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**FOR THE
PROTECTION
OF THE
WAVES**



Travel broadens the mind, providing exposure to other landscapes, other peoples, other cultures and customs. Travelling and surfing round the world puts us in touch with the global ocean, whose varied and various coastlines experience shared problems. Contamination of its waters, urbanisation, coastal degradation and the impact of this on the flora and fauna, and also the threat to and destruction of surfbreaks; and without surfbreaks there is no surfing.

In the face of global problems, we need global voices that support the strongest and most active groups and empower the smallest and weakest in the search for their own solutions.

This manifesto is a global public declaration of the value of and need to protect surfbreaks as part of our natural heritage and as a sporting, socio-economic and cultural resource.

It is a commitment of the intercultural community, a generational challenge. A road to inspire change in others, with the help of all. An expression of the ethic and cultural values of surfing: respect for and harmony with Nature, of which we all form a part. The way an individual or collective relates with their environment demonstrates their essential being, it is a key to civilization and culture.

Someone said that a human being is the size of its dreams. As surfers, travellers, academics, scientists, parents and ocean lovers, one of our dreams is to preserve that which has given us the most beautiful part of our soul. Join the Surf & Nature Alliance, it is time for the waves.





NATURE: A HERITAGE TO CONSERVE

The voices raised in favour of the conservation of Nature have been gaining force since, at the end of the 19th century, society began to be aware that the model of development being followed was causing huge alterations, on occasions irreversible, in each of the elements that comprise the natural system of the planet; actions which ultimately degrade the environment in which we live, and Nature itself, of which we are an integral part. This so-called development has brought with it the increased social, economic and territorial complexity of societies, and along with this, greater capacity to intervene in and alter the natural environment. However, and in contrast to the process of degradation of the natural environment, there has been an increasing awareness of Nature as part of our heritage, and something which needs to be protected.

We are thus facing a cultural assessment of nature, a change of view in the perception of what it is to be a human being. Nature is no longer considered to simply be an exploitable resource, it has in addition become an element of heritage to be valued from multiple viewpoints: ethical, aesthetic, scientific, educational and, ultimately, cultural.

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ON NATURAL DIVERSITY

From the enormous natural diversity of our planet, in this process of heritagisation it is the biotic components of the environment that have enjoyed pride of place. Biodiversity has been the flagship of environmentalism and environmental politics, though not in isolation. In the declaration of the first national parks, the value of the natural scenery played a leading role.

In the last two decades there has been increasing attention paid to the evaluation and management of geodiversity, and recently the term “hydrodiversity” has entered the international scientific literature in order to refer to the variety of existing forms in the “hydrosphere” –a term which has been in existence for decades – or the diversity of elements and places composed of masses of water in its various states. This notion acquires greater importance if we take into account that a great proportion of the surface of our planet (approximately 70%) is characterised by aquatic environments and landscapes.

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GLOBAL OCEAN AND HYDRODIVERSITY

The oceans are a fundamental component in the regulation of energy and climate control our planet. Water masses in their enormous diversity, from the great marine and oceanic expanses to small continental lakes, from the long courses of rivers to the small streams of the mountains, or from the polar ice caps to the smallest of mountain glaciers, are all elements and places that should also be considered and treated as part of the diversity and natural heritage of the planet.

However, and in most cases, masses of water are not valued in and of themselves, and instead are considered as mere supports to the ecosystems and habitats which are to be protected due to the richness of their biodiversity –the exceptional number and variety of forms of life they contain– which has for decades enjoyed specific attention and management.

On other occasions, because of their close relationship with the geosphere, and the geomorphological features resulting from the action of water as an external modelling agent, water masses are considered to be elements inserted into the landscape (e.g. a river, a waterfall, a lake, a glacier etc.). In this way, unquestionably, these elements are not thought of as contributing to geodiversity, let alone biodiversity.

**IN THE
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THE EVALUATION OF HYDRODIVERSITY

Specifically, the concept of hydrodiversity was coined on the basis of an element characteristic of coastal environments, that is, on waves.

No-one doubts the enormous value of wild flora and fauna, or mountains, deserts or the poles, but a river, a waterfall, the waves of the ocean, despite their ephemeral and mutable nature, are too all components of the environment, with their undeniable intrinsic, as well as added, value. In the current international context where governments are reviewing and finalising their inventories of their natural heritage, these will only be complete when all components of natural diversity have been added, including, from our perspective, the inclusion of the varied elements and places of the aquatic environment in general, and surfable waves in particular.

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THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT AS A RESOURCE

The coastal environment is a space of immense value where the laws of Nature, with their singular characteristics and dynamics, still reign, and it constitutes the border zone, the meeting and union between the sea and the land that rises from it. A space of great value for humans, occupied since ancient times because of the resources offered close by on its shores, base and refuge from the feared immense global ocean, a frontier between worlds it became a place of working and living, a bridge between the coast and human settlements. Nowadays though, our coasts have become areas of leisure and amusement for any citizen who finds themselves there: its breaks, beaches, cliffs, bays, estuaries, ecosystems, breezes and wide horizons define the coastal scenery that has become a first class socio-economic resource.

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COASTAL DEGRADATION: ITS IMPACT ON SURFABLE WAVES

That said, our coasts, as with other natural spaces, have become the amusement area of a growing urban society, paradoxically both the accused and the plaintiff as regards the deliberate abuse of and harming of Nature. Currently, coastlines are subjected to intense pressure from both their use and their exploitation, and this puts at risk not only the preservation of the coastal environment as part of our natural heritage, but also its rational and sustainable use as a socioeconomic resource.

In addition to traditional uses of the sea and shores and its local population, coastal settlements have had to contend with pressure from increased tourism and urbanisation which often bring in their wake intense changes, this when not directly causing the loss of certain elements processes and dynamics that erode the intrinsic value and potential of the locale as a resource. Unfortunately, as regards surfbreaks,

problems of degradation and loss are ever more frequent: dredging, beach fill, the construction of breakwaters, and other actions that impact on the shore and coastline all threaten the integrity of surfbreaks, thus the need to raise awareness of the impacts of such actions, often caused through lack of knowledge and which could frequently be avoided without additional costs.

**WAVES
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THE NATURAL VALUES OF WAVES AND SURFBREAKS

Waves are an essential element of the sea. Their presence is a significant component of seascapes and coastal landscapes, forming part of their nature as well as their value. Despite their ephemeral existence, they are a basic element in the marine and planetary energy balance. The energy of the sun, transmitted to the atmosphere in the form of the wind and storms which generate ocean swell, spreads in the shape of waves, which after a long and arduous journey across the high seas arrive at the shallow waters of the coastline and, in combination with other agents, discharge their energy, and in doing so sculpt the shoreline. Waves do not exist for our benefit alone. They are a fundamental agent in the natural system.

Their singular character —ephemeral, dynamic, fragile and changeable— demands they are dealt with in an holistic manner, considering not just the waves themselves, but also all the aspects that contribute to their breaking, which can be grouped together in the concept of the “Surfbreak”.

This is defined as a zone where factors such as the swell from the open sea, currents, the varying level and depth of the sea associated with the tide, the seabed and the wind all interact to give rise to surfable waves.

When contemplating how a surfbreak works it is also necessary to include the offshore transition area where a swell is transformed into a surfable wave, the so-called “swell corridor”. A surfbreak is, then, the strip of the coastline where, as a result of the combination of marine hydrodynamics, meteorological factors and coastal geomorphology, waves suitable for surfing are created.

By surfable waves we mean those waves that break in such a way that from an initial “peak” the wave offers a progressive and continuous section of unbroken crest which allows the surfer to catch the wave and glide laterally across the wall of the wave. Taking into account that the majority of coastlines do not produce surfable waves, their existence can be seen as exceptional and unique.

All this, and more, defines the intrinsic, or natural, value of surfbreaks. But in addition, human beings have ascribed to them wide-ranging and profound meanings, a cultural sediment.

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THE VALUE ADDED BY SURF CULTURE

The value of waves and the practice of riding them has a long tradition that flows from the ancient South Pacific islanders (Hawaii – Polynesia). The shoreline has since ancient times been worked, lived in and even venerated. Beyond the surfbreaks the peoples of the coast found fish to sustain them. Waves were an everyday element. Their form, energy and power would be mythified, bestowed with a special value and symbology, to the point where people wanted to engage with their power and ride upon these ephemeral breakers.

Since its arrival in the west at the beginning of the last century, the number of people riding the waves has grown exponentially. Despite the number of variants of surfing that have been developed recently, whether as a sport and leisure pursuit, an industry or even, for some people, a lifestyle, in essence, surfing promotes a feeling of respect for and harmony with the sea.

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SURFBREAKS AS HERITAGE AND A NATURAL, SPORTS, SOCIOECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL RESOURCE

The sea and the waves have strong aesthetic qualities, an essential, but not unique, part of their attraction. The beauty of their forms and energy—the freedom of their horizons, the purity of their breezes—afford us great pleasure, as do their light and colour. All of which has resulted in surfing developing its own cultural expressions: music, film, literature, painting, sculpture, fashion, natural and social science, even its own slang, with events created by and for surfers. The breaking waves are the basic resource for these activities, the playing field of the sportsperson, a place of leisure and a resource for the tourist, the object of study for the scientist, a space venerated by millions of lovers of the sea and surfing

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has become a socioeconomic resource which can contribute to local development and address the seasonality of the local population's income through an activity which, if managed sustainably, has a low impact on the environment. But as well as being a resource, among many other things, surfbreaks themselves are a unique element of nature, possessed of great added cultural value, a space of freedom and life that constitutes true heritage, a sum which is greater than its parts, an inherited resource, our resource, a resource which is in our stewardship.

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LEGAL PROTECTION OF SURFBREAKS: A CULTURAL KEY

However, despite the value and various meanings awarded to this characteristic element of the physical environment of the coastline, they remain without the legal status or protection necessary to ensure the correct management of this important part of our cultural and natural heritage. This public declaration thus constitutes not an end-point, but rather a start-point which aims to make a cultural and social claim. It deals with our cultural development, our relation as a global society with the natural world of which we are a part. Everything that implies damaging it is, in essence, degrading ourselves.

A sustainable focus requires, as a first step, the recognition of the value of surfbreaks and our willingness to protect them. Everything we do to advance along this road is progress, standing still is a setback. It means moving forward and throwing light on an issue that has been ignored,

indeed deliberately hidden or kept under wraps, due to practical misunderstandings and lack of knowledge of the scientific background to the study of waves. This first step addresses this gap, but does not end here. Once the call is made for an increased acknowledgement of the sense and value of the heritage value of surfbreaks, and with it the protection of its exceptional elements and spaces, it is necessary to collate detailed knowledge in order to ensure their correct and effective management. Given the peculiarities of the object in question —surfbreaks—, an integrated approach is required which addresses both their intrinsic and natural values, their added or cultural value, as well as their use and management.

**THIS IS A
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DECLARATION OF THE NEED TO VALUE, MANAGE AND LEGALLY PROTECT SURFBREAKS IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE THEIR PRESERVATION

Faced with the growing impact on, degradation of and losses of surfbreaks we hereby declare the need to inventory and evaluate the current state of surfbreaks along our coastline in order to guarantee their preservation, not only in the present, but also for future generations. We hereby declare the need to give surfbreaks the legal protection they currently lack, for them to be recognised as an integral part of our natural heritage and diversity and, as such, for them to be managed in a way that ensures their conservation.

On many occasions, interventions along the coastline are accompanied by serious impacts on surfbreaks while having no real benefit for anyone. All works in coastal environments should be preceded by a strict environmental impact assessment which evaluates – among other things – the factor of surfbreaks. In this sense, the principal objectives of this petition are, in the first instance, to recognise exceptional places of interest to surfing, and secondly to protect and conserve these places through the limitation and management of their use and its reconciliation with the sustainable development of the local population.

Following the example of what has begun to be applied in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, Peru and Spain, the path to accomplish this proposal is the recognition of Surfing Reserves, established at different scales, from international to regional. In this way, as well as assuring the conservation of surfbreaks as part of our natural heritage, they would also be re-evaluated as a quality resource on our coasts.

In conclusion, this manifesto is based on the notion of coming to know in order to appreciate, appreciating in order to enjoy, and enjoying in order to try to address conservation with the help of all. All actions which degrades is retrogressive, it is to deny future generations the quality of the coastal environment. It is true that we have the right to take advantage of and enjoy it, but also the responsibility to preserve it.

This is a commitment of the intercultural community.

We are what we protect, let's protect the waves.

WE ARE
WHAT WE
PROTECT.
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Surf&Nature Alliance is a non-profit intercultural organization dedicated to protecting the coastal environment, empowering local communities through the valuation, conservation, legal protection and sustainable management of their natural and cultural heritage.

This Manifesto was written in 2012 by
Surf&Nature Alliance
(surfnaturealliance.org)

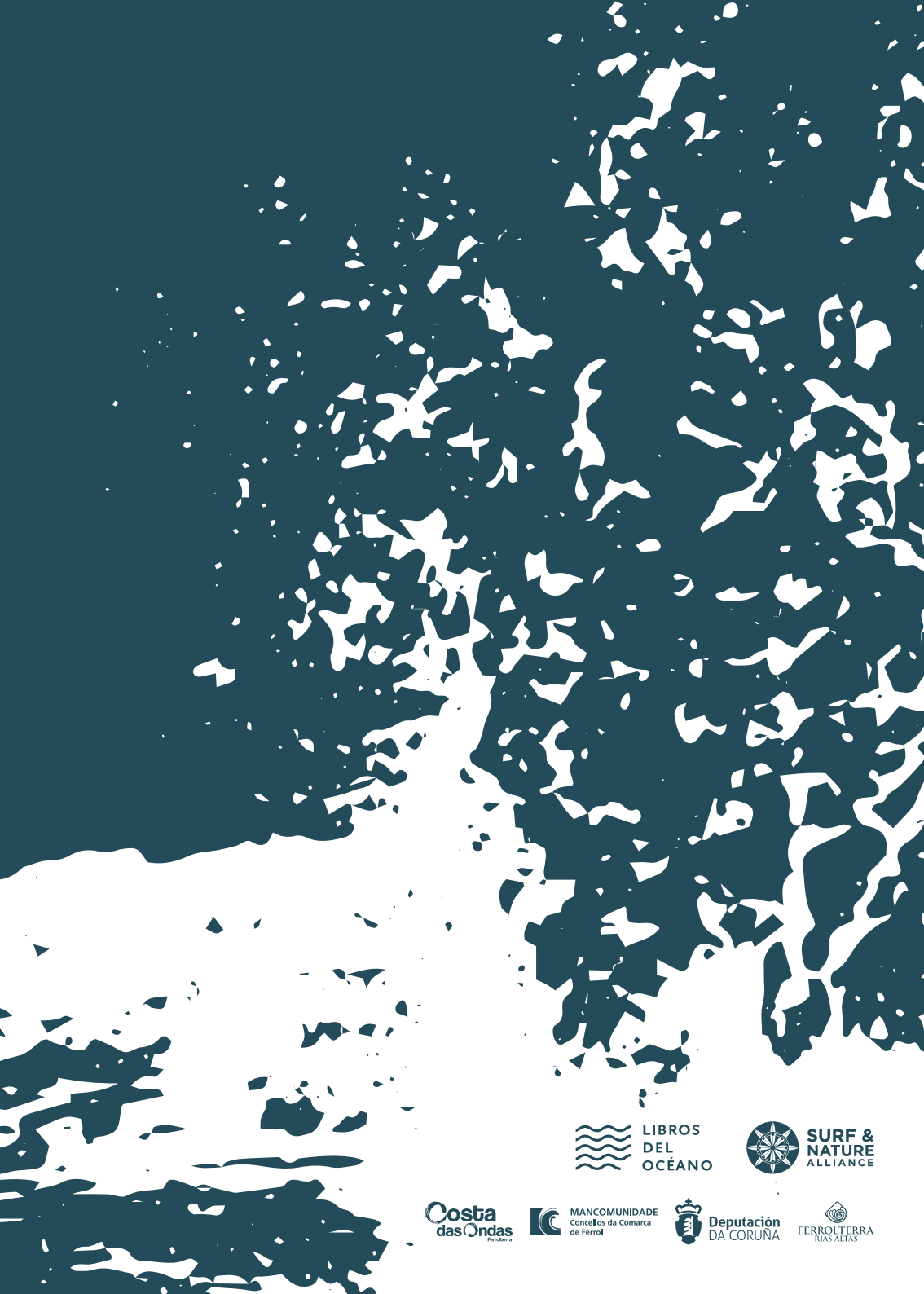
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