

Measuring the Importance of Social, Economic, Environmental and Governance Indicators for the Surf Resource Sustainability Index

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Abstract

Attention to coastal surfing resources has gained considerable momentum in the twenty-first century. Scholars, graduate students, not-for-profit organizations, and commercial and governmental sectors have entered the research field in order to better understand and manage all types surf sites. This research seeks to measure the importance of social, economic, environmental and governance indicators for a previously developed *Surf Resource Sustainability Index* (SRSI) and secondly to clarify existing SRSI criteria and implications for sustainability indicators relevant to socioeconomics and environmental management. Surfers were chosen for in-depth interviews based on their position as key stakeholders and for their practical experience, knowledge and interaction with the resource. The study finds that out of 26 indicators for ‘conservation aptitude’, surfers placed the highest importance on beach quality, water quality, legislative status, biodiversity, and history. Overall, environmental and governance indicators were slightly more significant than social indicators, and economic indicators were the least significant. Appendices offer the revised criteria and implications for the SRSI indicators and an exhaustive record of comments and suggestions provided by interviewees. The research contributes to the field of sustainable surf resource management through the development of sustainability indicators and the discernment of indicator importance by surfers.

Key words: coastal surfing resources; surf tourism; sustainable management; indicators; index

1. Introduction and Rationale

Surfing and surf tourism have gained significant attention in the public and private sectors for some time. However, research in this area is little more than a decade old and is for the most part grey literature, such as graduate studies and a variety of reports from commercial, government, and not-for-profit sectors (Assenov & Martin, 2010; Martin & Assenov, 2011). In order to create concise and global model for the assessment and sustainable management of coastal surfing resources, a system of standard indicators was developed by Martin and Assenov (2012). When placed into four indices (social, economic, environmental, and governance),

these indicators comprise the *Surf Resource Sustainability Index* (SRSI) (Martin & Assenov, 2012).

The current research serves to refine the definitions and implications of SRSI indicators and to advance the methodology by introducing a ‘weighting schema’ based on personal interviews with surfers from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience. Weights represent the level of importance which stakeholders place on indicators with a given index and can be used to gauge the psychometric values of a particular group. Surfers were chosen for this study for two reasons. First, they are a definitive group of stakeholders, and secondly for their personal