



WORLD SURFING RESERVES

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the World Surfing Reserves program?

The World Surfing Reserves (WSR) program proactively identifies, designates and preserves outstanding waves, surf zones and their surrounding environments around the world. The program is managed and administered by Save The Waves Coalition. WSR's represent a global network of designated surfing reserves that are managed, implemented, and protected by the local community. World Surfing Reserves provide a platform and stakeholder engagement mechanism to pursue projects that protect the surf, community and surrounding environment.

What are the strategic goals of this program?

The mission of World Surfing Reserves is to protect outstanding surf breaks around the world. Save The Waves Coalition has a strategic goal to protect 1,000 surf ecosystems by 2030 and the World Surfing Reserves program will contribute to this ambitious goal. As a network, the WSR's add an additional layer of protection for the surf ecosystems, build stewardship capacity at the local level, as well as broadly educate the public about the value of these special places. World Surfing Reserves, in partnership with local communities, unites the global surfing and environmental communities to protect the world's most sacred surf zones, and in turn inspires, organizes, and builds the capacity of these local communities to continue to protect their own cherished waves.

What are the WSR criteria?

WSR eligible waves and surf zones are evaluated and chosen based on the following criteria: 1) Quality and consistency of the wave or surf zone; 2) Environmental characteristics of the area; 3) Surf culture and history of the area; 4) Local community support. Other criteria is taken into consideration in the nomination process including if the surf ecosystem falls in a priority region for the conservation work of Save The Waves, capacity considerations and other criteria.



How does the program work?

There are four main phases of the WSR program:

- **Nomination**, where sites from around the world are nominated and a comprehensive application is completed and submitted by a leading organization or individual on behalf of the surf ecosystem
- **Selection**, when the nominated sites are evaluated by a global body of experts (Vision Council), and approved WSR sites are chosen and announced publicly
- **Dedication**, when the approved sites have completed a first draft of the Local Stewardship Plan and are officially enshrined as World Surfing Reserves; and
- **Stewardship Planning**, which includes the implementation of a WSR Local Stewardship Plan, as well as the ongoing management of the reserve by the local community. These phases repeat themselves on an annual basis, so every year represents a new opportunity for a site to ultimately be nominated, selected, and dedicated.

How are the actual sites selected?

All applicants must submit a Letter of Inquiry to Save The Waves Coalition (Example located at www.worldsurfingreserves.org) If the LOI is accepted by Save The Waves Coalition, the applicant will receive a formal invitation to apply. After each invited region submits their application, they are scored based on the WSR criteria: 1) Quality and consistency of the wave or surf zone; 2) Environmental characteristics of the area; 3) Surf culture and history of the area; 4) Local community support. The World Surfing Reserves Vision Council, a group of experts in the fields of conservation, biology, organizational management, business, and surfing make the final decision each year.

How many World Surfing Reserve sites have been approved?

As of 2021, 11 World Surfing Reserves have been approved and 10 have been officially dedicated.



What actually makes up a World Surfing Reserve? Is it just the surf break, or is there more to it than that?

Save The Waves embraces the concept of a “surf ecosystem” where the breaking wave, surrounding environment, and local community all interact and are key components of a defined region. The actual boundaries of a World Surfing Reserve will vary depending on location, but in general will include a specific wave break or series of wave breaks (a “surf zone”), in addition to its surrounding environment. This includes the surf break itself, plus the near-shore environment, as well as a defined area of coastal land surrounding the break.

What are some of the key references and inspirations for the WSR program?

- 1) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites program was one of the original inspirations for the program. While the WSR program utilizes some aspects of the World Heritage Sites model, it combines this with more of a community-based, grassroots approach at the local level.
- 2) National Surfing Reserves – Australia (NSR) is another pioneering program that the WSR initiative originally took inspiration from. NSR has created a blueprint for national surfing reserves in Australia.

How are World Surfing Reserves managed?

World Surfing Reserves as a program is managed and implemented by Save The Waves Coalition. Each World Surfing Reserve creates a Local Stewardship Council that is charged with carrying out the Local Stewardship Plan as well as representing the World Surfing Reserve in the public sphere and in the community. While Save The Waves provides general oversight of the World Surfing Reserves program and serves as the convening body for the global network, each World Surfing Reserve is governed individually by their prospective Local Stewardship Councils. Save The Waves provides resources, tools, networking, and support, but the management of the reserve is run by the Local Stewardship Council under the guidelines and oversight of Save The Waves Coalition.

What is the Vision Council?

The World Surfing Reserves program is governed by the Vision Council, a global group of thought leaders from the surfing, environmental, scientific, media and business communities, charged with the overall vision and guidance of the program. The Executive



Committee is a subset of the Vision Council whose charter is to evaluate the program each year and make key decisions on program management and implementation.

How did the WSR program come to life?

The program was officially launched in December 2008 at the Value of Waves Roundtable in Half Moon Bay, California, hosted by Save The Waves, which brought together visionary surfers, scientists and environmentalists to discuss the creation and management of the initiative. Save The Waves, along with key partners such as National Surfing Reserves (NSR) Australia and the International Surfing Association (ISA), began implementing the program in 2009.

How is the program funded?

Program costs for general coordination and facilitation is funded by Save The Waves Coalition and our generous donors. Ongoing project costs at WSR's generally are funded by a combination of sources including local funding partners at each WSR, sub-grants from Save The Waves, and community events and support.

Does Save The Waves provide funding to WSR's?

Save The Waves provides a small amount of seed funding to WSR's to implement the dedication ceremony and initial stewardship planning. In some cases, and dependent on availability, funding is provided for specific stewardship projects that WSR's implement. Funding for these projects from Save The Waves however, is not guaranteed and is reviewed on a case by case basis. Local Stewardship Councils must create a long-term financing plan and consider an organizational structure that will facilitate a sustainable fundraising plan.

How should a Local Stewardship Council be structured?

Save The Waves provides guidelines on Local Stewardship Councils to each nominated World Surfing Reserve. However, each WSR has the autonomy to choose how they would like to structure themselves. Some WSR's choose to incorporate as a local nonprofit, others create a board or working group that is attached to the local city or municipality, and some just create an informal working group structure. It really depends on the goals and objectives of the World Surfing Reserve.



Can a World Surfing Reserve designation, once approved by the Vision Council and Save The Waves, be rescinded?

Yes. If a selected World Surfing Reserve does not comply with the requirements of the program and/or pursues projects that are not in keeping with the values of the World Surfing Reserves program, the title may be rescinded. In these instances, Save The Waves Coalition will report any issues to the Executive Committee of the Vision Council who will make a final vote on rescinding a World Surfing Reserve designation. This is extremely rare but has precedent.

What are the requirements for a World Surfing Reserve to maintain its status?

In order to maintain its status each WSR must:

- Create and maintain a Local Stewardship Plan
- Maintain an active Local Stewardship Council
- Participate in WSR networking events organized by Save The Waves
- Ensure that the criteria of the program is continuously upheld
- Provide regular updates to Save The Waves on the implementation of the Local Stewardship Plan

Save The Waves Coalition may also implement additional requirements for World Surfing Reserves as the program continues to grow and evolve.

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