SANTA CRUZ
WORLD SURFING RESERVE
This book is dedicated to the Santa Cruz Surfing Museum and its many volunteers, who since 1986 have devoted themselves to honoring local surf history by collecting and displaying an engaging and educational array of videos, print media, surfboards, wetsuits and other artifacts. Housed in the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse, overlooking the legendary waves of Steamer Lane, the museum preserves Santa Cruz’s rich surfing heritage for future generations.
Growing up in Santa Cruz as a surfer was an incredibly fortunate experience. I rode my first waves at the Rivermouth on an impossibly small, along with my parents and three brothers. This was back before the Surfboard Bongos, and some days there’d be so many surfers that we’d ride over each other on the way out. Eventually my brothers and I talked our parents into buying a longboard from a guy named Otto, who operated a surf shop near the base of the wharf. We spent endless hours taking turns on that old log at Cowell’s. I’ll never forget the feeling of gliding across the bay on that heavy missile, absolutely filled with adrenaline while gazing up at the coastal range and its redwood forests running to the sea. Once I caught my first waves at the Lane, my friends and I affectionately call it Hooper Point (as in the vacuum), because of the way it sucks up any swell—north, west, south, or any combination thereof. The innermost spot at the Lane, Cowell’s, is one of the world’s best beginner breaks, where waist-high waves will taper a quarter mile over a forgiving sand bottom. Up the point a bit, Indicators offers long, carveable walls for old-school chargers air-dropping into draining, 15-foot, second-reef lefts. Across town, Pleasure Point also serves up a smorgasbord of options with an array of help-grooved cops from Sewer Peak to Capitola. The waves here don’t have as much power as the Lane, but they make up for it with the huge range of choice; the drop-shot rights at Sewer Peak, the snappy little bowl with a wall at First Peak, the long, Trendline-like walls from Second Peak, and the longboard-friendly rollers of 38th Avenue (which can transform into a rilling barrel on a big south swell). Beyond that you’ve Ranch-like setups from the Hook down to Capitola, especially on a swelling swell. Between Steamer Lane and Pleasure Point in Midtown, also known as the city’s banana belt. It doesn’t have the long point waves, but it does offer up the occasional gem, most notably the San Lorenzo Rivermouth. It may not break every year, but when it works—with a spinning peak that churns out draining, 15-foot, second-reef lefthis back before a spinning peak that churns out draining rights and lefts—local surfers go nuts. If all this variety isn’t enough to stoke local surfers, there’s in a national marine sanctuary filled with wildlife. An offshore upwelling produces nutrient-rich water, so the coastal ecosystem thrives here. I’ve had dolphins glide just below me in water so clear I could see them turn sideways to get a closer look, no doubt feeling pity for the terrestrial interloper who flips about in the sea through which they glide so effortlessly. One reason fishing has become so much easier into the Santa Cruz identity is because the breaks just look so tasty as you gaze down on them from the cliffs. Both the Lane and Pleasure Point are natural amphitheaters—all the action takes place directly above bluffs-top walkways. Anyone out for a scenic stroll inevitably has her or his attention drawn to the near-by waves. From locals who’ve never worn a suit, everyone eventually give in to its appeal, and as a result the whole community has surf fever. When the swell is up and the sun is out, stoke fills the air like sea mist. Everywhere you look, you see smiling surfers—from frothing groms to creasy seniors and everything between.

From a geographic perspective, it’s almost as if nature designed the coast of Santa Cruz specifically for surfers to enjoy. While the prevailing wind blows from the northwest, most of the town’s beaches face south. This means that when spots north and south are blown ragged by the breeze, the waves in Santa Cruz, with its chop-controlling kelp, are often glassy or groomed by offshore winds.

As a surfer, father and devoted local, I’m honored to see that so many people appreciate how special this coastline is, and grateful that some of my peers have put in the hard work to have it declared a Marine Surfing Reserve. Now, when I watch my own sons playing on these waves, it comforts me to know and realize that their kids will someday be able to do the same.

A LIQUID PLAYGROUND
BY RICHARD SCHMIDT

SANTA CRUZ WORLD SURFING RESERVE

I’ll never forget the feeling of gliding across the bay on that heavy missile, absolutely filled with adrenaline while gazing up at the coastal range and its redwood forests running to the sea.
WHAT IS A WORLD SURFING RESERVE?

World Surfing Reserves (WSR) proactively identifies, designates and preserves outstanding waves, surf zones and their surrounding environments around the world. Launched in 2009 by Save The Waves Coalition (STW), along with key partners National Surfing Reserves (NSR) Australia and the International Surfing Association (ISA), the program is directed and led by STW. The WSR program serves as a global model for preserving wave breaks and their surrounding areas by protecting the positive environmental, cultural, economic, and community benefits of surfing areas, through outreach, planning and community capacity building.

Save The Waves along with the World Surfing Reserves Vision Council, an international advisory group made up of 15 different individuals, select each World Surfing Reserve on an annual basis. WSRs are evaluated and selected based on how they meet the four principal criteria;

1) Quality and consistency of the waves; 2) Unique environmental characteristics with clear avenues to protect them; 3) A rich surf culture and history; and 4) Strong community support and capacity.

At each World Surfing Reserve, Save The Waves works collaboratively with the local partners to create the key components: a Local Stewardship Council (LSC), a Local Stewardship Plan, a WSR declaration ceremony, a booklet for the Reserve, ongoing support for projects identified in the stewardship plan of the Reserve, and identifying long-term avenues for protection. Save The Waves guides the community through a stewardship planning process that identifies critical threats to the Reserve, root causes, strategies, and concrete actions to protect the Reserve.

Save The Waves and the local community work hand in hand in implementing the action items to protect the Reserve for the long-term.

World Surfing Reserves is an effort to identify and preserve the world’s most outstanding surf zones and their surrounding habitats.
Santa Cruz has earned the sheltered status of a World Surfing Reserve because of its diverse mix of surf spots, its pervasive and deep-rooted surf culture, and its thriving but fragile coastline habitat.

Most surfers who’ve spent any time in Santa Cruz agree that the quality, consistency and aesthetic appeal of its waves make it the best all-around surf town in the continental United States. The reserve’s seven miles of serrated coast features more than a dozen quality spots—from one of the West Coast’s best beginner breaks to a heaving deepwater peak where big-wave legends train. The wide array of points, reefs and beachbreaks suck in Pacific swells from all directions, and the prevailing winds blow favorably year-round.

Santa Cruz’s surf roots date back to 1885, when three Hawaiian princes rode hand-hewn redwood planks in waves breaking near the San Lorenzo Rivermouth—the first documented surf session on the American mainland. A small but devoted core of local surfers kept the sport alive through the first half of the 20th Century, but it wasn’t until surf fever swept from coast to coast in the 1960s that surfing became forever woven into the very fabric of the community. In the decades since, innovative Santa Cruz surfers and manufacturers—from wetsuit designers to surfboard shapers—have influenced wave riders worldwide.

Today, Santa Cruz is home to thousands of surfers, many of whom are devoted to protecting the coast from the ongoing threats of coastal developers and inland polluters. The success of these coastal stewards is evident to anyone who ventures near the coast here on a day when the sun is out, the wind is right, and a solid swell is running. From Natural Bridges to Capitola, the surf zone buzzes with hundreds of shortboarders and longboarders, groms and geezers, heroes and kooks—all vying for sets in the cool, green, kelp-rich sea.

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A long time ago, in a decade far, far away, during a time called the Nineties, Huntington Beach had its official title of Surf City. Huntington Beach had its arguments. Santa Cruz had its arguments. In the end, the SoCal trend prevailed, but not due to a lack of strength on Santa Cruz’s side.

Anyone who knows anything understands that Huntington Beach has history on its side—from Jan and Dean to Chuck Dean to the Op Pro to Brent Simpson. But anyone who knows anything also knows that Santa Cruz has the surf on its side—and no small amount of history—from 19th-Century Hawaiian princes to 21st-Century vermin.

The surfing coast of Santa Cruz faces south, and the boundaries of the World Surfing Reserve (from Natural Bridges to Opal Cliff) encompass about six miles of that coast as the seagull flies, and maybe a mile farther as the Prat drives. They are six or seven miraculous miles of facts on coast, thoroughly exposed to every burp and billow coming from the miraculous miles of fractal coastline, thoroughly wrapped up in a silly-serious debate with the City of Santa Cruz.

Fast forward from the 1970s, the Nineties, the Golden Years—the best time to be a surfer. Jobs were plentiful and the living was easy. All the classic breaks that are elbow-to-elbow and sometimes slept in a love-runs, playing ukulele, beach parties and surfing.

Down in Southern California, the ’70s were, as Miki Dora called them, “The Golden Years”—the best time to be a surfer. Jobs were plentiful and the living was easy. All the classic breaks that are elbow-to-elbow and sometimes slept in a love-runs, playing ukulele, beach parties and surfing.

During the World War II torn a lot of young men and women away from their idyllic lives on the beach in Santa Cruz, but it also introduced many of them to the South Pacific and its many allures. Those who survived the war in the Pacific came home with a lust for life and new ideas on how to live—and that included aloha shirts, playing ukulele, beach parties and surfing.

As the Santa Cruz Surfing Club began in 1956 when Dave Steward invited the growing group of local surfers to store their boards in the basement of his parents’ house at Gharkey Street and Lighthouse Avenue. That location changed to a house on Bay Street, where members stored their boards in a barn and sometimes slept in a loft. The club evolved from loose to official when the Santa Cruz Jaycees built a board shed at Cowell Beach. Six years later, they transformed an abandoned hamburger stand into its official clubhouse. It moved until 1952.

The Santa Cruz Surfing Club was a faction on the Santa Cruz cli- 

Huntington Beach, three Hawaiian princes were the first people in mainland America to be seen “surfboard swimming” on planks of wood.

The three princes—Jonah, David, and Edward—were the adopted sons of the Hawaiian monarchs, King Kamehameha and his wife, Queen Consort Esther John Kapilau; they came to California to study at Saint Matthews Hall, a military school in San Mateo. Apparently homesick, they shipped sub rosa plants from a local lumber mill into reusable bags, and their groundbreaking session at the San Lorenzo Rivermouth made print in local newspapers.

One Percenters who could a-

Fast forward from the early 1930s to the late 1970s, a group of so-called “First Waveers” got together and became the First Generation Club. They called out the sets—went to Waikiki in 1959 and was one of the top surfers there in the 1960s and 1970s. Real war was over six people surfing on the West Coast when he started at age 17 in 1926,” according to local historian Tom Hickenbottom, and the old-time one described the area from Cowell to Swami Lane as “the perfect surfing spot.”

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In Santa Cruz, the ‘50s were a colder shade of golden. The big, heavy hardwoods that went so well at Cowell’s were phased out by the balsa chips coming up from Southern California, and then by foam. Boards were down to 9 feet and 30 pounds—enough to support a man but light enough to allow women and kids to pick up the sport.

The shorter, more maneuverable boards opened up new spots and new possibilities, from Mitchell’s Cove to the Wild Hook: long, peeling, high-performance waves that were perfect for the surfing and surfboards of the time.

Santa Cruz surfing is all about variety, and during the 1950s, local surfers like the Van Dyke brothers, Mike Winterburn, George Olson, Rich Novak and a happy few others were joined by southerners like Ricky Grigg and Peter Cole—who were in school at Stanford—and Pat Curren, Buzzy Trent and other future big-wave legends from down south who loved the muscular walls of Santa Cruz. Big days at Steamer Lane were considered a master’s degree before going to Hawaii for a PhD in the “heavies.”

In 1959, Jack O’Neill laid one of the cornerstones of the surf industrial complex when he moved his family and his small but growing wetsuit business from San Francisco to Santa Cruz, where the weather was better and the surf frontline. O’Neill’s original product was neoprene-lined bathing trunks he made to keep from freezing his balls off while bodysurfing Ocean Beach. Now in Santa Cruz, O’Neill moved into long johns, short johns and jackets. “I was just trying to support my family,” he would later say. O’Neill had good timing, because 1959 was the year Columbia Pictures’ Gidget looked back on the Golden Years around Malibu and effectively ended them, lighting the fuse of surf culture that would explode in the 1960s.

While most of the surf culture boom of the ‘60s was focused on Southern California—the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, Malibu and even Huntington Beach—the surfing population also grew in Santa Cruz, and with it came shops, manufacturers, clubs and contests. Santa Cruz and competitive surfing had a shaky relationship out of the ‘60s and into the ‘70s. In 1969, vandals pushed the scaffolding for an amateur contest over a cliff and then refused to clear the water when competitors for the first heat paddled out, calling them “goose-stepping pigs.” During the ‘70s John Scott was a constant presence at Steamer Lane surf contests, with his car and placards decorated with anti-contest messages.

But not everyone in Santa Cruz was adverse to competition or media coverage. In 1969, Roger Adams became the first Santa Cruz surfer to make the cover of Surfer magazine and a leading competitor on the Western Surfing Association AAAA circuit. In 1971 he finished second to Dru Hartmann at the Santa Cruz AAAA International—now known as the “Cold Water Classic.” It is said that those who really experienced the ‘70s in Santa Cruz shouldn’t be able to remember them. That may or may not be true, but of all the surfers, surfboards, ideas and trends coming out of Santa Cruz from 1970 to 1979, the one with the most lasting impact was the surf leash. Beginning in the late ‘60s, a loose affiliation of Santa Cruz surfers that included Steve Russ, Pat O’Neill, Roger Adams and Michel Junod began experimenting with a variety of techniques to keep their boards from getting slaughtered by the rocks. “I broke three boards in a day surfing the Santa Cruz harbor,” Pat O’Neill would later say. “Back then the ding repair factories were busier than the surfboard factories.”

The first surf leashes were made of surgical tubing attached to suction cups on the nose of the board.
they emerged as arguably the best all-around crew of surfers in California—using the natural skatepark of the town’s many points to work on their aerial surfing and eventually conquering the heats at Stunner Lane and, later, at Mavericks, the now-legendary big-wave spot on an hour north of Half Moon Bay.

Maverick’s pioneer Jeff Clark invited Dave Schmidt and Tom Powers to have a go at Clark’s home break. Schmidt and Powers paddled out cautiously and got their minds blown by the giant, evil perfection. Into the 1990s, the Vermin led the charge at Mavericks, pushing the limits deeper and bigger. They were joined by a smiling young waterman who couldn’t have been more uncool: Jay Moriarity was a longboarder, an uncool, Barney, Ratboy, Gally and Rodent.

Going all the way back to those Hawaiian princes first rode hand-curved robber planks in front of well-dressed beachgoers, the Santa Cruz Surf Museum opened—the first of its kind on the U.S. mainland. That opening day was historic, because it marked the term “Surf City,” Santa Cruz has never tried that hard to sell itself as a surf mecca. But if you’re a visiting surfer and aren’t yet sold on the place, here’s what you should do: On a solid west swell day with offshore winds and clear skies all the way from the Salinas Valley, ride your bicycle from one side of town to the other—from Natural Bridges to Privates—by way of the Rivermouth and eventually your bicycle from one side of town to the other—from Natural Bridges to Privates—by way of the Rivermouth and eventually

\[ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT, AND BELOW LEFT\] TEAM O’NEILL THROUGH THE ’60s, ’70s AND ’80s. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF O’NEILL. (BELOW RIGHT) JESSE COLIBOMI. PHOTO: COURTESY OF WANK CRANG.

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Natural Bridges, or “NB’s” as it’s sometimes called, is as picturesque as a surf spot gets. Long fingers of flat, rocky reef bend northwest swells into well-shaped walls that range from playful to intimidating. On shore, birdwatchers compete with UC Santa Cruz Banana Slugs for towel space on the pristine white-sand beach. At higher tides, the inside section of the wave can produce a slurpy barrel that breaks over a shallow section of reef called the Tabletop, where faltering surfers often end up on dry rock faster than you can say “Westside pride.”

**Type of wave:** Righthand reef-point.

**Bottom type:** Rock reef with sand mixed in on the inside.

**Best tide:** Medium to full.

**Wave conditions:** From W to NW swells.

**Wind conditions:** Prefers little to no wind, stronger NW winds blow it out.

**Wave height:** 3 to 15 feet.

**Surf type:** Semi-challenging to reef grinder.

**Surfing ability:** Advanced.
STEAMER LANE

Steamer Lane was named for the steamships that would thread their way through its offshore reefs during the 1930s. It has been Santa Cruz’s central surf spot for more than 70 years now, and is one of California’s most consistent spots, comprised of four different breaks. The Point is directly under the Lighthouse and is best on a summer south or southwest swell. Lost boards almost invariably bash into the rocks at the Lane, which is why the surf leash was invented here. The Slot is a right section on the inside of the Point, and is an excellent performance wave. Middle Peak is a two-way peak that breaks farther out on big swells, with a meaty left and softer right. It’s a dusty, powerful, challenging wave that many have used as a preparation for Hawaii and Mavericks. All of the big, disorganized energy washing in from Middle Peak rolls forward and re-forms into a long performance wall at Indicators. A perfect wave for modern, high-performance surfing, Indicators will also throw out a round barrel when it’s in the mood.

Type of wave: Right reef and point, with a left at Middle Peak.
Bottom type: Kelpy rock reef, with occasional sandbars as the seasons and tides ebb and flow.
Best tide: In general, a lower tide coming up is best, although usually surfable on most tides.
Wave conditions: From S to SW to W/NW/N swells; extremely consistent.
Wind conditions: Prevailing northwest wind blows offshore; east and south winds blow onshore.
Wave height: 1 to 15 feet plus.
Surf type: Gentle to thunderous.
Surfing ability: Intermediate to advanced.

COWELL’S

On the inside of Lighthouse Point sits Cowell’s—one of the best beginner breaks in the world, possibly second only to Waikiki. It’s not uncommon to find as many as 200 people in the water on a nice day: locals, visitors, Banana Slugs, Vormins, Vals, surf schools, rippers, trippers, SUPers, grommets and surfagenarians. Cowell’s has been the incubator for Santa Cruz surfing since the 1920s. Its long, easy rollers were perfect for the unwieldy hardwood boards of the early 20th Century, and in the intervening decades many generations of Santa Cruz surfers have taken their first steps here before branching out to Steamer Lane, Pleasure Point, the Hook and beyond.

Type of wave: Soft, user-friendly rights.
Bottom type: Sand with some rock reef.
Best tide: In general, the lower the tide the better.
Wave conditions: From SW to W/NW/N swells; normally needs larger swells to break.
Wind conditions: Mostly protected from prevailing northwest wind; east and south winds blow onshore.
Wave height: 1 to 6 feet.
Surf type: Gentle
Surfing ability: Beginner heaven.

SAVE THESE WAVES
MATT MAKUDA. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PATRICK TREFZ.
PLEASURE POINT

Pleasure Point concentrates a variety of breaks over a third of a mile of kelpy rock reef. A consistent wave that is open to swell from just about any direction, the point offers something for everyone. At the top, Rockview/Suicides is a right breaking off rocks into a sandy cove. Sewer Peak is the Black Diamond spot—a fast, boulder right and a gnarly left off the main, powerful peak. Sewer Peak isn’t the longest wave along Pleasure Point, but it’s the most challenging and also the most competitive. First Peak is a longer, high-performance wave with a tight takeoff area and a mix of aggressive shortboarders and performance longboarders. Second Peak is a longboarder’s paradise and also a good place for intermediate surfers to work on their skills without getting in everyone’s way. On big days there is a Third Peak, and on the biggest days it is possible to ride a wave from outside First Peak all the way through to the waves known as Insides or 38th Avenue. On small days, 38th Avenue is a gentle beginner wave, but on bigger days, it transforms into a high-performance shortboard haven.

Type of wave: Right point and reef breaks.
Bottom type: Kelpy rock reef, with sandbars that come and go.
Best tide: Medium tides are generally best, although usually surfable at most tides.
Wave conditions: From SW to W/NW/N-NW, consistent.
Wind conditions: The northwest winds blow side-onshore, although strong NW winds can blow out the top of the point. Thick kelp outside the breaks provides significant wind protection.
Wave height: 1 to 15 feet.
Surf Type: Easy to semi-gnarly and everything between.
Surfing ability: Beginners to superstars.

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Surfing ability: Beginners to superstars.
Back in the ’50s, or maybe it was the ’60s, this spot at the end of 41st Avenue became known as the Wild Hook. Some say that name came from the fast, curling waves that were a challenge to the longboards of the day. Others say the name came from the thick kelp that would “hook” the deep skegs of the time. Regardless, what modern surfers now know as the Hook is the top of a point that runs all the way down to Capitola. That entire point is divided into the Hook, Shark’s Cove, Private and Trestles. The Hook itself has three breaks: First Peak, Second Peak and Third Peak. What was a beloved longboard wave in the 1960s is now a beloved performance wave for 21st Century shortboarders, but longboarders like it, too. Alia flyiers crave the place, because without fins, they don’t have to worry about all the kelp.

**Type of wave:** Right reef and point.

**Bottom type:** Kelpy rock reef, with sandbars that come and go.

**Best tide:** In general medium tides are best; low tides cause skegs to catch kelp, and high tides swamp it out.

**Wave conditions:** From SW to W/NW/N swells.

**Wind conditions:** The Hook is more protected from the wind than Pleasure Point. The northeast winds coming out of the Santa Cruz Mountains how offshore. South winds wreck the place.

**Wave height:** 0.5 to 12 feet.

**Surf type:** Playful to challenging.

**Surfing ability:** Intermediate to advanced.
Stratified along the northern edge of Monterey Bay, a little more than an hour’s drive south of San Francisco, the Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve lies within the coastal waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Covering 276 miles of shoreline and 6,094 square miles of ocean (larger than Yellowstone National Park), this federally protected area extends, on average, 30 miles from shore. At its deepest point, the sanctuary plummets down 12,713 feet, or more than two miles. It is our nation’s biggest marine sanctuary.

The Surfing Reserve encompasses about seven of the sanctuary’s 276 miles of coastline, including world-renowned right-hand point breaks Steamer Lane and Pleasure Point. In all, some two dozen surf spots—point, reef, and beachbreaks, both famous and lesser known—fall within the reserve’s boundaries. South-facing, Santa Cruz is well-protected from Central California’s prevailing northwest winds while also open to any swell direction except extreme north. Most of its beaches are overseen by California State Parks, the City of Santa Cruz, and Santa Cruz County.

At Steamer Lane, surfers run past barking sea lions as they hustle toward the gladiator-like proving grounds where wave energy converges with abruptly sloping bedrock reefs. Here, world-class breaks are born. Often compared to those of the North Shore, these waves owe their existence to a fortunate confluence of geology and oceanographic processes. The inner continental shelf near the reserve consists of flat sandy areas, faults, boulder fields, and complex bedrock ridges, the amalgamation of which provides the foundation for prolific marine ecosystems.

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The inner continental shelf near the reserve consists of flat sandy areas, faults, boulder fields, and complex bedrock ridges, the amalgamation of which provides the foundation for prolific marine ecosystems. Each spring when the northwest winds blow, cold, nutrient-rich waters rise up out of submarine canyons, nourishing lush growths of marine algae and surface plankton blooms. These provide sustenance for many invertebrates and fish, a key food source for cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises), pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), and sea otters. Numerous species of sharks also inhabit the region, including blue, mako, and whites reaching more than 20 feet in length.

Santa Cruz is also home to the nation’s largest kelp forest, 33 marine mammal species, 94 whale species, 345 species of fish, 4 species of turtles, 31 phyla of invertebrates, and more than 450 algae species. An estimated 20,000 gray whales pass by Santa Cruz each December during their annual migration from Arctic feeding grounds to their calving grounds off the Baja peninsula. Humpback, and killer whales are also frequently spotted off the coast. A total of seven species of whales are found in local coastal waters, including the less frequently seen minke, beaked, and fin whales.

Within the city limits, 39 miles of watercourses, creeks, and wetlands support diverse natural habitats, transport storm water, and protect water quality. Local flora and wildlife depend on no less than twelve habitat types for their subsistence. These range from aquatic to salt
mounds to freshwater wetland, and from grassland to woodland to forest. Santa Cruz’s mild Mediterranean climate and geography support such diverse vegetation as pickleweed, willow, eucalyptus, pine, black cottonwood, coastal oak, big leaf maple, rhododendron, and Douglas fir. Maintaining the vegetation not only has a significant positive effect on reducing the potential for landslides and floods, but also is crucial to the survival of local wildlife. Examples include gray foxes, mullard ducks, snow geese, cob salmon, starfish, and monarch butterflies in the lower watershed, and brush rabbits, salamanders, squires, hawks, and deer in the upper watershed.

Spanish for “Holy Cross,” Santa Cruz is blanketed by mountains bearing its name. Well known for the raw beauty of its windswept beaches, sandstone cliffs, and chaparral-covered slopes, Santa Cruz is just as breathtaking above water as it is below.

Oblique view to the northwest toward Point Santa Cruz. The southwest-trending bedrock ridge is composed of sandstone of the Purisima Formation, which crops out in Point Santa Cruz. The ridge runs more than 4 km (2.4 mi) offshore and forms reefs that focus the waves that break southeast of Point Santa Cruz at Steamer Lane. The irregular pattern of the shallow sea floor to the west of the bedrock ridge is a field of boulders hypothesized to be resistant bedrock concretions eroded from the Santa Cruz Mudstone that crops out west of Mitchell Cove. The sinuous channel that cuts across the bedrock ridge appears to have formed by erosion, possibly during a period of lower sea level; the abrupt change in water depth over this channel causes the gaps between Steamer Lane’s second and third peaks. The vertical exaggeration is 5x.

SANTA CRUZ WORLD SURFING RESERVE

Well known for the raw beauty of its windswept beaches, sandstone cliffs, and chaparral-covered slopes, Santa Cruz is just as breathtaking above water as it is below. The irregular pattern of the shallow sea floor to the west of the bedrock ridge is a field of boulders hypothesized to be resistant bedrock concretions eroded from the Santa Cruz Mudstone that crops out west of Mitchell Cove. The sinuous channel that cuts across the bedrock ridge appears to have formed by erosion, possibly during a period of lower sea level; the abrupt change in water depth over this channel causes the gaps between Steamer Lane’s second and third peaks. The vertical exaggeration is 5x. Approximate distance across the bottom of the image is 1.0 km (0.6 mi).
COWELL BEACH WATER QUALITY EFFORTS
BY NICK MUCHA

Cowell’s Beach is a cherished natural resource that lies at the heart of the Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve. In recent years, however, Cowell’s Beach water quality has been compromised by high bacteria counts (Escherichia coli and enterococci), consistently landing it on Heal the Bay’s “Beach Bummer” list in recent years.

Stemming from a 2014 World Surfing Reserve planning summit, the Cowell Beach Working Group (CWG) was created to improve the scientific understanding of the issue, recommend actions to improve water quality, and improve public understanding of the issue.

This group is supported by the City of Santa Cruz and led by Save The Waves Coalition and is comprised of City of Santa Cruz staff, County Environmental Health Department staff, Surfrider Foundation and Sierra Club. CWG meets regularly to review water quality data and make recommendations for further improvements.

In 2016, CWG recommended the installation of bird screening to prevent the roosting of pigeons and gulls under the wharf, which the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf completed in the August 2016. Subsequent monitoring has shown a 50% reduction in high bacteria postings since that intervention, which represents a notable improvement in water quality conditions. CWG continues to meet regularly and seeks outside input from a Technical Advisory Committee to achieve further bacteria reductions at Cowell Beach.

The Cowell’s water quality issue was a top priority for the Santa Cruz WSR and we are proud of the bacteria reductions achieved by the Cowell’s Working Group.

SANTA CRUZ WORLD SURFING RESERVE

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NICK BROOKS
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WORLD SURFING RESERVES AND SAVE THE WAVES COALITION RECOGNIZE APPRECIATE THE EFFORTS OF ALL WHO HELPED MAKE THE SANTA CRUZ CREED WORLD SURFING RESERVE AND THIS BOOK A REALITY.

Hue Ocean Supporters: Surfrider Environmental Alliance (DEA), Santa Cruz Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, (SCF)

Green Wave Supporters: Dream Inn, Cllf Bar

Grassroots Supporters: Ocean Champions, Young Surfers.

Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve Partners City of Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, Santa Cruz City Council, U.S. Congressman Sam Farr, California Senator Joe Simitian, California Assemblyman Bill Monning, California Coastal Commission, Big Stick Surfing Association, Santa Cruz Surfing Club Preservation Society.

Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve Coastal Group: Surfrider Environmental Alliance (DEA), Santa Cruz Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, Save Our Shores, Surfrider Ocean Restoration, Santa Cruz Surfing Museum.

Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve Local Stewardship Council: Jim Lindhild, Hillary Bottoms, Brian Kilpatrick, John Leapold, Dustin MacDonald, Jane McFarren, Mark Steen, Dan Young.

World Surfing Reserves Vision Council: (Executive Committee) Dean LaTorre, Brad Farmer, Andrew Short, Glenn Kelly, Drew Kawamoto (Vision Council)

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For more information on World Surfing Reserves and to support the WSR initiative, please visit worldsurfingreserves.org or contact Save the Wave Coalition at info@waves4change.org

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