

## Surfers Alarmed at Dredging Threat to Surf Breaks

Surfrider Foundation Australia is alarmed at the possible impacts of two major dredging proposals on Victoria's iconic beaches and surf breaks.

Surfers have rallied to provide submissions on the Environmental Effects Statement processes for the Port Phillip Bay Channel Deepening proposal and a plan to improve ocean access at Bastion Point through the mouth of Mallacoota Lake. Both projects will involve huge intervention with the coastal sediment movements that not only maintain the beaches of the Mornington Peninsula, but create two of Victoria's famous estuary-mouth breaks: the lefthander known as Corsair at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, and a righthander at the entrance to Mallacoota Lake.

"Surfrider is very concerned that the possible effects of these two proposals on Victoria's beaches and surf breaks does not appear to have been adequately considered in the EES process," said Geoff Withycombe, Chair of Surfrider Foundation Australia.

"Surfing and beach-going are recognized as an integral part of Australia's coastal lifestyle and Victoria is blessed with some of Australia's best beaches. We can't afford to repeat the mistakes made in parts of NSW and Queensland and let popular surf breaks like Corsair and Bastion Point be destroyed. The EES processes being coordinated through the Victorian Government must consider the effects of these proposals on beaches and surf breaks."

The Surf Coast Branch of Surfrider provided a submission to the EES process highlighting the possible effects of the Channel Deepening proposal and presented to the independent panel in 2004. Key issues were the possible impacts on coastal processes such as sand movement in the vicinity of the entrance to Port Phillip, particularly the effect of an increased tidal exchange on sand migration across The Rip to the Mornington Peninsula's beaches.

"Corsair is a veritable oasis for thousands of surfers from Melbourne and the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas," said Iain Lygo, President of Surfrider's Surf Coast Branch.

"Corsair is one of a handful of breaks that works in a south-east wind, which blows consistently through the summer. While breaks like Bells will be choppy and windy in a sou-easter, Corsair will be clean and perfect if there is swell. We can't afford to lose these fabulous breaks, and want the additional investigations to look at the issues of sand supply to the Mornington Peninsula's famous beaches and the effects on Corsair."

Surfers on the Mornington Peninsula are also well aware of the possible impacts of the proposals. Murray Turner, Surfrider's community representative on Melbourne Water's Eastern Treatment Plant's Advisory Committee, said that the effects of the dredging on the Peninsula's beaches was too important to neglect.

"Never before has such a large cross section of the community been united in desperately wanting the right outcome," said Mr Turner.

"The community place enormous value in the beaches and the amenity they provide, and surfers travel from far and wide to ride the world-class waves at Corsair. The Mornington Peninsula's coast is world famous, particularly through the progression of the Pt Nepean area to National Park status, and to lose our beaches and surf breaks simply because the EES didn't consider the effects of increased tidal exchange would be a dreadful outcome."

In Victoria's far east, the proposal to dredge the entrance to Mallacoota Lake and construct groynes to hold sand for boating access has surfers fearing the possible destruction of the famous wave known as "Broken Boards".

“The wave at Bastion Point reminds us what many of Australia’s east coast estuaries were like before the construction of training walls,” said Neil Lazarow, Surfrider’s National Projects Director.

“Given the quality of the wave at Bastion Point and its recreational importance, Surfrider has called for the EES process to examine impacts on the wave climate and formation of the sand banks that make Broken Boards such a quality wave.”

“These surf breaks provide enormous social, recreational and spiritual benefits to the community – they are amazing natural features that simply can’t be relocated or copied by the engineering methods that threaten to destroy them,” said Mr Withycombe.

“Once they are gone they are gone forever.”

Copies of Surfrider’s submissions to these EES processes are available on request or at [www.surfrider.org.au](http://www.surfrider.org.au).

Surfrider Foundation Australia is a not for profit organisation dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the Australian coast for all people through conservation, activism, research and education.

**Media Contacts:**

Geoff Withycombe 0425 325 148

Iain Lygo 0437 745 874

Murray Turner 0418 339 866

Neil Lazarow 0416 022 742