

# ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

Number One in a Series of Six  
Surfrider Foundation Community-based  
Ecosystem Management Case Studies  
By Chad Nelsen

As part of our 2006 Ocean Revolution series we reported that a leading recommendation of the Pew Ocean Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy was the need to apply ecosystem-based management (EBM) to protect and conserve our coastal ocean environment. Subsequently, the need for EBM has been emphasized by the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and the West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health. Needless to say, EBM has become the recommended paradigm for ocean and coastal conservation. So what does that mean?

Communication Partnership for Science and Sea (COMPASS), an organization dedicated to helping coordinate and communicate important marine conservation science issues defines ecosystem-based management as the following:

“Ecosystem-based management is an integrated approach to management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans. The goal of ecosystem-based management is to maintain an ecosystem in a healthy, productive, and resilient condition, so that it can provide the services humans want and need. Ecosystem-based management differs from current approaches that usually focus on a single species, sector, activity or concern; it considers the cumulative impacts of different sectors.”

In other words, ecosystem-based management means taking the entire ecosystem, add the way it interacts, including with humans, into account when making decisions. While this may be revolutionary for government agencies, the concept is very intuitive for Surfrider Foundation's grassroots activists. Our advocacy tends to take a community-based or area-based approach in addressing coastal issues, which often tends to be inherently ecosystem-based.


At a conceptual level this seems obvious, but exactly how to put EBM into practice remains ambiguous and challenging. One practical place to start experimenting with EBM is at the community level and that is exactly what the Surfrider Foundation is trying to do.

The Surfrider Foundation is active in four precedent-setting community-scale “ecosystem-based management” campaigns that are demonstrating the value of proactive coastal and ocean management that takes the entire ecosystem into consideration. These communities are the San Juan Islands in Washington, Port Orford in Oregon, Ventura in California and Rincón in Puerto Rico.

In upcoming issues of *Making Waves* we will highlight these four leading projects and discuss how they are applying EBM to proactively create model communities that are striving to balance coastal protection, recreation and economic development in a holistic manner. We are hopeful that these projects will illustrate how ecosystem-based management can be applied to all of our efforts and campaigns.

For more information on this efforts visit:  
[www.surfrider.org/ebm](http://www.surfrider.org/ebm)

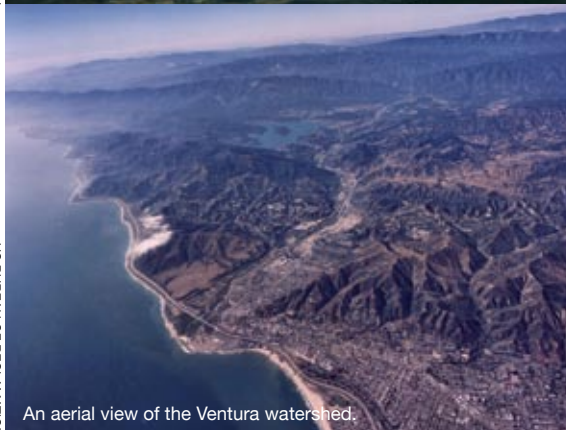
Chad is Surfrider Foundation's Environmental Director.



Port Orford, Oregon



Tres Palmas, Puerto Rico



An aerial view of the Ventura watershed.



The San Juan Islands, Washington

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