

The Drop

SPRING 2026



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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

1,000 Victories, and Our Biggest Fight Yet

This spring arrives with both triumph and urgency. Surfrider is on track to achieve our 1,000th coastal victory – a milestone representing over four decades of grassroots power protecting our ocean, waves, and beaches. These victories aren't just statistics: it's public beach access protected, polluters held accountable, cleaner water, reduced plastic pollution, and communities empowered to defend the coasts they love.

During a year of relentless setbacks at the federal level, we did achieve some important wins that prove what we can accomplish together. Despite attempts to eliminate the BEACH Act, we secured level funding for beach water quality testing nationwide and protected critical programs, including National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and the Border Water Infrastructure Grant Program addressing the U.S./Mexico water crisis. These victories happened because hundreds of Surfrider activists met with over 120 congressional offices during our Coastal Recreation Hill Day, and thousands more demanded meaningful coastal protection.

But our biggest fight of 2026 remains: stopping the Trump administration's plan to open new coastal areas to offshore oil drilling. This plan would auction off nearly 1.3 billion acres of our public waters to the oil industry, which is already sitting on 1,800 unused drilling leases currently.

When the federal agency responsible for the drilling plans (BOEM) refused to hold in-person public hearings, Surfrider hosted our own People's Hearings. The result? Over 300,000 public comments – nearly all opposing the plan – from surfers, fishers, business owners, and beachcombers who all know Big Oil profits while coastal communities pay the price.

The ocean needs more friends, like you, to keep oil out of our ocean for good. So please share this issue of *The Drop* with a friend and help us grow our community so Surfrider can continue fighting for clean water, healthy beaches, and the communities that depend on them.

For the future of our ocean, waves, and beaches,

Dr. Chad Nelsen
CEO, Surfrider Foundation

MAKING WAVES

Offshore Drilling: Next Steps to Protect Our Coasts

By: Pete Stauffer, Ocean Protection Manager, and Zach Plopper, Sr. Environmental Director

In late 2025, the Trump administration announced plans to expand offshore oil drilling to nearly 1.3 billion acres of U.S. ocean. The proposal targets California's federal waters, most of Alaska's wild ocean, and much of the Gulf of Mexico, including waters off the Florida coast. Stunning in scale, the plan poses a looming threat to our marine ecosystems, coastal communities, businesses, and quality of life.

Public blowback to the drilling proposal was swift and loud. During the initial federal comment period, over 308,000 people submitted feedback, nearly all in opposition to new drilling. Surfrider's network fueled this response through inspired grassroots advocacy, organizing People's Hearings, and generating media coverage across the U.S. From surfers to anglers, from climate advocates to business owners, and from city councils to members of Congress, the message was clear: the public does not want new drilling off U.S. coasts.

What's at Stake

Offshore drilling is a dirty and dangerous practice that endangers marine ecosystems, disrupts coastal economies, and increases the risk of devastating spills. The industry causes serious environmental harm through every phase of the process – from exploratory seismic blasting that harms marine wildlife to the routine drilling

operations that pollute our ocean. On land, refineries that process the oil drilled offshore release toxic pollutants and disproportionately impact lower-income and communities of color.

New oil and gas drilling worsens the effects of climate change as our nation and world struggle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The effects of climate change are being felt across the globe, with increasing heat, hurricanes, floods, droughts, wildfires, rising seas, and ocean acidification affecting us all. New offshore drilling could result in billions of metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere, making the U.S.'s achievement of net-zero emissions by 2050 far less likely.

Next Steps to Protect our Coasts

To stop the administration's plan to ramp up offshore drilling, Surfrider is calling on Congress to permanently protect our coasts from this destructive practice. The drilling proposal has achieved the increasingly rare feat of uniting Democrats and Republicans in a common cause. From Florida to California to Alaska, lawmakers from both parties are speaking out against the plan as unnecessary and out of step with most American's interests. Surfrider is urging Congress to respond to this public opposition by passing legislation to prohibit new offshore drilling across all U.S. regions.



Left: Oil spill causes beach closure. Right: Surfrider chapters and clubs build opposition to new offshore drilling through community organizing and local advocacy.

During the initial federal comment period, over 308,000 people submitted feedback, nearly all in opposition to new drilling.

At the grassroots level, Surfrider chapters and clubs are building opposition to new offshore drilling through public education, community organizing, and local advocacy. Our network is urging local governments to pass resolutions against drilling to show bipartisan support for protecting our coasts. In recent months, we've helped pass resolutions in Islamorada, Sarasota, and Delray Beach, Florida, as well as San Diego, Santa Barbara, Monterey, and Humboldt Counties in California.

To build the business case against offshore drilling, Surfrider has launched Sign the Surfboard tours in Florida and California that highlight opposition from ocean recreation, tourism, and fishing industries. These sectors support 3.3

million jobs and contribute \$250 billion to our nation's economy each year, but depend on a clean and healthy coastal environment. With our partners, Surfrider has built regional alliances representing over 60,000 U.S. businesses opposed to new offshore drilling.

Daunting yet inspiring, this campaign has energized a movement of ocean lovers and users from across the U.S. It has leveraged all that makes Surfrider successful, from grassroots advocacy to savvy federal strategy. It is from the strength of the Surfrider network, the strong coalitions, and a motivated front of coastal defenders, that gives us confidence that our oceans will be protected for all.

AMBASSADOR PROFILE

Bruce Johnston

When did you start paying attention to the ocean?

My ocean interests started when I was a kid, growing up in Santa Monica and Malibu. I had no interest in the ecology of it all until I moved to Malibu. We would have these big storms in the winter — we still do — and all this ocean driftwood and junk would wash up on the beach. One day my dad and I pulled in an electric lawnmower from the shore break (minus the engine). That was my first taste of how man-made objects can unintentionally ruin the beaches. I was probably around either eight or nine years old, thinking “*What is this stuff?*”

What was your first memory of surfing?

Living in Malibu, we were 10 houses south of the pier, on the beach. I would always go up there, and guys would be surfing paddle boards that were 12 feet long with corks in them. Like the ones you would paddle to Catalina in a race. When I started seeing people standing up, I thought, “*Whoa!*”

My dad and I built my first “surfboard.” It looked more like a scarecrow. We took what I thought was a surfboard, barely the size of a shortboard, down to the beach. What do you think happened? It sank. We brought it back home and I believe we burned it in the fireplace.

The biggest shock of my ocean and beach life was the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara, which led to Earth Day. All of a sudden, my sport had been crushed by our greed for oil. I hitched myself to the eco train, and I’ve been on it ever since.

How did you first come to find Surfrider?

I asked around to find out who to call, when it was getting founded.

Was there a rumor that Surfrider was in the process of being formed?

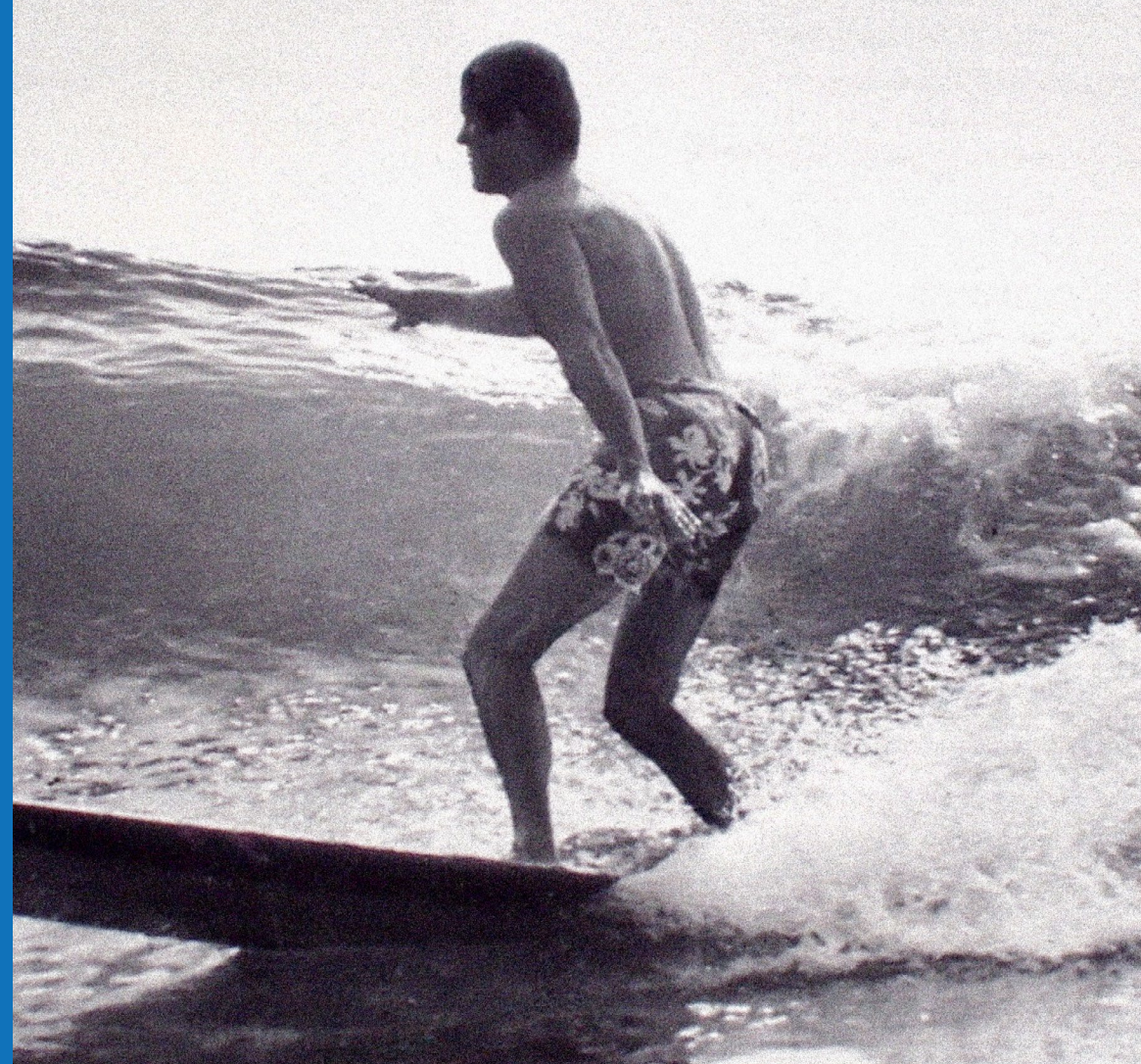
Yes. I was on the outside, being in the band, and somehow I got on the advisory board.

One of my old high school friends is also one of the founders, Lance Carson. There I am in high school, with my 9’0”, and he’s out there doing his tap dancing, up and down his board. When you get beyond high school and you become an adult, then have an organization to connect to, that’s a great feeling.

What are your favorite things about Surfrider?

One thing I love about the Surfrider Foundation is that it’s more than just surfing. It’s about what it takes to make the beaches clear and clean. I think the foundation came at the right time, although it should have come a lot earlier.

At least it’s had all these years now to spread the word. There are some very intelligent and passionate people that are volunteering their time, or working as staff. It’s a fantastic thing.



Little Dume Beach, 1967. (© Cyril Maitland)

You can get elementary school or high school kids down to the beach and say, “See these soft drink cans on the beach?” And they say, “Uh huh.” “Well, if we don’t dispose of them properly, they are going to be here for two or three hundred years, right on our beach.”

All of these little things add up to the power of Surfrider — the power of education, getting people to absorb it, and then act on it. Maybe that little kid will be walking down the beach one day, and he

or she will remember that advice from a Surfrider volunteer. They might just pick something up and go find a trash can — simple as that.

As I got older and became successful in the music business, I never lost my love for surfing. The biggest shock of my ocean and beach life was the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara, which led to Earth Day. All of a sudden, my sport had been crushed by our greed for oil. I hitched myself to the eco train, and I’ve been on it ever since.

How can music be a tool to protect our natural world, specifically our oceans?

The *MOM: Music for Our Mother Ocean* album is a perfect example. The artists that chose to contribute their work were a lot younger than me, but they jumped right into what Surfrider is all about. The album was a chance to show the world that musicians that you would never think had a connection to surfing and ecology actually did.

Can you tell me about your December 2025 fundraiser?

As an advisory board member, my assignment is to spread the word. I always give a little shoutout right after we sing "Surfin' U.S.A." I yell, "Support the Surfrider Foundation!" I live up in Santa Barbara, but the area is Montecito. The Beach Boys wrote a book, *The Beach Boys by The Beach Boys*, and we put it out two years ago. It's a coffee table book, and it's gorgeous.

Mattina Lloyd suggested, why don't we get some books together, go to the local Country Mart, see what we can sell in four hours, and donate proceeds to Surfrider? We bought the ones we could find online, signed them, and sold out! Most importantly, I was able to raise awareness of the foundation's mission.

Why do you feel like print media is still important today in this digital age?

Because you don't have to keep punching at a see-through screen to get what you want. You can turn the pages.

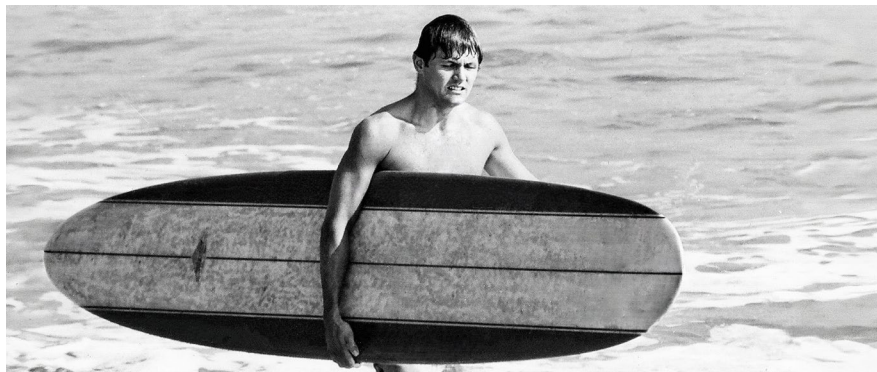
Where is your favorite place to surf?

I always thought Malibu was heaven. I still do. But sometimes it gets so crowded you can use people's boards like a plank to walk up to Third Point. So Malibu is #1, and Rincon is #2.

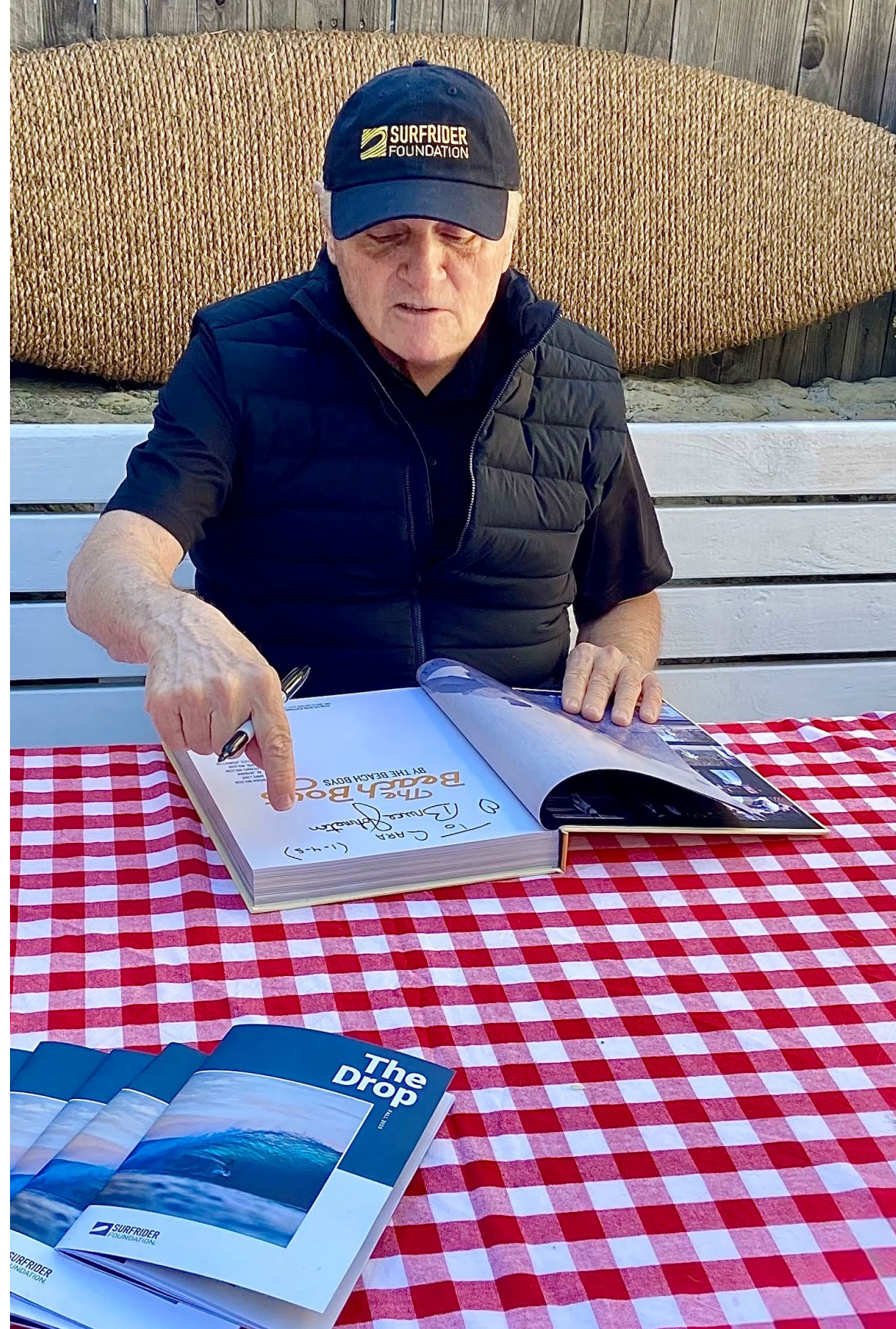
What advice would you give to the next generation, in terms of environmental advocacy — or life as an artist?

Ask your parents what they did, along those lines. The next generation might get a lot of good advice from the older generations' love for the ocean. If you were going into the movie business and asked my advice, whether you were a girl or a guy, I would say, become George Clooney. Why? Because he writes, he directs, he produces, AND he acts.

In the music business, it's the same way. People do more than just sing. In our funky business, if you put your head down and pay attention and move your talent around, you can be the kid that starts at 15 and still be doing it at nearly 84.



Above: Little Dume Beach, 1967. (© Cyril Maitland) Right: Bruce Johnston signs books to raise funds to support The Surfrider Foundation. (© Mattina Lloyd)



CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

Oregon Beaches Forever: Safeguarding a Legacy Under Threat

By: Charlie Plybon, Oregon Sr. Policy Manager

Oregon's shoreline is iconic: miles of wild sand, crashing Pacific surf, towering sea stacks, and a legacy of public access unique in the United States. Oregonians have the freedom to wander wherever they wish along all 362 miles of ocean beaches and rocky shores. Few citizens of other states enjoy this kind of unfettered access, ensured by our celebrated Beach Bill, passed by the legislature in 1967.

Today, however, this legacy is under threat. Not because anyone is scheming to take away our rights — at least, not directly. Yet human actions are threatening our beaches from both directions. We may retain our access to the shore, but in the coming years, our access along the beach could be lost. The Surfrider Foundation's Oregon Beaches Forever campaign aims to protect our beaches not just for today's visitors, but for generations to come.

A Storied Shoreline

Oregon's beaches are not merely scenic backdrops; they are the product of layered history, geological forces, and human determination to keep them open to all. Long before American settlement, Indigenous peoples — including the Tillamook on the north coast — navigated and cared for these lands and waters. As railroads reached the coast in the late 19th century, places like Seaside, Newport, and

Rockaway became tourist destinations, drawing crowds from inland cities eager for sea breezes and ocean views.

However, public access was far from guaranteed. In 1913, Governor Oswald West took an unprecedented step by having the Oregon Legislature declare the entire Pacific shoreline a public highway — a clever legal strategy that ensured access from the Columbia River to California. This early act set Oregon apart from neighboring states, where much of the beach remained private.

Despite this, loopholes persisted. The law technically protected tidelands (the wet sand zone), but not all the upland dry sand above the high-tide line. In 1966, a Cannon Beach motel owner fenced off dry sand for private use, triggering an uproar. Oregon's legislature responded with the landmark 1967 Oregon Beach Bill, which established that the public has a right to use the beach from the low-tide line to the vegetation line — effectively codifying the idea that the coast belongs to everyone.

The key principle isn't ownership, in the sense of property. Rather, our right to travel the shoreline is based on something deeper and older: the customary use that dates back to the region's tribal history and continued through European settlement. In Oregon, the beaches are common ground for everyone.



The Coastal Squeeze

Oregon's entire shoreline has been public long enough that we tend to take this access for granted. When contemplating a visit to the waves, we just think in terms of where we want to go, not where we are allowed to be. But our shoreline is now caught in what is known as the "coastal squeeze."

Sea level rise and increased storm surges, driven by climate change, are pushing waves and tides higher and higher, speeding up erosion and flooding the beach more frequently. On the landward side, many landowners are seeking to protect their property with shoreline armoring, such as seawalls and riprap revetments (structures made of boulders).

Over time, this will be a deadly combination. Hardened structures lead to increased erosion, both by deflecting waves onto adjoining shoreland and by causing scour at the front of the structure. At the same time, they deprive beaches of their natural sand supply. Higher seas and stronger storms pull sand offshore, but if nature is allowed

to take its course, they replenish the beach by mobilizing sand from bluffs and dunes as they move upslope. Deprived of this fresh sand supply, beaches will narrow, becoming inaccessible to people first at high tide, and then at lower and lower tide levels. Eventually, beaches may disappear entirely, as waves slap against solid walls and riprap forms artificial peninsulas protecting a handful of coastal property owners.

The desire of property owners to preserve their assets is understandable, and they can always rationalize that one seawall spanning a limited stretch of shore won't destroy the beach. But shoreline armoring has a cumulative effect, with each structure further accelerating the eventual erosion of entire stretches of the beach.

Loss of the beach wouldn't just be a disaster for Oregonians who love the coast. The shoreline is also habitat for a range of plants and animals, from snowy plovers to sand verbena to seals. Our beaches are especially critical to migratory shorebirds, as they stop over on their travels from hemisphere to hemisphere.



Extensive riprap placed on the beach in Neskowin, OR, make stretches of beach impassible. (© Rena Olson)



Chapman Point, OR. (© Mylasia Miklas)

Building a Movement for Change

In September 2024, the Surfrider Foundation launched Oregon Beaches Forever in partnership with Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition to address these modern forces — and we're already seeing results.

The campaign operates on multiple fronts: advocating climate adaptation at local levels, strengthening rules that govern ocean shore management, promoting nature-based solutions that nourish beaches instead of undermining them, and engaging the public in opposing harmful coastal development applications.

Together, community and legal engagement has halted proposed riprap in places like Lincoln Beach, Cannon Beach, and Yachats. Legislation passed in 2025 now requires the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to update rules for oceanfront and beach permitting to better enable nature-based solutions and alternatives to seawalls — a process underway right now. Updated comprehensive plans in three coastal

counties now require better planning for access, stronger considerations for alternatives to shoreline armoring, and improved science to inform development siting.

We don't profess to know what the best policies will be for Oregon in every circumstance. In other states and countries, various approaches are being undertaken, from outright buyouts of threatened properties to rolling easements and transfer of development rights. Our goal is to continue to study these alternatives and present them to Oregonians and local decision makers, so we can decide together how best to preserve our beaches in the era of climate change.

For generations now, Oregonians and their visitors have cherished Oregon's coast and public beaches. The ultimate goal of Oregon Beaches Forever is to ensure that this shared inheritance can be enjoyed by many more generations to come, and we urge all Oregonians who share our love for the Oregon coast to join us in this effort.

INITIATIVE SPOTLIGHT

Ocean Friendly Businesses: Surfrider's Secret Weapon for Fighting Plastic Pollution

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

There has never been a time when the Surfrider Foundation's Plastic Reduction initiative has been more pressing. Sadly, we are living in an era when the federal government has a soft spot for fossil fuel companies. Lobbyists have high hopes to ramp up crude oil extraction, the first step in manufacturing polymers that become plastic products. Not only that, the plastics industry is watering down policies and pushing false solutions like "advanced recycling," which does little to remove existing plastic from the environment. Despite the looming complexity of the situation, Surfrider has over twenty years of expertise on the topic.

Each component of Surfrider's Plastic Reduction initiative has a uniquely important role to play in the fight to end plastic pollution. Beach cleanups are our boots on the ground, logging the plastic trash that is found in our marine environments. Since 2015, we've removed over two million pounds of trash from beaches nationwide. Our policy work ensures that we have strong, equitable restrictions on unnecessary single-use plastic items for years to come. Since 2005, we've passed over 380 plastic reduction policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

Surfrider also has a "secret weapon" for fighting plastic pollution — the

Ocean Friendly Restaurants and Hotels Programs. Surfrider provides a straightforward framework to these Ocean Friendly businesses to reduce plastic at the source by eliminating certain single-use plastic items from their business model. The result is a community of eco-conscious businesses that we can lift up and celebrate as examples of success to inspire behavior and policy change. Currently, we have over 640 restaurants and 42 hotels participating in 32 states, plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Our Ocean Friendly Restaurants serve over 42 million single-use plastic-free meals, and our Ocean Friendly Hotels save 1.8 million water bottles and 2.8 million mini toiletry bottles every year.

Ocean Friendly businesses fill in policy gaps, strengthen campaigns, and showcase how reducing disposable plastic is good for business. We have over 50 businesses voluntarily participating in states that preempt local plastic ordinances. Where local plastic reduction policies have been passed, chapters uplift our Ocean Friendly Programs to ensure restaurants and hotels are compliant with the law. Surfrider has mobilized hundreds of Ocean Friendly Businesses to support plastic reduction policies at the local, state, and federal levels by signing comment letters and attending lobby days.



Top: Hotel Joaquin, an Ocean Friendly Hotel in Laguna Beach, CA. Bottom Left: Guests dine at Flying Fish Company LLC, a sustainable fish market and Ocean Friendly Restaurant located in Portland, OR. Bottom Right: Owners of Tropi Shack, an Ocean Friendly beach bar located in Pozuelo, Guayama, Puerto Rico.

Surfrider provides a straightforward framework to these Ocean Friendly businesses to reduce plastic at the source by eliminating certain single-use plastic items from their business model.

Finally, we feature participating businesses in case studies that show real-life examples of plastic reduction cost savings — *one Ocean Friendly Restaurant saves \$10,000 a year by switching from bioplastic cups to reusable cups for onsite dining.*

When customers eat at an Ocean Friendly Restaurant or stay at an Ocean Friendly Hotel, they get to experience what the world could look like without single-use plastic. Not as an abstract idea, but a

real, tangible possibility. Ocean Friendly Businesses are a way to present Surfrider's mission to new audiences in an immersive way. Food and travel bring people together, and what better way to advocate for healthy beaches than by enjoying a restaurant or hotel that prioritizes sustainable business practices?

Want to support an OFR or OFH in your area? Visit [surfrider.org/programs](https://www.surfrider.org/programs) for more information and locations.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Christina Blaustein

How would you describe your relationship with the ocean?

The ocean always brings me back to a Rainer Maria Rilke poem, "Let Everything Happen to You":

Go to the limits of your longing.

Embody me.

Flare up like a flame
and make big shadows I can move in.

Let everything happen to you:
beauty and terror.

Just keep going. No feeling is final.

Don't let yourself lose me.

My father was a sailor, and I spent much of my childhood racing the Eastern Seaboard with him. He introduced me to the ocean — though it feels less like an introduction and more like a gift. At a young age, I learned its scale and our lack of control. I learned its serenity, and that it held a connection to something profound.

As an adult, surfing deepened that relationship. The ocean recalibrates my sense of importance; it makes clear what matters and what doesn't. It is the only sport I have experienced that feels explicitly spiritual — even more than sailing (don't tell my dad). To paddle out is to enter on its terms, not mine.

If you fall in love with the ocean, I have learned, it will take you to the limits of your longing. It will show you beauty and terror. It will ask you to keep going when you are exhausted and to surrender to understand your limits. It will remind you that no feeling — fear, joy, triumph, frustration — is final.

What are some issues that are affecting your local ocean, waves, and beaches?

Some of the most pressing issues affecting my local Eastern Long Island Chapter center around coastal resilience. In Montauk, we are watching the shoreline move. Storms are stronger. King tides are higher. Over the past two years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has continued pumping sand onto downtown beaches as part of the Fire Island to Montauk Point project — widening the shoreline and rebuilding dunes to protect infrastructure. It buys time, but it is not a solution.

Pumping sand raises larger questions about how we adapt to a coastline that is actively changing. What does resilience look like when sea levels are rising and storms intensify? How do we protect homes and businesses without losing the very character, and access, that define Montauk's beaches and surf breaks?

At the same time, plastic pollution remains a daily threat. What washes up here is not unique to us — it mirrors what other chapters are seeing along their shores. Our Eastern Long Island Chapter understands that policy can have a far greater impact than individual commitment alone. If we don't reduce production or hold producers more accountable, we will be managing debris and pollution indefinitely.

Joining Surfrider felt like a way to ensure that my children, and their children, can experience this beautiful blue planet the way I got to.



Why and when did you get involved with the Surfrider Foundation? What led to you joining the board?

Ten years ago, I attended Surf Movie Night in East Hampton. Our local chapter opened the screening with a short Surfrider film called *The United States and Oceans of America*, and something in it caught me off guard. It had never fully dawned on me that we have more ocean than land — and that protecting it requires collective action. The scale of it, and the responsibility, felt immediate.

I walked up to the chapter chair that night and asked if I could volunteer. The next thing I knew, I was on the executive committee and running Surf Movie Night for the next three years. From there, I was invited to serve on the New York Leadership Council. After several years with that group, I was asked to join the board.

Joining Surfrider felt like a way to ensure that my children, and their children, can experience this beautiful blue planet the way I got to. When my kids ask me why I always have to go to California for a board meeting, a beach cleanup, or a chapter meeting, I tell them, “I want you to remember me fighting for this.”

What is the most important thing you tell others about Surfrider?

There are a few highlights about the Surfrider Foundation I can't emphasize enough: first, we aren't just for surfers. Yes, we were started by a group of passionate wave riders, but today we are one of the most impactful ocean conservation organizations in the country. With a professional staff of nearly 90 people, more than 200 local chapters and student clubs across the country, Surfrider does what a traditional environmental organization

simply cannot. We pass bills, laws, and ordinances. We support community resilience planning. We secure legal wins from one end of the country to the other. Grassroots is truly our superpower. The scale and consistency of our policy and legal victories speak for themselves.

We are also home to one of the largest volunteer-based beach water quality monitoring programs in the world. Through the Blue Water Task Force, volunteers collect critical data that informs policy, protects public health, and strengthens legal protections for our ocean and coasts. I have sat on many boards and volunteered with many organizations. Too often, once you get under the hood, you find lack of focus, disorganization, or leadership challenges. Having been under the Surfrider hood for some time now, I can say this with confidence: Surfrider is a clean, efficient engine. We have serious, focused, ethical leaders at the wheel and an inspiring team of scientists, environmental professionals, legal experts, and volunteers who push this work forward every day. They are the reason I keep fighting.

Finally, in a time when community can feel like it's dissolving, Surfrider consistently shows up as a community. Our local chapter meetings, Hill Day in D.C., and regional events make members feel connected to something larger than themselves — and to work that matters. Whether it's passing a local plastic bag ban, paddling out with new friends, watching an inspiring film with neighbors, or supporting high school students finding their voice as the next wave of leaders in the fight against plastic pollution, Surfrider has always felt to me like a place to build relationships and build impact at the same time.



Top: Simakakang Island, Tuapejat, Mentawai Islands. Bottom: Ventura County Campaign Coordinator, Paul Jenkin, along with our national Board of Directors on a walking tour of Surfers' Point Managed Retreat Project — a model for coastal resilience through nature-based solutions.

What keeps you motivated and inspired as a conservationist during an era of ongoing attacks to the environment?

My first reaction is that I don't feel like I have a choice — this work matters too much. That doesn't mean I don't have low days. I do, and I feel like that's saying something because I tend to be solution-oriented and optimistic. But my kids are a huge inspiration. I want my legacy to them to be that I tried to protect the places and waters I love.

When I feel depleted, I look to leaders like Chad Nelsen, our board, our incredible staff, and the network of volunteers and activists who show up every day. I am intentional about finding energy in small wins as much as big ones. Movement in nature is often a domino, a pattern, a

spiral — one small wave (yes, I'm going to use that metaphor) can ripple out in much greater ways.

Volunteers show up to restore native plants, monitor beach water quality, lobby for stronger plastic reduction bills, and more. Who am I to lose steam when they keep their heads and hearts in the fight? I have to remember what the ocean taught me — proportion, resilience, and clarity about what matters. That fear and triumph can exist at the same time. That we can't control outcomes, but we can choose to participate. That no feeling is final. So I pick up the trowel, the vote, the poster and I get back to work. I look at one win and I pour that energy into the next thing, the next opportunity, the next fight worth having. Because we are in this together.

THE OCEAN NEEDS MORE FRIENDS

SURFRIDER IMPACT

Cultivating the Next Generation of Surfrider Members & Leaders

By: Chris Casey, Membership Manager, and Carolyn Curtin, Sr. Student Network Coordinator

Across the philanthropic sector, one thing is clear: Generation Z, or those born between 1997 and 2012, is reshaping how social and environmental change happens. Research shows that today's students are less interested in traditional institutional pathways and more motivated by hands-on action, shared values, and a sense of belonging. They want to participate, lead, and witness tangible impact.

At the Surfrider Foundation, our grassroots model ticks all those boxes, with our Student Club Network being a perfect example. The network exists to meet young people's growing demand for opportunities to influence environmental action in their communities and on high school and college campuses. Through service projects, policy advocacy, and leadership development, students don't just support Surfrider's mission — they help drive it.

The results speak for themselves. What began as just 16 student clubs in 2008 has grown organically to 170 active clubs across the U.S. and Puerto Rico during the 2024–2025 school year. What's more, these student-led clubs engaged nearly 10,000 students across our network.

All Surfrider clubs participate in and lead a variety of events in their communities, such as beach cleanups, restoration projects, plastic reduction initiatives, water quality monitoring, and educational outreach activities. At the University of Hawai'i at

Mānoa, students removed more than 2,400 pounds of debris from local waterways. With that hands-on experience as their guiding light, they helped inform public testimony supporting statewide plastic reduction policies. This is what Gen Z philanthropy looks like in practice: direct action connected to positive changes in our communities.

Civic engagement is another cornerstone of Surfrider's student work. For many participants, Surfrider lobby days are their first-ever experience engaging directly with policymakers. In 2025, students made up 39% of participants at Surfrider's Federal Coastal Recreation Hill Day, and student participation in state lobby days increased by 150% compared to the previous year. These experiences build lifelong skills, from public speaking to relationship-building, while reinforcing that young people belong in decision-making spaces.

Leadership development doesn't stop at graduation. Surfrider intentionally supports a pipeline from student clubs into our chapter network, where emerging leaders continue their involvement as volunteers, organizers, and advocates.

What began as just 16 student clubs in 2008 has grown organically to 170 active clubs across the U.S. and Puerto Rico during the 2024–2025 school year.



Top Left: Surfrider student club leader Jarelys N. Merle Crespo plants a mangrove along the Puerto Rican coastline. (© Nicole Holman Creative) **Top Right:** Beach cleanup hosted by club members at Christopher Newport University in Virginia. **Bottom:** Chapter and student club members in Sacramento on California Ocean Day 2025.

Carolyn Corley's journey reflects this pathway. After volunteering with Surfrider in high school and serving as a leader with the University of San Diego Student Club, she transitioned into a leadership role with the Florida Keys Chapter, where she now helps coordinate volunteers and community events.

Jess Kotrick followed a similar path. After leading a student club in North Carolina, she moved to Maine and stepped into multiple chapter leadership roles — coordinating beach cleanups, supporting policy advocacy, and helping organize regional conferences. For both, Surfrider provided continuity during major life transitions, offering a familiar community and meaningful opportunities to lead.

To further support that transition, two years ago Surfrider began gifting a one-year membership to graduating college club members. This intentional gesture helps keep young leaders connected as they leave campus, reinforcing that Surfrider is a coast-to-coast family that was born from their participation as students.

At a time when nonprofits are searching for ways to engage the next generation, Surfrider's Student Club Network offers a clear lesson: cultivate belonging first. When young people are trusted with real responsibility and invited into meaningful action, philanthropy becomes more than a donation — it becomes a lifelong commitment.

ACTIVIST PROFILE

Jessica Clark With the Cape Fear Chapter

When and why did you choose to get involved with the Surfrider Foundation?

I joined Surfrider in 2024 to meet like-minded people and to make a positive impact on my community through my skills as a marketing coordinator. When the chair position opened up in early 2025, I was happy to step in. I remain in that position today!

What Surfrider projects have you been involved with? How have these projects impacted your community?

This past year, with the help of our awesome Cape Fear Chapter leadership team, I launched a surfboard recycling program where damaged, unridable boards could be dropped off at different locations along our coasts. A team of local artists is given a board to bring new life to it through painting, sculpture, or other art mediums. These boards will be displayed and available for auction at an upcoming 2026 Cape Fear Surfrider event.

Additionally, our team's ALL (Aquatic Love and Learning) in the Water program addresses the legacy of historical inequities that have prevented marginalized communities in our region from safely enjoying our beloved waterways. We seek to strengthen participants' connection to

and appreciation of water by offering free summer camps to our youth who have never had the opportunity to enjoy our ocean and beaches as they deserve.

Have you had any experiences or been involved in campaigns where social justice and environmental movements intersected?

One common misconception is that sustainability is only about pollution or climate change, when in fact it also addresses socioeconomic challenges, community wellness, and societal injustice. It is all interconnected in ways that scientists, community organizers, and many other professionals across the country can quantify every day.

What can Surfrider do to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment?

By continuing to eliminate barriers for systemically marginalized communities to enjoy and advocate for our ocean and beaches. When we start asking the right questions of the right people, with intention and a willingness to learn, grow, and be humble, we can break down the walls that prevent so many of our fellow Americans and the global community from feeling the power of connection and gratitude for this planet we call home.

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REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

The Power of Restoration: Protecting Trestles for Generations to Come

By: Alex Ferron Mignogna, Coastal Adaptation Manager

It's a unique and wonderful thing to dig your hands through the sandy soil of land that has been stewarded and held sacred for millennia.

Each month at Trestles, Surfrider volunteers do exactly that — remove invasive plants, restore native habitat, and protect a coast that has endured centuries of change. Led by California State Parks staff and accompanied by San Onofre Parks Foundation members, they march down the scenic access road toward Uppers or Lowers, not with surfboards, but with gloves and spades, ready to untangle invasive plants from the scrub brush, making space for native plants to thrive. This is Surfrider's Climate Action Program happening in real time, and Surfrider volunteers are writing the next chapter at Trestles.

Panhe, as Trestles is known by the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation, was and is a sacred site, as well as a vital point of trade and community gathering. This stretch of coast has survived the arrival of Spanish missionaries, Mexican rancheros, WWII military operations, the threat of a toll road in the early 2000s, and relentless pressure from developers to pursue profit in Southern California. Preserved as a natural space by Camp Pendleton, then protected as a State Park and saved for good by the historic Surfrider campaign

and coalition to "Save Trestles," it remains one of the few undeveloped coastal areas in the region — home to one of the last unchannelized natural streams where native steelhead still spawn.

But protection isn't passive. It takes work to maintain what remains, and the fight to save Trestles is far from over. Invasive vegetation like South African iceplant now colonize native habitat. This poses a major problem for the protected and endangered species that call this area home. Whether they crawl, walk, or fly, the insects and animals here have been evolving alongside every specific native plant, on which they are now mutually dependent. When those plants disappear, so does the chain of life they support.

Native plants also do something invasives can't — they build resilience into the landscape itself. They send roots down to incredible lengths, their leaves capture sand, and they allow dunes to shift with the beach while maintaining their integrity. If you like sandy beaches, especially as stronger waves and higher tides batter the coast with increasing frequency, this resilience matters more than ever.

In 2025, 250 Climate Action Program volunteers at Trestles removed over 6,000 pounds of invasive plants, and natives are already naturally filling in with vigor. The



Volunteers participate in recurring monthly restoration events and beach cleanups at Trestles. (Top Left: © Aaron Lieber, Top Right and Bottom: © Alex Ferron Mignogna)

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hands-on stewardship at Trestles directly supports long-term shoreline resilience planning underway next door at San Onofre State Beach's Surf Beach, where engineers, scientists, and community members are collaborating on nature-based solutions to address the erosion and climate impacts that currently plague San O. Restoration builds momentum, understanding, and most importantly, it builds trust — between people and place, and among the many groups working to protect this coast for generations to come.

The Climate Action Program offers a way to root in land and give back to a place that gives us so much. Whether with waves, wildlife, refuge, or joy, Trestles has always been generous. Showing up to care for it isn't just an act of service, it's an act of love, and of continuing a story that's been unfolding here since the beginning of time.

And the story is far from over. Want to learn more or find events in your area? surfrider.org/programs/climate-action

WEAR YOUR SUPPORT

We've brought back our highly sought Drilling is Killing collection. Proceeds from sales will keep our ocean clean and protect it from the harms caused by new offshore drilling.

SHOP.SURFRIDER.ORG



PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

A Conversation with Faherty on Accountability, Authenticity, and Action

By: Janie Overland, Partnership Activations Coordinator

At a time when environmental conversations ebb and flow between catastrophe and complacency, Faherty's co-founder Kerry Docherty is committed to a different outlook. By refusing narratives of greenwashing or despair, she remains grounded and acknowledges the fashion industry's innate extractiveness while insisting we can and will improve. "The clothing industry is inherently extractive and unsustainable. We have found that the only way to exist in it is to be in partnership with organizations, individuals, and communities who dream of and show up in better ways," Docherty said.

Faherty's support for the Surfrider Foundation will mark its 10-year anniversary this year. Their hands-on participation from company leadership, staff, and retail teams has measurably supported programmatic impact and demonstrated that incremental action leads to greater change. When Surfrider chapters collaborate with Faherty stores on events, the consistent result is warmth, inclusion, and genuine enthusiasm enjoyed by all. Quoting Joan Baez, Docherty notes, "Action is the antidote to despair."

Tell the truth, try your best, and keep showing up and doing the work, regardless of whether you're getting credit for it or not.

Docherty rejects the notion that individuals should feel responsible for the degradation of the natural world, especially regarding plastic pollution. "By design, huge corporations that are responsible for the majority of pollutants have put the onus on individuals to distract from who the biggest perpetrators are," she said. To drive permanent protections, Surfrider has been advocating for Extended Producer Responsibility laws on a state-by-state basis across our network since 2020.

In the end, Docherty's philosophy, which is at the core of Faherty's business model, is straightforward: "Tell the truth, try your best, and keep showing up and doing the work, regardless of whether you're getting credit for it or not." This simple ideology, practiced wholeheartedly, has the potential to drive positive change in the industry.

Now more than ever, Docherty's message resonates distinctly. Not because it ensures easy solutions or denies hard facts, but because it reminds us that we're united not just by shared values, but by the beautiful messiness of being human. That messiness — with all our limitations, contradictions, and daily decisions — also presents the possibility of meaningful change. The question isn't whether we're perfect. It's whether we keep showing up.



GUEST FEATURE

If You're Not a Friend of the Ocean, What Are You Supporting?

By: Leyla Yalman and the 72andSunny team

We've always been friends of the ocean. But with much more dangerous and imminent current threats, the ocean needs more friends than ever. So we set out to create a bold, irreverent new campaign to turn apathy toward our ocean into action.

The Foundation

Surfrider's *The Ocean Needs More Friends* platform launched internationally in 2023 as a rallying cry to urge one million supporters to defend our coasts, fight plastic and water pollution, and confront climate threats.

But as the impacts of these threats became more and more egregious and pronounced, we pivoted to a louder voice to shake people out of their indifference. We did so by inviting them, in surprising ways, to join Surfrider.

The purpose wasn't to shame people. We wanted to jolt them into self-awareness. So we asked a question that flipped passivity into accountability: *If you're not a friend of the ocean, what are you supporting?*



Billboards pop up across Los Angeles featuring provocative messaging, teasing a shocking vision for LA's beaches.



Stickers slapped across the original billboards redirect viewers to Surfrider's real rallying cry: "If you're not a friend of the ocean, what are you supporting?"

Meeting the Moment with Snark — and Clarity

The campaign was designed to stop people in their tracks with snarky fake headlines, disarming imagery, and an alarmist design system to garner attention.

In Venice Beach, wildpostings greeted tourists and locals alike. A turtle with a plastic bag in its mouth, exclaiming, "Honk If You Hate Sea Turtles." A sea otter covered in oil, shouting, "Suck it Sea Otters."

A week later, we "tagged" our own work with Surfrider-branded messaging, prompting people to reconsider their relationship with the ocean while asking them to join Surfrider — and become a friend of the ocean.

We also launched a series of absurdly fake URLs, like "someone-else-will-pick-up-that-trash.org" and "i-heart-microplastics.org" that, when visited, redirected you to [surfrider.org](https://www.surfrider.org) to become a friend of the ocean.

What began in Venice spread to Miami's waterways, the Staten Island Ferry, and ultimately Times Square, bringing the message to some of the most visible public spaces in the country, where people least expect to be reminded that their apathy toward our ocean is a big part of the problem.

Creatives, surfers, and influencers, including voices like @ChadGoesDeep, amplified the campaign through their own perspectives. As the snark spread, so did awareness.

Beyond impressions and likes, there were clicks. Pledges. New sign-ups. In total, the campaign generated 45 million impressions and 700,000 social views,

moving people from passive scrolling to active engagement. People started asking not just what it means to be a friend of the ocean, but what they could do to help.

Collaboration Fueled by Curiosity

This campaign was made possible by a deeply trusted partnership between Surfrider and 72andSunny. Together, we pushed ourselves, and the work, to be as head-turning and shocking as possible.

The impact of this campaign affirms the value of sticking to bold ideas and creating work that matters. It shows that heart, integrity, and impact can still earn industry respect. More importantly, it fuels momentum for what comes next.



What began in Venice spread to Miami's waterways, the Staten Island Ferry, and ultimately Times Square. (Top Right: @ Allie Duke)



Campaign ad is displayed at Times Square on Black Friday weekend. (© Philip Cotty)

Surfrider and 72andSunny showed up with curiosity and trust, creating space for experimentation, humor, and bold ideas. We riffed, collaborated, and pushed each other to go a little further and a little deeper. All in service of a shared goal to drive real impact for the sake of our ocean.

That trust allowed the work to be honest, unexpected, and ultimately effective. It reminded us why we do this in the first place — not to be seen, but to make a difference.

The Ocean Needs More Friends, Always
Indifference didn't appear overnight, and it won't disappear overnight either. But every new friend, every pledge, and every click that turns into action is a step toward a more engaged and conscious community. The ocean is bigger than any one campaign. Its health depends on all of us showing up, not once, but consistently as a habit, a choice, and something worth defending. And if you're reading this, you've already taken the first step. So, ask yourself again: If you're not a friend of the ocean, what are you supporting?

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ARTIST PROFILE

Monika Mira

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

I'm an artist and an ocean conservationist. I hold a degree in Marine Science from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and have been blessed with the opportunity to work on a number of conservation projects here in Hawai'i. I have been fortunate enough to be able to combine my two passions — art and ocean — into my craft and use it as a tool to inspire action.

When was the first time you visited the ocean and what was it like?

When I was a kid, my uncle owned a trailer near Malibu, where we visited often. My dad called me Monika Fish because I could stay in the water all day. There is something magical about just being in the water that brings peace to my soul. It's like an extension of my being, and if I haven't been able to get into the water for a while, I get really fussy!

What inspires you and the art you create?

I used to write and illustrate educational marine life coloring books. About ten years ago, I came across an organization called Washed Ashore that creates large sculptures out of marine debris, and their work inspired me to do the same. Since then I have pivoted to working almost exclusively with marine debris. Now, a random piece of trash, like a diesel jug, may just inspire me to create a boxfish.

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

I like to dispel myths about the origin of the marine debris that we find in Hawai'i. This floating garbage is not from Hawai'i but is inherited from all over the Pacific via the Gyre. I like to encourage others to advocate for corporate responsibility. If the largest plastic producers and distributors could change their packaging habits, and become more involved in the circular economy, we could make a meaningful difference.

How do you feel that art can inspire environmental advocacy?

When something beautiful and unusual catches someone's attention, it opens the door to the conversation. I also enjoy teaching the process, so that my students can really get their hands dirty and have a story to tell about their individual art project. Community art projects are extremely powerful because the participating artists become their own advocates and I love to see what they can do to carry the message forward.

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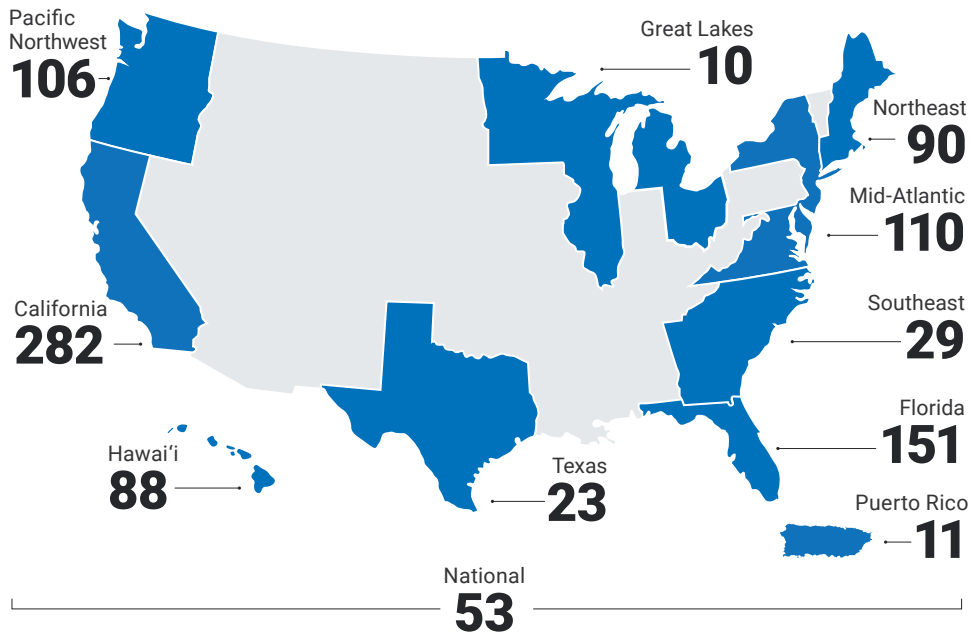


Coastal Victories

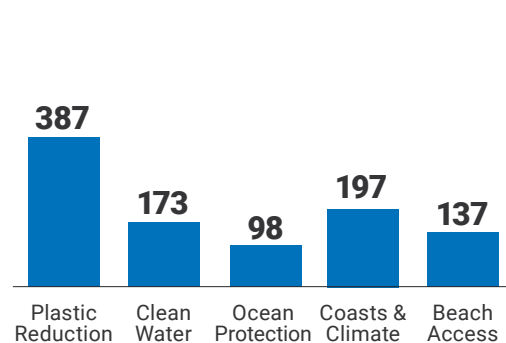
A coastal victory is a decision made in favor of the coastal and ocean environment that results in a positive conservation outcome, improves coastal access, or both. For more information visit surfrider.org/campaigns.

997
Total Victories
Since 2006

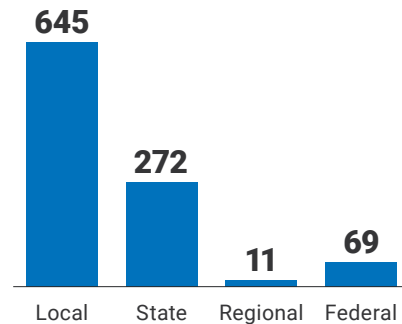
VICTORY LOCATION



VICTORY TYPE



VICTORY SCOPE



LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY

Help advance the protection of our ocean, waves, and beaches for future generations. Contact us at LEGACY@SURFRIDER.ORG about planned giving.

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