

Mark Massara, a surfer and attorney, is the Director of the Sierra Club's California Coastal Campaign. Massara gained a reputation in the surfing and environmental communities when, as counsel for Surfrider in 1991, he won a lawsuit against two pulp mill companies near Eureka, California that were dumping 40 million gallons of toxic effluents per day into the ocean. The penalty was the second largest collected for Clean Water Act violations.

Massara founded Surfers Environmental Alliance and the National Association of Surfing Attorneys, and partnered with Ken and Gabrielle Adelman to create a California coastline photographic survey. He is on the board of Vote the Coast and Coastal Advocates, and serves on the advisory board of Save the Waves Coalition and Project Kaisei. He writes on coastal and environmental legal issues for surfing magazines, Coastwatcher, and other publications.

Massara also serves as Chief Policy Officer for Dot Eco LLC, a coalition effort among Al Gore, Sierra Club, Surfrider Foundation, and others to establish an Internet domain service to benefit environmental protection and climate change efforts.

Currently, Massara focuses on climate change related coastal protection and land use issues. With a predicted 4.5 foot sea level rise along the California coast in the next 80 years, Massara states, "There is no time to waste in implementing aggressive land use retreat and resilient habitat and wetlands protection measures." Massara is urging private property owners along the coast to adopt "managed retreat strategies" and begin moving residential and other structures away from coastal bluffs. He is also arguing that coastal open space and wetlands areas be protected and expanded as "resilient" habitat necessary to protect wildlife in future decades.

Massara started in environmental activism at the age of 7. He was living in Santa Barbara when a Union Oil offshore rig leaked 80,000 to 100,000 barrels of oil, and he and his father threw hay bales on the beach and collected dead and dying birds. As a surfer and activist, Massara states, "Surfers bring to the cause of protecting the coast an intimate knowledge of the California coastline and its many resources, along with a zeal for recreation."

When the California Coastal Commission held a hearing in 1998 on whether to approve a Hearst Corporation proposal to build a series of resorts on one of that last untouched stretches of coastline, surfers protested. Massara and other Club activists organized aerial photos, obtained damning documents about significant Native American resources that would be disturbed by the project, and rounded up a crowd of 1,500 to show up for the hearing. Surfers provided signs for protesters and wore wetsuits to testify against the plan.

"Whether I'm working with surfers, farmers or Chumash Indians, I listen to them, go to their meetings and immerse myself in their perspective and genuinely empathize with their viewpoint," states Massara. "It helps to walk a mile in someone's shoes."

The Smithsonian has declared Massara an "ocean hero."

In April 2007, Massara and Sierra Club led a coalition of dozens of environmental organizations and thousands of coastal activists in the defeat of a multi-billion dollar proposal by BHP Billiton to construct a 14-story liquid natural gas terminal that would have been a floating industrial facility several miles off the Malibu-Oxnard area of Southern California. The victory, in which both the California State Lands Commission and the California Coastal Commission denied the project in separate hearings, is considered the Waterloo for LNG terminals along the California coast.

In May 2007, Massara was featured in Vanity Fair's Green Issue: "He is a polluter's worst nightmare: a longhaired surfer with a law degree. Now that's righteous."

In 2007, Massara's efforts resulted in the California Coastal Commission denial of Pebble Beach Company's plan to cut down over 18,000 trees on the Monterey Peninsula.

In May 2008, Massara was featured in The New York Times' video entitled Planet Us: The Coastal Warrior.

In 2008, Massara, Sierra Club, California State Parks Foundation, dozens of organizations, and tens of thousands of activists won one of the biggest environmental victories in Southern California history by defeating the Orange County Transportation Corridor Agency's proposal to construct a billion dollar 17-mile toll road highway. The project would have cut through San Onofre State Park and endangered species habitat along San Mateo Creek, through sacred Native American sites and adjacent to one of America's most famous surfing environments at Trestles Beach. Prior to the California Coastal Commission denying the project, Massara stated, "The TCA's rich man's highway to nowhere is the wrong road at the wrong time at the wrong place."

In 2009, Massara was featured in an article entitled "Ocean Hero" in the University of San Francisco School of Law's USF Lawyer magazine.

In 2008 and 2009, Massara participated in SEA Paddle NYC, a 28-mile paddle around New York City that raises money for charities.