Paddling out, I feel the same way I feel when I am fishing in Yellowstone: Somebody deserves a medal for not screwing this place up. The last, best place in Southern California. Call it what you will—Malibu rules. I’m from Santa Cruz originally and I’m not supposed to love L.A., but Malibu is hard to argue with. I spend a lot of time paddling around at First Point at Surfrider Beach, and every time I take to the water and look up into all those empty, desert hills and that endless blue sky, then look down and see leopard sharks and stingrays gliding through kelp as thick and healthy as the hair on George Clooney’s head, I feel the same way I feel when I am fishing the Lamar River in northern Yellowstone: Somebody deserves a medal for not screwing this place up. In Yellowstone it’s Theodore Roosevelt. Carve his head into Mount Rushmore! It’s already there? Carve it again! Around Malibu, the list of those who have fought to protect it go back as far as May Knight Rindge in the early 1900s. She inherited all of Rancho Malibu and a fortune from her husband Frederick Rindge. She could have cashed out and lived like a queen, but instead, she went forward with her husband’s wish to preserve the land as a private domain to be enjoyed only by family and friends. Mrs. Rindge invested a great deal of that wealth in court in an attempt to block public access, ultimately taking the case to the United States Supreme Court. Yes, it’s your private property, the Supreme Court ruled. No, the public doesn’t really have a right to trespass with a highway. But, tough beans. Eminent domain. Go cry with the Native Americans. More recently, Malibu has had a lot of buckers public and private—from Barbra Streisand to Ozzie Silna to Jefferson “Zuma Jay” Wagner—who have had the respect and foresight to fight off the creep of urban and suburban gack, those “avenues of horror,” as Victor Gruen put it in 1954, “flanked by the greatest collection of vulgarity—billboards, motels, gas stations, shanties, car lots, miscellaneous industrial equipment, hot dog stands, Wayside stores—even collected by mankind.” Oxnard to the northwest, the San Fernando Valley to the north, Santa Monica/Venice to the east—Malibu is beset on three sides by traffic, population density, delays, billboards, and vulgarity. Surfing at Malibu and looking east, you can see the edge of a landscape swarming with the legions of the unjazzed: 20 million souls crammed together at 2,500 people per square mile, all the way to Mexico. The population density of Malibu is 260 people per square mile, and it feels that way. It feels good. Malibu has protectors but it needs all the help it can get. The World Surfing Reserve is another step toward man not tearing asunder what creation so nicely put together.

THE LAST BEST PLACE
BY BEN MARCUS

THE LAST, BEST PLACE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. Call it what you will—Malibu rules. I’m from Santa Cruz originally and I’m not supposed to love L.A., but Malibu is hard to argue with. I spend a lot of time paddling around at First Point at Surfrider Beach, and every time I take to the water and look up into all those empty, desert hills and that endless blue sky, then look down and see leopard sharks and stingrays gliding through kelp as thick and healthy as the hair on George Clooney’s head, I feel the same way I feel when I am fishing the Lamar River in northern Yellowstone: Somebody deserves a medal for not screwing this place up.
World Surfing Reserves (WSr) is an effort to identify and preserve the world’s most outstanding surf zones and their surrounding habitats. Drawing upon models established by UNESCO’s World Heritage Program and National Surfing Reserves Australia, WSR’s board of international experts forges partnerships with local surfers and environmentalists to select, enshrine, and help protect valuable and historic surf spots. Each WSR goes through four phases: nomination, selection, enshrinement, and management. Eligibility is based on a strict set of criteria: quality and consistency of the waves within the surf zone; the area’s environmental richness and fragility; the spot’s broader significance to surf culture and history; and local community support. Once a site has been selected and prioritized, the WSR board helps locals form a council to draft a management plan that will enable them to act as ongoing stewards of the reserve. World Surfing Reserves is first and foremost a public-awareness program—a way to communicate the essential value of a surf break to its local community and the rest of the world. Each WSR is designed to provide locals with a well-publicized tool they can use to protect their favorite surf spot for decades and centuries to come.

WHAT IS A WORLD SURFING RESERVE?

World Surfing Reserves is first and foremost a public-awareness program
Malibu has been selected as the first World Surfing Reserve because of the stellar quality of its waves, the seminal role it played in the birth of modern surf culture, the rich biological characteristics of its besieged inland wetlands, and the protective galaxy of locals caught in its gravitational field.

The waves at Malibu represent California pointbreak surf at its finest. For decades, dating back to the 1920s, surfers worldwide regarded its long, peeling righthand walls as the very definition of a “perfect” wave. Soon after the sport of kings puddle-jumped from Hawaii to the West Coast, Malibu became Ground Zero for California’s mushrooming surf culture. “Malibu is the exact spot on earth where ancient surfing became modern surfing,” Paul Gross once wrote. Gidget, the book and movie that helped lure hordes of newcomers to the sport, was set here. The shapers who designed the first high-performance surfboards (Bob Simmons, Joe Quigg, and Matt Kivlin, among others) conceived their revolutionary prototypes here. Mike Dana, the mid-century icon who still stands as surfing’s preeminent anti-establishment hero, learned to walk the nose here.

Surfers regarded Malibu as the very definition of a “perfect” wave. The community surrounding Malibu and the surf break is active and engaged, comprised of recreational and professional surfers, surf clubs, environmental groups, and other community organizations. The break is a source of pride and identity for locals, and the beach there serves as a de facto town hall for residents and visitors alike.

Malibu World Surfing Reserve

Why Malibu?

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Surfing Malibu

Surfers regarded Malibu as the very definition of a “perfect” wave.
Malibu wasn’t so much a surfing location as it was a small, intimate, well-designed surfing theater.
In 1952, after putting his business on hold for a few years, Velzy opened his second shop in the South of Market area of San Francisco. He was the oldest of the new group, a generation of surfboard makers that included Dewey Weber, Terry Tracy, and Wally Law. When the mood struck, he was also a hard worker. For example, when Velzy was seventeen, he made a 12-by-12-foot shack halfway up First Point, just to have a shaded place to drink beer in the afternoon. Not long after it was completed, he installed a cot, decorated the interior with empty wine bottles and pennants, and after it was completed, he installed a cot, decorated the interior with empty wine bottles and pennants, and a framed picture of a shark that he had caught. When Weber was seventeen, Velzy handed him a pig prototype, and Weber became the show. Surfers got mad about the way he surfed. For the rest of the fifties, the sport’s performance standard was now being set by the Malibu regulars and hang-ons, the surfing experience was often pursued as if it were an extended vacation with friends and family lots of beer and wine, parties and get-togethers, some horseplay, and the occasional brawl. They put surfing closer to the center of their Malibu colony, the famous Hollywood bedroom community within the established sphere of leisure that surrounded Los Angeles and to relax in style on the beach.

Malibu of popular legend was mostly created by a few dozen postwar Malibu regulars and hangers-on, could in fact flourish—without formal organizations. for Surfers, brief public nudity and forms of mild social rebellion came with that pride), a default wariness toward other titles, of course, had a fault, and there was a new cachet in not doing what everybody was doing. Nonconformity, of course, had been a hallmark of modern surfing ever since Tom Blake, who sailed as far from the shores of convention as Dora or Tracy. Blake, though, was a surfing proselytizer who wanted everyone to enjoy what he enjoyed. from Surfboard, magazine, point of view, their Malibu was “Tubesteak”—a nickname of such pitch-perfect raunchiness that it defined the sport’s midfifties interior with empty wine bottles and pennants, and a framed picture of a shark that he had caught. When Weber was seventeen, Velzy handed him a pig prototype, and Weber became the show. Surfers got mad about the way he surfed. For the rest of the fifties, the sport’s performance standard was now being set by the Malibu regulars and hang-ons, the surfing experience was often pursued as if it were an extended vacation with friends and family lots of beer and wine, parties and get-togethers, some horseplay, and the occasional brawl. They put surfing closer to the center of their Malibu colony, the famous Hollywood bedroom community within the established sphere of leisure that surrounded Los Angeles and to relax in style on the beach.

The terms “hotdog” originated on the ski slopes, but backpedaled. A few years earlier, Weber viewed the Malibu beachgoers as an audience in want of entertainment. But when Dora and Tracy viewed the rest of the world as real or repelled. “I ruled the beach,” Tracy later explained with a shrug, “Miki ruled the water.”
“Every surfer,” Bruce Brown said in _The Endless Summer_, “dreams of finding a place as good as Malibu.”

coffee can, and was about to pour the wax onto the deck of a new board for traction, when, he said, “all of a sudden he arrived at Malibu just as Kelvin and Quigg rolled out their maneuverable Malibu chips. Kelvin was Dora’s favorite surfer, and he expired the older surfer’s stance directly: lowered arms, back knee bent in toward the front, a casual slouch while trimming. Dora’s skating consisted mostly of bright staccato grace notes, strung together as if a John Coltrane solo, with quick and unexpectedly sharp turns as smooth as ice to be immediate. Dora worked hard at his surfing. He rode constantly, drove his car quickly and unexpectedly as a John Coltrane solo, with more to more transitions as smooth as ice to be immediate. Dora worked hard at his surfing. He rode constantly, drove his car quickly and unexpectedly as a John Coltrane solo, with more to more transitions as smooth as ice to be immediate.

Dora was just as theatrical as Tracy and could be equally comedic. For the Malibu morning surf check, he’d step out onto the beach or in the banquet room, Dora was as Dora put it in a rare noncombative moment of reflection—had been the first place to fall. Dora’s outlook was confident. He talked about being dismantled by a vast and conspiratorial range of forces, and that Malibu—“my perfect wave,” site of “my cherished days,” as Dora put it in a rare noncombative moment of reflection—had been the first place to fall. Dora was as Dora put it in a rare noncombative moment of reflection—had been the first place to fall. Dora’s outlook was confident. He talked about being dismantled by a vast and conspiratorial range of forces, and that Malibu—“my perfect wave,” site of “my cherished days,” as Dora put it in a rare noncombative moment of reflection—had been the first place to fall.
THE MARVELOUS MALIBU SURF RIDER BEACH is a south-facing, cobble- and sand pointbreak roughly seven miles east of the city of Malibu. The natural beauty of the area is well-documented. It is at the base of Ecore-rica Malibu Creek State Park (part of the 199,000-acre Santa Monica National Recreation Area), and the 20,000-acre Malibu Lagoon State Beach, which includes the historic, recently restored Malibu Pier. These are part of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state agency that owns and land in the Santa Monica Mountains to preserve as open space for recreation and wildlife protection.

The surf break is located at the mouth of Malibu Creek, outfall of the second largest watershed in Santa Monica Bay. While development and other actions have evidently impacted the function and health of many watersheds that drain into the Southern California Bight, Malibu has based relatively well against the onslaught, thanks to the countless tracts of nearby land controlled by the conservation-minded interests mentioned above.

Malibu and all its beauty was formed from the sediment (sand, gravel, cobble, etc.) flowing out of the Malibu Creek watershed during periods of heavy runoff. The influx of new sediment replaces sediment eroded due to wave action and coastal currents, helping to maintain the wave-sculpting bottom contours. The scouring of runoff and wave action and coastal currents, helping to maintain the wave-sculpting bottom contours. The scouring of runoff and wave action and coastal currents, helping to maintain the wave-sculpting bottom contours.

The influx of sediment created the estuary known as the Malibu lagoon. The mouth of the lagoon is currently filled to capacity with sediment that would otherwise reach the ocean. Efforts are currently being made to have the口口 visit the Malibu Pier. These are part of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state agency that owns and purchases tracts of nearby land controlled by the conservation-minded interests mentioned above.

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The influx of sediment created the estuary known as the Malibu lagoon. The mouth of the lagoon is currently filled to capacity with sediment that would otherwise reach the ocean. Efforts are currently being made to have the Rindge Dam removed.

The Malibu Lagoon provides vital habitat for more than 200 species of bird, including several endangered and threatened species. Like more than 90 percent of California’s historical coastal wetlands that have been filled or drained, Malibu Lagoon’s remaining 20 acres are a fraction of what it once was. This eliminates less makes what remains of the lagoon even more valuable as a habitat.

Numerous plants and animals depend on the Malibu watershed and lagoon for their continued survival. Malibu Lagoon is considered one of the last bastions of the incredible shape of Malibu’s waves.

The faMouS MalIbu SurfrIder beach is a south-facing, cobble- and sand pointbreak roughly seven miles east of the city of Malibu. The natural beauty of the area is well-documented. It is at the base of Ecore-rica Malibu Creek State Park (part of the 199,000-acre Santa Monica National Recreation Area), and the 20,000-acre Malibu Lagoon State Beach, which includes the historic, recently restored Malibu Pier. These are part of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state agency that owns and land in the Santa Monica Mountains to preserve as open space for recreation and wildlife protection.

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Now that Malibu has been named the first World Surfing Reserve, the Local Stewardship Council will keep its focus on watching out for threats to this historic surf spot.

— SHANE ANDERSON

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TOM BOYD.
If Surfers Won’t Save the World, who will? Obama? The G20? The United Nations? Is there some other global network of alert, persistent, environmentally aware individuals who are similarly trained in the art of navigating variables, overcoming adversity, and appreciating the rarities of perfection? Who else will do the work? Who else will uphold the vision?

It’s pretty ironic. Surfing is all about getting away from the constraints of society, of breaking free and committing to the rule of natural law—the physics of wave form, the glide. Surfers are conversant with the wild, in touch with the natural world at a time when the natural world is increasingly remote from most people on the planet. And yet here we are, using words like “criteria” and “nomination” and “enshrinement” and “stewardship.”

Creating a chain of World Surfing Reserves may not in itself save the world, but it’s a step in that direction. By acknowledging the worth of a wave and its environs, we open communication between disparate parties that might not otherwise become engaged. And once communication begins, who knows where it will lead?

A WSr that is fully embraced at the local, national, and global levels—where it becomes an asset not merely for surfers and beach-lovers, but for the bioregional community of which it is a part—enables sustainable activities while resisting the intrusion of the grosser monoliths of unchecked development, such as landfills, breakwaters and mining operations. The mere existence of the WSr will act as a tactical wedge that inserts itself into every future discussion concerning the destiny of the reserve area.

A WSr increases the chances of environmental synergy, integrating the principles of preservation, sustainability, stewardship, and cultural celebration. It permanently sets a surf spot with an intrinsic (and globally acknowledged) importance that locals already understand but may not be able to articulate.

The WSr says that these people—representing a global community of like-minded individuals—hereby value this place, right here, and intend to hold it sacred for as long as the waves break and the tides cycle. In other words, each local monument is a symbol for the greater monument that is the worldwide network of World Surfing Reserves, dedicated forward for the benefit of present and future generations.

Over time threats will come, one by one, to all of the world’s great surf spots, and over time, again and again, they will be compromised. And in the end, the enshrinements we make now may be the deciding factor that saves a beach or a surf spot or a park ... or just a jewel of the natural world.

World Surfing Reserves is about surfers saving the world, one wave at a time. And while it may not guarantee that a beach or a wave will be saved, it does forever commemorate the global surfing community’s demand that it must be.

Saving the World, One Wave at a Time

By Drew Kampion

Malibu World Surfing Reserve

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Green Wave Supporters:

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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 Waves Coalition at info@savethewaves.org.

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