



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Surfrider Foundation's Hawaii Chapters Launch COVID-19 PPE Awareness Campaign

Local chapters have joined forces to educate the public on importance of proper personal protective equipment disposal

HONOLULU, HAWAII – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the newest source of plastic pollution. In the era of COVID-19, single-use plastic items such as gloves, masks and sanitizing wipes are increasingly being found and littered on shorelines and disrupting marine ecosystems. While PPE can provide a life-saving service, their proper handling and disposal is also essential for protecting the health of local beach goers and marine life. The Surfrider Foundation's five Hawaii chapters have joined forces to bring awareness to this issue and educate the public on the importance of proper disposal and prevention of PPE ending up in our natural environment.

With federal and state governments advising citizens to wear masks in public, single-use plastic PPE items are finding their way into our coastal ecosystems. These items may be carrying contagious doses of viruses and pathogens. The bright colours and texture of gloves and other PPE can also potentially be mistaken as food by seabirds, turtles and marine mammals, putting them at risk of severe injuries and death.

"Millions of pounds of plastic pollution wash ashore Hawaii beaches each year," said Dr. Carl Berg of Surfrider Foundation's Kauai Chapter. "This campaign is aimed at reducing the environmental and public health impacts of improperly discarded PPE."

The guidelines developed by Surfrider Foundation Hawaii chapters include properly disposing of PPE in the trash can, wearing gloves and other protective equipment if cleaning up littered PPE, choosing reusable PPE (like masks) when available and per CDC guidelines, and share findings on your social media accounts (Facebook & Instagram) tagging #HawaiiPPEdebris to help spread awareness.

Proper disposal of single-use PPE and making the switch to reusable items can aid in solving the ever-rising plastic pollution issue. Littering PPE and any other items is illegal and considered a criminal offense in Hawaii. The Surfrider Foundation's Hawaii chapters suggests using reusable cloth masks and continuing to use (and wash) reusable shopping bags when permitted by shopping establishments. Sanitizing of reusable masks and bags should follow CDC



guidelines. The Hawaii chapters also note that PPE, including sanitizing wipes, should never be flushed down the drain.

Get Involved

Residents looking to get more involved can participate in the #HawaiiPPEdebris campaign. We are asking community members to share photos on social media of PPE debris spotted on Hawaii's beaches and waterways to help raise awareness about the environmental impacts of littered PPE. In addition, the tagged photos will allow The Surfrider Foundation's Hawaii chapters to track and identify the sources of littered PPE.

- 1) Share photo on Instagram or Facebook of PPE littered in ocean or waterways
- 2) Tag the location, @SurfriderOahu and #HawaiiPPEdebris
- 3) Share a personal message about the issue to help spread awareness
 - Sample Social Media Post
 - i) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protects humans, not beaches. Please stay safe and healthy while properly disposing of used PPE in a trashcan - not in the environment. Help us track PPE on Hawaii beaches by tagging #HawaiiPPEdebris.

To learn more about the Surfrider Foundation, visit <https://www.surfrider.org/> or find a Hawaii chapter at [surfrider.org/chapters](https://www.surfrider.org/chapters).

For interview and media opportunities with Surfrider Foundation Hawaii chapters contact Lily Williams at (808) 223-3314 or marketing@oahu.surfrider.com.

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About Surfrider Foundation

The Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's ocean, waves and beaches through a powerful network. Founded in 1984 by a handful of visionary surfers in Malibu, California, the Surfrider Foundation now maintains over one million supporters, activists and members, with 5 volunteer-led chapters in Hawaii and more than 170 volunteer-led chapters and student clubs in the U.S. Learn more at [surfrider.org](https://www.surfrider.org).