Surfing: an innovative and inclusive force for marine conservation.

Surfing is growing globally in popularity with an 80% increase projected in the next ten years, especially after its successful debut as an official Olympic sport in 2020. Currently there are over 35 million surfers globally and the global surf travel industry contributes USD $61 billion to local and international economies.

The world's 35 million surfers are a critical constituency for conservation. They love the ocean, know that it is threatened and are motivated to protect it. The conservation and management of surf breaks and their surrounding environments present a great opportunity to protect wider ecosystems, contribute to the economic growth of coastal communities, enhance coastal resilience, and provide sustainable funding for protected area management.

Surf Conservation Protecting Biodiversity and High Carbon Ecosystems Helping to Combat Climate Change

- **Biodiversity:** Research by Conservation International, Save The Waves, and other partners shows that over 75% of surf breaks are located in areas of high biodiversity, while 26% of these surf breaks are in or near Key Biodiversity Areas (which represent some of the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet). However, more than two-thirds of these areas currently lack formal protection.

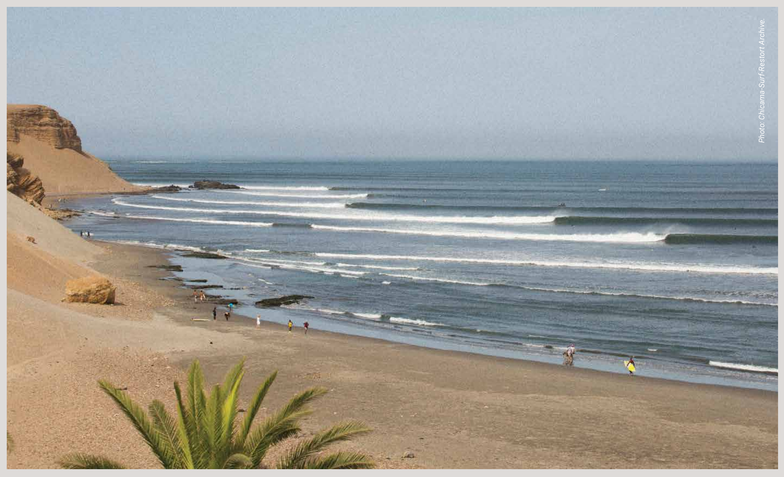
- **Surf and High Carbon Ecosystems:** Research just published by Conservation International, Oregon State University, Save The Waves and other partners, demonstrates that surf ecosystems around the world are a powerful ally in the fight against climate change. That's because thousands of surf breaks worldwide are surrounded by ecosystems that store massive amounts of potentially planet-warming carbon in mangroves and coastal forests.

10th GEF Biennial International Waters Conference
10ª Conferencia Bienal de Aguas Internacionales del FMAM
URUGUAY

People Protect What They Love – and Surfers Love the Ocean

Strengthening Marine Conservation Through the Blue Economy, Tourism and Nature-Based Sports

Success cases of surf activity supporting marine conservation, local economies, and local communities.



The 2 kilometers long wave of Chicama was the first wave to be legally protected in Peru.

Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA) has been instrumental in making Peru the first country to legally protect surf breaks through a specific legal mechanism known as Ley de Rompientes. This system, managed by the Peruvian Navy, revolves around a National Registry of Protected Surf Breaks. Once registered, these surf breaks are safeguarded from conflicting activities like aquaculture, construction of ports, and other badly planned infrastructure projects. The law effectively creates small protected areas focused on preserving seascapes with significant human use, such as surfing. Currently, 44 surf breaks, covering 988 hectares and about 80 kilometers of coastline, are protected. The law also indirectly conserves marine ecosystems, enhancing its broader environmental impact. This legal tool empowers civil society and advocacy groups to challenge environmentally risky developments, strengthening marine conservation in Peru.

www.spda.org.pe | www.hazlaportuola.pe

Punta Conejo, a renowned surf break along the coastline of Southern Oaxaca, Mexico.

Save The Waves work takes place across the globe in North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia and Oceania. This encompasses our defend and protect actions and the designation of 13 World Surfing Reserves, preserving 218 surf ecosystems, 431 square kilometers of ocean, and 151 kilometers of coastline. We have completed 3 Surf Protected Area Networks focused on locally-driven designation, stewardship, community engagement, and sustainable economies. Surf Protected Area Networks are currently being developed in Costa Rica, the Azores and Mexico. As an example, our Punta Conejo Protected Area project in Mexico will preserve and safeguard over 1,416 hectares of land, 10.5 kilometers of coastline including 3 surf breaks, and 517 hectares of mangrove forest. Preserving this surf ecosystem would also conserve habitat for over 40 species of bird and 4 species of turtle, several of which are endangered.

www.savethewaves.org

Community surfer in one of Morotai, Indonesia's newest Surf Protected Areas

Conservation International has supported partners including Konservasi Indonesia and the Indonesia Locally Managed Marine Area Foundation to establish a Surf Protected Area Network across four Indonesian islands: Biak-Supiori, Morotai, Sumba, and Nias. The network includes 26 Surf Protected Areas using a Locally Managed Marine Area approach to create enforceable regulations that tackle threats like deforestation, mangrove cutting, irresponsible development, coral and sand mining, overfishing, and pollution. These areas also manage tourism and support local communities through eco-enterprises linked to surfing and conservation. Additionally, Surf Conservation Camps and Contests are building the next generation of surfer conservationists. Collectively, these areas protect over 100 waves and 80,000 hectares of carbon-rich coastal forests, mangroves, seagrass, and the world's most biodiverse coral reefs.

www.conservation.org/surf

Joining forces in expanding blue economy benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and ecosystem services by managing surf ecosystems.

In collaboration with the governments of Costa Rica, Panama and Peru, and with support from the UNIDO GEF Implementing Agency, Conservation International, Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA) and Save the Waves, join forces to implement the ***"Expanding blue economy benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and ecosystem services by managing surf ecosystems"*** project (GEF-ID 10931).

This 3-year project (2024-2027) aims to demonstrate the critical role that effective management of marine-coastal ecosystems surrounding surf breaks can play in protecting biodiversity and ecosystem function, as well as generating blue economy benefits that will motivate greater ecosystem conservation. The project will leverage the experience, successes and lessons learned of project partners.

The project focuses on emblematic geographic areas known for their surf breaks. In Costa Rica, it includes Ostional and Playa Hermosa-Punta Mala Wildlife Refuges, and in Peru, it includes Huanchaco World Surfing Reserve, Illescas National Reserve and La Brea Negritos surf breaks.

The project will 1) generate tools and capacity for government and communities to effectively manage surf ecosystems, 2) benefits for local communities and local economies through supporting equitable and inclusive blue economy opportunities that relate to the surf activities and tourism, and 3) lessons learned and good practices guidelines focused on informing effective protection and management of surf ecosystems while supporting the expansion of a fair and inclusive blue economy.

Project implementation and execution:

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL · SPDA · SAVE THE WAVES COALITION · UNIDO UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

With participation of the governments of: