



SPORT EQUITY

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Friday, February 12, 2021

Steve Padilla, Chair
California Coastal Commission
455 Market St., Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: **Gender Discrimination: Jeff Clark's 2021 Mavericks Surf Awards**

Dear Chair Padilla,

In 2015, I asked the Coastal Commission to correct decades of gender discrimination by requiring that women be included in a big wave surf competition held at Mavericks in San Mateo County. In a 7-4 vote, I received support for a CDP condition requiring the inclusion of women going forward. Subsequently, the Coastal Commission voted unanimously to require the inclusion of a single heat for women in 2016 and 2017. In 2018, the Coastal Commission unanimously supported requiring a multi-heat women's division with equal prize money at each participant level.

Sadly, in 2020 Mavericks reverted back to the unregulated Wild West. Gender discrimination is taking place in a multi-day professional surf competition at Mavericks. The Mavericks Surf Awards is running from Dec 1st, 2020 – April 15th, 2021. The event is held on every surfable day for 4.5 months and the contest organizers are Jeff Clark and Chris Cuvelier.

You may remember Jeff Clark; he founded the first big wave surf competition at Mavericks in 1999. The event was named 'Men Who Ride Mountains'. Jeff Clark is notorious for blocking women from competing at Mavericks because as he puts it, "women just aren't ready yet." He's also said, "women need to pump more iron." So, it's not surprising that he's organizing and promoting an event that flouts efforts by the Committee for Equity in Women's Surfing, the Coastal Commission and the State Lands Commission to increase access and diversity by requiring inclusion, equality and equal pay.

Men are competing for **80%** of the prize compensation in the Mavericks Surf Awards and women are competing for **20%**. This inequity is gender discrimination.



It's difficult and sometimes impossible for women professional athletes to compete internationally without an opportunity to earn equal money. Unfair and discriminatory business practices prevent women professional surfers from utilizing public resources and coastal access. The Coastal Act was amended in 2016 to ensure that the coast is accessible to everyone and to protect people from discrimination, including sex-based discrimination. Please apply the **Environmental Justice and Social Equity** section of the Coastal Act to Mavericks surf competitions. A lack of parity must be addressed.

The Mavericks Surf Awards is running without any permits. Event organizers should be required to obtain a CDP so the Commission can review the contest to ensure that a public beach is being used fairly and that the event does not impede public access. A website describes the event as a "Performance Based Video Contest That Lasts All Season Long." While some may describe it as a "digital" contest it's actually an in-person physical competition using public resources including State waters, public beach and public launch ramps. **By no means is this a simulated, animated or virtual event.**

The Mavericks Surf Awards has transformed the entire surf season into a multi-day contest. The density and intensity of use has dramatically increased because the event runs every day big waves break at Mavericks for 4.5 months as opposed to the traditional format that runs one contest day per winter season and requires a CDP or a CDP waiver.

The website indicates that a number of private companies are sponsoring the event and contest rules state that all photo and video submissions will become the "intellectual property of Mavericks Surf Awards and its partners will be licensed to use the content." When does obtaining unpaid content become exploitation? Also, it's unclear who's judging, is it a panel selected by Jeff Clark or just Jeff? Will there be women or people of color judging the event? On Dec 4, one of the sponsors, The Inertia, a surf news site, reported that the contest will award \$10,000 in prize money. It's unclear if this is the total amount or the amount per prize category. On Dec 18, Standup Journal reported, "Significant cash prizes will be divided across five categories with 80% of the prize money going to the surfer and 20% to the videographer." This could mean the women's performance of the year category actually earns less than 20% of the total prize purse. Elsewhere it's been reported that the total prize purse is \$200,000.

The only thing we know for sure is the event was designed to avoid state oversight, rollback gender equity, evade accountability, incentivize risk on every high surf advisory day, reduce safety precautions and end opportunities for free surfing on non-contest days because there aren't any.

The lack of a Coastal Development Permit or CDP Waiver for the 2021 Mavericks Surf Awards is inconsistent with past CDP requirements and it's also inconsistent with California state law. Sadly, this is a step backwards for equality and pay parity.



On September 9, 2019, Assembly Bill 467 was signed into law by Governor Newsom. To enforce the law a CDP must be required: <https://bit.ly/3qboS8L>

SEC. 4. Section 30615 is added to the Public Resources Code, to read:

30615. (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Event" means a competition event within the **coastal zone**.

(2) "Prize compensation" includes prize or purse money, other prizes, goods, or other compensation.

(b) The commission shall require as a condition of a coastal development permit for any event that awards prize compensation to competitors in gendered categories, for any participant level that receives prize compensation, that the prize compensation for each gendered category be identical at each participant level. The commission shall not approve a coastal development permit for an event that does not comply with this condition.

Sport Equity works to end discrimination in professional athletic competitions held within the California coastal zone, submerged lands, public waters of the state, territorial seas, public waterways, public roadways, public land and public facilities.

We support the inclusion of a women's gendered category and a men's gendered category in all professional surf competitions. We support equal prize compensation at every participant level and in every prize classification (e.g. Ride of the Year, Biggest Wave, Best Barrel, and Performance of the Year).

We urge the Commission to require a CDP for all professional surf competitions held at Mavericks. It's the only way to ensure access, inclusion, equality and equity in California professional big wave surfing at Mavericks.

Please require an after-the-fact CDP for Mavericks Surf Awards.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sabrina". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Sabrina Brennan
Founder, Sport Equity & Surf Equity
Co-Founder, Committee for Equity in Women's Surfing

Copy: Jack Ainsworth
Dan Carl
Jeannine Manna

Donne Brownsey
Carole Groom
Effie Turnbull-Sanders
Dr. Caryl Hart
Sara Aminzadeh
Linda Escalante
Robert Uranga
Mike Wilson
Katie Rice
Betty T. Yee
Sachi Cunningham
Karen Tynan
Surfrider California
Surfrider San Mateo County

Bianca Valenti Surfing Mavericks

January 10, 2021 — Photo by Sachi Cunningham



Mavericks Surf Awards screenshots:

<https://www.maverickssurfawards.com>



2021 Multi-day Competition at Mavericks: Pillar Point Bluff
January 14, 2021 — Photo by Ken Pagliaro @kenpagliaro



2021 Multi-day Competition at Mavericks
January 10, 2021 — Boats, Jet Skis and Helicopter at Mavericks



2021 Multi-day Competition at Mavericks
January 10, 2021 — Helicopter skimming waves to capture images of competitors



2021 Multi-day Competition at Mavericks
Mavericks Beach and Reef

