

TESTIMONY OF THE SURFRIDER FOUNDATION

**Testimony before the Commission on Ocean Policy
concerning
Tourism, Development, and Coastal management**

by

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in

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Good morning Chairman and Commissioners and thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Commission on Ocean Policy. I will speak on engaging the public to protect our beaches and oceans, and offer some specific recommendations.

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people, through conservation, activism, research and education. The Surfrider Foundation has over 30,000 members and 57 local chapters in the United States, including the Oahu Chapter of which I am a member. The Surfrider Foundation also has affiliations in Australia, Japan, France, and Brazil.

The Surfrider Foundation exists to help local citizens protect the beaches and coastal areas that are important to them. Local volunteers do nearly all of the organization's work and the organization's limited staff have developed several programs and tools to assist local activists in their efforts to steward our coasts. Surfrider's State of the Beach Report is the organization's principal publication to educate the public and important decision makers on the health of the nation's beaches.

Surfrider's State of the Beach Report is an annual report that assesses the health of each coastal state's beaches using the available information on selected beach health indicators. The selected beach health indicators are public beach access, surf zone water quality, coastal erosion, shoreline structures, beach nourishment, and threats to surf areas. Surfrider started the State of the Beach Report in 1999 with a very simple question, "As a concerned citizen, what information

can I find on the health of my local beach?" When we asked this question in 1999, we couldn't find much information on our selected indicators or when we did find data they were usually in a form difficult for a concerned citizen to digest, such as an engineering report or journal article. Each year we've seen improvement in the information available to assess beach health, however, there are still large gaps. Local citizens would significantly benefit from a concerted and coordinated effort by public agencies to make their data available in an understandable format.

Another important conclusion from Surfrider's State of the Beach Reports is that the nation lacks a standardized set of beach health indicators that can be used to measure the effectiveness of coastal zone management. Other research has found similar results. In an evaluation of state coastal management program effectiveness in protecting natural beaches, dunes, bluffs, and rocky shores, Bernd-Cohen and Gordon (1997) concluded, "there is insufficient nationally compatible outcome data to determine on-the-ground effectiveness." Another publication, the 1999 "State of the Nations Ecosystems" report states that, of the of the three ecosystems they covered, "coasts and oceans suffer most from a lack of comprehensive and consistent information on key ecosystem goods, services, and properties." Without such information, ecosystem status cannot be accurately established and we cannot evaluate the effectiveness of coastal zone management policies.

Promoting effective coastal zone management is vital to Surfrider's mission of protecting and enjoying the world's oceans, waves, and beaches. The act of wave riding is intimately tied to the quality of marine and coastal environments and it depends on the abundance of natural assets like clean water, natural beaches, and healthy marine ecosystems. Effective coastal zone management is equally vital to the tourism industry. Tourism is also dependent on the quality of the natural environment and that connection is most readily apparent here in the Hawaiian Islands. This state has over 7 million visitors each year that come here to play on beautiful beaches, swim in tropical waters, dive and fish on coral reefs, and ride some of the world's best waves.

The Surfrider Foundation will recommend to the Commission on Ocean Policy actions in several areas, relating to the Coastal Zone Management Act, Clean Water Act, Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act, Army Corps of Engineers, and marine protected areas. Surfrider believes that the recommended actions will help protect the nation's important natural coastal assets and benefit both our membership, wave riders, and the tourism industry.

COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT:

Recommendation 1: Coastal Zone Management Act Coastal Zone Enhancement Grants Program should be amended to facilitate the creation of a national standard of beach health indicators and provide incentives for state coastal zone management agencies to maintain records on beach health indicators.

States, nations, and non-governmental organizations are increasingly using environmental indicators to support sound decision-making and policy development. Identifying meaningful measures of beach health, and establishing guidelines for the collection and reporting of this vital information, will enable states and the federal government to evaluate ecosystem status, track changes, and determine program effectiveness.

Surfrider's State of the Beach Report provides a useful starting point for this assessment. The Florida Coastal Management Program also provides an excellent model program. The Florida Assessment of Coastal Trends (FACT) program developed an extensive set of indicators that are monitored and assessed each year.

Recommendation 2: Coastal Zone Management Act Coastal Zone Enhancement Grants Program should be amended to provide incentives for state coastal zone management programs to increase public awareness regarding beach and coastal health.

For all interests to be equally represented in decision making processes it is essential that the participants be fully informed. Educating the public about the economic and cultural values of coastal and ocean resources, the complexity of these resource-related issues, and the intricacies of the decision-making process will help to make this happen. States have a vital role to play in giving public education the attention it deserves. One thing they can do is to develop user-friendly information. States can also make this information more accessible by using advances in technology that make it easier to share.

BEACHES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND COASTAL HEALTH ACT OF 2000:

Recommendation 1: Continue to fund completely the BEACH Act to ensure that the program is fully implemented by all states and territories. Not only will the monitoring of ocean water quality for recreational health protect the health of the beach going public, it will provide an important tool in measuring water quality problems and will raise awareness about this important issue for coastal ecosystem health. Fully funding of the beach bill will:

1. bring all states, territories and commonwealths up to EPA Standards for recreational water quality monitoring
2. Fund implementation grants that are awarded in 2004 which will provide the ability for states to fully implement the standards.
3. Fund research to improve indicators of water quality to include viruses and other harmful toxics such as heavy metals, herbicides, etc.

Clean Water Act - 301(h) Waivers:

There are approximately 36 Sewage Treatment Facilities in the United States that are still granted 301(h) waivers from the Environmental Protection Agency that permits the dumping of partially treated sewage into the ocean. The 301(h) waivers should be stopped.

Recommendation 1: Amend the Clean Water Act to remove the 301(h) waiver program.

Reform the Corps Legislation:

Recommendation 1: Support legislation such as H. R. 1310 to reform the Corps of Engineers.

This legislation is important because:

1. The Army Corps of Engineers is the primary Federal agency responsible for developing and managing the Nation's harbors, waterways, shorelines, and water resources.
2. Scarce Federal resources require more efficient use of Corps of Engineers funding and greater oversight of Corps of Engineers analyses.
3. Demand for recreation, clean water, and healthy wildlife habitat must be reflected in the Corps of Engineers project planning process
4. The social and environmental impacts of dams, levees, shoreline stabilization structures, and other projects must be adequately considered and fully mitigated.
5. Affected interests must play a larger role in the oversight of Corps of Engineers project development.

Protect Special Ocean and Coastal Places- Marine Protected Areas:

Recommendation 1: Congress should pass and the President should sign into law new legislation to establish a national system of fully protected marine reserves that protect, within biologically sound, viable borders, the "best places" in America's undersea lands and representative samples of all ecosystem types in each of the nation's marine biogeographic regions. The primary purpose of this system is to protect and recover biodiversity within America's Exclusive Economic Zone.

We appreciate the opportunity to present Surfrider's concerns and recommendations for protecting our oceans and beaches, and thank you for listening and for your work in this area. Thank you.

References

Bernd-Cohen, T. and M. Gordon. 1997. State coastal management effectiveness in protecting beaches, dunes, bluffs, rocky shores: A national overview. Silver Spring, MD: NOAA/OCRM. 66 pp. + apps.