

Notes from WSR/NSR workshop GWC 2020

Southern Cross University, Friday 14 February 2020 3pm - 5pm

Purpose

To work towards designing guiding principles for wise practice to reach best practice for surfing reserves.

The vision

Local communities thriving in their pursuit to share, protect and preserve iconic, special and sacred surfing sites.

Who attended

Save The Waves Coalition's World Surfing Reserves Programme in collaboration with National Surfing Reserves (Australia) co-hosted a workshop for surfing reserves partners and interested stakeholders at the Global Waves Conference. Twenty-seven (27) people attended, who represented World Surfing Reserves (WSR) and National Surfing Reserves (NSR) programmes (Australian, Brazil and New Zealand NSR programmes). Academics from Griffith University, Sunshine Coast University, The University of Queensland and the University of Southern Florida also attended, exemplifying research expertise among the global surfing reserve community. Six countries were represented, including Australia (15), Brazil (3), Portugal (1), New Zealand (2), Mexico (2) and the United States (5), and of the attendees, 70% were male (19) and 30% were female (9).

Key themes from circle discussion

Successful traits

- Network approach with shared established goals
- Engagement with diverse stakeholders, particularly government authorities

To be better

- More people involved
- Be proactive, not reactive (have a plan)

Issues

- Crowd control/rage issues and managing different surf capacities of surfers
- Water quality, sewage and sedimentation, urban water runoff, chemicals (e.g. pesticides, Per and Poly Fluoroalkyl Substance, PFAS)
- Access: parking and illegal campers and subsequent issues

- Land and sea development impacts

Opportunity

- Climate change and adaptation could be central themes for surfing reserve/surf protected area management plans

Ideas to thrive

Legal protection - Pathways for protection if desired?

- Clear definitions
- Consultation (engage, consult, good karma and smile)
- Have a clear plan - management plan is an option
- Stronger government partnerships: all levels and Memorium of Understandings between surfing reserves and departments
- Working together: with Indigenous groups for joint protection
Rethink and change/adapt engagement approaches
- Political support: regular engagement with members of parliament
- Follow the Gold Coast pathway to State Government legislation
- Have active 'surfing reserves' - be proactive
- Have political champions (Ministers who love the beach, coast, and surf)
- A strong community who are willing to fight for the protection (wider community support)
- Legal toolbox for WSRs and NSRs to share information
- Technical supported information to have a base for legal protection
- Protective legislation where available and applicable
- Proceed to have legislative protection for the land/environment that supports and enhances the surfing cultural experience

Stewardship plan -

How do we measure the impact of surfing reserves? What metrics?

- Local council adoption of recommendation requests to address surf schools
- Baseline data (physical, socio-economic) and monitor
- Interaction with the business community and local environmental groups
- Number of programs created, number of organisations involved with WSR projects, degree of involvement of diverse organisations
- Surveys: keep community communication channels open
- Request surveys on the local and state government
- Focus on youth attitudes for protection
- Data collection on users and economic contribution
- Include more aspects of surf histories
- Getting university students involved to do projects, thesis form local universities analysing the economic, social, biological impacts of surfing reserves
- Understand community beliefs
- Encourage more diversity in surf populations
- Improved, enhanced and maintained environmental conditions
- Legal protection, # of kms gazetted under management
- Mobilisation, # of people participating in governance, # of organisations participating and # of people involved,
- Stewardship: # of threats reduced or eliminated

- # of management plans
- Problems turned into solutions
- Area of legal protection, water quality results, number of issues addressed
- A reporting tool that we can share to report on all the above!

Human resource management: - governance

How can we best facilitate the longevity of stewardship councils/committees? (The succession of councils, inclusion, expertise, partnerships)

- Accept the ebb and flow of activity - don't always have to be "on"
- Democracy - in civil society and in the surf
- Include women: images, leadership, future plans
- Revolving key management roles - formality process for "new blood" to replace "old blood"
- Consistency invite new members to the committee so it is not seen as elite, closed or exclusive (e.g. rotate chairs regularly)
- Show tangible progress with initiatives: keep people interested and motivated
- Changing membership and leadership - structured that allow for mentoring (e.g. have contributors support local stewardship committee objectives)
- Engage relevant community groups
- Engage all levels of government not just at the beginning but all the time (e.g. especially with upcoming elections)
- Create meaningful programs with community benefit: Our CPR Program?
- Think about protecting surf spaces for 'new people' (less visible), e.g. disability amenity

Youth engagement - 'protect the place you love'

- Education of younger generations, teaching them the importance of surfing reserves so they would get involved on the stewardship committees
- Create a 'junior committee': youth network

Diverse stakeholders and skillset on local committees

- Identify what skills and expertise are needed and recruit on expertise, not usual suspects
- Boardrider Clubs
- Surfing Clubs
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local Government
- Youth representation
- Academics
- Gender and ethnic diversity
- Indigenous positions - must be included in the leadership membership

Conclusions

World Surfing Reserve and National Surfing Reserves Local Stewardship Committee members found common areas of opportunity to engage for the protection of the coastal environment. There was also broad consensus that a 'network' approach would be very beneficial as each area has a lot to learn from the other. Participants of the workshop show willingness to continue to collaborate and share tools and experience to elevate each others' work in coastal protection.