

## Surf Equity in Pacifica at Linda Mar Beach

*(last updated November 2021, please see [Resolution Summary](#) for the most recent updates on our work in Pacifica)*

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*In our ongoing efforts towards decolonization Brown Girl Surf acknowledges that we are occupying unceded and stolen Lisjan Ohlone lands. The work we are doing in Pacifica is on the land of the Aramai tribe of the Raymaytush Ohlone peoples.*

*With this acknowledgment, we pay our respect to our Indigenous elders - past, present, and future - and hope to help heal colonial traumas and create a path for joy.*

*As we continue our work, we recognize that this land acknowledgment is merely the first step in our decolonization path and push ourselves to turn acknowledgment into action. To learn more about Indigenous healing and land rematriation please visit [Sogorea Te' Land Trust](#).*

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### What is “surf equity”?

Brown Girl Surf (BGS) defines *surf equity* as the inclusion of all peoples, regardless of background and/or identity, in the surfing community with the special emphasis on making sure those who have been historically excluded from accessing the coast, beaches, and surfing, have equitable access to these resources. *Surf equity* means that the communities who have had limited access to surfing - namely Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) folks - [due to systemic racism](#) and other oppressive factors, are prioritized in a new system that breaks down the systemic barriers to surfing. *Surf equity* does not mean the exclusion of those who have historically monopolized beach access, but rather a creation of a community where there are no barriers for anyone to enjoy the ocean and its resources.

It has been proven undoubtedly that [access to nature](#), especially to the coast is crucial in mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Surf equity is important not only to right historical exclusion, but to provide a path forward for *everyone* to find joy and benefit from the ocean.

### Who will benefit from surf equity?

**EVERYONE!** Equity means that all folks receive the support, care, and resources needed to reach their full joyous potential. BIPOC individuals, especially BIPOC women, girls, and gender-expansive folks currently need to be prioritized because of their historical oppression and exclusion from coastal resources. The prioritization of marginalized folks may look like, but not limited to:

- Lowering monetary barriers to access
- Creating more points of entry into surfing
- Providing reparations

- Providing additional resources such as affinity groups and organizations where folks can feel safe and supported
- Inclusion in decision making, planning, and permitting processes and/or public apologies and admittance of harmful actions

## Why focus on Pacifica?

Linda Mar Beach, also known as Pacifica State Beach, has been the focal point for Brown Girl Surf's and City Surf Project's (CSP), along with our allies', fight for equitable beach access. For the last 17 years, Linda Mar Beach has had a permitting system for surf schools and camps that actively excluded folks from accessing coastal resources.

### *How have people been excluded?*

- Since 2004, there have only been 4 operating permits allocated for surf schools/camps operating on and at Linda Mar beach. The same 4 commercial surf camps/schools have held permits with no turnover or opportunities for new permit applicants. New businesses and/or nonprofits wanting to conduct surf camps on Linda Mar have not been able to apply and/or obtain permits; many have not even been able to start the permitting process as no new permit slots have opened since the creation of the initial 4.
- Under Pacifica's current surf camp permitting system, nonprofits like City Surf Project and Brown Girl Surf and new commercial programs such as Sea Surf Fun have never been allowed to legally operate a surf camp on Linda Mar Beach.
- There is no numerical value that can be placed on the emotional and mental wellbeing that is impacted by exclusionary practices. However, to quantify the loss created by this inequity, this looks like about 10 Pacifica programs per season that serve 6-8 participants each, 2 seasons a year, plus youth summer camp programs, which serve approximately 8-10 youth per week.
- Furthermore, a permitting system that actively excludes folks (especially those who do not own businesses or property in Pacifica) from accessing the beach goes against the California Coastal Act guidelines on equitable access. **Pacifica is operating a permitting system that lacks compliance with the California Coastal Act.**

## How is Pacifica upholding an invalid permitting system?

Under the [California Coastal Act](#), the City of Pacifica DOES NOT have the authority to regulate activities of surf camps/schools because it does not possess a Coastal Development Permit (CDP).

### *What does this mean for surf schools?*

For the past 17 years, the City of Pacifica has been upholding an exclusionary permitting system that is null and void. This means that technically, any surf camps and organizations can hold programs on Linda Mar Beach outside of the city's invalid permitting system.

### *How has the California Coastal Commission (CCC) responded?*

The CCC has provided us with emails and other evidence that shows the City of Pacifica was made aware of the fact that they must apply for a CDP to legally regulate surf schools. There has been historical interaction between the CCC and the City of Pacifica regarding the need for a CDP, however the issue fell off the radar and wasn't revisited until earlier this fall. Despite previous contact, the CDP application process was neither completed nor followed up on. Now, the CCC has once again shared with the City of Pacifica that they **MUST** apply for and be approved for a CDP to regulate activities like surf camps on Linda Mar Beach.

### *What are the attitudes in Pacifica?*

Although we have seen significant progress, this process has not come without challenges and resistance to change. We are grateful for the majority of support we receive and allies who work alongside us. We want to acknowledge and share that our work has not come without opposition, negative attitudes, and reinforced racism through acts of localism. While these oppositional acts may be the attitudes of the few, these actions do not exist in a vacuum, nor will they simply disappear once BGS and other nonprofits are granted permits. Changing hearts and minds will continue to take time, work and community engagement. In speaking this truth, we hope to shift surf culture away from the exclusionary and resistant actions that perpetuate harm within our communities.

## **What progress has been made (outside of the discovery of an invalid system)?**

Over the last 6 years, there have been several attempts made by City Surf Project and other organizations to apply for a surf school program, however, they have been rejected by the City of Pacifica. Finally, in 2020, after the Paddle Out for Love - Black Lives Matter paddle out, attention was directed towards Pacifica's inequitable permit system through grassroots organizing and community engagement. Summary of activities include:

1. Creation of [Surf Camp/School Policy Advisory Task Force](#) (STF), Dec. 2020 :
  - a. The STF was created after public action and support to ensure safety and equity for underrepresented groups by creating a permit program with equitable access for all.
  - b. Consisted of 9 members made up of - one representative from traditional surf camp/school, one community access partner surf camp/school, one representative from San Mateo County Chapter Surfrider Foundation, and three PB&R commissioners, and two at-large members representing the Pacifica Public.
  - c. The STF's goal was to review potential new permitting systems and make a recommendation to the PB&R after several STF meetings
2. Proposal of a [Community Access Partnership Program](#) (CAPP):

- a. BGS and City Surf Project created and proposed the CAPP permit system as a way for nonprofits to apply for permits to operate on Linda Mar beach and address the issue of equitable access for historically excluded and/or underrepresented groups
- b. The CAPP lays out a clear framework for equitable access going forward and supports organizations that are committed to the principle of increasing access to surfing for underrepresented groups

The [STF has met once a month](#) for 2-3 hour meetings for the last 11 months to discuss the permitting system and review the CAPP proposal. STF members were presented with the CAPP proposal created by Mira Manickam Shirley, Co-founder and former Executive Director of BGS, and Johnny Irwin, Co-founder and Executive Director of CSP, and discussed the scope and logistics of a new, more inclusive system.

On October 27th, the Task Force recommendations on the CAPP were [presented](#) to the Parks Beaches & Recreation Commission (PBRC). The PBRC unanimously approved the recommendations set forth by the STF - we are now waiting for the PBRC to vote on the new permitting system, which includes the CAPP.

### What's next?

There has been unclear communication from the City of Pacifica on whether or not they will prioritize applying for a CDP before the end of the year in order to continue the work of ensuring surf equity.

- **We and our allies would like a formal apology from the City of Pacifica acknowledging its role in upholding exclusionary systems and reinforcing systemic racism and oppression**
  - We would like to start a conversation with the city after this apology about what reparations for the community might look and feel like.
  - We are inviting the City of Pacifica to embrace change through an equity lens.
- BGS and CSP would like to see the City of Pacifica apply for and be granted a CDP that includes the CAPP proposal as a focus.
  - In order for equity to be ingrained into the future of Pacifica's surf culture, we believe it must be part of policy foundation and action.
- Once the CAPP system is created, we would like more priority to be given to CAPP schools when permits are approved
  - This may look like allocating more "spots" to CAPP schools than commercial surf schools
- **We expect *surf equity* to be continuously promoted when making surf camp policy and beach access decisions in the future.**

One of our goals has always been to create a replicable system of surf equity for the entire state of California. In working with us and allies, ***the City of Pacifica has the opportunity to become an example of a city that worked to acknowledge outdated and exclusionary practices, and supported the creation of a more inclusive and joyful surf culture through an equitable lens.***

## What's the "bigger picture"?

The work BGS, City Surf Project, and numerous allies have been doing:

- Demonstrates how land managers and nonprofits can work together for equitable access solutions, and influence guidelines for equitable public access and permitting processes on State lands.
- Increases understanding of how [localism helps to enact and perpetuate structural racism](#). Ultimately, we hope to decrease localist attitudes and localist acts in towns like Bolinas and Pacifica (for example, maybe we will no longer see signs that say "Black Lives Matter" next to signs that say "If you are not from here, do not come here.")
- Aims to start Bay Area conversations about the connections between localism and structural racism and spur conversations about this topic in the global surf community.
- We hope that localism will no longer exist in the California surf community and beyond.

## How can you become involved?

At this moment, all we ask is that you SPREAD THE WORD, stay engaged and be ready for action! JOIN US in raising awareness and sharing with your communities what's going on and how far we've come since the paddle in 2020 BE PROUD of yourselves for taking action, supporting the fight for equity, and continuing to learn and grow with us.

Stay tuned for the next Pacifica City Council meeting. We will follow up with ways that you can show up and be involved in this process, whether through public comment or letters of support.

We appreciate YOU and everyone for their continued energy, allyship, and love for the ocean!

With Gratitude and Stoke,

The Brown Girl Surf Crew & City Surf Project in unity with our allies

