



SURFRIDER FOUNDATION STATEMENT ON 2024 OLYMPIC PLANS IN TEAHUPO'O



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Surfrider Foundation Europe and Surfrider Foundation USA have issued a joint statement on the planned venue for the surfing events in Teahupo'o (Tahiti), as part of the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics.

The reef and lagoon ecosystem at Teahupo'o has remained healthy for generations due to the dedicated stewardship of indigenous and local Tahitians, many of whom continue to derive their livelihoods and subsistence from these nearshore waters. As a result, any potential project related to the Teahupo'o reef ecosystem should only be done with complete collaboration and support from the local community.

The iconic wave at Teahupo'o has cultural significance for surfers worldwide. While we understand the anticipation of surf and sports fans to watch the world's best athletes compete at one of the world's best waves on the Olympic stage, we strongly urge the International Olympic Committee, and all other vested interests, to respect the interests and traditions of the indigenous and local Tahitians who call Teahupo'o home and explore alternatives that will protect the health and integrity of this unique marine ecosystem.

A wooden tower has been successfully used to host and judge international surf competitions for decades; however, the Olympic Committee claims that the existing wooden tower does not meet their standards, without sharing why. The Olympic Committee now wants to build a new, multimillion dollar aluminum tower, the construction of which threatens the health of a pristine marine ecosystem and could even degrade the surfing resource. The collaboration and transparency with the local community has been unsatisfactory, which has raised strong opposition towards this new construction project. One of the main causes is the lack of information regarding the Olympic Committee's needs and the environmental impacts on the coral reef ecosystems.

While the Olympic Committee, and associated parties, have attempted to find solutions, shared part of the documentation with the local associations, and brought them to the test phase of construction work,

they have not demonstrated a need for further construction or justified increased impacts to the reef ecosystem. As a result, those efforts have not satisfied the local or global conservation community. The credibility of the current construction plans was damaged when an empty construction barge ran aground on the reef during a recent visit to the site.

Surfrider Foundation supports the local community position and the concerns of the Vai ara o Teahupo'o Association to ensure the environmental integrity of the reefs at Teahupo'o. We are opposed to any new construction that endangers the reef and lagoon ecosystem. Any necessary upgrades to the existing structure must be done in the most ecologically responsible way possible, and in collaborative consultation with the local community. The best interests of the community and ecosystem health must be prioritized, over a one-time Olympic competition.

Therefore, we urge the International Olympic Committee, the French National Olympic Committee, and the Assembly of French Polynesia to:

- **Recognize the indigenous and local community as the key stakeholder on this topic:** if the proven risks are unacceptable for them, the new tower should not be built. This assessment could potentially cast doubt on the feasibility of hosting other major international competitions.
- **Release all relevant environmental analysis,** construction plans, and requirements for the judging – publicly and to the local community.
- **Explore other solutions, including other contest sites, as well as economic, environmental, and social consequences.** This information must be transparent and shared with the local community. To prevent replicating the oversights witnessed in the stages of the case at Teahupo'o, it is imperative that any new projects related to the Olympic games ensure the complete involvement of local communities from its very outset.

“Surfrider Foundation stands with the local community's desire to protect the precious reefs at Teahupo'o. The Olympics should be able to hold a 3-day surf contest without jeopardizing the health of the ecosystem at Teahupo'o,” says Surfrider Foundation CEO Dr. Chad Nelsen. “The Olympics have the opportunity to set the bar for holding an international surf contest while protecting the integrity of the coastal ecosystems. The current plans create unnecessary risk to the reefs at Teahupo'o and to the future integrity of Olympic surf competitions as a whole.”

“More dialogue with the local community and transparency are first steps that the Olympic Committees need to take if we want an Olympic Games that checks at least some of the boxes for the environmental goals that

they have set for themselves,” adds Florent Marcoux, CEO of Surfrider Foundation Europe.

Surfrider Foundation is a global organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world’s ocean, waves, and beaches, for all people through a powerful activist network. The Surfrider Foundation’s primary guiding principle recognizes the biodiversity and ecological integrity of the planet's coasts are necessary and irreplaceable. Surfrider is committed to preserving natural living and non-living diversity and the ecological integrity of the coastal environment.

To learn more and show your support for the local community, go to www.saveteahupooreef.com and sign the petition.

We remain at the disposal of journalists for any requests for information or interviews.

About Surfrider Foundation

The NGO Surfrider Foundation is a group of positive activists who take concrete action on the ground every day to pass on a preserved ocean to future generations. Our mission: to make the voice of the ocean heard loud and clear! Our weapons? Raising awareness and mobilizing citizens, children and adults alike, using our scientific expertise to lobby and transform companies. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/>

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