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## **APPEAL FOR CONSIDERATION OF SURFING AND OTHER OCEAN SPORTS TO BE PERMITTED AS EXERCISE UNDER LOCKDOWN**

### **PREAMBLE**

Surfing South Africa, the official representative of the sport of Surfing in South Africa, is a member of the South African Sports Council Olympic Committee (SASCOC) and the International Surfing Association and partners with the World Surf League (WSL).

The following disciplines fall under the Surfing South Africa umbrella:

Surfing, Longboard Surfing, Bodyboarding, Kneeboarding, Para Surfing (Disabled) and Stand Up Paddlesurfing (SUP) are recognised affiliates.

It is estimated that there are over 20,000 competitive and recreational surfers (all disciplines) in South Africa.

Surfing is an ocean sporting activity that is carried out on the waves.

All ocean sports, by their very nature, are naturally self-distancing.

They require a person to have an existing level of expertise in the ocean and have minimal environmental impact.

Some examples of Ocean Sports are Surfing, Longboarding, Bodyboarding, Para Surfing, Stand Up Paddle Surfing, Kneeboarding, Waveski, Surf Ski, Canoeing and Kayaking.

All of the sports mentioned above are non-motorised, self - propelled and use the dynamic energy of waves to assist movement.

## **MOTIVATION**

1. Ocean sports are only practiced in the ocean and there are relatively few venues where this can take place.
2. Ocean sportsmen and women do not congregate in groups.
3. Ocean sports do not involve any physical contact.
4. Ocean sports pose a lower health risk than cycling or running as any body fluids such as perspiration or saliva are immediately diluted in the sea water.
5. The most significant area of risk with regard to ocean sports is when the sportsperson transitions into the ocean from the beach, at which time they would experience the same risk as a walker, runner or cyclist.

## **PRECEDENT – SURFING**

- 1 All countries that have a number of individuals participating in surfing have to address access to the ocean during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2 Each country has a different approach to surfing within the definition of their specific overall strategies.
- 3 Many countries do not have a specific exercise window and allow individuals to exercise at least once a day.
- 4 The biggest differentiators to sport relate to the possibility for contact or the non-compliance with social distancing.
- 5 As exercise windows are opened and levels are relaxed in countries where surfing is practiced, surfing is a permitted activity along with cycling, running and walking e.g. New Zealand, Australia, USA, France and Spain.
- 6 Surfing is one of the sports that are able to comply with social distancing requirements as it is, by its very nature, a sport that encourages social distancing.

## **EXERCISE: ACCESS TO THE OCEAN VIA THE BEACH UNDER LOCKDOWN**

- 1 With this in mind we respectfully request that surfers be allowed to access the ocean via the beach under Lockdown.
- 2 Should any circumstance arise where beach overcrowding occurs at any specific beach, this beach could be closed.
- 3 If access to beaches for general public exercise is not considered prudent at this time, we request that access across beaches and other areas be permitted specifically for surfers and other solo ocean users.

## **PROTOCOLS – SURFING UNDER COVID-19 LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS**

1. Must comply with provincial travel restrictions at all times.
2. Must comply with the legislated time window restrictions at all times.
3. Must comply if specific beaches are closed.
4. Must comply with all social distancing regulations at all times.
5. May only use a vehicle with the regulation number of people in each vehicle to access the beach at the surfing venue.
6. On arrival at the surfing venue, surfers must change into surf gear immediately and enter the ocean directly.
7. May not loiter at the beach prior to or after surfing.
8. Must wear a mask until ready to paddle into the ocean.
9. Must complete their surfing with sufficient time to change and return home in compliance with restrictions.
10. Must follow equipment cleansing protocols.

## **RISK MITIGATING FACTORS: SURFING**

1. Surfboards are attached to every surfer's leg while surfing which means that surfers are attached to a flotation device at all times.
2. Surfing is practiced within 100 metres of the coastline
3. The beach and the ocean are both low contact zones

## **SAFETY: SURFING**

Surfers have a proven track record as first responders in numerous coastal rescues

## **SOCIAL COHESION: SURFING**

1. Surfing provides beneficial social programs such as mentorships and life skills.
2. Surfers are made up of all sectors of the population, from all communities
3. Surfers range in age from the youth to veterans
4. Surfing offers beneficial programs to disabled individuals (Para Surfing)

## **ECONOMIC BENEFITS: SURFING**

1. Work opportunities: youth, informal sector, low barriers to entry.
2. Surf and ocean tourism: foreign tourists, decentralised benefits, year round economic contribution in areas of seasonal economic activity.
3. Manufacturing: surfboards and other ocean equipment used in South Africa are manufactured in South Africa as is apparel, wetsuits and accessories.
4. Retail surf and ocean stores: owner managed businesses, operating in coastal cities and towns, free standing or on the beachfront. Limited presence in malls.
5. Surfing provides small coastal towns with economic activity during the winter months that help sustain these local economies.

## **SUMMARY**

### **HEALTH**

1. Surfing is a healthy sport.
2. Surfers use their arms to paddle which increases lung capacity and efficiency.
3. Surfing is practiced in the ocean, away from land and therefore surfers are not exposed to many of the environmental risks experienced by runners or cyclists.
4. Surfers exercise in a natural environment. The mental benefits of exercising in a natural environment is widely recognised and documented.
5. In terms of risks of transmitting Covid-19, surfing would be rated as lower risk than cycling, running or walking, which are activities that are currently permitted.

### **SURFING – MITIGATING RISK CONCERNS WITH REFERENCE TO SURFING**

1. Surfing takes place on waves in the ocean. The beach is merely a conduit to the ocean.
2. Surfing takes place within 100 metres of the coastline in an area not occupied by motorised craft.
3. Surfers exercise where there are breaking waves.
4. Surfers are tethered to their equipment by a sophisticated “leash” which prevents the loss of the board from the surfer. This means that the surfer is constantly attached to a flotation device which significantly reduces the risks that swimmers or regular beach goers are exposed to.
5. Surfers wear wetsuits which allow prolonged exposure to cold temperatures, offer sun protection and provide positive buoyancy which reduces risk for the individual.
6. A surfboard assists flotation, making rip currents manageable.
7. Surfboards do not sink, allowing surfers time to rest safely after riding a wave.
8. Surfers can move in the water at speeds significantly faster and for much longer than swimmers.
9. Records show that very few surfers ever require third party assistance in the event of an accident in the water.
10. Surfers are often the first responders due to their presence in numbers, their boards (floating devices), their confidence and awareness in the water and their recognition that another ocean user is in trouble.
11. It is reasonable to conclude that surfing is a sport where there are a number of self-mitigating factors that reduce risk.

## **SURFING - SOCIAL IMPACT**

- 1 Surfing is recognised as an effective method of addressing a wide range of social challenges, from mental trauma in the youth at risk, to programs for disabled individuals.
- 2 Surf based therapy programs operate nationally and are recognised and supported by Surfing South Africa. Most of these provide surfing based mentorship programs that teach life skills and also provide safe places for youth at risk.
- 3 Many of the individuals who progress from these programmes surf recreationally, compete at club, district, provincial and national level and also find work in the surfing industry as coaches or sports officials.
- 4 Surfing is increasingly being used in therapy for people with physical and intellectual disabilities at both a recreational and competitive level.
- 5 Surfing is a healthy, solo exercise that provides high levels of fitness and mental agility to thousands of individuals of all ages and from all walks of life.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT - SURF TOURISM**

1. South Africa is blessed with some of the best and most varied global surfing conditions .
2. Surfing is practised both competitively and recreationally in the Western Cape, Southern Cape, Eastern Cape and KZN.
3. Many of the surf spots along the South African coastline are household names to surfing communities throughout the world.
4. Most of these venues have hosted International surfing events that have drawn thousands of visitors to South Africa.
5. South Africa is a “bucket list” surfing destination for international surfing tourists and is ranked alongside Hawaii, Australia, Brazil and Indonesia as a perfect surfing destination.
6. South Africa has a substantial surf tourism industry stretching from the Western Cape to Richards Bay.
7. Most surf tourists visit from Europe, Australia, Brazil and the United States and due to their currency advantage these surf tourists stay for two to four weeks.
8. South Africa provides packaged “learn to surf” coaching at numerous beaches up and down the coast.
9. It is estimated that in 2019, approximately 45,000 surf coaching packages were sold in the Western Cape alone, representing revenues in excess of R10 million.
10. Because the waves in South Africa is generally best in the autumn and winter, the positive impact of the surf economy is complimentary to the traditional year - end holiday period.

## **JOB CREATION, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

1. Surf related industry and business is generally made up of small enterprises which are able to absorb new entrants into the job market.
2. Surf tourism adds to South Africa's GDP
3. Retail surf shops and manufacturing generates income and employment
4. Surf coaching and Surf Schools offer employment to individuals who have completed internationally approved coaching courses presented by Surfing South Africa.
5. Specialised surf coaching covers all aspects of the sport from entry level through to preparation for professional international participation and the Olympics
6. The surfboard making industry as well as the manufacture of surf specific, wetsuits, surf apparel and surf equipment enables the development of skills.
7. Surfing has its own sport specific media publications.

***Submitted by:***

***The Board of Directors***

***Surfing South Africa***

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