



Mara Arroyo
Surf Protected Area Network Manager
Save The Waves Coalition
www.savethewaves.org

Save The Waves Coalition is an international nonprofit that works with diverse organizations dedicated to protecting surf ecosystems. Our vision is a world where surf ecosystems are valued and where the practice of surfing provides a proactive vehicle for long-term coastal conservation.

Climate change is having an increasing impact on our daily lives with an escalation in fires, drought, sea level rise, and floods. The changing climate also greatly affects oceans and coastlines. Ecosystems and communities are poised to be drastically altered with events like permanent high tides, coral reef destruction, erosion, and flooding.

Our program's strategy is in line with the global trajectory for increasing the protection and effective management of our oceans, focusing on places around the world where iconic surfing waves overlap with biodiversity hotspots and habitats that are critically important for marine conservation. Protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services requires a holistic approach that empowers local communities to steward ecosystems while benefiting from natural resources and creating strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Save The Waves is developing Surf Protected Area Networks, a new approach for marine and coastal conservation that combines legal protection of ecosystems and sustainable community development in areas where high-quality surfing waves and priority marine ecosystems overlap. Defined as "A collection of individual marine and coastal protected areas around surfing locations," the goal of the Surf Protected Area Networks (SPANs) program is to establish an innovative, systematic approach for the conservation of large numbers of surf ecosystems, utilizing networks of locally managed protected areas that both protect and are supported by sustainable surf tourism.

Sharing best-practice guidelines and approaches for the protection and management of surf ecosystems and building a blue economy will encourage governments and stakeholders to recognize the value of protecting surf ecosystems as a part of global marine and coastal conservation efforts. This approach recognizes that surf ecosystems are a valuable marine resource that, if properly managed, can create an important and equitable source of income for local populations, contribute to the protection of coastal and marine ecosystems and engage a new constituency to be more active in marine conservation.

In general, MPAs lack financial support for operations, so there is an urgent need to assess the scope of common mechanisms such as fines, penalties, volunteering and cost-sharing, use rights, and biodiversity offsets, as well as potential mechanisms linked to surf tourism and the surf industry that might be most appropriate for Surf Protected Areas.

Surf Protected Areas will motivate and sustain long-term environmental and blue economy benefits by systematically protecting ecosystems surrounding waves and greatly improving economic linkages between community members and local surf related businesses. By contributing to the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems through the creation of protected areas around surf locations and strengthening management plans of the existing ones, we can support and improve opportunities for cultural, educational, and recreational activities, while making a long-lasting contribution to the local economy. Through a Surfonomics study, we can determine the economic value of a wave and surfing to local communities to help decision makers make better choices to protect their coastal resources and waves.



We believe that surfers are a critical constituency for conservation and the protection of surf breaks and their surrounding environments presents an opportunity to protect wider ecosystems, contribute to the economic growth of coastal communities, and provide sustainable financing for protected area management. Surfers are becoming a significant force for marine conservation, especially in the protection of critically important marine areas around the world and contribute billions of dollars annually to local economies.

As a result of the efforts of our coalition, we are currently creating networks of protected areas and national policies to better conserve surf breaks and surrounding ecosystems in countries such as Indonesia, Costa Rica, Peru, Portugal, and many others and are integrating sea level rise adaptation and coastal resiliency into our work. Ultimately, the goal is to protect 1 000 surf ecosystems by 2030 in alignment with the 30x30 goals which will protect critical coastal habitats and species, promote blue economy benefits for coastal people, and prepare and mitigate for the impacts of climate change.

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849 ALMAR AVENUE, SUITE C #163, SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95060 USA
TEL 831 426 6169