2024

IMPACT REPORT

This Impact Report covers Save The Waves Coalition's activity and progress in 2024.

Thank you for your support and making this work possible.

Cover Photo: Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve © Steven Lippman
Current Spread Photo: Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve © Sociedad Salvaje Salvadoreña

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LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Save The Waves Supporter,

2024 was a pretty confusing year, to put it mildly, with some of the greatest challenges we've ever faced unfolding in real time.

Throughout the year, we once again felt the real impacts of climate change on our beaches, waves and surf ecosystems.

Despite this, I take great pride in the sheer tenacity of our team and the collaborative creativity we employ so that we can all avoid losing what we cherish most. Behind every hard-earned win is a story of partnership, innovation and a deep commitment to each place.

You're not just a supporter of the Coalition. You are a part of the Coalition.

I know we can rise to the challenges of our times by working together. Our institutions may fail us, yet through bottom up partnership and collaboration, we can protect these wildly important ecosystems and pass along what makes them so special to future generations.

Sincerely,

Nik Strong-Cvetich
Chief Executive Office, Save The Waves

Azores, Portugal
© Ryan 'Chachi' Craig

Save The Waves Coalition (STW) is an international nonprofit that works with diverse organizations dedicated to protecting surf ecosystems.

WHO WE ARE

Launched in 2003, we are the only international organization solely dedicated to protecting surf ecosystems around the world.

OUR MISSION

Save The Waves' mission is to protect surf ecosystems across the globe.

WHAT WE DO

We build coalitions to protect, steward, and defend surf ecosystems through a unique combination of protected area creation, stewardship and grassroots mobilization.

OUR VISION

Our vision is a world where surf ecosystems are valued and where surfing provides a proactive vehicle for long-term coastal conservation.

THE COALITION

We are a Coalition - it's in the name. We work with organizations and individuals at a grassroots level on an international scale – enabling local surf breaks to be protected by the communities that cherish them the most.

2024 AT A GLANCE:

Impact & Programs

• WORLD SURFING RESERVES

Our flagship program proactively identifies, designates and preserves outstanding waves and their surrounding environments across the globe. WSRs represent a global network of surf reserves that are each managed, implemented and protected by local communities.

• SURF PROTECTED AREAS

Surf Protected Areas (SPA) is a new approach for marine and coastal conservation that combines the legal protection of ecosystems with sustainable community development. Our program establishes a systematic approach to conserving large numbers of surf ecosystems that can scale nationally.

• CAMPAIGNS & ENDANGERED WAVES

Our campaigns inspire action that result in conservation. We partner with local communities and movements to mitigate and defeat immediate threats, or to preemptively protect surf ecosystems before they can be destroyed or altered.

WHERE WE WORK

- Bahía de Todos Santos, MX
- Ericeira, PT
- Gold Coast, AUS
- Guarda do Embaú, BR
- Huanchaco, PE
- Malibu, CA, USA
- Manly Beach, AUS
- Noosa, AUS
- North Devon, UK
- Oriente Salvaje, SLV
- Playa Hermosa, CR
- Punta de Lobos, CL
- Santa Cruz, CA, USA
- Azores, Portugal SPA
- California, USA SPA
- Chile SPA
- Costa Rica SPA
- Indonesia SPA
- Mexico SPA
- Brazil SPA
- Peru SPA
- Puerto Escondido, MX
- Uluwatu, Bali, ID
- Punta Conejo, MX
- The Maldives

12+ surf breaks dedicated under new World Surfing Reserve

in Oriente Salvaje, El Salvador, including the iconic surf breaks Las Flores and Punta Mango

119 waves actively stewarded & protected

across 10 countries in 13 World Surfing Reserves. The WSR program currently manages 136 miles of coastline.

475+ native trees planted

in restoration projects in the Playa Hermosa and Guarda do Embau World Surfing Reserves

45 hectares of wetlands restored

in the Huanchaco World Surfing Reserve to build climate resilience and support ancestral fishing practices in a blue carbon ecosystem.

30+ workshops & participatory planning

were hosted for Surf Protected Areas in the Azores, Portugal and Oaxaca, Mexico

18 community engagement activities

took place in the Playa Hermosa World Surfing Reserve on behalf of climate resilience

55+ meetings with stakeholders & government officials

were organized for Surf Protected Areas in the Azores, Portugal and Oaxaca, Mexico

500+ completed surfonomic surveys

were collected and analyzed in Santa Cruz, California and Nosara, Costa Rica

1M+ views on new film

called "Place of Thorns: The Story of Puerto Escondido" for STWFF and the Mexican campaign

150K+ individuals outreached in Conejo campaign push

after a Spring 2024 launch for the second phase of the project to establish a protected area

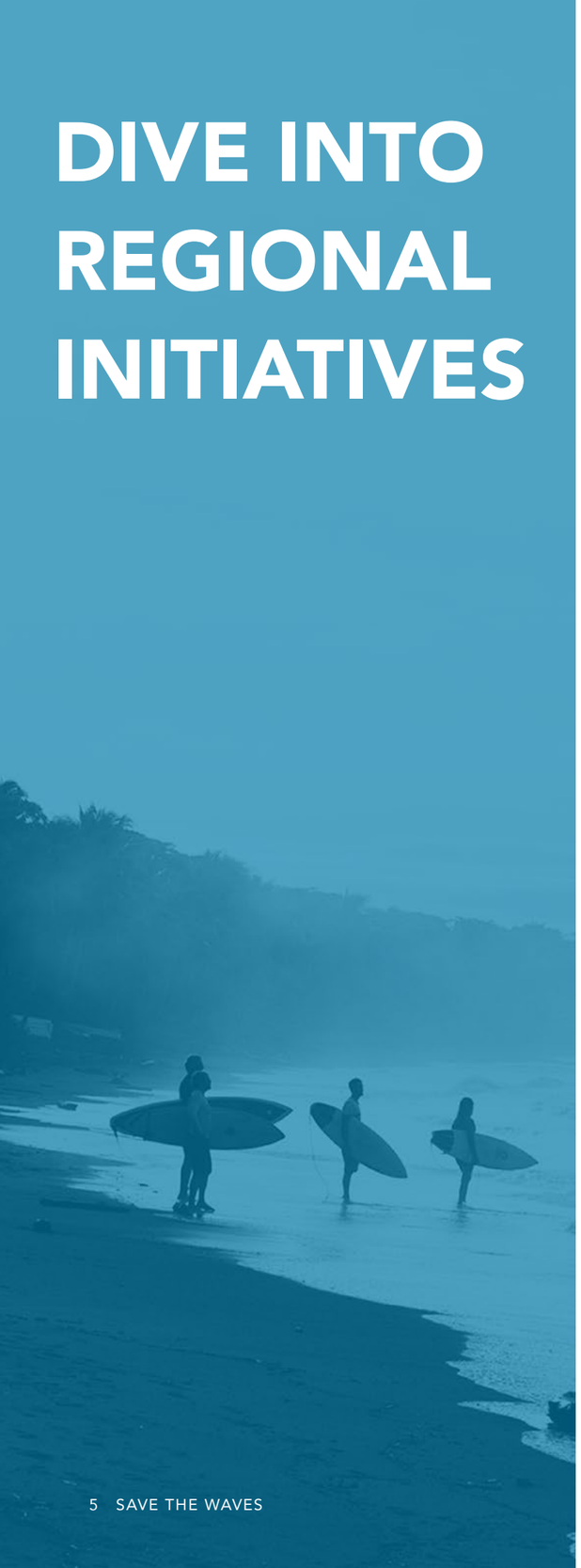
50K+ individual actions taken, including petition signatures

for two campaigns in Puerto Escondido and Uluwatu

12 Endangered Waves & campaigns supported

via our Wave Saver Toolkit, as well as staff technical support and experience. Campaigns were located in Mexico, Iceland, Indonesia, Canary islands, etc.

DIVE INTO REGIONAL INITIATIVES



CALIFORNIA

A groundbreaking, first-of-its-kind report underway in surfing's climate laboratory: Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve

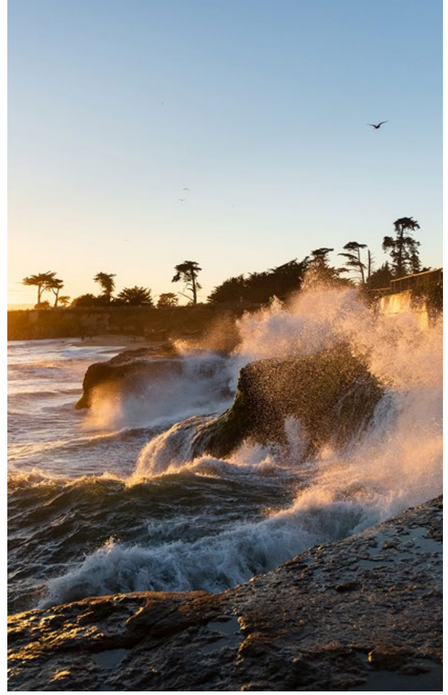
In 2024, Save The Waves and our partners at Integral Consulting and Black Surf Santa Cruz, with support from the Ocean Protection Council, teamed up to create a comprehensive study on how much the local economy relies on surf and its relative vulnerability to climate change.

We analyzed the economic contributions of visiting travelers, housing values, the willingness to pay for stewardship and conservation, and the total jobs created by the surfing economy. This data was matched with complex modeling of all surf spots in Santa Cruz, overlaying their vulnerability to climate threats such as accelerated erosion, sediment loss, and sea-level rise.

This groundbreaking work will result in the world's first and only Surf Break and Economic Vulnerability Assessment. The final report is set to be released in Spring 2025.

Elevating Impact: California SPAs

Following the completion of the Surf Break and Economic Vulnerability Assessment in the Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve, our team plans to leverage the lessons of the report and advocate for further protection of the Golden State's coastline through California Surf Protected Areas in 2025.



Top Photo: Santa Cruz World Surfing Reserve © Ryan 'Chachi' Craig
Middle Photo: Playa Hermosa World Surfing Reserve © Dixiana Salas
Bottom Photo: Playa Hermosa Surfing Reserve © Ryan 'Chachi' Craig

COSTA RICA

Stewarded climate resilience in Playa Hermosa alongside new work in the Global Environmental Facility (GEF)

Through our Stewardship Fund, the Playa Hermosa World Surfing Reserve was able to:

- Complete 2 stewardship projects including native plant restoration on newly established trails in the Reserve, with 175+ tree seedlings planted
- Host hundreds of visitors and community members utilizing the recently constructed and restored trails of the Quebrado Ganado micro-watershed
- Develop 4 proposals to ensure protection and restoration of Playa Hermosa surf ecosystem, furthering collaboration with local municipalities and the community

Elevating Impact: Costa Rica SPAs

In 2024, STW began work with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in Peru and Costa Rica alongside our partners at Conservation International (CI) and Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA).

The project aims to demonstrate the critical role that the effective management of marine and coastal ecosystems surrounding the surf breaks can play in protecting biodiversity and ecosystem function, and in generating blue economy benefits that will motivate further ecosystem conservation.

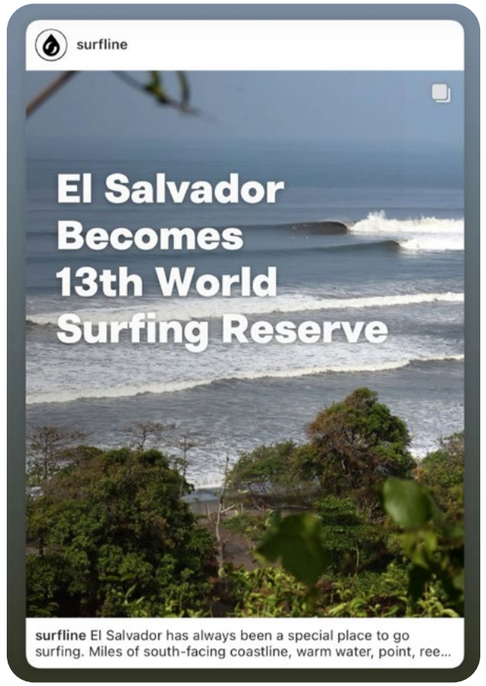
EL SALVADOR

Dedicated 12+ new surf breaks under the Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve, including Las Flores and Punta Mango

The World Surfing Reserve will focus on expanding protected areas in the tropical dry forest, instituting sustainability standards, collaborating on a master plan for development, and working towards marine protection initiatives. All of this work will help safeguard the ecosystems that create the incredible point breaks of Oriente Salvaje. Our commitment is to the incredible local partners and communities to protect this critical place.

> ***This is the beginning of a collaborative partnership to ensure Oriente Salvaje's waves and precious coastline remain intact. The community and the Local Stewardship Council are committed to the vision of creating more opportunities for conservation, establishing sustainability standards, and creating tools, pathways and plans that lead to sustainable development.***

Rodrigo Barraza
President of ADETCO and co-owner of Las Flores Resort



Top Photo: Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve © Salvaje Salvadoreña
Middle Photo: Oriente Salvaje Dedication Ceremony © Gaston
Bottom Photo: Screenshot of Social Media Announcement from Surfline
Next Page Photo: Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve

Launched the first ever surf ecosystem insurance project to help manage the growing impacts of extreme weather events driven by climate change

At the site of the Oriente Salvaje World Surfing Reserve, the world's first surf ecosystem insurance pilot project is underway. This initiative supports coastal communities by leveraging the economic value of surf breaks. Using parametric insurance, it offers rapid, predetermined payouts triggered by environmental thresholds, offsetting income losses when the surf economy that depends on these surf breaks is disrupted. This innovative approach brings surfing into the coastal resilience conversation, protecting both ecosystem functionality and vital income for vulnerable communities.

> ***This initiative is vital as it introduces a financial safety net that is rare in conventional environmental conservation strategies. By ensuring quick payouts through parametric insurance, Save The Waves helps sustain not only the natural surf ecosystems but also the social and economic structures that depend on them.***

Climate Champions

"Surf's up, risks down: How a bold insurance plan could preserve surfing hotspots amid climate threat"

This project was supported by the Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA).
This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the federal Department of Environment and Climate Change.
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada agissant par l'entremise du ministère fédéral de l'Environnement et du Changement climatique.

MEXICO

Submitted final proposal to Mexican Government for a 3,500 acre legally protected area at Punta Conejo

The fight for Punta Conejo continued with a final proposal to the Mexican Government for the first-ever coastal "Área de Protección de Flora y Fauna " in Oaxaca to preserve:

- 3,503 acres of land
- 6.5 miles of coastline
- 3 surf breaks
- 1277 acres of mangrove forest
- 4 local communities
- 500+ fishermen and salt workers
- 40+ species of bird
- 4 turtle species

Elevating Impact: Mexico SPAs

As one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth with over 174 surf breaks, Mexico is a priority area for Save The Waves. We have had multiple past and present projects - from creating Baja's first state park in San Miguel, to aligning with local efforts in Puerto Escondido, to retrieving debris off Todos Santos Island. We are officially working to formalize Surf Protected Areas across Mexico, especially the central Pacific Coast, and using the site at Punta Conejo to begin state and federal conversations to preserve surf ecosystems nationally.

After a long but rewarding journey, joint efforts have resulted in the communities voting and advocating for the establishment of a coastal conservation area that includes wetlands, mangrove forests, beaches, surf breaks, and coastal dunes.

By uniting local partners, our coalition aims to safeguard these ecosystems.

Mara Arroyo
Senior Manager, Conservation and Science

Top Photo: Punta Conejo © Jesus Monroy Camacho
Middle Photo: Planning the Punta Conejo Protected Area

Defended Mexico's Pipeline alongside local efforts in #SalvemosPuertoEscondido

Save The Waves joined Costa Unida, Salvemos Colorada and others to demand that the government take action to protect the waves and coastal ecosystem of Puerto Escondido. By uniting the local partners in a coalition under a common banner, this campaign aims to elevate the voice of the local community and protect the surf in Puerto Escondido.

To further the campaign, Save The Waves collaborated with NowNow Media to co-release "Place of Thorns: The Story of Puerto Escondido", a film with more than a million views on YouTube.

Top Photo: Still from "Place of Thorns" documentary © Will Bendix
Bottom Photo: Puerto Escondido, Mexico © Edwin Morales

PORTUGAL

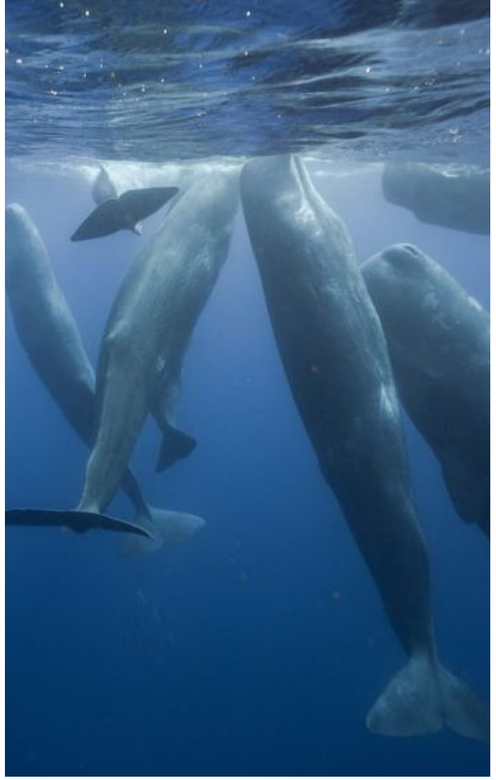
Supported the creation of Blue Azores' Marine Protected Area, covering 287,000 square kilometers, to be the largest network in the North Atlantic

Save The Waves is so thrilled and honored to partner on the Blue Azores program alongside the Regional Government of the Azores, Waitt Institute and Oceano Azul to further protect the beauty of these islands. Through these combined efforts, Save The Waves is working to bring Azorean surf communities into this conservation effort to better protect surf ecosystems.

To support this effort and ensure surfing is brought into the Marine Spatial Planning Process, we hosted multiple outreach events across 9 islands, including 18 workshops, 10 beach cleanups and over 40 stakeholder meertings.

Elevating Impact: Azores SPAs

Our Azores Surf Protected Area (SPA) is an ongoing effort to support the work of the Blue Azores Program. Our objective is to harness the power of the sport of surfing and surf communities to create additional marine protected areas in line with the IUCN 30 x 30 goals in the Azores and incorporate surfing into current protected area management plans. We are also working with Save Azores Waves, Azores Surfing and Bodyboarding Association, the Azores chapter of Surfrider Europe, Terceira Surfing Association and other local organizations.



Top Photo and Bottom Photo: © Blue Azores

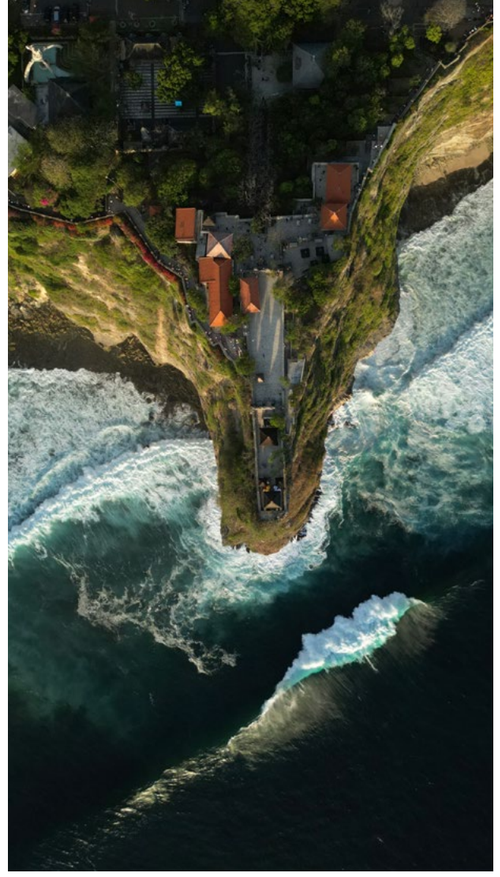
INDONESIA

Raised the alarm for Uluwatu and the warning for surf breaks nationally

The legendary wave was threatened by the construction of a service access road and seawall along the cliffs south of the main surf breaks of Uluwatu in Fall 2024. Funded by the Badung Regency government, the road is the first phase of a project to reinforce the cliffs under the Pura Luhur Uluwatu Temple. We acknowledge the spiritual, cultural, and economic significance of the Pura Luhur Uluwatu Temple to the Balinese people. However, like many others throughout Bali and around the world, STW was alarmed by the potential environmental risks the project posed to the surrounding marine and surf ecosystems. To our knowledge, no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted for this proposed road project. Without such an assessment, it is impossible to gauge how Uluwatu's biodiverse surf ecosystem might be affected. The reefs at Uluwatu, which create world-class waves, also support a rich array of marine life, including dugongs, sea snakes, reef sharks, sea turtles, and a wide variety of reef fish species. The campaign continues to understand the widespread and long-lasting damage.

Elevating Impact: Indonesia SPAs

Along with Conservation International and Locally Managed Marine Areas, we continue to create a network of over 20 village surf protected areas on the island of Morotai. This work now extends to other parts of Sumba, with a country level strategy currently in development for 5 different regions across Indonesia.



Drone Shot of Uluwatu Construction: © Anonymous

> ***"It's already affected the people who have business over there – the shops, the restaurants, the photographers, the videographers, the surf coaches...It's a big part of the economy and income for the village and also the entire province of Bali itself.***
>
> Piter Panjaitan

OUTREACH

‘IN THE MEDIA’ HIGHLIGHTS

- The Wave below the Sleeping Rabbit - Patagonia; 02.24
- Save The Waves Proposes Protection for Punta Conejo and 3500 acres of Oaxacan coastline - Inertia, 03.24
- Surf’s Up, Risks Down: How A Bold Insurance Plan Could Preserve Surfing Hotspots Amid Climate Threats - Climate Champions; 08.24
- The Mission To Protect Mexico’s Pointbreaks Is On, And You Can Help - Surfer, 03.24
- Everything You Wanted to Know About Puerto Escondido (And Why It’s In Trouble) - Surfer, 06.24
- Meet the Surfers Who Are Pushing New Boundaries in Ocean Conservation - Conde Nast, 08.24
- New Petition Calls For Transparency of Uluwatu Development’s Environmental Impact - Surfer, 09.24
- Climate and Surf in Santa Cruz - Lookout Santa Cruz, 11.24
- El Salvador Gets Its First World Surfing Reserve - Yahoo, 11.24

SAVE THE WAVES MOBILE APP

- Launched v 2.4.4. of App in Android and iOS versions, including an exciting new feature to give real-time information to users, which was downloaded by over 6500 users across both platforms.
- Successfully addressed App reports from Santa Cruz, Huanchaco and Gold Coast WSRs alongside LSCs and local government
- STW App showcased in a poster, a plastics-focused brochure, and an in-person Citizen Science roundtable at the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain
- App film displayed as part of STW FIlm Fest in 20 locations across 8 countries
- New data-sharing partners in Canada and Peru
- New corporate partnership with Lineup Surf
- Expanded reach through SciStarter podcast, People of the Ocean Decade series, partner-led outreach efforts

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

- UN Ocean Decade - Barcelona, Spain
- The Blue Leaders - New York, USA
- UN Oceans Conference “Immersed In Change” - San Jose, Costa Rica
- Ocean Resilience Innovation Challenge (ORIC) Leadership Academy & Investor Showcase - London, UK
- 10th GEF Biennial International Waters Conference (IWC10) - Punta del Este, Uruguay
- New York Climate Week - USA

SAVE THE WAVES FILM FESTIVAL REVITALIZED

In 2024, we brought back the Save The Waves Film Festival, the world’s only international surf and environmental film festival.

With the return of this community-favorite event, our team also launched “Film Fest In A Box”. Thanks to this new initiative, STWFF became a ready-to-go toolkit with tips, guides and materials for more Coalition partners and enthused volunteers to host their own event. In 2024, Save The Waves Film Festival’s global tour included over 20 events in 8 priority countries, with 2000+ attendees and over $14,000 raised for local stewardship projects and initiatives.

> ***It was a powerful reminder of why our conservation efforts are so important, and it reinforced the sense of responsibility we all share in preserving this incredible place for future generations. The festival wasn’t just about raising funds; it was about building a stronger, more connected community with a shared passion for the ocean.***
>
> Almendra Gomezleyva
>
> Community leader; Puerto Escondido, Mexico

Top Photo: World premiere of STWFF in Playa Brasil, site of the Punta Conejo campaign
Bottom Photo: Our team gathered at the UN Immersed in Change Conference in Costa Rica

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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Nik Strong-Cvetich
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Director of Conservation Impact
Lauren Parrino
Director Communications
Susan Coffey
Director of Operations and Finance
Mikaela Osten
Director of Operations (Left August 2024)
Mara Arroyo
Senior Manager, Conservation & Science
Trent Hodges
Senior Manager, World Surfing Reserves and Campaigns
Diego Sancho Gallegos
Conservation Programs Manager, Stewardship and Resilience
Rachael Roehl
Philanthropy Manager
Shaun Burns
Santa Cruz WSR Coordinator
Emmett Balassone
Communications Coordinator
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Azores SPANs Coordinator
Laura Zumbado
Costa Rica SPANs Coordinator
Angelo Picardo
El Salvador Local Coordinator

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OUR PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS

FOUNDATIONS AND GRANTS

Stichting The Flotilla Charitable Foundation
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Global Environmental Facility (GEF)
Conservation International
The Schmidt Family Foundation
Waitt Foundation
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The Stone Family Foundation
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Holdfast Collective
Surf Industry Member Association (SIMA)
Mighty Arrow Family Foundation
Parker Foundation
Holdfast Collective
Better Giving (nee Angel Protocol)
McKnight Foundation
The Joe Collins Fund at The Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County
City of Santa Cruz Economic Development Department
Government of Canada - Department of Environment and Climate Change

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Conservation International
Waitt Institute
Oceano Azul
Saves Azores Waves
Regional Government of the Azores
Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA)
Conservamos Por Naturaleza
SOS Puerto
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Costa Unida Oaxaca
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Divine Global People LLC
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Klean Kanteen
Mountains Wave Marketing
Firestone Walker
West Peak
Suda
Hand of God Wines
Surfer's Journal

Top Left: Punta Conejo © Jesus Monroy Camacho
Top Right: Oriente Salvaje WSR Dedication
Middle Left: Punta Conejo; community beach clean up
Middle Right: Azores © Ryan Chachi Craig
Bottom Left: North Devon WSR © Rob Tibbles
Bottom Right: Guarda Do Embau WSR; water quality testing

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