

OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

CHAPTER TOOLKIT



SURFRIDER
FOUNDATION

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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 8.75 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 registration form, a small membership fee, and a compliance check.

WHY DO WE NEED OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS?

AN ESTIMATED 170 MILLION PLASTIC STRAWS ARE USED EACH DAY IN THE UNITED STATES, TOTALING TO NEARLY 63 BILLION STRAWS USED ANNUALLY.

AN ESTIMATED 8.75 MILLION METRIC TONS OF PLASTIC ENTER OUR OCEANS EACH YEAR.

FOOD PACKAGING AND STRAWS ARE ROUTINELY AMONG THE TOP 10 ITEMS FOUND AT BEACH CLEANUPS ANNUALLY.

RESTAURANTS USE AN AVERAGE OF 5,800 GALLONS OF WATER PER DAY.

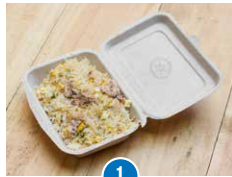
THE US RECYCLING COLLECTION RATE OF PLASTIC BOTTLES IS LESS THAN 30% WHICH TRANSLATES TO ROUGHLY 6.88 BILLION PLASTIC BOTTLES THAT WERE LITTERED OR WENT INTO A LANDFILL IN 2016.

SINCE PLASTIC DOES NOT BIODEGRADE, EVERY PIECE OF PLASTIC EVER CREATED STILL EXISTS IN SOME FORM TODAY!

PROJECTIONS ESTIMATE THAT BY 2050, THERE WILL BE MORE PLASTIC BY WEIGHT IN OUR OCEAN THAN FISH.

PROGRAM CRITERIA

Restaurants participating **MUST** follow the first five criteria:



1
No expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam is used.



2
Proper recycling practices are followed.



3
Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.*



4
No plastic bags offered with take out or to-go orders and utensils are provided only upon



5
Paper straws are provided only upon request.**

And choose a minimum of two of these criteria as well:

- No beverages sold in plastic bottles.
- Discount is offered for customers with a reusable cup, mug, bag, etc.
- Vegetarian/vegan food options are offered on a regular basis.
- All seafood must be a 'Best Choice' or 'Good Alternative' as defined by Seafood Watch or certified as sustainable.
- Water conservation and pollution mitigation efforts are implemented.
- Energy efficiency efforts are in place.

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

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

Is there a fee for enrolling in the OFR program?

The funding to maintain our Ocean Friendly Restaurants program comes from the annual membership fee for time spent conducting workshops, audits and providing technical assistance. The revenue from the fees allows the OFR program to grow and thrive with appropriate promotion and ensures that time and resources are spent on businesses that are working to support ocean friendly practices.

The annual membership fee is based on a sliding scale ranging from \$125 to \$175 for local businesses based on the number of employees. With the Surfrider Foundation's OFR program, we offer registration from a trusted and credible nonprofit brand at a great price. **Plus, the membership fee is 100% tax-deductible!** Chapters collect 50% of the local restaurant membership fees to help further your OFR program and other chapter efforts.

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.

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

** Exceptions may be made for alternatives made from other naturally occurring materials and reusables.

HOW TO START AN OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS PROGRAM FOR YOUR SURFRIDER CHAPTER

1. Start by identifying a leader or co-leaders to structure the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program as a subcommittee for your Surfrider Foundation chapter. Review this toolkit and all of the materials available on the [Brand Portal](#) for a full overview of the program. go.surfrider.org/ofr-assets
 2. Order an OFR starter kit from Surfrider HQ that includes 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 name and contact info, see the link on the [Brand Portal](#).
 3. Create an online presence. Add an OFR tab on your chapter 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/ and oceanfriendlyrestaurantshawaii.org/
- Social Media:** While some chapters have started local OFR social media feeds, we recommend against this. You typically get the widest audience if you promote OFR through your main chapter 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 OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

There are two main ways to start registering 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 go.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 registration process and pay their membership fee on the OFR web page: go.surfrider.org/ofr

Fee structure: \$125 for 1-20 employees; \$150 for 21-40 employees; \$175 for 40-60 employees.

When the membership fee is received, the restaurant will get an instant acknowledgment. Their welcome package with window sticker and brochures can be expected in 2-4 weeks.

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.

Download all program assets at: go.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.

Registration 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.

Registration Survey Form: This is a more detailed version of the registration checklist available to use when time permits. This is a six-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:

- Window stickers, brochures, table-tops, and bill inserts
- 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** = 295K
- **Twitter** = 126K
- **Instagram** = 99K
- **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 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. To replace disposables with reusables, Clean Water Action has the Reusable Food Serveware Guide:

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

Find a break-even point calculator to see how fast your investment will reap rewards on page 4 of the guide.

A couple of resources for alternative products include:

Portland, Oregon has a good guide to polystyrene alternatives.

portlandoregon.gov/sustainabilityatwork/article/507465

The city of San Jose, CA, provides a guide to replace polystyrene disposables with a “better” disposable. sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/34104

How long will the membership fee be valid?

The OFR membership will be valid for 12 months from when the business registered and paid their membership fee. Restaurants need to renew their membership annually to ensure that they continue to meet the OFR program standards. Annual renewal fees are based on number of employees.

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?

If a restaurant is locally based, but with 4 or less locations in the same community, and not part of a franchised chain, each location will need to undergo separate registrations. 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. The membership fee will be based on total number of employees for each location. If a restaurant has 5 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 register online if they are not near a Surfrider chapter running the OFR program. Restaurants can visit the national OFR webpage for more details: go.surfrider.org/ofr

Why do we have to charge a membership fee?

We recognize that one of the larger objectives of the program is to help modify behavior and reduce single-use plastics and EPS foam pollution. Charging a small fee does not limit or stop those outcomes, it actually enhances those efforts and puts "teeth" into the program. How many credible nonprofit recognition programs are 100% free or on the opposite end, such as for-profit companies that may charge outrageous fees and could be viewed as greenwashing?

The Surfrider Foundation has an extremely credible brand with significant reach, which we have found that even small businesses want to be associated with. This speaks to the success of the OFR program and why it's growing so rapidly.

For-profit entities in general can not provide this level of core constituent outreach. The Surfrider Foundation provides businesses with credibility and amplifies restaurant practices that support our mission, but there are costs with these efforts.

The funding to maintain the Ocean Friendly Restaurants program comes from the membership fees for the time spent conducting workshops, audits, providing technical assistance, website maintenance and updates to the program. The revenue from the fees allows the OFR program to have a sustainable future and ensure that time and resources are spent on businesses that are serious about the program.

The membership fee is based on a sliding scale ranging from \$125 to \$175 for local businesses. There are for-profit organizations that charge up to thousands of dollars for similar programs, but with the Surfrider Foundation's OFR program, recognition is earned from a trusted and credible nonprofit brand at a fair price. The local membership fees are split equally between the chapter and the Surfrider Foundation headquarters 50/50.

Do we have the ability to waive the membership fee?

No. Consistency and standards are important because it allows a program to scale and grow in a strategic manner while ultimately achieving our goal of environmental and behavioral changes. If 80+ chapters are implementing a different variation of the program including not charging fees, it diminishes the overall effectiveness of our mission and the success of the program.

Do we charge a membership fee for existing businesses?

Yes. We recommend that you contact any existing restaurants currently registered with your chapter and inform them about changes to the program. The Surfrider Foundation can assist in developing messaging so all existing businesses are notified about changes in the registration process. Because of the overwhelming success of the program and in order to scale and provide the materials needed, such as stickers, website maintenance and keeping the program relevant, we have to incorporate a fee structure to support it.

How are the membership fees processed?

The fees 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 local chapter will be notified and 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 membership fees tracked?

The Surfrider Foundation tracks these in a similar manner to how we track membership sign-ups. Chapter affiliation will need to be associated to an account, which is necessary for awarding rebates back to chapters. Membership fees 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 brochure. The membership department provides a monthly report to post (on ChapterNet)/distribute to OFR leads on new restaurants in which chapters can welcome personally and include in the chapter's marketing efforts. New restaurants will be added to the national website automatically on a monthly basis.

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.

We previously signed these businesses up for free. Will they be upset that we're charging a fee?

When any business rolls out a new program, project or product, there is an evaluation process associated with it. This includes small businesses that modify their business plans, menu options, vendors or advertising direction. The Surfrider Foundation developed a program that began at the grassroots level without an emphasis on consistency in criteria, benefits, branding, measurable outcomes or a larger mission-driven goal. If the Surfrider Foundation truly wants to have an impact on issues associated with single-use plastics and change behavior, we need to provide our chapters and businesses with a program that is consistent in content, goals and services and there are costs associated with it.

We can not guarantee that a business chooses to go through the pledge process the second year with the addition of the membership fee structure. There could be a host of reasons for this, including comments such as value offered, not wanting to pay for something that was free before or not having the nominal fee in their budgets.

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 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 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.