as being more inclusive and more accessible to everybody.

Bianca, what are your passions?

I'm a professional big wave surfer, mindset coach, and entrepreneur. I'm also an activist and advocate for gender equity and the environment.

How did you get involved with Surfrider?

I'm proud to say that I started volunteering at Surfrider beach cleanups when I was seven. By the time I graduated high school I had accumulated over 500 hours of community service from cleanups, stuffing outreach envelopes at Surfrider HQ, and volunteering at their annual galas on the catering team. I believe that to be in service of others, as well as the ocean and environment, is the highest form of existence. I intend to walk this path until the day I die and I invite others to join me in catching and creating better waves for all!

In your eyes, what are some of the most pressing issues affecting your local beaches and community?

Plastic on the beaches and in the water. Dirty water from runoff and sewage. Large corporations illegally dumping pesticides in our waterways that lead to the ocean. Ocean

warming, which causes all kinds of issues, such as algal blooms, that impact our health. Sea level rise coupled with coastal erosion damages streets, houses, and infrastructure, especially during the winter months.

Where do you see the future of surf culture?

I see the future of surf culture as being more inclusive and more accessible to everybody. While surfing Steamer Lane recently, I noticed only one other woman in the lineup of 100. I was surprised but also saw that as a great growth opportunity. Get out there ladies – you belong!

What is the most important thing you tell others about protecting the ocean, waves, and beaches?

Every little bit helps and any opportunity to protect the ocean matters. Education and community are key, so I suggest joining local groups and getting active in your area. A couple of organizations in San Francisco that are worth checking out are the Surfrider Foundation, Save the Waves Coalition, Sustainable Surf, and Baykeeper SF.

The Meaning of Membership: 40 Years of Surfrider

By: Chris Casey, Membership Manager

Forty years of protecting our ocean, waves, and beaches. What are the odds of that? There are more than 1.8 million non-profit organizations in the United States, and 30% of them will cease to exist after 10 years. So what does it take for a nonprofit to last for 40 years?

Surfrider's first annual membership meeting was held at The End Cafe on the Huntington Beach Pier, and according to Volume 2, Issue 1 of our newsletter *Making Waves*, the meeting "produced a promising outlook for our second year." Just imagine that milestone at the time, a fledgling nonprofit reaching its second

year of existence, and a second volume of its newsletter! That same early newsletter made this appeal:

We Need Your Support

To safeguard and advance the quality of our ocean, waves, and beaches

To promote water safety and enjoyment through education and research

To defend these environmental rights through litigation when necessary

To foster a sense of place and community through an active membership



With 40 years of hindsight, it's an easy takeaway to assume that Surfrider's longevity can be attributed to these core principles we stated at the outset:

- We have safeguarded and advanced the quality of our ocean, waves, and beaches by fighting offshore drilling and single-use plastics.
- We have promoted water safety and enjoyment through education and research, including beach cleanups and publicly-shared water quality tests.
- We have defended these environmental rights through litigation when necessary, with 910 campaign victories in the last 18 years and legal wins all the way up to the Supreme Court.
- AND we have fostered a sense of place and community through an active membership by showing YOU the impact of your support and connecting you with other like-minded beach lovers through our nationwide network of over 200 chapters and student clubs.

Recently we acknowledged our supporters who have supported Surfrider for 20 or more years with a special membership sticker. More than 400 of you have been with us for at least half of our existence, and some for much more.

Why not a 30 or 40-year sticker? Well, there's a simple answer: we have been around longer than our own data. Four decades of records – from paper to spreadsheets to membership platforms – have come with expected gaps in our own records. But regardless of our ability to keep track, one thing remains crystal clear: without the support of our members, there is no Surfrider.

Forty years ago, a lasting idea was formed: enough people loved our coasts to come together to protect them for future generations. The legacy of our longest supporters lies in our ongoing ability to grow, share Surfrider's mission with new supporters, and increase our impact.

This 40-year-old movement has expanded around the globe, and rightfully so, as no single country alone can protect our ocean. The Surfrider mission lives not just in the United States, but among our international affiliates in Europe, Australia, Japan, Canada, Argentina, and Senegal.

Victor Hugo said, "40 is the old age of youth; 50 is the youth of old age." And while nonprofits aren't bound by the same constraints as our human lives, 40 is still young. We can celebrate this milestone, as we should.

While we reflect on past achievements, we recognize that all our past success is due to your support. With your continued support, we look forward to shaping a brighter future for our ocean and coasts. Here's to the next 40 years of protecting what we love – together.





PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Breitling x Surfrider: A Shared Mission For A Plastic-Free Ocean

Breitling has always had a strong connection to the sea. Together with Surfrider, we are stepping up the global fight for a clean ocean, not only for today but for future generations.

After launching its first SuperOcean dive watch in 1957, Breitling has cultivated a community of ocean enthusiasts who are deeply committed to protecting the marine environment. With time, divers were not the only ones wearing the trusted timepiece while exploring the undersea world that they loved. Surfers became equally drawn to the SuperOcean's functional and durable performance in all conditions.

Recognizing that surfers are keenly connected to the current and emerging conditions of our ocean, today Breitling celebrates the sport of surfing while using the same philosophy to craft their sea watches — a blend of precision and performance. Their impressive Surfer Squad includes 11-time world champion Kelly Slater, the most successful surfer of all time, together with eight-time world champion Stephanie Gilmore, the most successful female surfer of all time, and Sally Fitzgibbons, a multiple title-holding champion hailing from Australia. This trio, along with Breitling's commitments to continually progressing the sustainability

of their business operations and their commitment to supporting causes that further environmental stewardship, represent a set of core values that the Surfrider Foundation recognizes and sets Breitling apart. Aside from eradicating plastic waste from its global operations by 2025, Breitling is also innovatively transforming plastics. The company has switched to watch boxes made of 100% recycled PET and introduced a range of watch straps crafted from salvaged ghost fishing nets.

With our shared core values, the Surfrider Foundation is honored to have support from Breitling through our official corporate partnership. "Breitling has always had a strong connection to the sea," says Georges Kern, CEO of Breitling. "Together with Surfrider, we are stepping up the global fight for a clean ocean, not only for today but for future generations." Together, we have brought together coastal stewards for beach cleanups around the world and drawn on our common mission to raise awareness for the global movement to protect our ocean, waves, and beaches.

INITIATIVE SPOTLIGHT

Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Hotels Program

By: CJ O'Brien Weddle, Ocean Friendly Programs Manager

For well over a decade, the Surfrider Foundation has fought to stop plastic pollution at the source by passing policies and working with restaurants to reduce single-use plastic. We are excited to take this work to the next level with the introduction of the new Ocean Friendly Hotels Program! This program celebrates hotels that have eliminated unnecessary single-use plastic and offers a simple, straightforward framework to help them implement practices that are better for the health of our ocean.

Expanding Our Ocean Friendly Programs

The Ocean Friendly Hotels program is an expansion of Surfrider's nationally-recognized Ocean Friendly Restaurants (OFR) program. Since 2013, our OFR Program has helped restaurants reduce their plastic footprint. With over 560 OFRs participating nationwide serving over 36 million single-use, plastic-free meals a year, our restaurants and activists have helped Surfrider positively influence consumer behavior and pass common-sense foodware policies across the country. We started the Ocean Friendly Hotels program to expand our impact on the hospitality industry and help turn the tide on plastic pollution.

The larger we grow our network of Ocean Friendly business leaders, the more mainstream the concept of single-use, plastic-free becomes.

Inspired by Chapter Activism

Our Surfrider chapters have worked closely with hotels through campaigns, local programs, and community collaborations for years. The Kaua'i Chapter spearheads a local Ocean Friendly Visitors Program and the Maui Chapter leads Rise Above Plastics on Vacation, encouraging hotels and visitors to reduce their single-use plastic use. In New York and Washington, our chapters successfully campaigned to ban mini toiletry bottles statewide.

With the launch of the Ocean Friendly Hotels Program, chapters now have an official framework to help guide hotels to reduce their use of mini toiletry bottles and other single-use plastic items. The result of this program will be a community of hotels our chapters can promote, support, and lift up as successful examples to influence greater adoption of ocean-friendly business practices and even more single-use plastic reduction legislation.



Studio suite interior at Hotel Hanalei Bay.

A Sneak Peak at Our OFHs

The 11 participating hotels, located across six states, collectively save an estimated 416,100 water bottles and 624,150 mini toiletry bottles annually through this program.

Adrift Hotel, an 82-room hotel nestled on the coast of Long Beach, Washington, also features an OFR called Pickled Fish. In addition to using reusable toiletry bottles and eliminating single-use plastic throughout the property, hotel staff regularly engage in beach cleanups and the hotel harnesses solar power for both electricity and hot water.

Hotel Joaquin, a 22-room hotel just steps away from Shaw's Cove in Laguna Beach, California, also has an OFR named Saline onsite. To eliminate plastic waste, coffee is

delivered in a reusable thermos to guests each morning and room keys are reusable. Guests are also given custom glass water bottles to fill at their numerous water refill stations.

Our Vision for the Future

Our Ocean Friendly Hotels program has a goal to add 100 hotels in the next five years. This will eliminate an estimated 4 million+ plastic water bottles and 6 million+ mini toiletry bottles annually from our landfills and polluting our ocean! We strive to welcome different types of hotels in diverse geographic locations and cater to various price points. One hotel, one traveler at a time, we're increasing awareness, influencing behavior change, and ultimately creating scalable impact to reduce plastic pollution for our ocean, waves, and beaches.

Our Ocean Friendly Hotels program has a goal to add 100 hotels in the next five years. This will eliminate an estimated 4 million+ plastic water bottles and 6 million+ mini toiletry bottles annually.

PLASTIC SUCKS



**THE OCEAN NEEDS
MORE FRIENDS**

Scan to join and become a friend of the ocean.

 **SURFRIDER
FOUNDATION.**



DONOR PROFILE

Janet MacPherson: “Surfrider’s Godmother”

Her legacy is one of living life on her own terms with an unwavering spirit that knew the value of what truly mattered – her family, her friends, and her freedom.

Janet MacPherson was a trailblazing champion not just in the water, but in life as well. From her introduction to surfing by Hawai‘i’s legendary Waikīkī Beachboys, to becoming New Zealand’s 1965 Women’s Surfing Champion, to her golden years holding court at Pavones and Scorpion Bay, she made the pursuit of wave riding her guiding light.

A founding member of the Surfrider Foundation, Janet was influential in establishing the Baja Assistance Program and the Malibu Surfrider Chapter’s early success. In the words of Surfrider’s founder, Glenn Hening, “Janet was right there from the beginning. Her spiritual support, as well as her tangible efforts, were invaluable. She was always above the fray, right there in sync with what I was trying to do, and representative of what Surfrider was all about. She saw Surfrider as almost more important than surfing. She was, in some ways, Surfrider’s godmother.”

The daughter of a Mexican immigrant, Janet was a devoted single mother who raised her son Sean with the same tenacity she brought to surfing and environmental activism. The respect for the planet that Sean learned from a young age was instrumental later in life as he forged his

career as an environmentally-conscious hotelier, restaurateur, and entrepreneur.

There were many facets to Janet’s unique personality, and many chapters to her storied life. Janet was as comfortable digging for pre-Columbian artifacts in Latin America as she was smuggling them across the border. She felt as at home surfing, driving in her dune buggy, and sleeping in a sleeping bag under the stars in Scorpion Bay, Mexico, as she was eating at the Waverly Inn and sleeping in the penthouse at the Bowery Hotel.

After a richly-abundant life, Janet passed away on March 5, 2022. Her legacy is one of living life on her own terms with an unwavering spirit that knew the value of what truly mattered – her family, her friends, and her freedom. Her life wasn’t always easy, but she never wasted a precious second looking backward. This past August, Surfrider honored Janet, Sean, and his wife Rachelle at our One Ocean gala in Montauk, New York. The evening celebrated recent campaign victories and raised critical funds which will be dedicated to coastal adaptation plans in Eastern Long Island. Janet was very much there in spirit – as she always is when surfers and environmentalists come together for a good time.

Guardians of the Great Lakes: Protecting America's Freshwater Coasts

By: Sarah Damron, Sr. Regional Manager Texas and Great Lakes

If you live on the East or West Coast, the Midwest may seem like an amorphous expanse between the bookends of the United States – a place you drive through, go to visit family, or associate with burning rivers. (The Cuyahoga River in Ohio did, in fact, catch fire, at least thirteen times before the 1969 blaze that inspired the passage of the federal Clean Water Act.) This understanding, however, overlooks a globally significant defining feature of the region: the Great Lakes.

The five Great Lakes and their roughly 9,400 miles of shoreline spanning from Minnesota to New York and shared with Canadian provinces, are home to surfers, freshwater recreationalists, and communities who have

a stake in how their local shorelines and waters are managed. Uniquely, there are also 30 million people who rely on the Great Lakes for what they hope is clean drinking water.

As significant as the Great Lakes are, they are often treated as a dumping ground and an industry-serving resource. It was around the issue of water pollution that the first Surfrider chapter in the region was formed, in 2009. At that time, surfers were finding small steel shards in their wetsuits and even in their eyes after surfing, prompting the then-named Lake Michigan Chapter to contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and start a chapter water testing program.



A popular break on Lake Michigan that is protected with the help of Surfrider activists. © Mike Killion

We now have three chapters that border Lake Michigan – Milwaukee, Chicago, and Northern Michigan – in addition to the North Shore MN, Northern Ohio, and Niagara Frontier chapters. In 2018, the Chicago Chapter sued U.S. Steel for an egregious violation of the Clean Water Act, wherein U.S. Steel illegally discharged nearly 300 pounds of carcinogenic hexavalent chromium into a waterway adjoining Lake Michigan. Our involvement contributed toward the outcome of significant monetary fines leveled at U.S. Steel, a mandated water quality monitoring program, and enhanced public notification of toxic releases.

Plastic pollution also impacts this region, where industry has targeted conservative state legislatures to preempt local single-use plastics reduction ordinances, such as plastic bag bans. Ohio was one such battleground, and the Northern Ohio Chapter and partners fended off preemption legislation for four years until ultimately it passed into law in 2021. The chapter joined forces this year with the Ohio Environmental Council and the Sierra

Club to influence litigation via amicus brief in support of the City of Athens' single-use bag ban, to hopefully invalidate the effect of the state's preemption laws and once again allow local governments to decide what is best for their own communities and pass plastic waste reduction ordinances.

To address water pollution at the federal level, Great Lakes chapters have joined with allies in recent years to advocate for hundreds of millions of dollars of funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and corresponding action plan. The GLRI engages multiple federal agencies in coordinated, targeted efforts to address habitat protection, invasive species, and water quality in the Great Lakes.

So, the next time you're driving to Grandma's house in Cleveland, Ohio, don't forget that you are only a few blocks away from an incredible freshwater playground where the river no longer catches fire and is instead surrounded by amazing coastal defenders fighting the good fight to protect the Great Lakes.



Skyline behind the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio.



ARTIST PROFILE

Spring Break Jake

Take care of your mental health so that you can show up for our ocean. It really is the most beautiful, vital, and awe-inspiring environment we have the privilege of experiencing.

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your background?

My name is Jacob Jerome Kenobi but I make art under the moniker Spring Break Jake and I'm based in Bend, Oregon.

I've been drawing since before I can remember and shifted towards graphic design in high school and college. That became digital illustration, then murals, and now I'm back to drawing and painting.

These days, I'm creating mixed-media Memento Mori paintings around mental health with subtle messages about climate change.

What was your introduction to the ocean and surfing?

I was around two or three the first time I went to the sea. Growing up as a water lover in landlocked Minnesota, we did annual family trips to Florida that hold a special place in my heart.

My first time surfing wasn't until a teenage trip to Surfers Paradise, Australia. I was already into skateboarding and snowboarding, but surfing definitely proved harder than I expected!

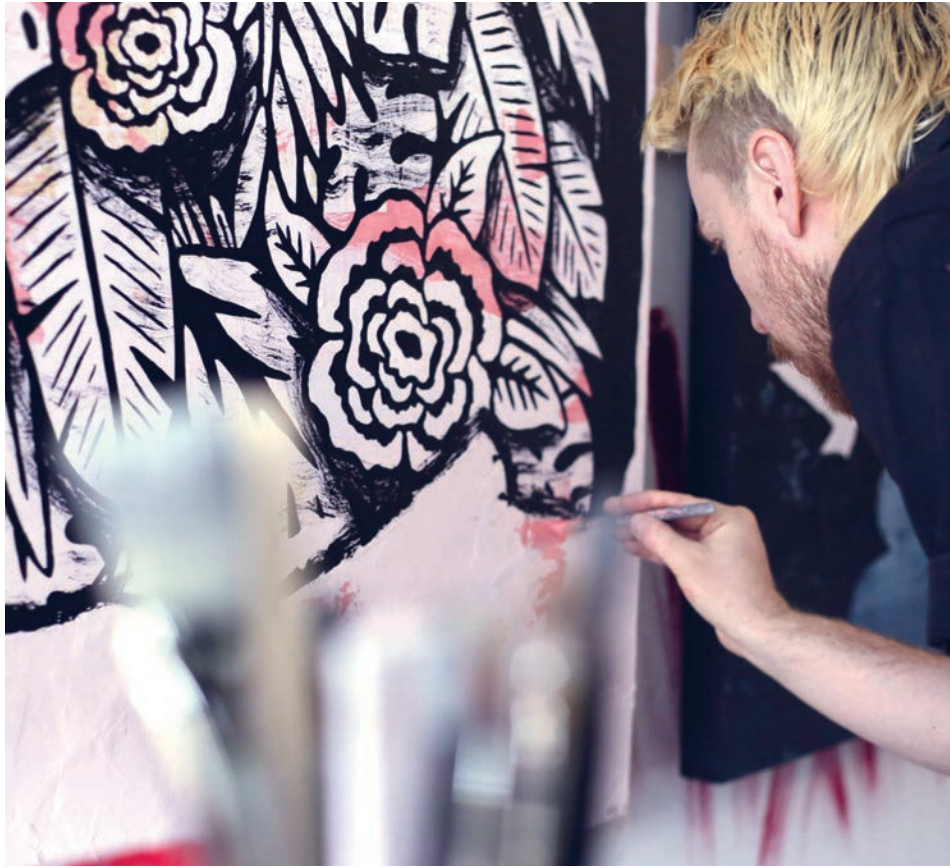
What inspires your art, which has been featured by Surfrider over the years?

Two huge sources of inspiration are music and travel. From album art to the way certain songs make me feel, music has always shaped my imagery and style. Recently, I typically travel to tropical locales and always return from those trips with new ideas. The ocean also provides endless inspiration. I find peace in feeling small and insignificant when I'm looking out to sea. It's always a reminder that most of the things occupying and stressing my mind don't matter in the long run. Being near the ocean allows me to let go of worries and fears to make room for creativity.

What is the most important thing you tell others about protecting our ocean, waves, and beaches?

Vote on the ballot and with your dollars. Be vocal to politicians, friends, and family. That is one reason why I love Surfrider: your ocean advocacy policy work – and how you spread the word about it – is incredible!

Take care of your mental health so that you can show up for our ocean. It really is the most beautiful, vital, and awe-inspiring environment we have the privilege of experiencing.



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Glenn Hening Recalls the Birth of the Surfrider Foundation

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Surfrider's ancestry can be traced back to Santa Monica Canyon, near Los Angeles, a unique place with its own climate and creative community. The canyon meets the reefs and sandbars of State Beach, as unique a break as any from Point Dume to Palos Verdes.

State Beach was home to some colorful surfers in its time, including Miki Dora and Marty Sugarman. In the mid-'60s, we grew up surfing in their shadows, and when shortboards came on strong, we began to call ourselves the Canyon Rats. In our time, we threw mad parties, circled the globe for surf, and generally got away with whatever we wanted to for about 15 years.

By late 1983, we found ourselves scurrying about trying to make ends meet. Gone were the spirit, the youth, and the adventure of the Rats in their prime as jobs, marriages, and mortgages took their toll. One brisk winter evening, with offshore winds whistling in the sycamores, most of the original crew got together for a reunion. Tales were told from the seven seas, and after an hour or so, the talk turned to the state of surfing.

A quick look at the surf mags said it all, and it had nothing to do with us. It was the day-glo era, with pro surfers signing deals and trade show kings selling their way to riches. This disconnect sparked an idea: a surf club modeled after the Cousteau Society and the National Geographic Society – a member-supported service organization that more genuinely reflected surf culture and values.

Birth of a Vision

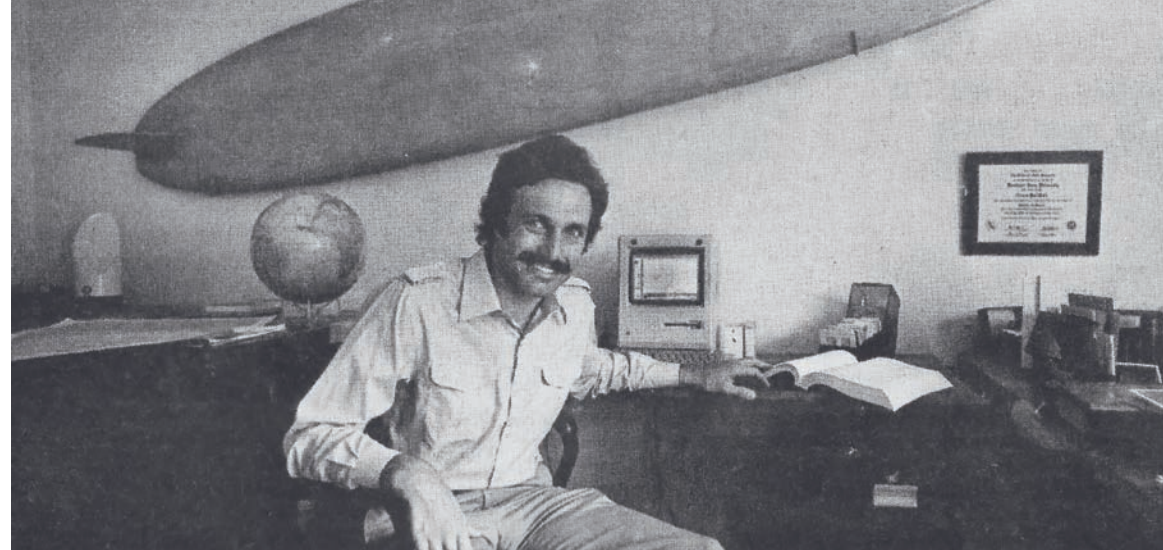
In 1984, inspired by the Los Angeles Olympics, my passion for pulling off a landmark idea addressing the future of surfing had not dimmed. Reality demanded I come up with a new name, and so I thought I could get some instant respectability through the use of the word "foundation." And then one day I was driving past the Surfrider Inn in Santa Monica, the place where I first saw the Pacific Ocean when we moved out here in 1959 from New York. That was it. The Surfrider Foundation.

To say I had delusions of grandeur would be an understatement, but with the Olympics in town, who could blame me? The ideas started flying: surf schools, scholarships, apprentice programs, team competitions, travel clubs, wave preserves, new surfboard materials, and a *National Geographic*-style magazine. The idea of sharing surfing with the inner-city kids of Los Angeles particularly resonated.

If we really wanted to change the surfing world, we would have our work cut out for us. But so what? After all, we were surfers, and we were not in the habit of taking no for an answer.

Assembling the Team

We had to come up with some big ideas, but now it was time to make it happen. We knew we would need some name recognition to catch the attention of the surfing world, but we didn't know any surf stars.



Glenn Hening in Surfrider's Pasadena office in 1985.

Through an old friend, I tracked down Lance Carson, and we met one night after the legend of Malibu got off work hanging drywall. I explained what we were up to and why.

"Sure, I'll help. As long as I don't have to go to any meetings," said Lance. "But you know, maybe you can do something right away about what's happening at Malibu."

"What's the problem?"

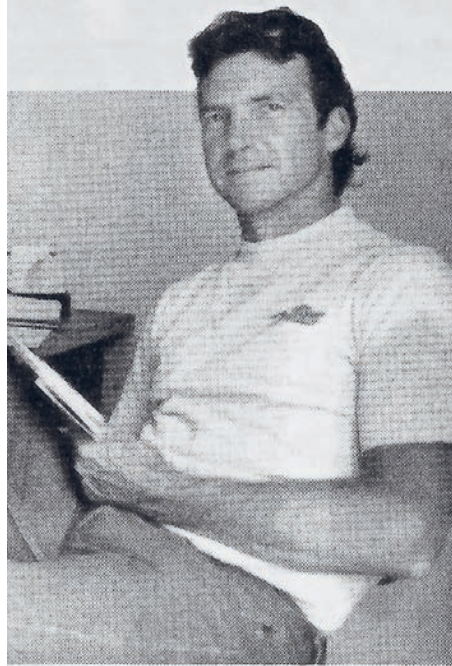
"State Parks guys are destroying First Point. I tried to stop them, but they just ignored me. They took down the 'Surfrider Beach' sign and changed the name of the place to Malibu Lagoon State Park. They carved up the lagoon, and when it starts to overflow, they bulldoze a channel straight toward the pier. The outflow gouges a channel across the bottom and the shape has been completely ruined, and these State Parks guys could care less."

"Well, let's do something about it."

"Yeah, you want to call a guy named Tom Pratte. He has some ideas, and he's been trying to get something going."

A week after my meeting with Lance Carson, I was in the 'office' of Tom Pratte at his parents' home in Huntington Beach. He had just graduated with the first-ever degree in Environmental Studies with Coastal Emphasis at Humboldt State University. He was soft-spoken but direct. His room was filled with binders and files covering threats to the surfing environment from Crescent City to Imperial Beach. He had Coastal Commission documents, State Parks blueprints, Coastal Act sections, transcripts, and just about every official document existent relating to the situation. But it had been an uphill battle so far because as far as the State was concerned, surfing at Malibu was nothing but a nuisance.

Now I knew inner-city programs and surfing preserves were long-term ideas. But what about preserving what we had right now? I quickly realized that with Lance on board as a guiding figurehead and Tom's encyclopedic grasp of the issues, defending Malibu would be an important first step toward creating an organization that could directly affect surfing's future, which was the whole point to begin with.



Surfrider co-founders Lance Carson (left) and Tom Pratte (right).

Signing My Life Away

By early August, I was fully committed to establishing something completely new in the world of surfing. With the emergency at Malibu and Tom Pratte's environmental leadership crying out for support, the Surfrider Foundation was going to be something special.

There was only one thing left to determine: Who would actually sign the documents that made the whole thing real?

It was one thing to dream up a non-profit organization of surfers ready to take on the world. It was something else to make it legal. By mid-August, Surfrider was ready to go, but now it was time to file with the feds.

A quick canvas of the room sobered me up a bit. Some of our co-founders had wives or kids or mortgages, some were not ready to

sign anything legally binding, and even Tom Pratte wanted to hedge his bets. They all wanted to be a part of Surfrider, but in the end, there was only one person left on the peak as the set approached.

I showed up early and read the document. It was all there, though I had one question: "What does 'agent for service of process' mean?"

"That's for the IRS. They need to know who is going to take full responsibility if something goes wrong."

I thought for a second back to the Canyon, to my daughter, to Lance and Tom and Malibu and the future of riding waves. Surfing had done a lot for me, and it was time to do something in return.

"Where do I sign?" I replied, and a minute later, the Surfrider Foundation was born.

Defending Malibu: Surfrider's First Victory

I was on the phone with Lance, and we were trying to get out of the Surfrider office and beat traffic up the coast. Tom had used his connections to schedule a community hearing with the State Parks officials that was on for 7:30 that night.

"No, Lance, you don't have to say much, but you've got to come through as a legend and leader of the Malibu surfing community," I said. "Look, how about if I write you a speech and all you have to do is read it?" Lance was at a loss as to what would work for him, so I made it simple, "Don't worry; we're surfers. We'll blow 'em away."

I had 20 minutes to write a speech for Lance Carson, and then we had to bail or traffic would kill us. *Lance, Malibu, my learning to surf in '62 watching him and Dewey and Miki, decades of perfect waves, no other place like it, a natural wonder, we need the place...*

A page soon came out of the printer as Tom stuffed some more documents into his leather satchel. We grabbed a slide projector, a video camera, our sport coats and shoes,

and off we went in my '67 VW Bus. We cranked up the Allman Brothers' "One Way Out" and were burning up PCH as if it was eight feet and perfect.

The meeting was at the Point Dume Elementary School auditorium. Thanks to Tom and Lance, a cross-section of the Malibu surfing community was waiting to get in: old-timers from out of the woodwork, gremmies, young couples with kids, and hot surfers.

Before the meeting started, Tom went over and talked to the State Parks officials. The suits were a bit surprised at the crowd, and as Tom sat down he said, "You know, I think they're scared that all these surfers might riot or something if they don't get what they want."

First came the presentation from the superintendent of the new park. Lance hated the guy, and for good reason. The first time the bulldozer started carving toward the point, Lance went up and tried to explain what they were doing might ruin the wave.

The ranger's response to Lance's input?



In 1983, construction of Malibu Lagoon State Park, and an artificial wetland, destroyed the natural interaction between the lagoon and ocean.

"I don't know who you are, but you are not part of this conversation," as the ranger continued to give instructions to the operator of the bulldozer. Lance tried to protest, and a young grom from Malibu even sat down in front of the dozer. But the Parks guy just ignored them as the D-4 fired up.

Lance grabbed the grommet and pulled him out of the way, and the destruction of Malibu's First Point began.

So, as this guy went on and on during their opening statements, Lance was steaming. This was the kind of bullshit he hated, and it showed. But there was more to come.

To the stage came an engineer who proceeded to explain, from blueprints and charts, that they had carved up the lagoon into channels in order to create "an inviting area for new park users." He said the beach was now going to be accessed by people using the new parking lot on the other side of the creek and that they had to drain the lagoon toward the pier so that park patrons would have as much uninterrupted beach as possible.

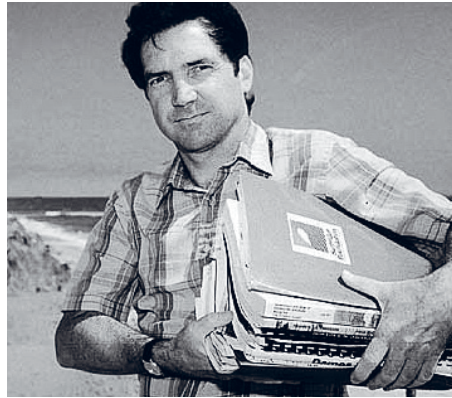
"Yeah, but we were here first!" a local shouted.

"And what about your interrupting a perfect wave?"

"Yeah, and who let you guys change our beach around?"

"Who asked you guys to come into Malibu anyway?"

The poor engineer was showered with shouts from the crowd and the guy running the meeting had to ask for order. The engineer finished his bit, and then began the public comment phase.



Tom Pratte, armed with a sharp mind for coastal policy and a passionate heart for conservation, took on overwhelming odds and laid the groundwork for the professional and well-respected organization that Surfrider has become. © Aaron Chang

"First speaker from the community, Tom Pratte from the Surfrider Foundation."

Tom made the opening presentation. He was reserved, chose his words carefully, and said nothing to overtly confront the officials who were conducting the hearing. This was part of our strategy as was the fact that we had all signed in right when we got there so that we could hit 'em with a sequenced presentation.

Tom closed by saying, "I'd like to introduce a man who has spent a lifetime at Malibu and has the respect of everyone who has ever ridden a wave at the place. His sense of protection for something he has loved since he was a kid is why we are here tonight."

As Lance Carson rose and walked to the front of the room, the place went wild. Everyone stood up and clapped and whistled. It could have been the opening of a surf movie at the Civic – the crowd was that amped. Coat and tie, slacks, and polished loafers, it was a Lance Carson nobody had ever seen before and it galvanized everyone in the room, except the suits, who were suddenly looking even more nervous.

The room came to order and Lance began: "Waves are a natural wonder no different from Old Faithful or the redwood trees. They are a phenomenon that demonstrates all the laws of physics. They have a perfect parabolic shape that can be appreciated in only a very few places on earth. Surfrider Beach is one of those places, here in California.

"Malibu is the most famous surf area in the world. Countless films and articles have tried to explain its mystique and its energy, because surfing is an art form unmatched by any other sport.

"I have been blessed with 35 years of going to Malibu and enjoying the natural beauty of quality waves that break like a long string of falling dominoes. I have memories of clear water, lonely afternoons, Japanese clam diggers finding food at low tide, and things I may never see again. Progress is progress, and that's something that can't be changed. I've always known this, and I've always said, 'Well, at least the waves will never change.'

"But now that may no longer be true.

"In 1983, I was watching the winter storms change the beach as it has for centuries and I remarked to John Baker, the lifeguard at Malibu, how wonderful it is to watch the beach change and get ready for another summer of great waves. By late spring, however, I was watching another kind of change take place. A change that nature had nothing to do with.

"State Parks officials were instructing the county lifeguards to where the new outlet for the lagoon park would be. The name of the beach would no longer be Surfrider Beach but Malibu Lagoon State Park.

"Since then, one of the saddest things in my life has taken place, and not just for me. One of the greatest waves in the world, a surfer's natural wonder as special as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon has been damaged.

"Malibu must not become a battlefield because of indifference, neglect, or ignorance. We must work together to save the beach and the waves that can be found nowhere else in North America. Surfers have a special knowledge of the ocean that must be considered.



Local surfers, led by such long-time Malibu veterans as Paul Minkoff, often tried to stop the outflow after the bulldozer left the beach, but State Parks policy continued to damage Malibu.



In a coat and tie, a well-spoken Lance Carson represented the Malibu surf community and stepped up to the plate to help Surfrider achieve its first victory.

“And we are here tonight, students and doctors and construction workers and mothers from all over Malibu, Santa Monica, and the San Fernando Valley. Our experience stretches from the early ‘30s on the part of some of the veteran surfers here tonight – to those young people who have discovered the wonder of surfing Malibu only in recent years.

“Tonight, you have the opportunity to hear our statements and opinions and facts. If you consider them carefully in your decisions, we hope that you will not allow the lagoon outlet to slowly kill sea life and permanently damage or destroy one of the very best waves in the world.”

When he was done, the room was dead quiet. The State Parks guy took advantage of that and said, “Next speaker, Glenn Hening. Surfrider Foundation.”

Well, as a high school teacher, I knew how to write a lesson plan, and the Parks guys needed some schooling about surfing.

I opened with some lineup shots of the place that got the crowd hooting. Then came slides that Lance had taken from a variety of angles before and after the Park bulldozer had done its dirty work. Finally, I presented four slides of graphics I had done on the Mac, with Tom’s help, culminating in a slide that showed exactly what we wanted.

Now the Parks officials were in a corner, so they called for a recess. They had never expected a crowd with a lot of energy to provide a coherent plan that would halt their redevelopment proposal. I looked over at Tom, who was smiling as he watched the Parks guys go out the back door quickly.

“I bet those guys are really scared now,” he said.

An hour and a half later, the thing finally began to wrap up. Everyone in the room had signed the speaker’s request list, and though some didn’t know quite what to say, they knew that they didn’t want Malibu ruined and that was that. Voice after impassioned voice was heard as dozens of people spoke of what a special place Malibu was to them and how they were not going to stand for the destruction of such a great wave. When they were done, the State Parks guy spoke.

“That concludes the public input section of our meeting. We want to thank you for your participation in this community hearing and be advised that your input will be given careful consideration at our next managers’ meeting.”

“F#@% that – are you going to keep wrecking the place or what?” It was my old friend, L.J. Woods, leveling with the suits.

Suddenly, the crowd grew restive, and the Parks guy picked up the vibe immediately.

“We won!” Tom Pratte whispered to me. He knew the bureaucrats’ code when it came to admitting defeat.

“Thanks to the presentations made here tonight, we certainly will make every effort to respond to the community’s demands, er, I mean requests. Meeting adjourned.”

“We won!” Tom Pratte whispered to me. He knew the bureaucrats’ code when it came to admitting defeat.

There was no cheer, just a lot of mystified people who had never been to something like this before. Even Lance didn’t quite know what to think. They were expecting something, but just what had happened?

But as we took down the AV stuff, Tom Pratte was stoked.

Some people asked him what happened, and he said simply, “We scared them. They’ll do exactly what we want. They don’t want angry surfers laying down in front of bulldozers. That’s what they think we’re all about after this meeting.”

As we drove back down PCH, I reflected, “You know, I’ve ridden Malibu for years, but coming home tonight feels like we just got it better than ever.”

Tom Pratte was exhausted but happy. Then he frowned. “I’ve got to go to San Diego tomorrow. The Army Corps wants to build a breakwater at Imperial Beach.”

“Well, the IRS has our application as of yesterday, Tom,” I said. “The Surfrider Foundation is for real.”



Coastal Victories Update

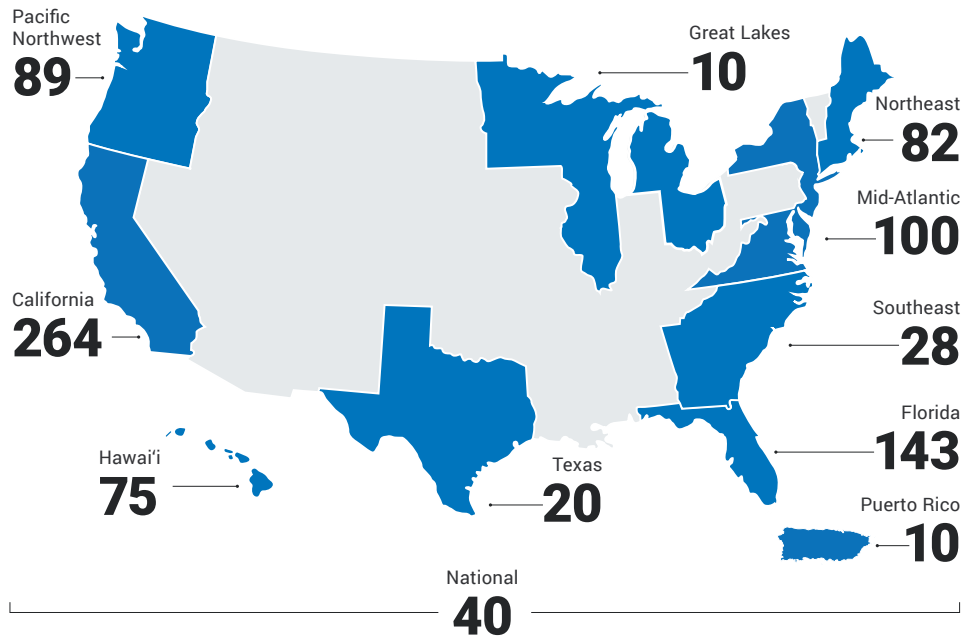
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Total Victories
Since 2006

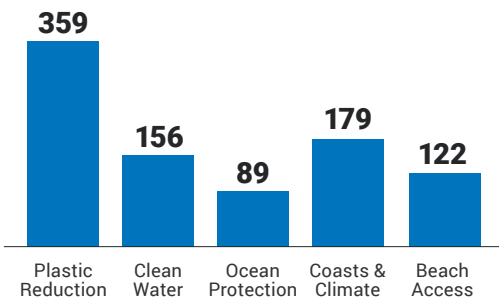
A coastal victory is a decision made in favor of the coastal and ocean environment that results in a positive conservation outcome, improves coastal access, or both.

For more information visit surfrider.org/campaigns.

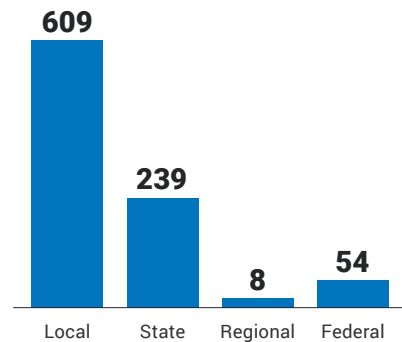
VICTORY LOCATION



VICTORY TYPE



VICTORY SCOPE



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