

Surfrider Foundation - Connecticut Chapter

By Andrew Krupa

Yes, there are surfers in Connecticut. We ride on surfboards, boogie boards, kayaks, canoes, Boston Whalers and J/24s. We ride the current below the surface, scuba tanks strapped to our backs. Many of us earn our living riding above the waves in search of catch. Some of us prefer to stroll upon the many sandy beaches, watching for the next set of waves and picking up a discarded styrofoam cup or two. No matter how we experience Long Island Sound and the Atlantic, Connecticut Surfrider Foundation members have two common interests: a love of the ocean and a desire to protect it. It is these two interests that bond a network of over 60 Surfrider Foundation chapters and 50,000 members throughout the world.

"Surfrider is full of people with a good attitude who operate from an informed rather than just purely emotional brand of activism," says Jim Perry, Chapter Treasurer. "The Connecticut Surfrider Foundation is like a family," adds Hector Ramirez, Membership Chair. "We surf, we ride the waves. It's more laid back. We pick up our trash when we leave the beach... and other peoples', too! I love the work that the Surfrider Foundation does all over the world to protect the ocean."

The Surfrider Foundation was founded in 1984 by a handful of surfers in Malibu, California allied to protest environmental and otherwise harmful threats to their local break. The organization struggled to find its bearings, mainly as a loose advocacy group until 1991, when the first chapters were officially founded and the Foundation transitioned into a grassroots activist organization.

The Connecticut Chapter started in the spring of 2006. Through the efforts of a small group of members, the chapter has transformed into a growing group of 175+ members - all working to preserve and protect Long Island Sound and the waterways of Connecticut. This work is needed now more than ever, as the Sound struggles to remain healthy through a barrage of environmental impacts that has led to hypoxia, habitat destruction, toxic and pathogenic contamination and access restriction. The latest threat to the Sound comes from the proposed Broadwater project.

The Surfrider Foundation's Connecticut Chapter opposes the construction of Broadwater. This facility would further degrade the Sound through 25 miles of dredging, increased pollution from runoff, traffic and potential spills, and further industrialization of the Sound.

Broadwater creates major safety concerns, restricts access to areas of the Sound, and threatens the \$5.5 billion generated by activities such as fishing and recreation. Surfrider CT has joined the Anti-Broadwater Coalition, our members have testified at hearings and the group strives to educate the public on this threat to the Sound.

The Surfrider Foundation's Connecticut Chapter has an ambitious 2007 agenda, including launching the "Hold on to Your Butt" program. This program looks to curtail the enormous amount of cigarette butts littering our beaches. "The Connecticut Chapter observed during their voluntary clean-up of Hammonasset State Park beach that cigarette butts were one of the primary forms of litter left on the sand by visitors," notes Rudy Beran, Development Chair.

According to the Surfrider Foundation, more than 176,000,000 pounds of cigarette butts are discarded in the United States each year. Cigarette butts are composed of cellulose acetate, a plastic that can take many (estimated 2 to 25) years to decompose. Cigarettes contain over 165 chemicals that remain in the environment for long periods of time. Aside from the chemicals leaking into our environment, children and wildlife have been known to ingest this harmful litter. The "Hold on to Your Butt" program will distribute specially designed ashtrays to Hammonasset and Rocky Neck beaches.

"The visitors of these beaches will be handed cigarette butt holders when they stop at a state park gatehouse to pay their parking fee and they will be asked to return them as they pass the gatehouse upon their departure," says Beran. It is hoped that this program will noticeably reduce the level of cigarette-butt pollution on these two popular beaches and also raise public awareness of this problem.

Education is a key component in achieving the Chapter's goals. Utilizing the Surfrider Foundation's nationally recognized "Respect the Beach" program, the Connecticut Chapter will be educating students on the hydrological cycle. This classroom activity will teach children how the water cycle works, the connection between the mountains, sea and air, and how we can protect our water for future generations.

The Surfrider Foundation is a network of like-minded people who enjoy the social bonds that the Chapter creates. This means we have fun! We're planning social activities including surf movie nights, the Mystic May Day Celebration, a day cruise, a paddle out and impromptu beach trips. The Surfrider Foundation's Connecticut Chapter is dependent on member volunteers to affect positive change for the betterment of the environment. To get involved, contact Chapter Chair Andrew Krupa at ct@surfrider.org. Remember, we are all surfers in one form or another and the Surfrider Foundation keeps our waves alive. ♦

Other regional Surfrider Foundation chapters include New York City, Central LI, Eastern LI, RI, MA and NJ. surfrider.org

