

Part IV

Informing policy domains

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6 Surfing voices in coastal management

Gold Coast Surf Management Plan – a case study

Dan Ware, Neil Lazarow and Rob Hales

Introduction

Participation levels in surfing at the surfing hotspots of the world have never been higher. It is estimated that there are 35 million people in the world who consider surfing one of their recreational pastimes (*The Economist* 2012). The mainstreaming of surfing culture through increased marketing of competitive surfing events and the commodification of surf culture has led to a rise in the popularity of surfing. Coupled with population increase and decreasing costs of surfboards means that there are even more people in more places that have fewer constraints to participate. Surfers throughout the world see the result of this as overcrowding.

For Australia's Gold Coast climate and tourism marketing combine to lure surfers to live and visit by the tens of thousands. A quick glance at the homes of surfing world champions indicates that the combination of wave quality, wave frequency and competition in the line-up has bred multiple generations of world-class surfers.

In addition, to the production of high-performance surfers there are other benefits of crowding to a modern capitalist society – busy car parks, beaches and surf breaks – are all signs of opportunity for consumer spending. Vendors of surfboards, board shorts, wax, meat pies, gluten free veggie burgers, cans of coke, accommodation can all be seen as benefiting from greater numbers of surfers at surf breaks.

The economic importance is also reflected in the destination marketing for the Gold Coast where the image of surfing is used to attract tourists to the city. Additionally economic development strategies supported by state and local government have been implemented to enhance the surfing industry and one of the more visible strategies is the Queensland Government financially contributing to the annual world tour surfing on the Gold Coast.

Increasing numbers have also contributed to the power and success in campaigns surrounding surfing issues. Surfers have a long and proud history of protest and advocacy on issues that reflect the connection of surfers to the coastal and marine environment. There have been many successful campaigns against direct threats to surf breaks where surfers and surfing groups have been unified

against development proposals that risk the degradation or destruction of waves (see Lazarow 2010 for a detailed description of the history of surf advocacy). As the authors will describe, the Gold Coast has been a focal point for campaigns against inappropriate coastal development for some decades now – a situation which is contributed to by the combination of the region’s strong economic development imperatives against a desire by many to maintain the quality of the waves.

While there are economic benefits of increasing the number of surfers in the ocean there are also social benefits as surfing opens up opportunities for communities and classes to interact, laugh and share. There is, however, an important flipside to the surfing participation equation. The number of waves and surf breaks available to accommodate a given surfing population is limited. The implication of this is that as surfing populations increase, the quality of the surfing experience in many locales tends to decrease as a result of increased competition for waves.

Increasing participation, however, creates issues for the surfing experience – often increasing risk of personal injury, lessening the overall surfing experience and lowering the number of waves an individual might ride in any given session. Education campaigns to promote informal rule or lore systems of surfing etiquette (e.g. no dropping in) have been promoted in an attempt to mitigate conflicts between users.

Lazarow *et al.* (2007) present a typology of Surfing Capital to capture the range of issues that may affect surfing and the surfing experience. Distilled, the four categories are: wave quality, wave frequency, environmental and experiential. In 2010, this was extended to better understand the array of strategies available to manage Surfing Capital, which essentially revolve around supply and demand options. This is presented in Table 6.1.

While the more direct threats to Surfing Capital such as the degradation of supply (e.g. loss of surf break due to a marina development), less overt issues such as increasing demand present problems which traditional surfer advocacy/protest tactics may not be able to address. There is limited evidence of the existence of a social contract, which may act to guide public policy decisions regarding (1) surfers interactions with other surfers and other users, (2) conflict with other land/sea use and (3) surfing’s role in the conservation of coastal environment. As a result of the lack of a social contract, decision making regarding the use and development of coastal Australia often remains highly contested and can be considered an arm wrestle between commercial and social/environmental interests (Moote *et al.* 1997; Rockloff and Lockie 2004; Vanclay 2012).

This chapter examines the agenda-setting processes, which led to the development of the Gold Coast City Surf Management Plan. In contrast, to many local government, management planning processes, the plan was instigated by a coalition of community surfing organisations and interested individuals as a mechanism to support the transition to a more institutionally recognised and socially acceptable social contract for surfing on the Gold Coast.

Table 6.1 Strategies to manage user impact and resource base at surf locations

Do nothing	Legislate/regulate	Modify the resource base	Educate/advocate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do nothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict users through strategies such as payments, restricted access or parking, craft registration, restricted time in the water • Modify user behaviour using legislation such as requiring proficiency to surf particular areas or policing a surf break on jetskis • Community title (for example, Tavarua) • Declaration of surfing reserves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groynes • Seawalls • Artificial reefs • Sand bypass systems • Beach and nearshore sandbar grooming • Nourishment campaigns • Break becomes unsurfable due to water pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of ethics (that is, road rules for the surf) • Signage • Education strategies • Surf rage, aggression, intimidation • Self-regulation/localism • Lore • Declaration of surfing reserves • Direct action • Protests and demonstrations • Lobbying and the promotion of alternative strategies • Provision of new information

Source: Lazarow (2010).

To understand how such a contract has developed the multiple streams theory of agenda setting in public policy will be used. Kingdon's (2011) multiple streams theory of agenda setting in public policy describes three process streams: politics, problem recognition and the formation and refining of policy proposals. The theory argues that the three processes operate independently; however, on occasions they merge either coincidentally or through the concerted efforts of individuals referred to as 'policy entrepreneurs'. The merging of the processes indicates the point where there are significant changes and developments in the policy agenda of a particular policy issue. This theory builds on the garbage can model of organisational choice by Cohen *et al.* (1972), where organisations are characterised as 'organised anarchies' or garbage cans where 'collections of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decisions situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be the answer and decisions makers looking for work' all circulate and occasionally align. The three streams of problems, policy and politics will now be explored and this will be followed by an analysis of these streams to highlight how the Gold Coast Surf Management Plan came into being in its present form.

The method used in this chapter is a case study approach with an embedded methodology (Dredge *et al.* 2013). All authors have been part of the policy landscape of surfing on the Gold Coast and have surfing, tourism and coastal management as significant areas of their research focus.

Problems stream

Within the multiple streams framework problems are policy issues, which attract the attention of the policy system. A policy problem, which attracts considerable attention is economic development. On the Gold Coast the local government authority, City of Gold Coast, takes an active role in stimulating economic development through its economic development unit. The recent cruise ship proposal was supported by economic development policies but is considered a problem for surfers and other interest groups.

The Spit cruise ship terminal

The 2012 Broadwater Marine Project is a response by the Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate to the economic development ‘problem’ the Gold Coast faces. The following quote from Tate at the launch of the Broadwater Marine Project highlights the linkage between the economic development and the project.

This is the opportunity to transform currently unused land into a one-of-a-kind marine-based hub in the heart of Australia’s leading tourist destination. My promise to the people of the Gold Coast is to boost the economy through tourism and jobs. Together we can achieve this and create something special.

(Tom Tate as quoted by City of Gold Coast 2012, 2 November)

The Broadwater Marine Project was the second time a Government had sought to undertake the development of a cruise ship terminal on the same area of public parkland immediately to the south of South Stradbroke island, home to a popular surf break known as TOS. The original proposal in 2004 was strongly opposed by the local surfing community on the basis that it would restrict access to TOS and that the dredging required to establish the terminal would interfere with the unique coastal processes which contribute to the high wave quality at TOS. After a lengthy campaign the state government abandoned the proposal in 2007 on the basis that it was both environmentally and economically unfeasible. The 2012 proposal was quietly announced on the eve of the 2012 Gold Coast City Council elections by successful mayoral candidate Tom Tate. The proposal by the mayor was subsequently supported by the state government who initiated a special project.

The 2012 proposal was immediately recognised as a threat by surfers, not just to the quality of waves at TOS but also to the environmental and social values of the area. Two world champion surfing figures entered into the public debate.

Tom Tate the Mayor for the Gold Coast is proposing the construction of a cruise ship terminal that would gut The Spit causing mass impact to the marine life, waves and lifestyle on the Gold Coast.

(2013, 2009, 2007 World Surf League (WSL) champion Mick Fanning as quoted at www.mickfanning.com 2012, 18 September)

1 @Goldcoastmayor Tom Tate, you're tripping, Mate (with that Spit propo-
2 posal). #TooShallow and #GonnaRuinGreatSurfSpots.

3 (11-time WSL champion Kelly Slater as quoted at www.twitter.com
4 @kelleyslater 2012, 12 September)
5

6 In examining the problems stream it is important to recognise that the problems
7 which attract the attention of policy systems may not be those same issues which
8 are recognised as problems by a user group such as Gold Coast recreational
9 surfers. The following quotes highlight the difference in the appreciation of the
10 issues associated with the development of a cruise ship terminal at a surf break
11 between the policy makers and the surfing community
12

13 He's (Mick Fanning) a good surfer but I tend to listen to people with quali-
14 fications and information to add to the debate.

15 (Tom Tate as quoted by Killoran 2012, 19 September)
16

17 I welcome them to come and I just want to point out the surfers there's 65
18 kilometres of beach here on the Gold Coast and take a pick.

19 (Tom Tate as quoted by Berkman 2012, 3 August)
20

21 The surfing community aren't happy about the cruise ship terminal because
22 it will lose them some of the surf break.

23 (Tom Tate as quoted by Anon 2012, 16 August)
24

25 At the time of publication the proposal to construct a cruise ship terminal had
26 lost the support of the state due to a change of government. However, the mayor
27 had announced a revised version of the cruise ship terminal as one of his key re-
28 election policies.
29

30 ***Crowding***

31 The problem of crowding at surf breaks has traditionally gone unrecognised by
32 the policy system. According to 11-time world champion Kelly Slater, Snapper
33 Rocks at the southern tip of the Gold Coast is the most crowded surf break in the
34 world.
35

36 The crowds here are like nothing I've ever seen in the world.

37 (Kelly Slater as quoted by Greenwood 2014, 6 February)
38

39 The ironic feature of this statement is that the promotion of professional surfing
40 and competitions are part of what attract people to the Gold Coast with the inten-
41 tion of surfing, which exacerbates the crowding situation. In announcing a spon-
42 sorsorship of the 2013 World Surfing Championship Quicksilver Pro Snapper
43 Rocks Event, Queensland Tourism Minister Jann Stuckey MP had the following
44 to say:
45

This is the first stop on the 2013 World Championship Tour and is expected to draw big crowds over the next two weeks. . . . Last year’s Quiksilver and Roxy Pro attracted more than 41,000 people over nine days of competition – boosting the local economy by \$6.5 million.

(Stuckey 2013, 28 February)

Well respected local and former longboard world champion Wayne Deane provides the following explanation of the various factors which result in the overcrowding reported by Kelly Slater, highlighting connections between the sport, industry and government policy.

Since the inception of ‘TRESBP’, waves in the Coolangatta area have become more consistent because of the sand being delivered to the point. Add to that surf cams, mobile phones, the Quiksilver Pro, cheap flights, Chinese imports, Thailand imports, 50-odd board builders, and there you have a recipe for chaos.

(Wayne Deane quoted by Quinlivan 2014, 10 December)

While surf break crowding is recognised as a problem for surfers, the absence of recognition by the policy system can actually exacerbate the problem for surfers. One of the points which Wayne Dean stated above as contributing to surf break crowding are supported by the Queensland State and City of Gold Coast on the basis that they will attract crowds to the city. The problem recognised by the policy system in seeking to attract crowds is the need to stimulate economic development. From this perspective crowds are a positive outcome of government action.

Currumbin Alley

The Queensland State Government response to the death of a surfer at Currumbin Alley in 2011 provides an example of how the problem framing by the policy system can often differ from that of the local recreational surfing community with potentially significant consequences for surfers.

Currumbin Alley is a surf break that breaks across the entrance to Currumbin Creek, a popular bar crossing for recreational boat users. In May 2011 a local surfer was killed when, as he was duck diving beneath a wave, he was struck in the forehead by the propeller of a boat that was trailing the same wave into the creek. Following the death the Queensland State Government’s Department of Transport conducted an investigation into navigational safety at the creek. The findings of the study were released in June 2011 and proposed a series of recommendations; of particular concern was the recommendation regarding legislation. An extract from the recommendations section is provided:

Legislation should be clarified, the current lack of uncertainty regarding whether a surfer is a vessel is problematic. Legislation should be amended,

1 as necessary, to clearly define surf craft as either vessels or swimmers. This
2 preliminary report offers the suggestion that the former would be preferable.
3 (Maritime Safety Queensland 2011: 14)
4

5 The recommendation that surfers be classified as vessels has a number of serious
6 implications for surfing not just at Currumbin Creek but across Queensland. For
7 instance, once classified as a vessel, surfers would have obligations to give way to
8 vessels crossing the river bar. One possible (but hopefully extreme) interpretation
9 of this may result in surfers being forced to exit the water each time a boat wanted
10 to exit or enter Currumbin Creek. One has to question why Maritime Safety
11 Queensland (MSQ) didn't consider the experience from Byron Bay, where, while
12 the volume of vessel traffic is far smaller, the simple sounding of a horn to warn
13 surfers of the approach of a vessel has been used to reduce the risk of collisions.

14 This highlights the competitive nature of problem framing, particularly where
15 surfing interests are in conflict with other coastal uses such as boating. In this
16 instance the problem as defined by the Department of Transport is not the safety
17 of surfers but the capacity to regulate navigation. Fortunately this recommenda-
18 tion is yet to be implemented.
19

20 **Policy stream**

21 Within the multiple streams framework the policy stream is where solutions
22 emerge. In order for the streams to merge, problems must be connected to solu-
23 tions which suit the political climate. While the majority of policy proposals are
24 advanced as a solution to a problem, the important point is that unless that
25 problem is recognised by the policy system, the proposal is unlikely to become
26 an agenda item. An example of this was a proposal to floodlight surf breaks to
27 reduce crowding by extending the surfing hours into the night. The Gold Coast
28 mayor illustrates the gap between the policy solution and the problem.
29

30
31 [I]t is more important to light up the junior soccer fields and other courts
32 where children are playing. These ideas, along with the tax on surf, are just
33 not on my radar.

34 (Tom Tate quoted by Anon 2014, 19 November)
35

36 **Kirra Groyne**

37 Through the 1980s and 1990s Kirra Point, already significantly but fortuitously
38 modified through engineering works over many decades, was recognised as one
39 of the best right-hand point breaks in the world and was the home break of a
40 number of world champion surfers.¹ In 1996 Kirra Groyne was shortened by
41 30m to improve the longshore transport of sand from Coolangatta to Kirra. With
42 the reduction in the length of the Groyne and the commencement of sand
43 pumping to snapper rocks by the early 2000s the world-class point break that
44 was Kirra point was literally buried.
45

The 'Bring Back Kirra' campaign led by the southern Gold Coast surfing community, which ran for a more than a decade, provides an example of the challenges which can occur within the policy stream. While the surfing community was clear that they wanted governments to intervene to 'Bring Back Kirra', there was a lack of consensus regarding what it was that governments should do to bring it back. This lack of consensus among stakeholders, regarding what would constitute a solution, provided all the excuse that policy makers needed to ignore the campaign through its initial phase.

The following quote from a Queensland State Government report on community attitudes to the Kirra Point Groyne highlights the perception by government that there wasn't a clearly preferred policy option among stakeholders.

What to do with Kirra Point Groyne remains a significant and emotive issue, with some people advocating extending the existing groyne to its original length, while others believe that it should be removed or shortened further.

(DEHP 2013)

The following quotes by three high-profile, former world champion Gold Coast surfers illustrate three different perspectives on Kirra Point Groyne.

We just need to put the big groyne back to the dimensions it was before it was adjusted. That's not a theory, we have a 23-year data base that proves it.

(Three-time world surfing champion Wayne Rabbit Bartholomew quoted by Feliu 2006, 6 July)

The question is, will replacing the 30 metres removed from the artificial groyne in late 1996 help to bring back those famous Kirra Point Kegs?... There is no guarantee that replacing the front of Big Groyne can work like the old days.

(1988 World Champion Longboarder Andrew McKinnon quoted by McKinnon 2011, 4 November)

They are putting back the 30 metres and restoring the groyne to the original specifications. I've always said that the groyne is only part of the puzzle, there are things that need to happen before the wave will actually come back.

(1990 World Champion Longboarder Wayne Deane quoted by Lockwood 2013, 21 August)

As the surfing community reached a consensus that the extension of Kirra Point Groyne to its original length was the preferred option, the issue attracted the significantly greater attention of policy makers. Through taking advantage of political opportunities in the lead up to election campaigns, the campaigners were successful in initially gaining support to profile the beach in 2009 and in finally

1 gaining funding to extend the Kirra Point Groyne to its original length in 2014,
2 almost a decade after the initial campaign began.
3

4 ***Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve***

5
6 Another example of a solution in search of a problem and a political opportunity
7 was the idea of establishing a Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve. A WSR is a
8 programme and trademark of US non-profit organisation Save the Waves Coalition.
9 The stated role of the WSR programme:

10
11 proactively identifies, designates and preserves outstanding waves, surf
12 zones and surrounding environments around the world.

13 (Save the Waves 2016)
14

15 The idea of a Gold Coast world surfing reserve had been under discussion since
16 the establishment of a Gold Coast National Surfing Reserve in 2012. NSR is a
17 programme of a different Australian non-profit organisation, National Surfing
18 Reserves.
19

20 It means that the world and the nation recognises those three breaks here on
21 the Gold Coast as being iconic ... it also means that they have a level of
22 protection so that in future those iconic surfing breaks are protected from,
23 perhaps, inappropriate development.

24 (Brad Farmer ABC Coast FM, Marshall 2012, 24 February)
25

26 Both NSR and WSR programmes claim to provide a form of recognition and
27 promotion to 'iconic' surf breaks in addition to making claims of providing
28 either protection or preservation. Neither of these non-regulatory/symbolic
29 instruments provide further regulatory protection; however, they provide an
30 important political foothold by which these conversations are able to develop. In
31 the case of the Gold Coast, they also draw attention to surfing resources in a
32 more systematic manner, rather than on a beach by beach or break by break
33 scale.

34 The earlier section on crowding discusses how crowding is framed by policy
35 systems, this recognition and promotion aspect of both programmes seems to
36 align with the traditional policy system idea where attracting additional attention
37 to surf breaks is a positive outcome. While this attention may be a positive
38 outcome for local economic development for the Gold Coast, where surf breaks
39 are among the most crowded in the world, there has been little attention given to
40 resolving the impacts of this on local recreational surfing communities.

41 The protection or preservation aspect of non-government surfing reserve pro-
42 grammes is highly promoted by Save the Waves and NSR to local surfing com-
43 munities; however, the actual mechanism for protection and preservation has
44 been the subject of limited attention particularly given that the campaign to
45 establish a Gold Coast WSR emerged in 2014 and was positioned as a direct

response to a perceived threat of the construction of a cruise ship terminal at Kirra.

[W]hen I heard about the proposed cruise ship terminal, my first thought was we're going to lose one of the greatest surf destinations on earth.

(Mick Fanning quoted by Pawle 2014, January 10)

[W]e need to take this to the next step and get this area approved as a World Surfing Reserve, we don't wanna come back every 10 or 15 years and protest against some surfing development that's gonna be detrimental to the area.

(Former world champion and chair of Gold Coast World Surfing Reserve Committee Andrew McKinnon quoted by Smith 2015, 21 October)

The WSR was communicated as a higher level of 'protection' than the existing NSR, which was seen as having failed due to the Kirra cruise ship terminal proposal emerging within the area recognised as a NSR. However, the following statements from policy makers indicate that the proposal was far from being considered by government and may have been little more than a developer publicising an investment opportunity.

It's nothing more than a sketch on the back of a napkin, despite what you've heard or read or even what the developers have said. There has been absolutely no proposal put to council or the state government. Practically speaking, there's nothing to protest against except a fanciful sketch.

(Herman Vorster, then Media Advisor to the Gold Coast Mayor quoted by Workman 2014, 15 January)

'I haven't had any serious approaches about those off-the-beach type options', he said. 'I would have to say that I would be very sceptical that those types of options would ever receive the community support or government approval.'

(Jeff Seeney, then Queensland Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Development quoted by Pawle 2014, 10 January)

On the eve of a public rally organised by the advocates of the establishment of a Gold Coast WSR to oppose the Kirra cruise ship terminal, the Queensland Premier Campbell Newman released a statement that his government would not be supporting the development of a cruise ship terminal at Kirra.

There would be no cruise ship terminal at Kirra Beach... Our beaches are just too important – not just as a natural wonder or as a place for families and surfers – but also for the central role they play in Gold Coast tourism.

(Campbell Newman, then Queensland Premier quoted by Ardern and Harbour 2014, 16 January)

1 While the threat to surf breaks from the Kirra cruise ship terminal development
2 was without any enduring substance, the campaign to establish a Gold Coast
3 WSR continued that spanned a significant geographical area (i.e. all of the Gold
4 Coast initially and then the southern point breaks). Within the multiple streams
5 context a surfing reserve is a policy solution that needs to align itself with a
6 problem. From the surfing community the problem was clearly about protection
7 of surfing resources illustrated by the following quote from Gold Coast profes-
8 sional surfer and former world champion.

9
10 We need to protect our coastline from these type of developments and not
11 find in 10–15 years that we are fighting all over again.

12 (2012 WSL Champion Joel Parkinson quoted by Anon 2014, 4 February)

13
14 This alignment between the streams was contested by policy makers who dis-
15 puted both the framing of the problem of coastal development threats to Surfing
16 Capital and the solution as adding additional value to the current City of Gold
17 Coast coastal management system.

18
19 [W]hat aggravated this was this Kirra terminal thing. When people say we
20 want to have this so we can have our beach protected ... I'm not against it
21 as long as they can present to me that our community can benefit more than
22 (the existing management plans and strategies) we already have.

23 (Tom Tate quoted by Anon 2014, 4 February)

24
25 In response to the rejection of the problem definition by the policy system the
26 WSR campaign reframed the problem away from protection and preservation
27 (i.e. dealing with the critical demand and supply challenges outlined above) in
28 communications with policy makers and towards recognition and promotion.
29 The following quote shows that the WSR campaigners distanced themselves
30 from seeking any controls on coastal management that would have supported
31 achieving the intended protection and preservation objective

32
33 WSR status will not impose costs or restrictions on Gold Coast City Council
34 or State Government's management of ocean beaches. GCWSR will be
35 honorific, thoughtful, and respectful of state and local authorities.

36 (Report to City of Gold Coast by Gold Coast WSR nomination
37 Campaign Team)

38
39 While the Gold Coast WSR nomination was eventually successful and was
40 endorsed by Save the Waves in late 2015, the need to merge the solution with a
41 problem recognised by policy makers has resulted in an outcome which shows
42 limited immediate evidence of aligning with the problem perceived by the Gold
43 Coast surfing community (i.e. active management of a modified beach and surf
44 zone to benefit surfing and overcrowding) and which may in the end serve only
45 to exacerbate existing crowding problems.

Politics stream

Within the multiple streams framework the politics stream refers to a wide range of factors that create the motivation and opportunity for policy makers to convert a policy concept into action. The politics of surfing on the Gold Coast should be understood as a counterbalance between the economic and social significance of what is simultaneously a sport, recreational activity and industry and the history of conflict between surfers and the City of Gold Coast bureaucracy which has led to a fractured relationship and ongoing tensions.

The Gold Coast is home to a number of professionalised surfing related organisations such as Surfing Australia and Surfing Queensland. In addition to these organisations the Gold Coast surfing industry has been estimated to be worth \$3 billion each year (AECgroup 2009).

‘We recognise and appreciate the fact that our city’s enviable worldwide reputation is largely driven by the appeal of our surfing beaches so we’re reminding the community that we’re fully committed to protecting our beaches, supporting our surf industry and further developing our surf culture’, he said. ‘Surfing makes a vital contribution to our economy, contributing \$3.3 billion annually and employing 21,000 people.’

(Tom Tate quoted by City of Gold Coast 2014, 3 March)

‘If a candidate doesn’t have the surf community behind them on the southern Gold Coast they would struggle’, he said. ‘Candidates have been falling over each other to talk about issues like the Kirra and the CST down there. A lot of promises were made at the last state election.’

(Greg Betts, then City of Gold Coast Councillor quoted by Simonot 2014, 31 December)

These quotes indicate that while there is recognition of the importance of surfing on the Gold Coast by policy makers, the relationship between surfers and the policy makers continues to be adversarial. The following quote identifies the disjuncture between the surfing community and policy makers.

You can be the best surfer, diver, artist, I’m happy for you, but I will be listening to the people that matter... It’s more of an issue for high-profile people like the CEO of a cruise ship company ... they’re the high-profile people I’m worried about.

(Tom Tate quoted by Killoran 2012, 19 September)

This conflict between surfers and policy makers had deep roots with surfing groups opposing City of Gold Coast coastal management and development projects that date back to the 1960s.

Recent projects which have added to the tensions include the 1999 Narrowneck artificial reef and the ongoing Palm Beach shoreline protection project.

1 The Narrowneck project, an initiative of the City of Gold Coast, aims to reduce
2 beach erosion through the construction of an artificial reef in the north of the
3 city. This project is continually framed by surfers as an example of the incompe-
4 tence of the City of Gold Coast. While the primary objective of the reef was
5 erosion mitigation, at the time of its development the City promoted a secondary
6 benefit of creating a new surf break, and this was exacerbated by claims from the
7 reef designers (keen surfers themselves). The following quotes from Australian
8 media illustrate the aims of the project and the perceptions of the surfers.
9

10 This is the world's first multi purpose reef. It was set up for costal protec-
11 tion to protect the beaches of the gold coast and to improve the surfing. In
12 the right conditions the break peels left and right, offering up two surfing
13 waves from each swell.

14 (Kerry Black Coastal Engineer and designer of the Narrowneck Artificial
15 Reef quoted by Meerman 2008, 21 February)
16

17 Mr (Wayne) Bartholomew (former surfing world champion) said the surf at
18 the \$2.5 million artificial reef at Narrowneck was a 'hoax of a wave'
19 because the sandbag reef was mainly designed to prevent beach erosion.

20 (McElroy 2015, 12 June)
21

22 The perception of the failure of the City to deliver on the promoted surfing
23 objectives of the Narrowneck artificial reef has had ongoing implications for the
24 capacity to implement coastal management works on the Gold Coast. The Palm
25 Beach Shoreline Project commenced in 1999 and similar to the Narrowneck
26 project was an attempt by the city to reduce the vulnerability of Palm Beach to
27 erosion. At the time Palm Beach was seen as an urgent priority. The project was
28 opposed by the Palm Beach surfing community on the basis that the construction
29 of a series of offshore submerged artificial reefs at Palm Beach would have neg-
30 ative consequences for the quality of beach breaks in the area. As a result of the
31 opposition the Palm Beach shoreline project remains in the planning phase for
32 now more than a decade. Despite numerous changes to the design of proposed
33 reefs and the exploration of a number of alternatives such as artificial headlands,
34 the City of Gold Coast bureaucrats have been unable to advance the project
35 beyond planning due to community opposition.

36 The politics stream is about the motivation and opportunity for policy makers
37 to convert a policy concept into action. The above analysis identified that eco-
38 nomic value of surfing in the region, local electoral politics and the politics sur-
39 rounding coastal engineering projects were the motivations and opportunities for
40 policy development and implementation. How the three streams of problems,
41 policy and politics came together as the Gold Coast Surf Management Plan is
42 outlined below.
43
44
45

Merging the streams: Gold Coast Management Plan

In the previous sections we explored the disjunctures between the problems, policy and politics which have impacts on Surfing Capital. The discussion centred on the surfing spokespeople, surfing associations and surfing community actions and contrasted this with the coastal management activities of state and local government on the Gold Coast. This highlights significant friction between the surfing community and government, which produced a contested public policy landscape. This discussion describes the situation as of 2012. However, in late 2012 the surfing community, through its various representative organisations on the Gold Coast, instigated an approach to apply the multiple streams framework to reposition the interests of recreational surfers within the Gold Coast's coastal management policy system. The lead author of this chapter was instrumental, along with others from the surfing organisations, in forming the participatory, ground-up approach to the Gold Coast surfing social contract policy problem by drawing on the multiple streams theory.

The traditional relationship between recreational surfing and government had been constructed as protest by surfers against government initiatives. In a managed coastal process system such as the Gold Coast, by showing active resistance to coastal management or development, recreational surfers had positioned their interests in direct conflict to economic development. By altering their input to coastal management from 'resistance to change' to 'openness to opportunity' recreational surfers had the opportunity to reframe their relationship with government and develop the partnerships necessary to address threats to Surfing Capital.

In order to avoid the location-based politics of actions which may enhance Surfing Capital – be it avoiding development, dredging, sand pumping etc. – the solution was framed not as an initiative such as the development of a series of artificial reefs but as the development of a Surf Management Plan. Policy makers were well aware of the challenges in engaging with the surfing community, highlighted by delays or failure of coastal management and development projects. By linking the surf management plan to this challenge, presenting it as an opportunity to improve relations between surfers and the city hall, the problem and policy stream were merged.

The politics stream was shaped through use of existing institutional arrangements and the establishment of a coalition of surfing interests. City Councillor Greg Betts and member of the Gold Coast National Surfing Reserve Committee provided the formal mechanism to seek support from Gold Coast City Council as the community petition under the City of Gold Coast Subordinate Local Law No. 1.1 (Meetings) 2008. Under this law any petition presented to council by a councillor on behalf of the community with more than ten signatures should be considered for a review by council.

Surfrider Foundation Australia Gold Coast Branch invited surfing stakeholders to a briefing on the Surf Management Plan concept in 11 December 2012

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1 at Kirra on the southern Gold Coast. Following a presentation by author Dan
2 Ware on the potential to address threats to Surfing Capital in partnership rather
3 than opposition to government through a surf management plan, the group
4 agreed to sign a petition to be presented to Gold Coast City Council and to form
5 a representative group Gold Coast Surf Council to work with government to
6 better represent recreational surfing interests in coastal management. The found-
7 ing members of GCSC included the members of the GCSC, representatives of
8 Gold Coast boardriding clubs, Surfing Queensland, Surfrider Foundation Aus-
9 tralia and National Surfing Reserves.

10 The following is an extract from the original petition from surfers to the City
11 of Gold Coast to work collaboratively to develop the Gold Coast Surf Manage-
12 ment Plan. The text highlights the language used to merge the various streams
13 together.
14

15 While Council, Industry and the Community all benefit greatly from the
16 Gold Coast's surfing assets there are significant risks which if not proac-
17 tively addressed will degrade these assets. Particular concerns of the under-
18 signed include; crowding, increased vessel traffic, dredging, beach
19 nourishment and development.

20 There are major opportunities to maintain and enhance surfing assets
21 through innovative design of coastal management initiatives as proven in
22 other locations. By working cooperatively with surfing stakeholders to
23 identify surfing assets and enhancement opportunities Council can prepare a
24 surf management plan that will lead other surfing destinations and improve
25 the surfing experience for community, tourists and industry.

26 (Text from petition to City of Gold Coast – Ware 2012)
27

28 The City of Gold Coast engineering services committee considered the petition
29 on the 14 February 2013 and adopted the recommendation that the draft Ocean
30 Beaches Strategy include the development of a Surf Management Plan and a
31 Commercial Activity Plan (City of Gold Coast 2014).

32 The terms of reference for the Surf Management Plan (City of Gold Coast
33 2014) required that the plan was to be developed and implemented through an
34 ongoing consultative process which enables surfing representatives to have over-
35 sight on the implementation of the plan. The merging of problems, policy and
36 politics in the policy landscape of maintaining Surfing Capital had been
37 achieved.

38 At the time of publication the Surf Management Plan was scheduled for
39 launch for 8 March 2016 following the successful endorsement by the City of
40 Gold Coast in December 2015.
41

42 Our beaches are for everyone and we want to ensure everyone can enjoy our
43 city's prized natural attraction, this is a celebration of our City's Surf Man-
44 agement Plan and the soon-to-be World Surfing Reserve status.

45 (Mayor Tom Tate, City of Gold Coast 2016, 9 February)

While it has been formally endorsed it remains to be seen what institutional impact the Surf Management Plan will have; however, this will be the subject of subsequent work by the authors.

Conclusion

The development of formal policy on the Gold Coast that recognised the threats to Surfing Capital is highly significant for a number of reasons. First, the process was successful in forming a coalition of disparate views and at key agenda-setting moments were critical in the formation of shared interests on policy formation. Second, the social contract of the Surf Management Plan was seen to be valid because of the ground-up, participatory process of development by the Gold Coast Surf Council. Third, the combination of Surf Management Plan and the Gold Coast World Surfing Reserves validates the social contract with surfers. Last, the accountability within the Surf Management Plan through participation by surfing groups increases the robustness of the social contract.

The previous adversarial relationship between surfers and government had negative consequences for the interests of both parties and the Surf Management Plan is a way to decrease these consequences. The multiple streams framework was applied on the ground to seek policy solutions to maintain Surfing Capital and the framework has been used here to analyse policy developments.

While the process has been positive, there are limitations – surfers as participants risk becoming co-opted by the process. Public conflict reduces trust between the bureaucracy and stakeholders so in seeking to build trust with government surfers may limit their public commentary, which may limit their power to negotiate a favourable outcome.

It is hoped that the surfing–government relationship will continue to improve within the now established policy framework, and new and ongoing issues can be addressed within this framework so that the interests of the surfing community can be valued along with other coastal users.

Note

1 Lazarow (2010) provides a detailed description of the modifications to Kirra Point.

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