

THE SURFRIDER FOUNDATION'S BLUE WATER TASK FORCE

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ABSTRACT

The Surfrider Foundation is a grass-roots, non-profit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves and beaches for all people. The Surfrider Foundation operates through a system of over 60 chapters located in almost every coastal state, and is expanding internationally.

The Blue Water Task Force (BWTF) is the Surfrider Foundation's water quality monitoring, education and advocacy program. It is used by Surfrider chapters to alert citizens and officials in their communities about water quality problems and to work toward solutions. The BWTF has succeeded in raising public awareness of coastal water pollution levels and by working in cooperation with state and county health agencies has greatly enhanced local beach water quality monitoring programs.

Perennial under funding of the federal BEACH Act has left gaps in many state beach monitoring programs. Local agencies are often forced to prioritize which beaches to monitor and to limit their sampling frequency. Surfrider volunteers are helping to fill in these gaps by collecting water samples from remote beaches in northern California and Oregon that agencies are not able to visit on a regular basis. On the east coast, Surfrider volunteers have worked to expand the state beach programs in New Hampshire and Delaware beyond the typical summer swimming season, by collecting water samples throughout the fall, winter and spring.

Surfrider chapters are also helping to get the agency beach data out to the public by posting it on their websites, sending out email alerts, and putting up posters at beaches, schools, coffee houses and other community bulletin boards. The BWTF program run by the Laguna Beach High school has been particularly successful in communicating beach water quality information.

Beyond collecting and reporting water quality information, Surfrider has been able to use the BWTF program to motivate local governments and stakeholders to locate and take action to solve the sources of their beach water pollution. The Central Coast Chapter in Oregon was the first group to discover water quality issues in Nye Creek, and they were able to champion this watershed to the City of Newport to achieve better public notification, track the sources of pollution, and codify best management practices aimed at long-term watershed protection.

KEYWORDS

Volunteer monitoring, beach water quality