

# The Drop

FALL 2025







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

# From City Halls to Capitol Hill: Surfrider's Multi-Scale Strategy

This year has brought more than its fair share of challenges for our coasts and ocean. At the federal level, the actions of the administration and Congress have undermined efforts to protect marine habitats and better manage our coastlines for a changing climate. In response, the Surfrider Foundation has mobilized our network to defend against federal attacks, while advancing important coastal and ocean conservation efforts at the local and state levels. Our ability to work at all levels of government — from city councils to state capitals up to the halls of Congress — is a unique strength of Surfrider that is crucially important right now.

In response to threats from the federal level, Surfrider has stepped up to oppose offshore drilling, support agencies like NOAA and the EPA, and work to ensure our federal marine protected areas remain intact. During our Coastal Recreation Hill Day in May, Surfrider volunteers and staff from 27 states and territories met with over 120 congressional offices to discuss the importance of protecting our nation's coasts and ocean.

At the same time, our focus on local and state-level conservation is working. In total, Surfrider has 37 coastal victories this year, including 15 state-level legislative wins ranging from plastic pollution reduction policies in Oregon, Washington, and

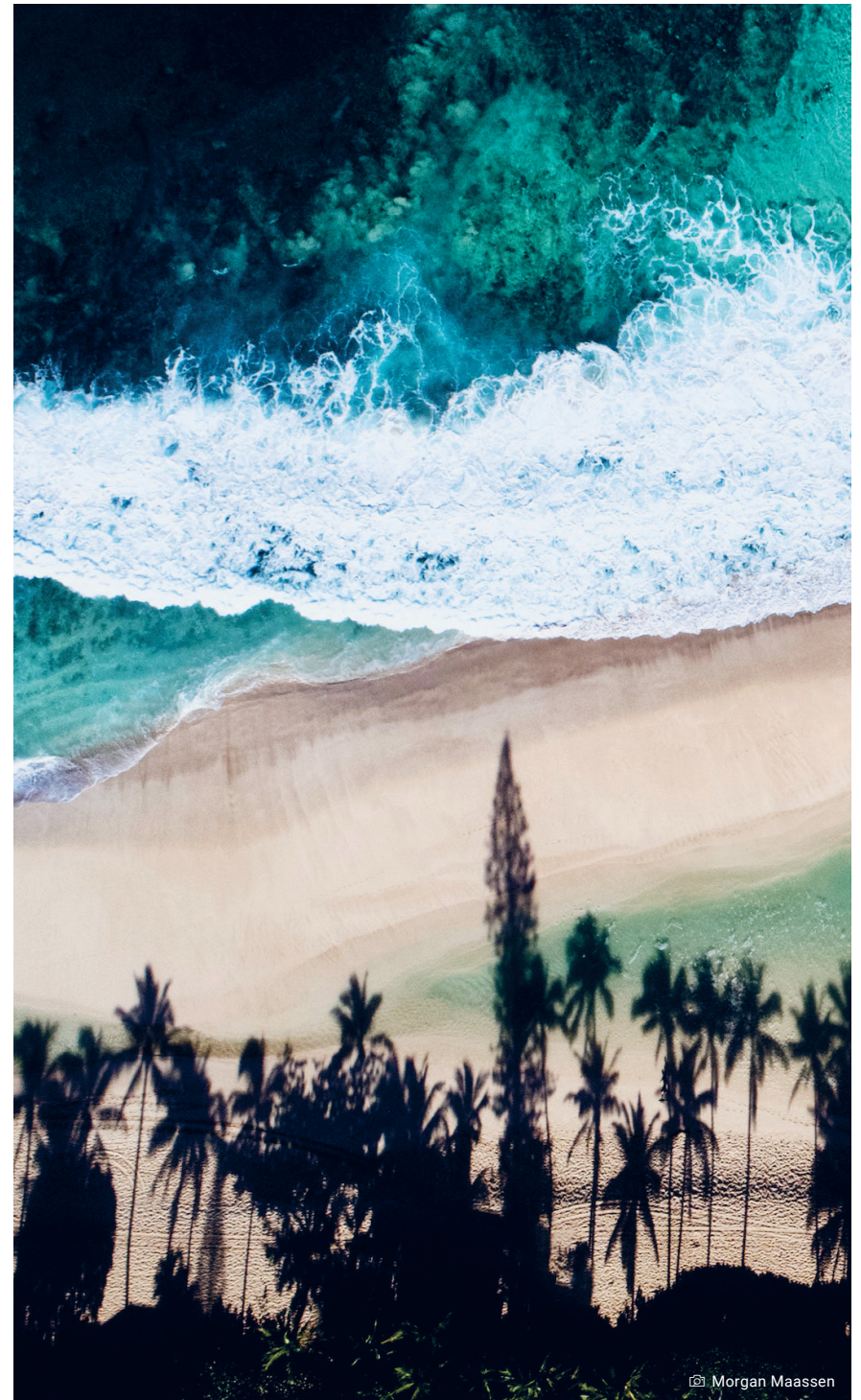
Virginia, to fighting bills that would weaken the Texas Open Beaches Act, to protecting Florida's State Parks. Our Climate Action Program, launched last spring, is thriving, empowering chapters and clubs across the country to take action. This initiative aims to restore coastal habitats, making our coasts more resilient to climate change impacts while sequestering carbon.

While we do our best to stem the destructive policies coming out of D.C., there is a lot of good work that can and is being accomplished in our states and cities. That said, one thing is clear: we need more friends of the ocean. Now, more than ever, we need more ocean activists to step up and use their voice to create the public pressure that will ensure that, over the long run, our elected officials and their appointees at all levels of government stop exploiting our coasts and ocean and start protecting them. It's up to us to create the groundswell of public pressure to force our elected leaders to recognize our favorite places as the incredible and irreplaceable resources that they are.

Thank you for your support of Surfrider,



Dr. Chad Nelsen  
CEO, Surfrider Foundation



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## MAKING WAVES

# Planting Hope: Nature-Based Climate Solutions in America's Most Vulnerable Coastal City

By: Emma Haydocy, Sr. Manager Coasts & Climate

Miami is known for its year-round balmy temperatures, crystal-clear tropical waters, and vibrant nightlife. It is also ground zero for the impacts of climate change, with much of the international tourism destination sitting at or below sea level. Nearly 60% of the city is estimated to be submerged by rising seas by 2060, including its iconic white sand beaches and more than \$3.6 trillion in assets. City residents and tourists alike already experience the impacts of sunny day flooding, unbearable heat, and extreme weather events, which are worsening each year.

Local officials have developed ambitious plans to defend the city from encroaching seas, such as retrofitting and elevating private property and critical infrastructure, building seawalls, and installing pump stations to keep floodwaters at bay. Unfortunately, these approaches have left Miami's beaches even more vulnerable to disappearing altogether.

Surfrider's Miami Chapter has been working with the City of Miami since 2006 to implement nature-based solutions for coastal resilience and protect local beaches from the impacts of sea level rise and climate change through a robust dune restoration

program. Volunteers have removed invasive species that degrade the health of the dune ecosystems while planting native sea oats and dune grasses that provide critical storm surge, flooding, and erosion protection benefits along Miami's shorelines. Over the past decade, the chapter has partnered with the City of Miami Beach to restore more than 10 acres of coastal dune habitat, installing more than 3,000 native plants.

Building on this strong history of implementing nature-based solutions, Surfrider launched its Climate Action Program with a dune restoration event in Miami Beach on Earth Day 2024, in recognition of more than a decade of partnership for coastal resilience along Miami's shores.

The Climate Action Program is Surfrider's hands-on coastal restoration program that serves as the first line of defense against the impacts of climate change along our shores. The program celebrated its first year of incredible success from coast to coast in April, engaging more than 2,000 volunteers across 16 chapters nationwide, planting over 55,000 native plants, removing 10,000 pounds of invasive species, and restoring more than 20 acres of vulnerable coastal habitat.



Surfrider volunteers pose for a photo following a successful dune restoration event hosted by the Miami Chapter.

*Over the past decade, the chapter has partnered with the City of Miami Beach to restore more than 10 acres of coastal dune habitat, installing more than 3,000 native plants.*

Surfrider's Climate Action Program was born from decades of coastal restoration work along some of the most vulnerable stretches of beach in the country, and has seen astronomical success since its inception last year. Miami Beach is just one of many coastal cities and communities where our chapter network is activating to shore up natural defenses against the impacts of climate change along our beaches.

Surfrider is celebrating the tremendous success of the first year of our Climate Action Program, and working toward ambitious goals to plant over 15 million native plants and restore 1,000 square miles of coastline by 2035.

Learn more about the Climate Action Program and the Miami Chapter at [surfrider.org/programs/climate-action](https://surfrider.org/programs/climate-action) and [miami.surfrider.org](https://miami.surfrider.org).



## CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

# A Major Win for Clean Water: Washington's Sewage Spill Right to Know Law

By: Mara Dias, Liz Schotman, and Peter Steelquist

Since our founding over four decades ago, Surfrider has had a long history of fighting for clean water. Sadly, the reason why we have such a long history is that coastal water quality is always under threat. Stormwater, urban and agricultural runoff, industrial discharges, and sewage cumulatively play a role in the degradation of the water we swim, surf, and play in.

Despite that, Surfrider is on the frontlines, sounding the alarm when necessary to ensure public health is put first. In coastal states and territories across the

*This year, Surfrider's Washington chapters celebrated a coastal victory for clean water with the passage of the Sewage Spill Right to Know Bill (SB 5450) by the state legislature.*

country, local chapters are leveraging their programmatic work to address inconsistencies in public notification of pollution events. This year, Surfrider's Washington chapters celebrated a coastal victory for clean water with the passage of the Sewage Spill Right to Know Bill (SB 5450) by the state legislature.



Blue Water Task Force volunteers collect and test water samples in the Evergreen State.

A not-so-fun fact: sewage spills and infrastructure failures release over 900 billion gallons of untreated sewage into surface waters across the country every year. Raw and undertreated sewage can contain bacteria, viruses, and parasites that make people sick with gastrointestinal symptoms, rashes, skin and eye infections, flu-like symptoms, and even more severe conditions like hepatitis.

With climate-related sea level rise and more extreme weather events, water infrastructure failures and sewage spills

occur dozens of times annually in Washington. Although spills must be reported to the Department of Ecology (DE), accessing this information can be challenging for the public. Previously, if you wanted to access that data, you would first have to figure out the correct jurisdiction and then submit a public records request to determine the location of the spill. The passage of SB 5450 will require the DE to create an online portal where anyone can see if there has been a spill in their area that might affect their health, recreation, or the environment.



From left to right: Surfrider's Olympic Peninsula Chapter's Communications Coordinator Emily Simmons, Washington Policy Manager Peter Steelquist, Washington & Alaska Regional Manager Liz Schotman, and the Olympia Chapter's Blue Water Task Force lead Joseph McGee.



This bill enjoyed unanimous bipartisan support because our network was able to leverage our work to show lawmakers that clean water is a priority for communities in Washington. This included volunteer-sourced Blue Water Task Force data from across the state, providing concrete evidence that Washington's waterways and beaches contained unsafe bacteria levels at certain points of the year. A big shout-out to the South Sound Chapter's BWTF Coordinator, Stena Troyer, who submitted testimony highlighting the importance of transparent, timely communication of sewage spills.

As the bill was being discussed in the legislature, it was agreed that it was the state's mandate to make sewage spill information that they were already collecting easily accessible to the public. The original intent of the bill was to have the Washington Department of Ecology create a map that showed a sewage spill within 24 hours, but due to a massive budget shortfall, we had to settle for an online information portal that allows NGOs like Surfrider or local communities to aggregate this information on their

own. Moving forward, the state is open to having discussions about creating a comprehensive map and a real-time interactive communications platform.

This bill came together as a result of Surfrider's leadership in the Washington Environmental Priorities Coalition, and leveraged the contributions of other local groups, including Washington Conservation Action, the Seattle Aquarium, and Puget Soundkeeper, to unify a diverse set of voices around our common goal of clean coastal water for everyone in the state of Washington.

Thanks to this victory, Washingtonians now have stronger protections and better access to information about when and where spills happen. We will have better tools to make informed decisions about when and where we can safely play in our waters, without the danger of raw sewage, fecal coliforms, or nasty brown floaters. Finally, other coastal states across the country can look to the passage of SB 5450 as an example of what can be accomplished when communities come together to demand water quality transparency.



(Left) BWTF volunteer collects a water sample. (Right) Stena Troyer of the South Sound Chapter poses with a Surfrider sign in Tacoma, Washington.



## ACTIVIST PROFILE

# Acxel Herrera-Ibarra

### What is your current role with Surfrider?

I'm on the Executive Committee for the San Diego Chapter with various roles: Volunteer Coordinator, Imperial Beach Site Captain, and Blue Water Task Force Core Volunteer.

### What Surfrider projects have you been involved with and how have they impacted your community?

I have worked on Blue Water Task Force-related projects regarding water quality and testing, tabled events that inform the public and showcase our work, been the Imperial Beach Site Captain for beach cleanups, and attended the Surfrider San Diego Chapter Delegation for Virtual Hill Day 2024.

### Do you have any personal experiences when the social justice and environmental movements have intersected?

I am passionate about access to clean water and its intersection with public health — especially how it impacts at-risk communities.

We need healthy bodies of water so that we can continue to thrive as humans, but also so that our ecosystem doesn't fall apart and suffer the consequences of our inability to act. The health of wildlife, as well as our own, is important to preserve for this generation and the next.

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

Continuing to remain inclusive and emphasizing the mission and core beliefs of staying true to our coasts is a good way to go. Also, continuing to include the public and equipping them with information and resources is essential.

Everyone has been welcoming, open to ideas and opinions, and helpful in fostering my growth through different learning opportunities and activities. I got involved with BWTF because of the openness and willingness of my team leads, as well as their ability to listen to my concerns and opinions.

### What has been the highlight of your Surfrider experience?

Learning more about how environmental health can influence human health. Thanks to this impactful experience, I submitted my graduate studies application in Public Health to San Diego State University and was admitted. MPH in Environmental Health/Latin American Studies here I come!

*I am passionate about access to clean water and its intersection with public health — especially how it impacts at-risk communities.*





## INITIATIVE SPOTLIGHT

# More Than Pollution: Plastics' Silent Attack on Human Health

By: Miho Ligare, Senior Plastic Pollution Initiative Manager

Plastic is everywhere — from the deepest depths of the ocean to the highest mountain tops — and it's also being found in our bodies. Although a relatively new field, research is continually emerging about tiny pieces of plastic found in various parts of the human body, including the brain (Nihart

et al. 2025), kidneys (La Porta et al. 2023), heart (Yang et al. 2023), and reproductive organs (Hu et al. 2024).

With plastic products so prevalent in our daily lives, it's no real surprise that they're ending up in our bodies. But what are the risks, and what can be done?



### Impacts of Plastics on Human Health

Similar to how plastics harm our environment and wildlife, the chemical composition and characteristics of plastics make them toxic to our bodies.

First, plastic particles continuously break down into smaller and smaller fragments, also known as micro- and nanoplastics. As plastic particles degrade, fragments can more easily enter the human body through ingestion or inhalation of airborne particles — with the average American now consuming and inhaling five grams of microplastics per week, the equivalent weight of a credit card (Dalberg & University of Newcastle, World Wildlife Fund, 2019).

Second, plastics often contain chemical additives to create characteristics like durability and flexibility. A plastic product

*As plastic particles degrade, fragments can more easily enter the human body through ingestion or inhalation of airborne particles — with the average American now consuming and inhaling five grams of microplastics per week, the equivalent weight of a credit card.*

can contain up to 16,000 different chemical additives, such as Bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates, which can leach out of plastic products into the environment as well as our food and water, especially when exposed to heat. Chemicals associated with the production of plastics have been linked to cancer, chronic inflammation, organ damage, developmental issues, metabolic disorders, reproductive problems, and cardiovascular disease.



## Reducing Plastic in our Environment and Bodies

Fortunately, there are ways to reduce our exposure to microplastics, from policy changes to individual actions. Overall, the most effective solution is to reduce plastic pollution at the source by addressing its overproduction in the first place.

Surfrider advocates for policies that create meaningful change to prevent plastic pollution, from single-use product bans to more complex policies like extended producer responsibility (EPR). Most recently, Surfrider helped pass the Washington Recycling Reform Act (WRRRA), an EPR law that places the responsibility of a product's disposal back onto the producers and manufacturers, rather than leaving consumers and municipalities to bear the costs.

This law increases access to recycling across Washington, incentivizes the use of non-toxic packaging, and develops a reuse fund. Packaging producers will pay into the reuse fund, which will then go towards investments in infrastructure needed to implement a robust reuse system. This was a monumental victory, taking over six years, and a tireless and collaborative effort by Surfrider's grassroots activists, staff, and partners.

"The passing of this bill is a testament to the power of partnerships, and we would not be celebrating this victory without the multiyear, collaborative effort of so many individuals, groups, and coalitions," said Peter Steelquist, Surfrider's Washington Policy Manager.



On February 6, activists gathered in Olympia for the annual Washington Environmental Lobby Day. © Mallori Pryse



Switching to reusable drinkware and steel storage containers reduces your exposure to microplastics, commonly found in single-use plastic bottles and packaging.

Everyday actions can also help reduce your exposure to microplastics. Choosing non-plastic reusable products and shifting away from disposable plastic water bottles and packaging is a great start. You can also reduce exposure by avoiding microwaving food in plastic containers and instead using glass, wood, or metal kitchen items.

Plastics come with a significant price tag to human health, and we're just

beginning to scratch the surface in our understanding of these true costs. What is becoming increasingly clear is that the current overproduction and reliance on plastics are not only harming our environment, but they are also harming our own health. However, we have the solutions, both big and small, and Surfrider is working towards a healthier future free from single-use plastics.



## ORGANIZATION PROFILE

# RISE New York

### **RISE is a fixture in the Rockaways.**

#### **What lit the spark?**

RISE (Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability & Equity) began in 2005 as the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance, when longtime resident Jeanne DuPont saw an overlooked shoreline and envisioned a living classroom. Early programs like Shore Corps and Living Classroom turned the beach and bay into open-air science labs, while the space beneath the elevated A-train became a farmers market and gathering place. In 2016, we rebranded as RISE to capture a broader goal: pairing ecological restoration with community health and equity.

#### **How is climate change affecting the Rockaways?**

Rockaway is New York City's first line of defense against the Atlantic. Superstorm Sandy flooded the entire peninsula, and today, high tides flood streets even on blue-sky days. Rising seas, hotter

summers, and stronger storms threaten entire communities and strain residents who often lack air conditioning.

#### **How are your programs meeting that challenge?**

Our Dune Restoration Program restores local dunes by removing invasive species and planting natives to restore a stronger, natural storm buffer and richer, more biodiverse habitat. A 12-member Dune Squad monitors the secondary dunes and seeds our new native plant nursery so future projects can rely on locally adapted stock.

The youth are integral to RISE's programs. Shore Corps engages high schoolers year-round in plantings, cleanups, and coastal science; the Environmentor program pairs students with scientists for independent research; and finally, our beekeeping initiative teaches the value of pollinators while producing a little neighborhood honey.



From left to right: Surfrider's Climate Action Program Manager Carla Avila-Martinez, RISE's Programs Manager Alana Danieau, and RISE's Public Programs Coordinator, Juvie Anne Alfesche.



Surfrider and RISE staff and volunteers installing native plants during a collaborative dune restoration event.

#### **How has the partnership with Surfrider evolved?**

Surfrider volunteers were already our neighbors, so collaboration began organically about twelve years ago with beach cleanups. Today, Surfrider's Climate Action Program supports our Dune Restoration Program by helping engage volunteers and funding planting events when possible, including a NYC Climate Week Dune Restoration event.

#### **How does your organization work to create an environment that is welcoming to all?**

The Rockaways is among the nation's most diverse coastal communities. We collaborate with schools, businesses, faith-based groups, and civic groups in multiple languages to ensure every Rockaway voice is heard and every resident can help lift our community. Together, we're proving that resilience work can uplift both people and place.

*Today, Surfrider's Climate Action Program supports our Dune Restoration Program by helping engage volunteers and funding planting events when possible, including a NYC Climate Week Dune Restoration event.*



## REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

# From Crumbling Parking Lot to Thriving Beach: Historic Surfers' Point Project Nears Completion

By: Bill Hickman, Sr. Regional Manager Central California

For over thirty years, Surfrider's Ventura County Chapter has been advocating for a nature-based solution to help protect the waves and recreational activities at Surfers' Point. In late 2024, construction began on phase two of the managed retreat project – which got its start more than 30 years ago – to relocate an asphalt path and parking lot inland. In May of this year, the bulk of the work was completed, and the new multi-use path was opened for pedestrians and cyclists. All that remains is to plant native dune plants this autumn and to complete the new Ventura County Fairgrounds parking lot.

Surfrider embarked on this journey to protect Surfers' Point because planners paved over paradise many years ago by building the Fairgrounds and parking lot

on the dynamic rivermouth delta, and a multi-use path and promenade too close to the ocean. Meanwhile, the Matilija Dam, built in 1947, traps sand and cobble that should be migrating down the Ventura River to help naturally replenish Surfers' Point.

Relying on armoring like seawalls or riprap (like big rocks and boulders) exacerbates coastal erosion, typically leading to beaches being eroded completely. Even worse, any permanent structure on a beach will cause waves to reflect back toward the lineup at higher tides, negatively impacting the quality of how the waves break. With that, Surfrider determined that managed retreat would be the best solution to ensure a prosperous future for Surfers' Point.



This aerial image shows the scope of the restoration project, including the newly opened bike and pedestrian path.

It took over a decade of advocacy from the Ventura County Chapter to get approval and funding for phase one of the restoration project, near the top of the point and rivermouth. The long list of stakeholders who were needed to buy into the novel concept of managed retreat included the Ventura County Fairgrounds Board of Directors, the Ventura City Council, the California Coastal Conservancy, and the California Coastal Commission. A big, early hurdle was educating the community about the need for this type of solution, especially given the revolving door of newly elected board members and council members over the many years of planning.

The first phase of the project was only half completed in 2011, due to limited funding. Despite that, phase one continues to be a success story as the new dunes have absorbed the biggest winter storms and sizable swells, performing as designed to protect the

relocated multi-use path. That success quickly turned the focus to advocating for phase two of the project on the remaining portion of the Fairgrounds property. Despite the success of phase one, planning, approvals, and funding for phase two took nearly as long to weave through the bureaucratic process.

Since the groundbreaking in the autumn of 2024, the local chapter has been tracking progress, and Surfrider's Ventura Campaign Coordinator, Paul Jenkin, has been giving walking tours highlighting various aspects of the project. As was crucial during the fundraising period of phase one, it's been equally important to continue educating the community about the need for this type of nature-based solution. Jenkin, who has been involved with the campaign since its inception, noted, "This type of project takes a long time, but with constant pressure, we can truly make a difference in protecting and restoring our local beaches."



(Left) Coastal erosion at its worst. (Right) A restored coastline, featuring native plants, at Surfers' Point.





# ANOTHER REASON WE'RE FRIENDS WITH THE OCEAN

THE OCEAN NEEDS MORE FRIENDS

 **SURFRIDER**  
FOUNDATION.

📷 Allegra Hutton



# How Local Wins Create National Change for Ocean Protection

By: Chris Casey, Membership Manager

For more than 40 years, the Surfrider Foundation has worked to protect our ocean, waves, and beaches for all people through a powerful grassroots activist network. With chapters across the country, Surfrider has built a unique advocacy model that empowers local volunteers to influence policy from city halls to state capitols to the halls of Congress — and, when necessary, in court.

This structure provides Surfrider with a rare ability to effect change on multiple levels of government simultaneously. While the current federal administration supports many policies that conflict with Surfrider's positions on climate action, offshore drilling, plastic pollution, and resource protection, our chapters are continuing to consistently achieve victories where we can: in local communities and state legislatures.

## Taking Action in Washington, D.C.

At the federal level, Surfrider leverages its nationwide network through coordinated events like our 2025 Hill Day, "From the Coast to Congress." Dozens of volunteer "Ocean Champs" from across the country met with their congressional representatives, delivering a unified message: protect clean water and public health, ensure healthy communities and economies in the coastal zone, and prevent new offshore drilling.

By sharing personal stories of local beaches and waterways, these citizen advocates, including many young leaders from Surfrider's Student Club Network, connected national issues directly to the communities legislators represent, helping to advance coastal protections even in a challenging political environment.



On May 6, environmental advocates met in Sacramento for the 20th annual California Ocean Day.

## State Victories with Lasting Impact

Surfrider's state-level advocacy demonstrates how focused grassroots activism translates into landmark policy wins. In Connecticut, chapters helped secure a statewide ban on neonicotinoid pesticides across 500,000 acres of grass lawns and golf courses, a critical step for pollinator protection and watershed health. In Virginia, advocates celebrated the implementation of a polystyrene food container ban, protecting waterways from toxic plastic foam and supporting healthier communities. Meanwhile, California chapters launched the "Love Your Beach Tour," a coastwide initiative fostering local stewardship while building momentum for statewide environmental action. And these are but a few examples among many, many more. Collectively, Surfrider's chapters have achieved 37 victories so far in 2025 alone, from coastal resilience projects to plastic pollution prevention, proving that local activism can generate sweeping statewide results.

## Local Victories, Global Relevance

Many Surfrider campaigns begin with hyperlocal issues that directly impact community health and environmental quality. In Northfield, New Jersey, activists

successfully stopped plastic pollution from a construction site, preventing harm to local waterways. In Annapolis, Maryland, grassroots efforts are reducing plastic use citywide. On Kaua'i, Hawai'i, local advocates forced a halt to sewage dumping into the ocean at Wailua, protecting marine ecosystems and community recreation. These victories, while local in scope, address universal environmental challenges and are building public support for broader regional and national reforms.

## A Network That Delivers Results

Surfrider's chapter-based model is its greatest strength: a flexible, locally grounded structure with national reach. This network empowers volunteers to engage at the level where they can have the most immediate impact, while connecting their work to broader state and national campaigns.

Whether lobbying Congress, passing state laws, or solving local pollution problems, Surfrider's activists are proving that passionate, informed, community-driven advocacy can and does change policy — and protects our ocean, waves, and beaches for generations to come.



(Right) Student Club Network Manager Ryan Cruse holds a surfboard containing signatures from thousands of Surfrider supporters and politicians that oppose offshore oil drilling.



## DONOR PROFILE

# Natasha Leggero & Moshe Kasher

### How would you describe your relationship with the ocean?

**Natasha:** I didn't see the ocean until I was 23. So it's relatively new to me, but Moshe loves surfing so much, I love the ocean on his behalf because it puts him in a good mood. It's like a massive, wet antidepressant.

**Moshe:** I do love to surf — it's the only thing I've ever genuinely sucked at that I kept doing. My entire life, if I ever got any negative feedback whatsoever from any activity, I would quit instantly and never try it again. But with surfing... it's been years and... I still suck. But somewhat less! The fact that I haven't quit is a source of endless fascination to me — there's gotta be some deep spiritual meaning to it, but I haven't figured it out yet.

**Natasha:** Our daughter is in surf camps and is growing up by the beach. She's learning about the cycle of life and death and seasons and pollution and beauty and nature, all from the shores of our local beach. It's a magical classroom.

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

**Moshe:** The main issue I see with my local break is massive jealousy from the other surfers. Every time I park and head towards the beach, I get dudes pulling their sunglasses down and staring at me, whistling at how impressive I am. Babes are always asking if they can put sunscreen on my shoulders. Stuff like that.

**Natasha:** That's all 100% true, but there's also the issue of offshore drilling near us being resumed after a ten-year pause, and red tides coming more often and more severely. We saw so many dead seals and dolphins this year; it was really sad.

### Why and when did you get involved with the Surfrider Foundation?

**Moshe:** Mostly through surfing, but then learning about the deeper work the foundation does with ocean advocacy, I realize how vital the work you guys are doing is.

**Natasha:** I love forcing billionaires to build pathways through their backyards. But even more than that, I respect the tireless work you're doing to protect the health of our ocean.

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

**Moshe:** Of all the non-profit advocacy groups out there, you have the freshest merch.

**Natasha:** When I'm thinking about giving back, I always waver between trying to help kids and help the earth — what you are doing helps both. The ocean is a playground, and it's also a massive responsibility.

**Moshe:** And Surfrider takes that responsibility seriously. We have taught our daughter about beach cleanups because I started doing them at a Surfrider event. Now she and I have little trash grabbers that we bring to the beach together and clean up as a family.



*I love forcing billionaires to build pathways through their backyards. But even more than that, I respect the tireless work you're doing to protect the health of our ocean.*

### What keeps you motivated and inspired to protect the ocean?

**Moshe:** Paul Watson says it best, "If the ocean dies, we die," and we can't seem to effectively accept that truth. We think the ocean is a limitless resource that can take any amount of abuse and never sicken, never stop giving. It's like that book, *The Giving Tree*, except if we drill and heat the ocean down to a stump, it's not just a sad story — it's the end of our story.

### Describe your individual experiences of competing on *Wheel of Fortune*. Were you nervous? Did you do any studying to prepare?

**Natasha:** How can one study for *Wheel of Fortune*? They didn't do word puzzles at the acting conservatory, so I just tried my best and... it wasn't good enough. I lost, so maybe I'll let Moshe answer.

**Moshe:** I got exactly zero dollars in the first two rounds, so I certainly felt like an idiot. But then I had a wild comeback victory and felt vindicated in front of my ex, Vanna White. To be totally honest, I was only on the show because Wiz Khalifa cancelled. So, thank the blunt smoke that Surfrider made \$100k.



## PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

# Surf Industry Members Association with Executive Director, Vipe Desai

### Can you describe the motivations behind the SIMA Environmental Fund?

The SIMA Environmental Fund was born alongside the Waterman's Ball in 1989, created to celebrate the founding of the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association (now the Surf Industry Members Association) and the unification of surf brands under one trade association. From the start, the idea was simple: throw a great party for the surf industry and use it to raise money to protect the ocean.

Thirty-seven years and over \$10 million in donations later, we're still committed to that founding mission.

### What role do you envision SIMA having in the future of the ocean and coastal conservation movement? How does SIMA's Environmental Fund and leading organizations like Surfrider work together?

SIMA plays a vital role in uniting the surf industry around shared environmental goals. As a trade association responsible for supporting the business of surfing, we bring together brands that not only depend on a healthy ocean but also shape culture, innovation, and consumer behavior. The SIMA Environmental Fund channels this collective influence into real impact by supporting nonprofit organizations doing the hard work on the ground and in the water.

We partner with leading organizations like the Surfrider Foundation by providing funding, visibility, and industry support. The groups we support lead essential efforts in advocacy, education, research, and activism, and SIMA helps fuel that work through grants raised at the Waterman's Ball. We see this as a team effort: we raise the resources, they drive the mission forward. Together, we ensure the surf industry doesn't just benefit from the ocean, it actively works to protect it.

### What is the biggest environmental challenge facing the surf industry — and what changes would you like to see in the next five years? What positive changes have already happened?

Every day, we learn more about the environmental impact of our industry. The challenges go beyond beach access, sea level rise, plastic pollution, and overdevelopment. Brands are actively working to reduce this footprint and increase sustainability measures throughout the supply chain, but it's a huge challenge when the entire industry depends on a clean, healthy ocean for survival.

One of the most positive shifts I've seen is how the SIMA Environmental Fund has helped brands discover their own paths to supporting groups like Surfrider directly.



We've demonstrated, by distributing over \$10 million in grants, that giving back isn't just good for the planet — it's good for business.

The SIMA Environmental Fund was supporting nonprofits before it became mainstream. Many of our industry leaders are lifelong surfers who understood early on that protecting the ocean is just as important as running a business. That's real leadership and something everyone in the industry and every surfer should be aware of. SIMA is more than a trade association; it's a force for protecting the ocean that keeps our sport, culture, and industry alive.

### What role should small surf shops play in environmental stewardship?

Every surfer's journey begins at a surf shop, and specialty retailers are the frontlines of surf culture, and that includes environmental impact. I believe every surf shop should be a member of the Surfrider Foundation.

They should also lead or support local beach cleanups, work with local chapters on environmental issues, and step up as business advocates in their coastal communities when needed. Surf shops are pillars of their communities. They can, and should, be leaders in local stewardship.



**Why and when did you get involved with Surfrider?**

My involvement with Surfrider started in 1991 when I owned a surf shop. Local Surfrider supporters would come in asking for donations or prizes for their events, and I was always happy to help. Looking back, I'm proud to have witnessed Surfrider's growth and impact for our oceans and our industry as a whole, and even prouder to now support the organization at the national level.

**What has been the highlight of your experience working with Surfrider?**

The biggest highlight was being invited to serve on Surfrider's Board of Directors from 2004 to 2010. I learned so much about the organization and the passionate people behind it. My favorite moments came between the formal board meetings, when local chapters would present their work to us. Those encounters deepened my respect for grassroots activism.

Surfrider's leadership also helped me find my voice in advocating for the ocean. They guided me in bringing an economic perspective to lawmakers during Recreation Hill Day in Washington, D.C.



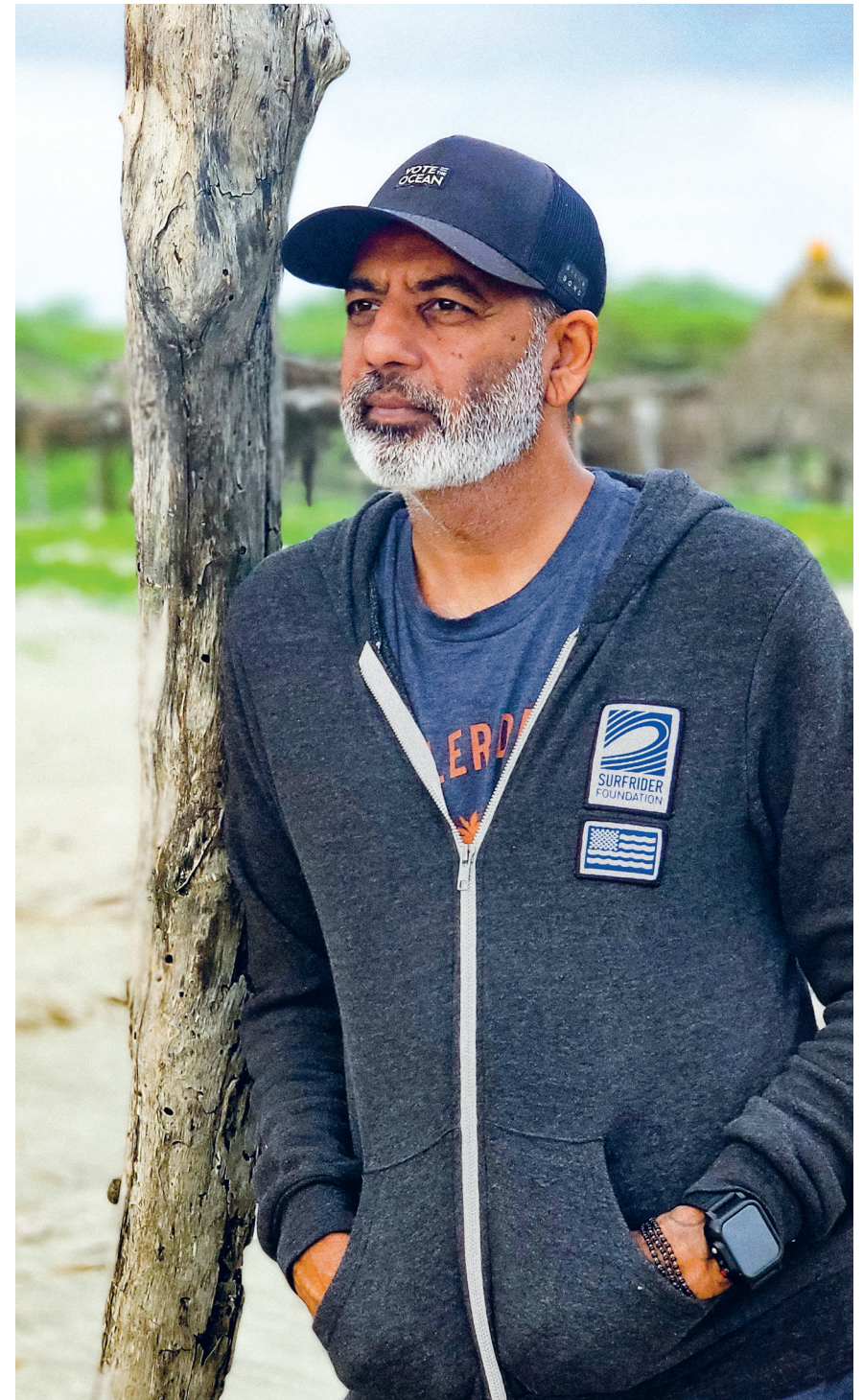
From left to right: Vipe Desai, Surfrider's first ambassador Shaun Tomson, 2023 WSL Champion and Olympic Gold Medalist Caroline Marks, Vissla's CEO Paul Naude, and Surfrider's CEO Chad Nelsen.

I truly feel like I'm a product of Surfrider, from supporting my local beach to standing before members of Congress on behalf of the surf industry and coastal communities.

**What's the most important thing you tell others about Surfrider?**

Perspective matters. Are you looking through a microscope or a telescope? If you're looking through a microscope, it's easy to get overwhelmed by the doom and gloom around ocean health issues. But when I started caring about the ocean in 1991, people used to laugh at those who picked up trash at the beach or voiced their concern about protecting the ocean. Today, it's a badge of honor. If you're not doing something for the environment, you're the one out of touch.

Yes, the ocean still faces serious threats. But in the more than four decades that I've been active, I see more people, more brands, and more organizations stepping up than ever before. Things have gotten better, but the work is far from done. That's why we can't slow down. We have to double down. From my perspective, through the telescope, we've made significant progress, and now's the time to fight for our oceans even harder.





# WEAR YOUR SUPPORT



100% of profits fund our mission to protect our ocean,  
waves, and beaches for generations to come.

[shop.surfrider.org](https://shop.surfrider.org)





## GUEST FEATURE

# Jeremy Jones: From Cape Cod Grom to Climate Action Advocacy

Growing up on Cape Cod, my life revolved around traditional sports. All that got turned on its head when I found skateboarding. There were no rules; it was lawless and wild. I loved the freedom and creativity. Soon, surfing followed. It was less punk rock but also wild and free. Learning to ride waves was the hardest thing ever. To succeed required being really in tune with nature. It was in this process that my connection and love of the environment started.

Living 45 minutes from rideable waves, there wasn't really a community to show me the way. So my friends and I decided to teach ourselves, even though we had no idea what we were doing. The water was so cold that we put spring suits over full suits

and stole rubber gloves from the football team. We knew nothing about winds, tides, or equipment. It took forever before any of us made it down the line on a clean face.

Being kids, it was natural for us to look up to the older, local rippers, even though we were too scared to talk to them. As is common in board sports, you can learn a lot by watching and emulating others, so we studied everything they did. I distinctly remember that they all had Surfrider stickers on their cars. I had no idea what Surfrider was — all I knew was that I wanted in. The connection came through surf mags, where I learned that the organization was devoted to protecting our ocean, surf breaks, and coastlines from developers and pollution.



By this point, I was 14 and completely obsessed with the ocean and mountains. Discovering the mission behind Surfrider's work made me realize that protected wilderness doesn't just happen — it's the result of people fighting to keep the environment clean and undeveloped. That led me to take my first action as an environmentalist — I wrote a check and proudly became a Surfrider member. I wanted to be part of the solution, not the problem. A protector, not a plunderer.

Looking back now, it's crystal clear that Surfrider played a pivotal role in inspiring me to start my own nonprofit, Protect Our Winters. My life is hyperconnected to the mountains and snow, and I was seeing firsthand what scientists were talking about — shrinking glaciers, warming winters, climate change.

By the mid-2000s, I had my name on over 40 snowboard products and wanted to donate royalties to a climate organization. I asked my friend Marco Gonzalez, a lawyer who worked with Surfrider, where I should send my check. Two weeks later, I got a response saying, "The outdoor community is doing nothing on climate. You need to start something." I had zero interest, but he was right. A year later, in 2007, while sitting in the rain in Jackson, Wyoming, I started Protect Our Winters.

Since entering the conservation space, I've realized that success comes from a unified group of people pushing for a common goal. Collectively, what we call the "Outdoor State" is a massive industry — bigger than the gun industry, pharmaceuticals, and others. But we're not leveraging that economic power effectively.





Jeremy Jones prepares to meet with legislators in Washington D.C.

We need to stop operating in silos and start building coalitions. When surfers, snowboarders, climbers, hunters, and anglers all speak with one voice, politicians listen. We need to coordinate our messaging, share resources, and mobilize our collective membership base. The outdoor industry employs five million people and generates \$1.2 trillion in economic activity — that's real political leverage if we use it right. We also need to make the business case for environmental protection. Now more than ever, it's vital we show lawmakers that healthy ecosystems drive tourism, create jobs, and sustain entire communities. When we can demonstrate that protecting the places we love also protects their economies, we capture their attention in a way that pure activism sometimes cannot.

Throughout my journey, there have been moments when feelings of hopelessness inevitably arise. My antidote to that is simple — action over apathy. We need large-scale systemic change. My advice

*When surfers, snowboarders, climbers, hunters, and anglers all speak with one voice, politicians listen. We need to coordinate our messaging, share resources, and mobilize our collective membership base.*

to anyone who wants to get involved is to plug into an organization that resonates with you and work towards making policy-level change.

The best recent example is when Congress tried to sell our public lands through the Trump administration's "Big Beautiful Bill." Dozens of groups, including Surfrider, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, POW, and others, organized members to flood their elected representatives' offices with calls and letters. It worked. Days later, the sale was removed from the bill. We owe it to future generations to act. That's when we'll see real change with the urgency the climate crisis demands.





## ARTIST PROFILE

# Sachi Cunningham

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

I'm a filmmaker, writer, water Director of Photography, and Professor Emerita of Multimedia Journalism at San Francisco State University.

Bodysurfing is my first love, which led me to water surf photography, which I've been doing for 28 years now. I've focused my lens on surfers outside of the mainstream, and prefer waves that challenge me physically and mentally — my home break of Ocean Beach in San Francisco, and Mavericks in Half Moon Bay.

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

I grew up far from the ocean, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My parents are both from Southern California, so I was fortunate to be exposed to Capistrano Beach for two weeks every summer as a child.

My first wave riding was with my body and on an inflatable mat. I remember never wanting to get out of the water. The beach equaled pure bliss, so by the time I was an adult, I made sure I had access to the ocean 24/7. I've built my life around surfing, so I would say those early years made quite an impression.

### What inspires you and your photography?

I'm inspired by the majesty and awe of deep water and big waves. I'm also inspired by underdog surfers and new narratives that challenge stereotypes.

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

I am a huge advocate of the mental health benefits of the ocean. The ocean has taught me how to surrender to the pain of losing my mother to cancer at a young age. It helped develop my resilience and grit after two hospitalizations for bipolar disorder when I was in my 20s, and helped me be comfortable with discomfort when I was diagnosed with cancer in my 40s. We need a healthy ocean so that we can thrive as humans living in very challenging times.

### Do you feel that surfing is becoming more welcoming and diverse? Why is accessibility important? How can surfing improve at inviting others in?

I do think that surfing has become more inclusive and diverse. I think surfing can continue to improve developing a welcoming culture by celebrating the people and stories that have been overlooked in the past. Representation matters — you can't be it if you can't see it! My current documentary feature, *SheChange*, is about four female big wave surfers and their fight for pay equity in the World Surf League. I'm aiming to have the film premiere in early 2026.

*I think surfing can continue to improve developing a welcoming culture by celebrating the people and stories that have been overlooked in the past. Representation matters — you can't be it if you can't see it!*



Sachi Cunningham, self portrait.





David Economos



Bianca Valenti



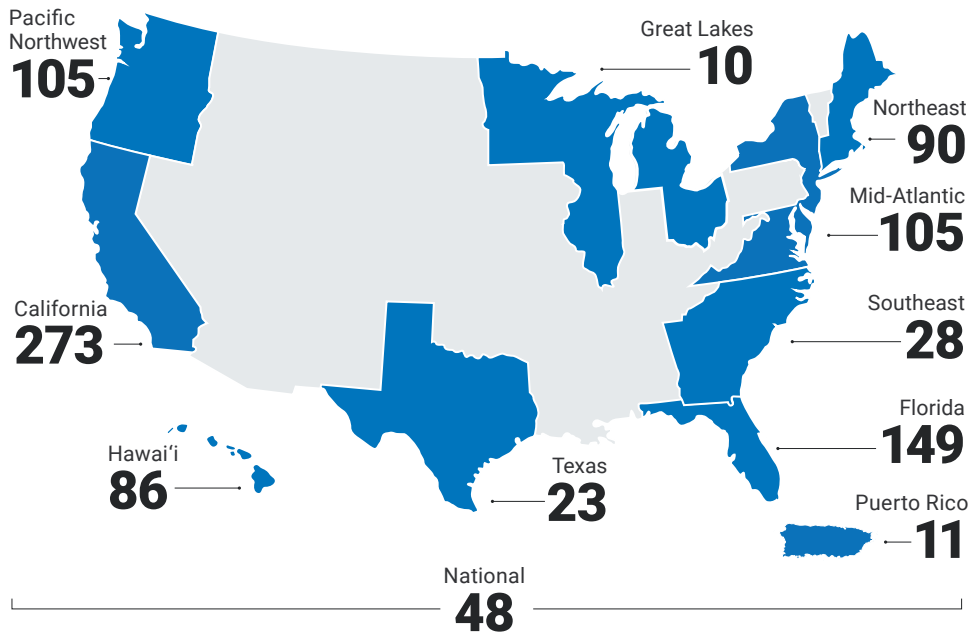
# Coastal Victories

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](https://surfrider.org/campaigns).

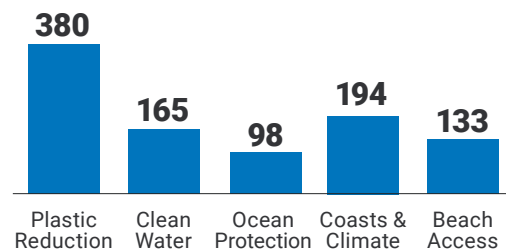
# 975

Total Victories  
Since 2006

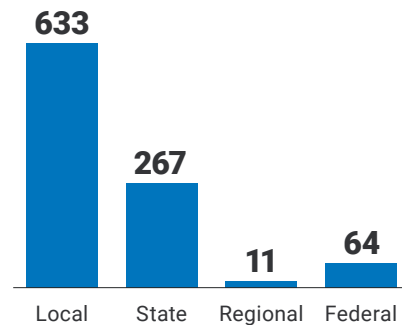
## VICTORY LOCATION



## VICTORY TYPE



## VICTORY SCOPE



# Leave a Lasting Legacy

Help advance the protection of our ocean, waves, and beaches for future generations. Contact us at [about@surfrider.org](mailto:about@surfrider.org).

[info@surfrider.org](mailto:info@surfrider.org)







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