

# MAKING

# WAVES

The Surfrider Foundation Newsletter

Vol. 6, No. 2 Summer 1990



Maalaea. Photo: Erik Aeder.

## Surfrider Joins Fight to Save Maalaea

The Surfrider Foundation pledged recently to join with Maui locals, including the Protect Maalaea Coalition and Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, to do whatever is necessary to insure that a harbor improvement project at Maalaea on the Hawaiian island of Maui does not adversely affect surrounding surfing or the environment. If implemented the project would triple the harbor's number of boat slips and would extend one of the existing breakwaters by 620 feet. The Foundation feels that the present plan would seriously affect the surf, including the spectacular Maalaea Pipeline, and has formally requested that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) be prepared.

Surfrider believes that a SEIS is required by law and that the present document is deficient on a number of counts:

The Foundation feels that existing analysis of the potential wave refraction is

inadequate in that it is based on an old method of measurement. SF believes that even the most modern refraction models cannot account for all of the elements involved and that the resulting unknown dynamics leave grave concerns for the stability of the proposed structures, the neighboring beaches and nearby surf. The beach and surf would undoubtedly be affected by the wave shadow cast by the proposed structures, according to Surfrider experts, and the burden of proof that this is not the case rests with the Corps of Engineers.

The current EIS incorrectly shows the location of the surfing areas. How can we be confident that there is no adverse impact when the study does not even correctly identify sensitive areas?

The EIS gives no consideration to the effects of increased boat traffic on water quality. The effects on the ecology of the

nearby reefs due to their partial destruction for realignment of the channel are also not addressed; nor is the impact of sewage from bilge flushing and pass-through plumbing. The effects of increased noise and potential of propeller-related injury to marine mammals (including the endangered humpback whales and green turtles) were also omitted.

The EIS is now ten years old and did not employ state-of-the-art engineering analysis. Surfrider feels that a SEIS must be undertaken.

The existing, original breakwater was built on the Lahaina side of the harbor in 1953 destroying a popular surfing break. In 1958 the east breakwater was constructed, to protect the harbor from powerful southeast swells. The harbor has been the subject of attempted improvements ever since. In 1989 an environmental assessment was published without public input announcing that construction was to begin on the current plan in the summer of 1990 and was to be based upon the decade old EIS.

Local surfers have repeatedly contested the proposal on many grounds. For example, they contend that the takeoff area for the Maalaea Pipeline is only 300 feet from the harbor entrance, whereas the EIS locates it 600 feet away. Locals were also distressed by claims that no one ever surfed Maalaea until the breakwaters created the surfing opportunities there. According to long-time residents, that is just not the case. Locals also argue that the biggest swells come from the southeast, not from the south or southwest, and the 620 foot breakwater extension would not block a southeast swell from entering the harbor; in fact, they say by taking 80 feet off the existing breakwater as they propose the new marina will be more vulnerable to southeast swells.

The Surfrider Foundation and the locals are prepared to go to court if necessary to force compliance with federal and state environmental laws and to halt construction of the breakwater extension at Maalaea. Presently Surfrider is awaiting the Army Corps' reply to our correspondence demanding a SEIS.