

COMMITTEE FOR EQUITY IN WOMEN'S SURFING

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Monday, September 5, 2016

Renee Ananda

California Coastal Commission

North Coast District Office

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**Re: Proposal for Women's Participation at Future Mavericks Events**

Dear Ms. Ananda,

On behalf of Committee for Women's Big-Wave Surfing please consider the following proposal for gender equality at future Mavericks surf events.

What does genuine inclusion of women's participation in surf events mean to women athletes?

It means creating a women's division with equal prize money.

What would women's inclusion mean for the Mavericks legacy and for global surfing communities?

Inclusion means leading the way in efforts to put elite women athletes where they belong on the world stage, increasing event sponsorship with benefits to local economies, and expanding viewership and media coverage. It would mean broadening public access to Coastal resources and ensuring women surfers too have rights of use.

In surfing competition, as in other professional sports, the standard is for men to compete against men, and for women to compete against women. Women do not compete against men. This distinctive format is important and appropriate to both men and women athletes because it provides an opportunity for equity in competitive sports.

The supporters of this proposal to the California Coastal Commission would like to see 6 women compete in a total of three heats in a women's division: two semi-finals and a final. The judging criteria and heat formats would be identical for both men and women's divisions.

This one-day event is weather and swell dependent. There will be windows of time during the day when the wind, swell, and tides provide optimal conditions for competing. The women's heats should be scheduled for the time of day that will best showcase surfing abilities. For the inaugural competition, the peak of the swell (i.e. the time of day where the waves are the largest) should feature the men. And, this sequencing should be revisited as the sport develops.

Past World Surf League (WSL) big wave contests as well as the 2016 Titans of Mavericks event have proven that there is ample time to add 3 extra heats. The 2016 Titans event, as an example, did not start until 8:30am, had a 1 hour window where no one surfed in the afternoon, and finished at 3:00 PM, leaving 3 hours of daylight in which three extra heats for women could easily run.

Sponsors are already offering women athletes and the "Committee Five" money for a women's division prize purse, therefore the additional heats would not reduce the men's prize purse. Indeed they may improve overall financial health and funding possibilities as supporters of women's inclusion contribute.

Studies in sports history and economics have shown that much misinformation exists on the topic of gender in sports. Experts agree that pay inequity is pervasive and a level playing field for women's athletics is far from a reality. They agree that commonsense notions that "men are better athletes than women" are simplistic and should not be rationales for policy decisions. More girls and women play sports, and play better, than ever before. The purchasing power of female consumers is as strong or stronger than male consumers. The influence of female athletes and consumer demographics is strengthening. Women and girls are entitled to equal access to sports, and public resources.

We believe that it's time for the women athletes to be given an opportunity to compete in a women's division at Mavericks. It will be good for women, for the Maverick's legacy, and it ensures fair and equal access to coastal waters that the Commission is charged to protect.

The California Coastal Commission voted to include women's participation in the event at Mavericks and this proposal asserts how we, the female athletes and stakeholders in women's big wave surfing, believe the event should be executed. Women do not compete against men in professional sports, nor should they at Mavericks, since such arrangements are widely understood not to contribute to gender equity in sport. In the name of equity and equal opportunity, we submit our request.

As you know, the granting of a Coastal Development Permit is a discretionary action. The Committee for Equity in Women's Surfing urges the California Coastal Commission to require the following:

- Six women to compete in three heats in a women's division: two semi-finals and a final.
- And six women alternates.
- Judging criteria and heat formats would be identical for both men and women's divisions.
- The women's heats should be scheduled for the time of day that will best showcase surfing abilities.
- 2016/2017 Mavericks event sequencing: the peak of the swell (i.e. the time of day where the waves are the largest) should feature the men's division.
- Women's division sequencing should be reconsidered annually as the sport develops.

Thank you for considering our views.

Paige Alms

Keala Kennelly

Andrea Moller

Bianca Valenti

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## Supporting Research

### Recent Report about Women's Big Wave Surfing

<http://www.theinertia.com/surf/womens-big-wave-surfing-and-the-2016-xxl-awards-exploring-how-far-weve-come/>

### On Misinformation & Women's Empowerment in Sports

<http://www.feminist.org/research/sports/sports9.html>

### Gender Income Gaps Among Elite Athletes in 2015

<http://www.expertmarket.com/athlete-earnings-per-second>

### Scholarship about Surf Culture, Global Economics, Women/Girls Surfing

Krista Comer, Surfer Girls in the New World Order (2010)