



Chapter & Club Toolkit





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What is an Ocean Friendly Restaurant?

Plastic pollution is suffocating our ocean and the many animals that call it home. Researchers estimate there are at least 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic in the ocean with 11 million metric tons being added each year from land-based sources. This pollution is negatively impacting our marine ecosystems and wildlife including seabirds, dolphins, whales, fish, and turtles. Plastic fragments are even displacing plankton as the base of the food chain. So, what's the best way to combat this global epidemic facing our ocean? It's simple - we need to stop the problem at its source! The Surfrider Foundation's Ocean Friendly Restaurants (OFR) program does just that. One restaurant, one customer at a time, it increases awareness, drives changes in behavior and ultimately creates scalable impact to reduce our plastic footprint.

Surfrider's OFR program highlights businesses that pledge to meet an ocean friendly standard, based on a comprehensive list of criteria. One of the main goals of the OFR program is to significantly reduce plastic waste including eliminating expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam, a type of plastic typically used for inexpensive, disposable products. However, there

are other types of pollution and issues impacting the ocean that restaurants can help address to be truly ocean friendly. Therefore, optional criteria is included to highlight restaurants that are also working to conserve water and energy, and offer more sustainable food.

The Surfrider Foundation's OFR program provides businesses with a registration process that has been vetted by a variety of stakeholders, Surfrider representatives, business groups, and government agencies. Recognition through the OFR program provides businesses with true marketplace value. Currently available for restaurants and other food service providers, OFR members become coastal defenders in their communities through an established program that is clearly recognizable with consumers.

Ocean Friendly Restaurants make a pledge to use less plastic and take other steps to help protect our ocean, waves, and beaches. OFRs are recognized by the Surfrider Foundation after the completion of the sign-up form, a small membership fee, and a compliance check.



Why do we need Ocean Friendly Restaurants?

170 Million

Plastic straws are used each day in the United States.

5,800

Gallons of water per day are used by restaurants.

6.88 Billion

Plastic bottles were littered or went into a landfill in 2016.

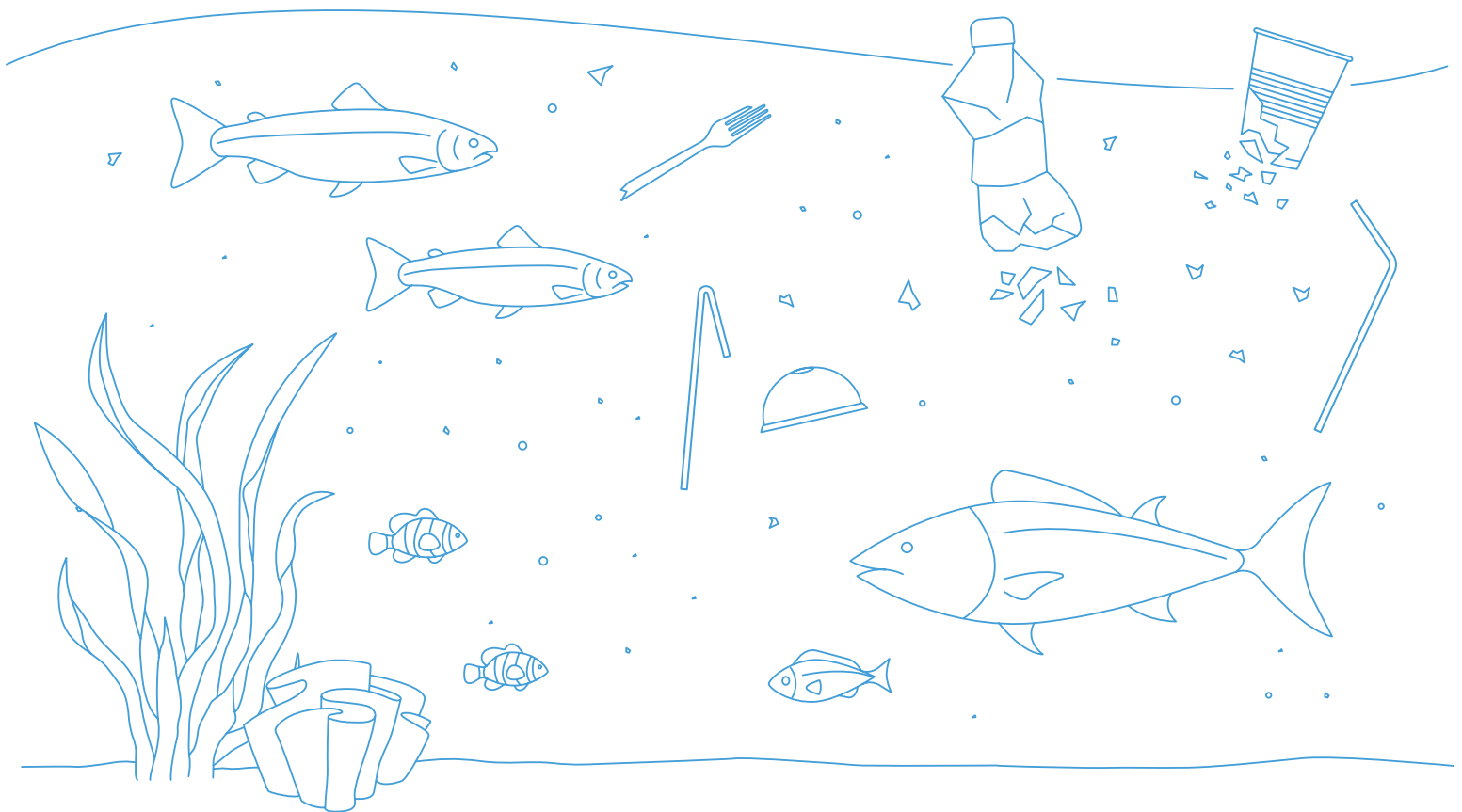
63 Billion

Plastic straws are used annually in the United States.

11 Million

Metric tons of plastic enter our oceans each year.

Projections estimate that by 2050, there will be more plastic by weight in our ocean than fish.



Sources for these facts and more can be found at beachapedia.org

Program Criteria

RESTAURANTS PARTICIPATING MUST FOLLOW THE FIRST SEVEN CRITERIA

1. Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.*
2. Paper straws are provided only upon request.**
3. No expanded polystyrene foam (aka Styrofoam™) is used.
4. No plastic bags are used for takeout or to-go orders.
5. Single-use utensils, straws, condiments, and other accessory items are provided only upon request for takeout and to-go orders.
6. Beverages are not sold in plastic bottles.
7. Proper recycling practices are followed.

* Foodware includes dinnerware, drinkware, silverware, and ramekins/containers.

** Exceptions may be made for naturally occurring materials (e.g. hay, bamboo) and reusables (e.g. metal, glass), not including bio-based plastic. Straws should be provided to anyone who needs one, including people with disabilities.

AND CHOOSE A MINIMUM OF THREE OF THESE CRITERIA

1. A discount is offered for customers with a reusable item (e.g. cup, container, bag).
2. Vegetarian and vegan food options are offered on a regular basis.
3. All seafood is 'Best Choice' or 'Good Alternative' as defined by Seafood Watch, or certified as sustainable.
4. Water conservation and pollution mitigation efforts are implemented.
5. Energy efficiency efforts are in place.
6. Concessions and pre-packaged food items are not sold in plastic packaging.
7. Composting efforts are in place for food waste.
8. Neither single-use plastic nor bio-based plastic containers are used for takeout or to-go orders, reusable containers are preferred.

Restaurants that meet all of the criteria are recognized as **Platinum Level Ocean Friendly Restaurants!**

Is there a fee for enrolling in the OFR program?

The Ocean Friendly Restaurants program is free to join, although an optional donation is recommended. In an effort to make the program more accessible to all restaurants, the Surfrider Foundation removed the mandatory fee in 2021. With an optional donation of \$150, restaurants can help to support program growth including resource development and promotional opportunities. These donations are 100% tax-deductible and help to ensure that Surfrider can continue to provide this program free of charge to restaurants in need across the nation.

Chapters collect 50% of the local restaurant membership donations to help support chapter efforts. In lieu of the mandatory fee, we encourage restaurants to participate in give-back projects to support their local chapter. We also encourage restaurant engagement in chapter policy

campaigns to enhance community leadership and create long-lasting, widespread change.

Food Truck Policy

Food trucks and small restaurants with 6 or less tables can still be registered as Ocean Friendly if all takeout items do not contain plastic or bioplastic (see Surfrider's Bioplastic Guidance Document), and utensils and other to-go ware is composed of natural materials that can biodegrade in the natural environment (eg. wood, bamboo, paper, etc.).

Food trucks are encouraged to utilize reusable items where possible and to minimize packaging for their food.

Schools

School cafeterias and other facilities are eligible to be registered if they meet the same criteria as restaurants.

Getting Started

1. Start by identifying a leader or co-leaders to structure the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program as a subcommittee for your Surfrider Foundation chapter or club. Review this toolkit and all of the materials available on the Brand Portal for a full overview of the program. Check out the [OFR Shared Chapter Resources](#) Google Drive for materials and resources from other Chapters.
2. Order an OFR starter kit from Surfrider HQ that includes 10 OFR brochures, copies of the registration checklist and other printed materials. The OFR brochure is also available to customize and print locally with your chapter or club name and contact info, see the link on the [Brand Portal](#).
3. Create an online presence. Add an OFR tab on your chapter or club website to provide info about the program and contact info for restaurants and volunteers who are interested. Here are a couple of examples: la.surfrider.org/programs/ocean-friendly-restaurants/, <https://sandiego.surfrider.org/ofr/>, and <https://oahu.surfrider.org/ofr/>

Social Media: While some chapters have started local OFR social media feeds, we typically recommend against this. You typically get the widest audience if you promote OFR through your main chapter or club social media feeds.

4. Host regular OFR subcommittee meetings quarterly, bi-monthly, or monthly to organize locally. It could be an OFR specific meeting or it could be a breakout session during or after a general Surfrider chapter meeting. Recruit volunteers to help register restaurants by sending emails, posting info to social media, talking about the program at chapter meetings and other community events.
5. Host training sessions where new volunteers can learn about the program details and how to register restaurants. Prepare folders for volunteers that contain copies of the OFR brochure from Surfrider HQ, the registration checklist and quick guide for restaurants, so that they can start signing up restaurants right away.



At this point, you have volunteers, an online presence, printed program materials and are ready to sign up restaurants!

A great way to help launch your OFR program is with a strawless challenge. The premise is to encourage restaurants to give up plastic straws, or at least offer straws 'by request' for a period of time such as a week or month. Ask them to estimate their straw usage before and during the challenge and highlight the best straw reductions online. After the challenge, ask each restaurant to sign up as an Ocean Friendly Restaurant once they see how easy it is. Check out the [Brand Portal](#) for a one-pager with more guidance on running a strawless challenge.

Another recommendation is to host Ocean Friendly 'Happy Hour' parties at participating restaurants to spread the word about the program and to promote our restaurant partners, with the owners and managers to prepare drink and appetizer specials. In Hawai'i, these parties attract 40-60 people at each event.

How to Register

There are two main ways to start signing up restaurants, whether we contact them or they contact us:

1. Brainstorm a list of potential OFRs in your area and keep track of it in Google Sheets. You can start by emailing or calling your list of restaurants, but you will have the most success by visiting restaurants in person.
2. When you are visiting restaurants in person, you can take the program brochure and registration checklist or survey form with you. Ask the owner/manager for their contact info to follow up. Be sure to finalize the OFR registration process at surfrider.org/ofr.

Try to schedule a time to talk to the owner/manager when they are not too busy—mid-afternoon in the 2-4 pm range is often a good time after the lunch rush and before dinner. Running a restaurant is long and hard work so don't be discouraged if you don't get a reply right away—persistence pays off!

Whenever possible, arrange to conduct a compliance check of every restaurant that you register. It's great to contact restaurants online or on the phone, but to create a stronger relationship and verify their compliance with the criteria, it is important to visit each restaurant in person. Plus, it's a great opportunity to get a photo at the end of the process!

Once you have a commitment that a restaurant would like to register, schedule a time to start the compliance check and, if desired, staff training at the restaurant. This will generally take around 20 minutes but could last up to an hour, depending on the level of detail and conversations that the visit may inspire (or, if the manager would like you to also plan a quick presentation to orient the staff to the program and answer questions) – so plan accordingly.

If you and the owner/manager have ample time during the compliance check, there is also a more detailed OFR Survey Form available to help capture more data on the restaurant's ocean friendly practices. Ideally, you should also take a laptop or iPad so that the owner/manager can finalize the registration and membership fee on the spot.

Restaurants can finalize the enrollment process and make an optional donatio on the OFR web page: surfrider.org/ofr.

When the enrollment process is complete, the restaurant will get an instant acknowledgment. Their welcome package with window stickers and bill inserts can be expected in 2-4 weeks. If they would like additional marketing materials, the Chapter can order them on the brand portal.

Finally, for your website and social media, take a photo with the owner or manager at their restaurant and their logo in the background if possible. The window sticker file can be used to print a 8.5" x 11" paper version at home that is great to hold up in the photo.



Program Resources

The program resources below are available for download on the Brand Portal at: surfrider.org/ofr-assets

Introduction Letter for Restaurants: This is a letter that you can email or print and give to a prospective Ocean Friendly Restaurant. It provides an overview of the OFR program and is customizable for your local chapter to add info about restaurant items collected at your beach cleanups, etc.

Signup Checklist: This is a one-page form to help guide you through the physical inspection of a restaurant. The physical inspection should last 20-30 minutes to review the criteria and discuss how they comply and may be able to improve their practices.

Detailed Signup Checklist: This is a more detailed version of the signup checklist available to use when time permits. This is a multiple page form that goes into further detail with how the restaurant complies with the criteria by providing more specific info on the products they use.

Quick Guide For Restaurants: A two-sided guide provides easy ideas on ways to meet the OFR criteria.

Paper Membership Form: If a restaurant would prefer to pay by check, they can mail in this form instead of paying the membership fee online.

Website Badge: An online badge for a restaurant to show they are an Ocean Friendly Restaurant.

Once you have visited with a new restaurant, follow up to make sure they filled out the online membership or have submitted the paper membership form so that the restaurant will show up on the list of OFRs across the country and receive all of the OFR benefits.

Every year, OFRs need to renew their membership and pledge. If you receive a report of noncompliance or think there may be noncompliance, please contact the OFR staff to inquire or visit the restaurant. Warn the owner/manager if you spot a violation, then revoke their OFR status if needed.

BENEFITS & INCENTIVES

Besides keeping plastic out of the ocean and reducing their environmental impact, OFRs gain access to an array of exciting benefits.

Here are a few you can reference in your outreach:

- OFR Marketing Collateral
- Use of OFR logo
- Listed on Surfrider websites
- Included on OFR national map
- Launch parties and collaborative promotions
- Social media marketing promotion
- National vendor discounts
- Tax-deductible contribution
- Association with a nationally recognized nonprofit with thousands of members and supporters working hard to keep our ocean healthy and protected!

Surfrider's social reach:

- **Website** = 100-200K
- **Facebook** = 302K
- **Twitter** = 127K
- **Instagram** = 170K
- **YouTube** = 3K
- **Vimeo** = 1-2K
- **Making Waves** = 125K

Why Standards and Consistency are Important

FOR THE BUSINESSES

- Standards ensure expectations are met around the quality of the program.
- Standards give businesses predictability of deliverables that allow them to better evaluate their continued participation in the program.
- Standards ensure our costs are managed carefully for enhancement and maintenance of the program, resulting in the best possible return on investment for the business.
- Standards ensure the time of participating businesses is well-managed.
- Standards ensure consistency (of brand, voice, presentation and formats) across communications channels and content types.

FOR THE CHAPTERS, CLUBS AND STAFF

- Standards ensure the quality of deliverables and service.
- Standards reduce turnaround time for the chapters (by reducing the amount of cycle time spent on revisions, reworking and tailoring the program for different businesses).
- Standards ensure a volunteer's time is well-managed.
- Standards reduce the amount of frustration caused through a lack of direction.
- Standards improve predictability of resource planning and scheduling.



FAQs

What are the best alternatives to polystyrene and other disposable plastics?

Reusable items are preferred whenever possible. Check out Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide for product recommendations, ideas to use more reusables and what items to avoid using. There even is a break-even point calculator to see how fast your investment will reap rewards.

A couple of resources for alternative products include:

Clean Water Action has the Reusable Food Serviceware Guide:

cleanwater.org/sites/default/files/CA_ReTh_Foodware_08.21.15a_web.pdf

How long will the membership be valid?

The OFR membership will be valid for 12 months from when the business signed up. Restaurants need to renew their membership annually to ensure that they continue to meet the OFR program standards. Restaurants will have the option to waive the fee or donate to the program each year.

How will a restaurant be promoted?

Ocean Friendly Restaurants will be promoted through a directory on the Surfrider Foundation's website. Membership benefits for all businesses include the use of the OFR logo in marketing materials online and in print, a window decal for display and announcement through a chapter's social media channels.



There are several locations of a restaurant. How should I proceed with enrollment?

The restaurant chain may sign up together but each location must undergo a compliance check to ensure they all meet the criteria. In our experience, even locations owned by the same company can meet different elements of the criteria. This is also a great way to compare performance and encourage branches to learn from one another. If a restaurant has 10 or more locations, please refer them to the OFR team at OFR@surfrider.org.

How was the Ocean Friendly Restaurants standard developed?

The OFR criteria was developed based on research and studying best practices from the Surfrider Foundation's Rise Above Plastics program. Volunteers analyzed data from Surfrider beach cleanups to identify the top items collected that originated from restaurants. Industry experts, academics, local governments and members of the business community also guided the criteria.

How can restaurants participate in OFR if their local chapter is not running the program?

Restaurant managers/owners have the opportunity to sign up online if they are not near a Surfrider chapter running the OFR program. Restaurants can visit the national OFR webpage for more details: surfrider.org/ofr

How are the optional donations processed?

The donations are processed by the Surfrider Foundation's Membership Department. This allows for better tracking of the restaurants and streamlines the annual participation process for the chapter and the business. If a restaurant chooses not to renew the restaurant will be removed from the website, along with all advertising. Businesses that do not renew, but continue to advertise as an OFR business will be subject to legal action by the Surfrider Foundation.

How are the optional donations tracked?

The Surfrider Foundation tracks these in a similar manner to how we track membership sign-ups. Chapter affiliation is automatically assigned to restaurants based on zip codes. Donations are split equally between the chapter and Surfrider HQ 50/50. Chapters will receive their split in the annual February rebate. Once a restaurant joins the program, it will receive an automated thank you and receipt. Surfrider will send out an OFR welcome package that will include a letter of participation, OFR decal and bill inserts. The plastics team provides a monthly report distributed to OFR leads on current and expired restaurants in which chapters can welcome personally and include in the chapter's marketing efforts. Chapters can also view active and soon-to-expire via the Chapter Wordpress site's Membership Dashboard. New restaurants will be added to the national website automatically within 24 hours. All renewals are automated e-renewal series for participating OFR restaurants in the same manner as a standard member. This automated email series will begin two months prior to its expiration date, two days prior to expire and two weeks post-expire. When renewed, an automated thank you acknowledgment receipt will be sent.

What costs are associated with the program?

The development and oversight requirements for the program include both hard assets and staff time. For example, legal review by the Surfrider Foundation's legal team, scientific review by our science team and coordination and training by the regional staff team.

Printed Materials: decals, registration manual, brochures

Advertising: website maintenance, development and updating the businesses

Marketing Promotion: costs associated with the updating of materials

Legal: costs associated with nonprofit and program compliance

Expertise: costs associated with criteria development and support

Chapter Support: costs associated with the training and support from regional staff



Start-up Development Program Costs

To determine our start-up investment cost, we must estimate the costs of developing and implementing the program. Some of these expenses are one-time costs such as the fee for trademark registration and logo design. Some are ongoing costs, such as the cost for director and officer insurance we provide for our volunteers which protects you from liability associated with implementing the program, as well as staff oversight and management.

While we identified these costs, we evaluate whether they are essential or optional. Essential expenses are divided into two separate categories: fixed and variable. Fixed expenses include administrative costs and insurance costs. Variable expenses include inventory, shipping cost, and other costs associated with the direct implementation of the program.

Using this formula, the Surfrider Foundation estimates we have invested approximately \$60K into the development of this program through administrative costs associated with the chapter, marketing, communication, legal, technology, membership and environmental departments involvement, but does not include the variable cost of printed materials such as the brochures.

What potential liability is associated with implementing the program?

The Surfrider Foundation is obligated to maintain accuracy and diligence in its program efforts. Any and all claims of Ocean Friendly Restaurants compliance must be verified on a routine basis by both the business and the Surfrider Foundation. Any potentially false marketing claims can be subject to consumer protection laws or subject to allegations of fraud. For example, Subway Sandwiches was the target of a class action lawsuit because they advertised \$5 Footlong sandwiches that were not a full foot long. While the court found that none of the marketing practices by Subway franchises were “improper or unlawful” they settled and agreed to pay up to \$525,000 in attorneys fees, and it agreed to employ and enforce “quality control measures to ensure that operators are complying with the rules,” which includes actual measurement of the bread. Surfrider does include clauses to limit our liability in our business rules and operating agreements for OFR, but it is still incumbent upon Surfrider to diligently ensure compliance with the OFR standards for all businesses claiming Ocean Friendly Restaurant status.

Limitation of Liability for Surfrider Chapters & Clubs to Post on Their Websites

Please post the following language on your chapter website's OFR page or section: "Surfrider Foundation acknowledges that we cannot claim that all listed Restaurants are 100% in compliance with OFR standards at all times, but that Surfrider Foundation strives to diligently review compliance on a regular basis. If an Ocean Friendly Restaurant is found to be out of compliance, they are removed from the website as quickly as possible. Such a restaurant will not be reinstated on the list of Ocean Friendly Restaurants, until the compliance issue is remedied."

Limitation of Liability for Surfrider Chapters & Clubs to send to Restaurants

Under no circumstances shall Surfrider Foundation, including its board of directors, officials, agents, volunteers, employees, staff, representatives and any other party involved in creating, producing, registering, certifying or distributing the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program be liable for any direct, indirect, incidental, special or consequential damages, including but not limited to the loss of profits, good will, use, data, intellectual property rights or other intangible losses (even if Surfrider Foundation has been advised of the possibility of such damages) that result from (i) the use of or inability to use the program marketing or online services, (ii) the cost of procurement of substitute goods and services (iii) statements or conduct of any third party relating to the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program; or (iv) any other matter relating to the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program. You hereby acknowledge that this paragraph shall apply to all content, merchandise, and services available in conjunction with the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program. Because some states do not allow the exclusion or limitation of liability for consequential or incidental damages, in such states liability is limited to the fullest extent permitted by law.





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