

# **NOOSA SURF MANAGEMENT PLAN OUTLINE SUBMISSION TO NOOSA DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**from Noosa World Surfing Reserve Committee**

**29th October 2023**

## **BACKGROUND**

On February 21, 2020, Noosa was officially dedicated as the 10th World Surfing Reserve (WSR) and the 3rd in Australia after Manly and Gold Coast. Designation recognises the world class quality of our waves, the strength of our local surfing community and the commitment of the environmental activists who came before who fought to protect the green canvas on which our surf breaks are painted. World Surfing Reserves is a program of Save The Waves Coalition, a global nonprofit based in Santa Cruz County, California. Save the waves are an organisation recognised worldwide by Governments, conservation groups and likeminded corporate organisations in surf and marine conservation.

Noosa has been a sanctuary for young surfers and a producer of some of the best surfers in the world (including three world champions) for many years. The importance of surfing is woven in the cultural fabric of our town. However, there are some key challenges that continue to affect this coastline and its surf ecosystems.

The Noosa World Surfing Reserve (NWSR) is managed by a Local Stewardship Committee (LSC) with help and resources from Save The Waves Coalition. This group, composed of local surfers, community members, council observers, boardriding clubs, and business leaders manages the WSR in collaboration with other environmental, community and stakeholder groups whose missions align.

The NWSR sits at the core of coastal conservation efforts and serves to convene and integrate existing environmental efforts with the goal of preserving the waves, coastal resources, and surfing ecosystems of Noosa. The LSC pledges to defend the integrity of the breaks and promote a spirit of cooperation and sharing enabling future generations of surfers to enjoy our waves safely and harmoniously.

## **ABOUT**

### **Our Mission**

To recognise and protect the key environmental, cultural, economic and community attributes of the NWSR and surrounds, that make up and/or effect the surf ecosystem.

### **Our Vision**

We aim to protect, steward, and defend the NWSR surf ecosystem. This is the land to sea interface that create the conditions for breaking, rideable waves, and the flora and fauna and human communities that are dependent upon it.

### **What is the Surf Ecosystem**

Put simply, a surf ecosystem is more than a wave: it's the interconnection between the geophysical (bathymetry, watersheds, sediment flow), the biological (biodiversity and productivity of the plants and animals), and the socioeconomic interactions (human wellbeing, economies, and cultures) that make our place special.

### **Stewardship Goals**

- 1. Enhance safety and access to surf resource.**
- 2. Strengthen adaptation response to climate change and coastal resilience to maintain surf break quality.**
- 3. Improve water quality & reduce beach trash.**
- 4. Record and preserve Noosa's surf culture as it relates to the history, social fabric and values (diversity, equity and inclusion) of the Noosa Shire.**

### **Core Values**

**Share** – We are here to share the stoke of our shire's beaches and points with everyone, share knowledge and expertise, share the waves.

**Respect** - We teach respect in and around our Shire's surf breaks for the environment, culture and local community, respect for the Surfers Code, respect for the line-up and personal levels of ability, respect for those who came before us.

**Preserve** – We work to preserve the outstanding waves of our Shire's surf breaks, preserve the surrounding environment, surf culture, history and economic benefits to community.

## **OUR PROPOSITION**

NWSR committee proposes a Surf Management Plan and a Noosa and Ocean Beaches Strategy that gives residents access to the future enjoyment of the Noosa Shire surf amenity. This would either be part of the Destination Management Plan or sit alongside it with other planned council initiatives.

### **Why does Noosa Shire need a Surf Management Plan (SMP)?**

Noosa is recognised as one of the world's iconic surf zones for good reason. Its renowned waves and global reputation as a centre of quality surf and surf culture contribute greatly to the Shire's economy, residents' quality of life and social capital.

### **Defining Issues**

- 1. Issues of safety, overcrowding and surf etiquette, to improve the surfing and beach experience on Noosa Shires beaches and Point breaks.**
- 2. Enhance access to the surfing breaks during holiday seasons and swell events and look for solutions to traffic, parking, and congestion during these times.**
- 3. Address and assess solutions to issues surrounding environmental factors affecting the waves of the reserve.**
- 4. Strengthen adaptation response to climate change and coastal resilience to maintain surf break quality. Tide sensitivity, sea floor composition (e.g. sediment/ sand management), shoreline resilience, swell direction sensitivity.**
- 5. Improve water quality & reduce beach trash.**

## **SURF MANAGEMENT PLAN KEY OBJECTIVES**

1. That resident and visiting surf users who share Noosa points and beaches, clearly understand local surf etiquette and surf safety customs. Ongoing education is key.
2. That management of surf amenity of Noosa points and beaches is recognised as best practice in coastal conservation and is informed by data collection, design, and innovation.
3. Joint stewardship in the management of Noosa Shire surf amenity. In addition to the development of the key actions to deliver the objectives of the Surf Management Plan. The prevailing content has been addressed in an issues, ideas and solutions format that should be considered a starting point. The NWSR Committee will continue to work on relevant and fluid responses to issues as they come to light with new innovative ideas and solutions possibilities.

## PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- Outline existing legislative and planning frameworks regulating coastal works and identify how State legislation and policy relate to managing surf amenity.
- Define 'surf amenity' as it relates to Noosa Shire beaches and point breaks with a residents first approach to maintaining a positive experience for residents and visitors alike.
- Commence study and communicate local coastal processes and seasonal weather patterns that shape surf amenity on Noosa beaches and point breaks.
- Provide a baseline for physical surf amenity characteristics. The Surf Management Plan should also outline the role of local government in the management of Noosa Shire beaches and point breaks as well as summarise the legislative framework and jurisdictional boundaries that exist between Local, State and Commonwealth Governments.
- Quantify surfer numbers and the economic value of surfers and surfing to the Noosa economy. Implement a minimum 1-year trial of collecting data via Surfline cameras utilising artificial intelligence to capture live data 24/7 on the number of surfers in the water at the points, number of beach users coupled with Noosa Council traffic studies to give baseline data. This will assist in decision making on solutions to the traffic congestion and beach access during seasonal swell events and holiday periods as well as visually monitoring coastline adaptations and responses to swell. The Surfline system collects and records weather, swell and wave data which is used in accurate surf conditions forecasting. These surf forecasts and associated data will also be able to project surfer numbers prior to swell events and holiday periods.
- Improve quality of water from sewerage outfalls that impact the Noosa Shire Beaches and surfing amenity.
- Discourage littering within the Noosa Shire with substantial litter fines for offenders. This may be reported by public or council officers.
- Provide accessible guidelines and mapping to public for beach and surf access – includes parking; location for stairs; disability access points; surf safety and etiquette signage points and defibrillators. **Note:** We need better consistency of beach access point codes that then are used by Emergency Services organisations to accurately locate an incident. These organisations include:
  - Ambulance [QAS]
  - Fire and Emergency Services [QFES]
  - Police [QPS]
  - Surf Lifesaving [SLSQ]
- Introduce paid parking for visitors only to reduce the traffic flow into the Hastings Street and National Park precinct (residents, tradesmen and commercial operators excluded, possibly an electronic pass of some kind). Parking fees should fund traffic control strategies.

- Set aside an area for workers parking into the Hastings Street and National Park areas and/or provide specific safe public transport for Hastings Street workers for the hours of work knock off from retail to hospitality.
- Investigate a visitor's tax to assist in traffic control strategies to reduce traffic flow and fund traffic control initiatives.
- Increase the number of bike security stands at the Noosa, Noosa National Park, and the Eastern Shire Beaches, beachside to encourage local users to ride to the beach whenever possible instead of driving a car. This will reduce demand for car space parking and improve the beach access for residents.
- Install surfboard storage facilities for locals near surf accesses where parking is limited to reduce congestion (i.e., Noosa National Park). Ideally this will increase the use of bikes or other forms of public transport where it may be difficult to take longboards on bikes or buses.
- Improve forms of public transport for surfers specifically, including ease of travel with surfing equipment to and from beaches and point breaks. This will be even more significant during a prevailing swell. This could be done by creating an integrated transport plan that includes construction of satellite car parks and implementing an electric bus transport system that runs on 15-minute intervals from Noosa Junction, Noosaville, Tewantin with a direct route to Hastings Street and Noosa National Park with no stops. Implement the restriction of Visitors cars into Hastings Street and National Park areas forcing the use and shorter travel times of buses to the surf amenity. The buses need to be set up with short board and longboard carrying facilities, wet areas and possibly sunscreen, and surfboard wax concessions.
- Encourage the bus companies to install bike carry racks front and back of every bus to likewise open opportunities for bike travel complemented by bus usage for part of a longer journey. Again, this improves amenity access for residents. Create and distribute mapping of available bike security stands.
- Provide defined guidelines to the shire surf schools, surf hire business, and backpacker accommodation establishments on surf safety and surf etiquette. Council to enforce these guidelines. This may be through Council Permit issuance conditions and/or Surfing QLD, Surfing Australia, or ASI bodies for Accredited Surf Schools.
- To create a local school-based Surf Etiquette and Safety education program for all local schools that encompasses Noosa values to change behaviour in future generations.

- A partnership with Noosa Council on a new approach to Tourism Noosa marketing that uses NWSR core values, SHARE RESPECT PRESERVE. Create and deliver an educational marketing campaign at the FRONT GATE to the Noosa shire to educate visitors on acceptable surf and social behaviour prior to arriving. This marketing initiative could include TV advertising, airport billboards-lightboxes, highway billboard signage south coming north and north coming south into Noosa, airline advertising, interstate marketing programs, taxi signage, social media targeted marketing, micro shire campaigns enlisting support of local community groups, social media material for all surf lifesaving, watersports and boardriding clubs can carry and distribute marketing material.
- Tourism Noosa to advertise to a profile of tourist that encompasses sustainability and the characteristics of regenerative tourism with each visit. Our vision is that less is more, we value quality over quantity. Ideally these tourists will leave Noosa in a better shape than before they arrived.
- A program to mitigate boat wake in the lineup from jet skis and commercial watercraft encroaching upon the surf amenity outside of MSQ regulations and give priority and respect to the safety and quiet enjoyment of surfers. Instigate increased policing and protection of the quality of the Iconic point break waves as a result of rebounding backwash. This backwash disfigures, reduces quality and destroys the waves and may lead to a safety issue should an injury be sustained as a result of this phenomenon. Perhaps boats within a specific proximity of the reserve could be enforced by Council. Permit holders to have defined guidelines and standards of operation with regard to proximity to the reserve and the breaking waves.
- Develop regenerative surf tourism policies and marketing strategies that improve the social context for the physical and mental wellbeing of residents. Highlight personal responsibility within the context of safety and surf etiquette. Educate and mitigate aggressive behaviour from residents and visitors alike. Convey and maintain the positive social context and social order of surfing and surf etiquette to improve the resident's way of life in and out of the ocean.
- Record and understand the historical cultural value of the surf amenity and its participants as a reference to its social value and capital for future generations of Noosa residents and the visiting surf community (e.g. funding for history of Noosa Surfing Project - Noosa Heritage Library ongoing).
- Develop a surf management plan that will encourage the benefits of an outdoor lifestyle for the children of the shire and lead to improved community involvement, healthy lifestyle choices and Noosa local identity aligned with a positive value set.

## DEFINING THE SURF AMENITY AND SURF ECOSYSTEM

This requires expert understanding and data analysis to understand coastal processes and define solutions. The following is suggested legislative frameworks to better understand our coastline to make informative decisions to protect the surfing amenity.

- **Our beaches** – natural processes that form surf amenity around Noosa. As surf users of Noosa beaches and point breaks, it is important to understand key coastal and seasonal processes that influence surfing conditions on our beaches.
- **Noosa Shire swell seasons** should be recorded, data collected cross referenced with relevant data on overcrowding, transport, ACCESS and effects on beach and point break sand profiles.
- **Sediment transport regime on Noosa Beaches and point breaks:** stake holders should be able to present data to balance the sand and wave action.
- **Noosa Beaches and point breaks geography and geomorphology:** Beach breaks point breaks, sand shoals, deltas and reefs should be recorded.
- **Location specific surf and tidal conditions effects** on the surf and access to the surf amenity.
- **Management of our beaches:** Dune management, basement sand excavation, tidal works approvals – profile of beach sand movements and accumulated sand banks over time are recorded to provide a benchmark for future estimates of sand management on Main Beach that benefit the entire surfing ecosystem.
- **Shark and jellyfish advice,** education, and avoidance as well as support for innovative solutions that protect our marine environment. Leading innovation in trials whilst measures are in place, which aims to remove all harmful deterrents to the marine ecosystem whilst still providing the same if not better protection for all beach goers. As a start, a look into alternative solutions such as smart drum lines that allow the nets to be at least removed in Noosa during whale season. This work needs to be guided by reliable information and data. Education of the public must be fact driven, we believe there are solutions, but any change must consider both the marine life and the social impact on the community expectation with regards to safety and well-being.
- **Existing coastal management Noosa Shire projects,** to consider the surf amenity, where appropriate and applicable and apply the Surf Management Plan conservation values as an assisting guide to these projects.
- **Annual monitoring** of sand conditions and benchmarks set by EPA for sand pumping.
- **Ongoing Surf etiquette** and surf safety program under the stewardship of Noosa World Surfing Reserve.
- **Coastal monitoring-** Wave data, hydrographic survey, coastal imaging cameras, aerial photography.

## **CONCLUSION**

The development of the Surf Management Plan should be a collective undertaking involving the Noosa Council, State Government agencies, the general community, Noosa World Surfing Reserve, and interest groups. A Surf Management Plan will ensure the surf amenity and the surfing experience on the Noosa Shire beaches and point breaks can be enjoyed now and by future generations. The Surf Management Plan presents a strategic course of management and research to support the long-term preservation and (where possible) enhancement and access of surf amenity, community surf culture and the coastal environment with management initiatives for the growing demand on our surf breaks.