

Save the Waves Coalition

“By protecting surf areas, we safeguard marine and terrestrial ecosystems and create win-win situations for local stakeholders.”

Diego Sancho Gallegos, Stewardship & Resilience Manager



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The Spark

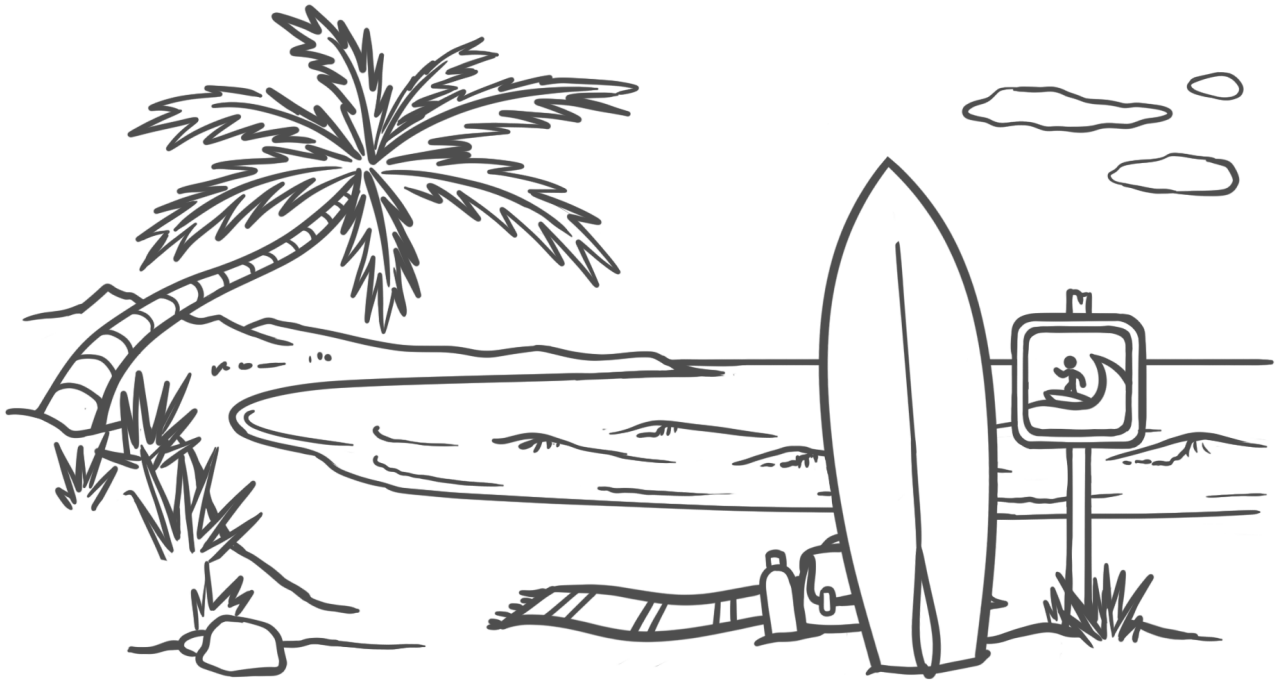
The Save the Waves Coalition is a global nonprofit organisation dedicated to protecting surf ecosystems through a mix of conservation, advocacy and innovation. Its core motivation is to preserve the unique cultural, ecological and economic value of surf breaks and coastal environments that are under threat from climate change, pollution and uncontrolled development.

By collaborating with local communities, governments and environmental partners the coalition establishes World Surfing Reserves, supports community-led conservation projects and leverages the power of surfers and ocean lovers as stewards of these vital areas. The Coalition's mission is rooted in the belief that saving surf ecosystems ensures the preservation of natural habitats, biodiversity and the vibrant coastal cultures associated with them.

Governance Model

Financed by donations and grants, the Save the Waves Coalition operates under a collaborative governance model that emphasises coalition building and community engagement to protect surf ecosystems. The organisation partners with local communities, governments and environmental groups to establish protected areas such as World Surfing Reserves, and to implement stewardship and advocacy initiatives.

This approach ensures that conservation efforts are locally led and culturally relevant. Save the Waves works collaboratively with local coalition partners at each site, guiding them through a conservation planning process that results in the creation of a Local Stewardship Council (LSC) and a Reserve Stewardship Plan. The LSC is responsible for the ongoing management of the Reserve once established.



Social Benefits

The Save the Waves Coalition fosters social benefits by empowering local communities to actively participate in conserving their coastal environments. Through collaborative efforts, the organisation instils a sense of ownership and pride among residents, enabling them to become stewards of their surf ecosystems. This participatory approach not only strengthens local capacity for environmental conservation, but also promotes social cohesion by connecting diverse stakeholders such as governments, NGOs and businesses to work towards shared goals. Additionally, the Coalition plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage by protecting surf breaks that hold historical and spiritual significance, ensuring that traditional practices and lifestyles remain intact for future generations.

Beyond cultural and community impacts, the Coalition contributes to the economic and well-being aspects of coastal populations. Sustainable surf tourism driven by the protection of pristine coastal areas provides economic opportunities, creates jobs and supports local businesses. Cleaner environments enabled by pollution mitigation and conservation initiatives improve public

health and offer recreational spaces for physical and mental well-being. Through education and awareness campaigns the Coalition instils a culture of environmental responsibility, not only benefiting local communities but also inspiring a global network of surfers and ocean enthusiasts to take action for the preservation of coastal ecosystems.



Environmental Benefits

The Save the Waves Coalition creates environmental benefits by protecting and preserving surf ecosystems and their surrounding habitats. By safeguarding critical coastal and marine environments such as coral reefs, mangroves and estuaries, the Coalition ensures the survival of diverse plant and animal species, supporting biodiversity and ecological balance. These efforts also reduce the risks of habitat loss caused by pollution and unsustainable development, preserving vital ecosystems that act as natural buffers against coastal erosion and storm surges. Moreover, by advocating for clean water and better waste management practices the Coalition improves water quality and reduces pollution, directly benefiting aquatic life and marine ecosystems.

In addition to these immediate conservation efforts the Coalition's work contributes to long-term environmental sustainability and resilience. Protecting ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs enhances their natural carbon sequestration capacities, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change. These ecosystems also provide natural defence against rising sea levels and extreme weather, improving climate resilience for coastal communities. By raising global awareness and promoting sustainable tourism practices, the Coalition not only preserves surf breaks but also inspires a culture of environmental stewardship among surfers and coastal populations worldwide. This holistic approach ensures that the environmental benefits extend far beyond the areas directly protected by the organisation.



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Replicability Potential

The Save the Waves Coalition's model has replicability potential due to its scalable, community-driven approach to conservation. By focusing on partnerships with local stakeholders, leveraging the global surfing community and employing a tiered engagement framework, the Coalition can adapt its strategies to diverse cultural, ecological and economic contexts. The concept of World Surfing Reserves, where iconic surf breaks and their ecosystems are designated and protected, provides a replicable template for other organisations aiming to identify and conserve similar niche environments worldwide.



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Sources:

- <https://www.savethewaves.org/>
- Save The Waves Coalition – 2022 Impact Report.
Available at: https://www.savethewaves.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022_ImpactReport_SaveTheWaves_WebShare.pdf
- Interview with Diego Sancho Gallegos



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