



Top-ranked West and East Coast Surfers Qualify to Compete in Elite USA Surfing Prime Series

After an epic Resin Services USA Surfing Championship presented by Hurley at Lower Trestles, we can't wait to see the nation's best under 18 surfers light up the lineups again in Prime Series jerseys!

The 2026-2027 Prime Series opens at two extra awesome breaks timed to take advantage of peak-season swells. The East Coast season opener is at *Jenette's Pier* in North Carolina's Outer Banks. The West Coast starts at NorCal's iconic cold water right-hand point break at *Steamers Lane* in Santa Cruz, CA.

Both locations are WSL QS stops and guaranteed to deliver fun and progression.

East Coast Prime Series

Oct 10–11 | Jenette's Pier, NC

Nov 14–15 | Wrightsville Beach, NC

Jan 30–31 | Ponce Inlet, FL

March 20–21 | Jacksonville, FL - Rescheduled

West Coast Prime Series

Oct 3–4 | Steamer Lane, Santa Cruz, CA

Nov 21–22 | Pismo Beach Pier, CA

Feb 6–7 | Huntington Beach Pier, CA

Mar 6–7 | Oceanside Pier, CA

Be on the lookout for the USA Surfing Power Your Performance clinics—open to all Prime Series surfers and regional qualifiers from NSSA, NSSA Hawaii, WSA, ESA, and TGSA.

These are incredible opportunities with purpose, healthy habits, and a plan for real progression.  **Stay tuned for the dates, locations, and RSVP info.**

Q. What is USA Surfing's Prime Series?

A. USA Surfing Prime Series is the highest level of junior (under age 18) surfing in the U.S., drawing talent from up and down the East and West coasts for pro-level competition experiences designed to prepare young surfers for the big leagues of surfing. Many of the top surfers in the US including 2024 Olympic Gold Medalist Caroline Marks and fellow Olympians Griffin Colapinto and Caity Simmers competed in the USA Surfing Prime Series. Caroline still holds the record for the most USA Surfing Championship wins.

There are four (4) Prime Series events on the East & West coast where surfers accumulate points throughout the season. Season-ending points determine who qualifies for coveted spots to surf in USA Surfing Championships held at Lower Trestles in June featuring the top qualified surfers from the East and West Coasts, Texas Gulf, and Hawaii.

USA Surfing's Prime Series events use WSL judging panels, announcers, QS-CT-level structure, broadcasts and premier sponsors designed to mirror and prepare for the highest levels of elite surfing.

Q. Who qualifies for the Prime Series? What are the qualifying pathways for the Prime Series?

A. This year 230 surfers from both East Coast and West Coast will receive invitations to surf in the elite USA Surfing Prime Series competition – a bi-coastal tour featuring the top-ranked surfers in the nation.

To compete in USA Surfing's Prime Series competitions, a surfer must receive an invitation which indicates they have met the following criteria to qualify:

Requalification from existing Prime Series competitors.

Surfers qualify for the upcoming 2026-27 Prime Series season by finishing within the top 75% of their respective birth year, based on final rankings of combined points from 2025-26 Prime Series and USA Surfing Championships.

Once the requalification cut lines have been established, all remaining available spots within each division will be allocated to the Regional Organizations.

Surfers who do not qualify via season-end rankings will be placed on the **Prime Series alternate list** and may be offered entry if opening spots become available during the season.

Based upon the amount of birth years that age out and the 75% of those who are in the top of those points, determines the amount of spots for regional orgs and aging up.

2026-27 Prime Division Overview of Qualification Slots:

WEST

Division	# of Athletes	75% Requalifying of Birth Year	Regional A - WSA	Regional B - NSSA
Boys U14	16	2 spots - 2014 3 spots - 2013	5	5
Boys U16	24	9 spots - 2012 9 spots - 2011	3	3
Boys U18	34	12 spots - 2010 14 spots - 2009	4	4
Girls U14	16	2 spots - 2014 4 spots - 2013	5	5
Girls U16	16	4 spots - 2012 8 spots - 2011	2	2
Girls U18	16	4 spots - 2010 8 spots - 2009	2	2

EAST

Division	# of Athletes	75% Requalifying of Birth Year	Regional A - ESA	Regional B - NSSA
Boys U14	16	4 spots - 2014 4 spots - 2013	4	4
Boys U16	24	8 spots - 2012 10 spots - 2011	3	3
Boys U18	24	10 spots - 2010 10 spots - 2009	2	2
Girls U14	16	3 spots - 2014 7 spots - 2013	3	3
Girls U16	16	6 spots - 2012 4 spots - 2011	3	3
Girls U18	16	5 spots - 2010 5 spots - 2009	3	3

**Birth Years per Age Division will vary each year

2027-28 Prime Division Qualification Slots:**WEST**

Division	# of Athletes	75% Requalifying of Birth Year	Regional A - WSA	Regional B - NSSA
Boys U14	16	6 spots - 2014	5	5
Boys U16	24	6 spots - 2013 7 spots - 2012	5	5
Boys U18	34 (32)	12 spots - 2011 12 spots - 2010	4	4
Girls U14	16	6 spots - 2014	5	5
Girls U16	16	6 spots - 2013 6 spots - 2012	2	2
Girls U18	16	7 spots - 2011 5 spots - 2010	2	2

EAST

Division	# of Athletes	75% Requalifying of Birth Year	Regional A - ESA	Regional B - NSSA
Boys U14	12	* 6 spots - 2014	3	3
Boys U16	24	* 4 spots - 2013 * 8 spots - 2012	6	6
Boys U18	24	* 11 spots - 2011 * 8 spots - 2010	2	2
Girls U14	16 (12)	* 4 spots - 2014	4	4
Girls U16	16	* 9 spots - 2013 * 6 spots - 2012	1	1
Girls U18	12 (16)	* 7 spots - 2011 * 4 spots - 2010	2	2

**Birth Years per Age Division will vary each year.

Seed Ranking when Aging into the Next Division

The top finishers from the year-end rankings of 2025-26 Prime Series including USA Surfing Championships points, surfers will keep 80% of their points moving into the next age division for seeding. Surfers staying in the same division will maintain 100% of the points they earned for the year end season points, to determine their new seed ranking for Prime Stop #1.

Qualifying via Regional Organizations:

Each regional organization qualifies surfers based on the number of spots allocated to them from USA Surfing, and through their own qualifying system. If you have questions about how your regional organization qualifies, you can reach out directly to them.

- **WSA** provides qualifiers based on top 6 events rankings plus WSA Championship results.
- **NSSA** draws on final results from their Open Nationals and breaks any ties by reviewing regional finishes. If available, Open slots may go to regional top finishers. They do not factor in regular season points.
- **ESA** - Top finishers from ESA's three regional competitions, and the division winners from ESA Easterns.

How do you pick the dates and locations for the Prime Series schedules on the East and West Coasts?

Prime Series locations on the East and West Coasts are chosen to mirror WSL Qualifying Series event sites, giving surfers a realistic bridge to the level of competition they're ultimately training for. We also factor in wave quality and consistency at each potential venue, feedback from parent surveys requesting more geographic variety throughout the season, and the availability of grants, discounts, and amenities that help make events more accessible. Event dates are selected to take advantage of optimal daylight hours and seasonal wave conditions, ensuring each event can run its full heat schedule in the best possible surf.

Can you drop a Prime event score to qualify for the USA Championships?

Yes, surfers on the East and West Coast Prime Series can drop one (1) event for Champs qualification.

East (4 events)

☑ Season ranking = Best 3 events

You'll drop your lowest event score from the four events.

West (4 events)

☑ Season ranking = Best 3 events

You'll drop your lowest event score from the four events.

This approach rewards consistency and strikes the best balance to protect surfers from unavoidable outliers (illness/injury, travel issues, and unforeseen circumstances).

Who judges USA Surfing Prime Series events on each coast?

Judging panels on both coasts include some of the nation's most experienced WSL QS/CT judges. Each panel consists of a head judge, a priority judge, four scoring judges, and a spotter/judge-in-training.

You will continue to see judges-in-training at events to ensure we have a high-quality pipeline of judges who cover key regions where events are held. Notes from head judges will also continue to be shared on WhatsApp and social media before each event to mirror WSL QS, CS, and CT events.

We encourage surfers, coaches and parents to use the broadcast of events to see real-life examples of how judging criteria is applied. USA Surfing has invested in live broadcasts to provide greater transparency and teachable moments for surfers, parents, fans, and judges themselves.

Are membership and registration fees going up this year?

To keep pace with increasing costs, there is a modest increase in membership and registration fees. It is based on the cost of other organizations and parent survey feedback indicating a willingness to pay more to sustain and improve USA Surfing's service to surfers and our sport. USA Surfing is facing higher costs in event production, Live Heats, and permits. 2026-2027 entry fees are \$180 and annual Prime Competitor membership is \$135.

When can we expect the heat draws to be published for every Prime Series event?

The deadline for registration will close one week before each event with heat draws published the Wednesday before each event. There will be a \$30 late fee charged for any late registrations and if provided too far past the deadline, they may not be accepted.

What is the "surfing up" policy and why did it change?

Surfers are required to surf in their birth-year age division **only**. USA Surfing does not allow surfers to compete in age groups beyond their birth year.

Age Division Policy and Athlete Development

USA Surfing is committed to maintaining age-appropriate competition across all divisions of the athlete development pathway. Based on feedback from CT/QS surfers and parents, along with observations from coaches, this policy reflects the importance of developing the maturity, focus, confidence, and character athletes need to succeed both in surfing and throughout their teenage years. This policy is consistent with the approach taken by other leading surfing nations, including Surfing Australia, Surfing New Zealand, and Surfing South Africa, which maintain age-appropriate competition and align their junior pathways with the International Surfing Association (ISA) World Junior Championship age divisions for U16 and U18 athletes.

Accordingly, athletes must compete within their designated age division for the 2026–27 season. This applies across all divisions, including U14, U16, and U18. This is in effect starting with the 2015 Birth Year for 2026-2027. These surfers will not be eligible for Prime qualification even if they have qualified through rankings in a Regional Organization. This ensures that the same age-division standard is applied consistently across the entire USA Surfing pathway.

By keeping athletes in their appropriate age division, USA Surfing encourages its top surfers to focus on competing against their own age group, building confidence through sustained performance, developing competitive character, and establishing a strong foundation for long-term success. Athletes are encouraged to dominate their age division before progressing to the next stage of competition, rather than advancing prematurely.

Athletes who qualify for the Prime Series in the first year that they are eligible in the U14 age division, may remain eligible for Prime for up to six years, provided they meet the applicable Prime ranking requirements and/or secure regional pathway invites each year. This is designed to provide athletes with a competitive pathway that allows them to progress naturally through their age divisions.

How can someone who placed below me in Prime qualify for this season, when I placed above them and am on an alternate list?

Surfers who are below the 75% of the birth year threshold to qualify for the 2026-27 season, may qualify via a regional organization (WSA, NSSA, ESA). Approximately a number of Prime spots in each age division are reserved for regional organization qualification. *See Table Page 3-4.

Can I compete in both East and West Coast Prime Series events, register for events on the other coast while traveling, or compete in the other coast if I have moved there?

Surfers must qualify through the regional organizations for the Coast in which they will compete. If they qualify for both, they must commit to one (East or West) for the season. This preserves the integrity of our ratings (and qualifying pathways).

How are Prime Series events seeded?

- Event one of the season is based on the qualifying order into the Prime Series with alternates replacing missing surfers receiving the lowest seeds.
- Event two seeding is based on event one results. For those athletes that missed event one, will retain their original seed order only for event two.
- Event three seeding is determined by the combined results of events one and two.
- Event four seeding draws on best two of three event results to determine seed order.

What happens if I get injured, sick, or family bereavement?

A surfer who is unable to compete in a Prime Series Event due to a documented medical condition, injury, or bereavement may request an approved excused absence by submitting to USA Surfing Leadership. Upon approval, the surfer will remain eligible to return to Prime Series competition and will retain their qualification status in accordance with applicable USA Surfing rules and procedures.

How do you determine Alternates for Prime Series? How will you fill openings that may come about due to injuries, illness, or bereavement? Is there an alternate list? What if there are last-minute openings on the beach?

Surfers who do not qualify via season-end rankings will be placed on the **Prime Series alternate list** and may be offered entry if opening spots become available during the season. Regional organizations will also provide additional names based on their rankings.

USA Surfing's alternate list draws on the next qualified surfers in line that come from:

- Prior season Prime Series season surfers who missed requalification.
- Regional organizations' next-in-line qualifiers.

All potential alternates for the 2026-27 Prime Series, will receive an official alternate email invitation confirming they are on the Prime Alternate list.

Alternates will stay in their original seed order for the full year. If an alternate surfs in three East or West events, the surfer's ranking at the end of the year will count towards 2027 Champs and the following Prime Season (2027-28) for qualification.

Every attempt will be made to contact the alternate surfers who are next in line. To maintain the integrity of the qualifying criteria and pathways, we will not replace openings with surfers who are not on the alternate list.

How do you qualify for the USA Surfing Championships at Lowers?

USA Surfing determines the number of heats that can be run each day of Champs at Lowers based upon the days/times provided by State Parks.

- **Champs Qualification for existing Prime Series competitors.** Surfers who finish in the top 50 percent of their age division at the end of the Prime Series season on East and West Coasts earn invitations to compete at USA Surfing Championship at Lowers.
- Space is also made available for each regional association – ESA, WSA, NSSA E&W, HSA, TGSA, NSSA Hawaii.
- Historically ESA has been given 3 slots (1 per region), HSA/NSSA Hawaii received 2-5 slots, and WSA/TGSA/NSSA E&W received 2 slots.
- If there are remaining spots after drawing from these qualifying pathways, more Prime Series surfers below the 50 percent cut line may be added.

- **Regional surfing association qualifiers for Champs:**
 - o **WSA** provides qualifiers based on top 6 events rankings plus WSA Championship results.
 - o **NSSA HI/East/West** draws on final results from their regional championship events that occur at the end of the season. Regular season points do not factor in qualifying.
 - o **ESA** - Top finishers from ESA's three regional competitions.
 - o **HSA** - Top finishers from HSA States.
 - o **TGSA** - Top finishers from Texas State Surfing Championships.

How do you qualify for USA Surfing Junior National and Development Teams?

The 2026/2027 Junior National & Development team qualification criteria are posted [here](#).

What is the mid-season call up opportunity for Prime Series surfers to make the Junior national team through their performances during the new season?

The mid-season nomination can be read on the selection procedures [here](#).

What are the Power Your Performance workshops planned for this year?

USA Surfing is finalizing a schedule of Power Your Performance workshops, which give surfers access to top experts in sport performance, training, nutrition, breathwork and safety for bigger-wave hold down conditions, injury prevention and rehab, sports psychology, working with agents, filmmaking, making more of your wavepool sessions, reading wave conditions with Surfline and more. Stay tuned to the website for this season's Power Your Performance clinics.

The series of Power Your Performance workshops held throughout the year are designed to help surfers develop their skills and prepare for success in and out of the water. If you have suggestions for a topic or expert presenter, please complete this survey. [Power Your Performance Survey](#)

Why does USA Surfing allow surfers who represent other countries to compete in the USA Surfing Prime Series and Championships? Isn't it unfair for them to "double dip" and use these events to give other national teams an advantage?

USA Surfing's [Competition Advisory Committee](#) thoughtfully weighed issues around dual citizenship surfers competing for other nations and its impact on USA Surfing's mission to develop the strongest possible pipeline of American surf talent for international competition, including the Olympics.

Here are the key concerns and arguments in favor of not allowing surfers who compete for other countries to participate in USA Surfing events:

- *Protecting the U.S. pipeline:* The Prime Series and Championships are critical stages in developing American surfers. Allowing competitors who will represent other countries can dilute this mission.
- *Preventing subsidization of other countries' teams:* USA Surfing invests significant resources in event infrastructure, judging standards, coaching feedback, trainings, and high-performance programming. Other nations benefit from this development work without contributing to its costs, while our surfers get no equivalent government support.

- *Encouraging loyalty to the U.S. program:* Many surfers forgo dual-citizenship options out of commitment to Team USA. Sharing limited competitive spots with surfers who keep one foot in and one foot out can feel unfair to those who are all-in.
- *Maintaining fairness:* It's a structural disadvantage if U.S. surfers must compete for limited roster spots while others can use dual citizenship to access both our competitive system and their own country's government support.
- *Professional standards:* Many other sports federations have nationality-based eligibility rules for development pathways. Surfing may need to adopt similar standards, especially with the LA28 Olympics approaching.

We also asked hard questions about fairness and community impact:

How would exclusivity have affected the decisions of past and current champions?

Would this make our program stronger in the long run, or damage relationships with families, clubs, and sponsors?

Could there be a transition period to avoid disrupting surfers' young career paths.

There were compelling arguments against exclusivity that ultimately determined the committee's decision:

- *Competitive quality:* Excluding strong surfers may reduce the depth and level of the field. "Iron sharpens iron"—keeping the bar high prepares our surfers better for ISA and Olympic competition.
- *American roots:* Many of these surfers live here full-time, train at our breaks, attend our schools, and are integral to our local communities—even if they choose to honor family heritage by representing another country.
- *Complex identities:* Surfing is a global sport. Families have multinational ties. We should respect surfers' choices without forcing kids to declare absolute loyalty at young ages.
- *Historical pride:* USA Surfing has a legacy of developing world-class surfers, even those who ultimately represent other nations like Tatiana Weston Webb and Kanoa Igarashi. We can take pride in being the center of global surf development.
- *Community relationships:* Excluding these surfers risks alienating families, clubs, sponsors, and local surf communities who see them as part of our own.

After weighing all these perspectives, the committee decided on a balanced approach:

>> USA Surfing will continue to allow surfers who represent other countries to compete in the Prime Series and Championships.

>> An additional “out-of-country” fee will be implemented for those surfers’ to collect from their national federations or governments to pay to compete in USA Surfing events.

This fee is designed to fairly recognize the substantial value of USA Surfing’s development pathway—funded through member fees, parent payments, sponsors, and donors—and ensure that foreign competitors’ organizations that benefit help cover those costs, much like out-of-state tuition in education.

This solution aims to strike the best balance:

- Preserving the highest possible level of competition to sharpen U.S. talent.
- Respecting our inclusive surf culture and honoring surfers’ complex identities.
- Protecting the integrity of our American development pipeline by asking other countries to help fund what they benefit from.
- Ensuring fairness for U.S. families who pay to support the system.

USA Surfing wants to support the strongest, most surfer-centered program possible, recognizing the responsibility we have to develop competitors prepared to proudly wear the USA jersey on the world stage.

Prior to the first Prime Series event, USA Surfing will require all surfers to declare their nationality. All dual-citizens must declare what nation they vie to represent at ISA. This will be completed as part of your competition registration via Live Heats.

To learn more about ISA Nationality and Change of Nation, further information can be found here: [ISA Change of Nationality FAQ](#)

What is the code of conduct for surfers?

Visit our website – [Code of Conduct for surfers](#)

What is the code of conduct for parents, coaches and athlete support personnel?

Visit our website – [Code of Conduct](#) Parents, Coaches, Athlete Support Personnel

Are all USA Surfing staff, contractors, coaches, leaders and those in contact with minor surfers U.S. Center for SafeSport certified?

Yes. As a condition of membership in USA Surfing and a condition for participation in any competition or event sanctioned by USA Surfing, each USA Surfing member and each surfer, coach, personal coach, trainer, agent, surfer support personnel, medical or para-medical personnel, team staff, official and other person who participates in USA Surfing or USA Surfing events (whether or not a USA Surfing member), agrees to comply with and be bound by the SafeSport rules, policies and procedures of the U.S. Center for SafeSport and to submit, without reservation or condition, to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport for the resolution of any alleged

violations of those rules, policies and procedures, as may be amended from time to time.

Why are Personal Coaches required to adhere to the U.S. Center for Safesport rules?

Please reference the U.S. Center for SafeSport's & Athlete Safety below. Please email Mia Gilkerson at mia@usasurfing.org with your Personal Coaches name and email so she can send the required compliance information. This is a new requirement for the 2026/27 Prime season and it applies at every stop, starting at Steamer Lane. All Personal Coaches, as defined by USA Surfing's Policies, are required to have a "Personal Coach" Membership \$10, current Background Screening \$30, and current Center for SafeSport Training prior to USA Surfing events. There will be no exceptions, and coaches who are not compliant will not be credentialed for the competitor/coach area. Please start this process now – SafeSport training and background screening can take time to clear. **If you do not complete your required training, you will not be permitted to participate or coach during our events.**

Who is on USA Surfing's Board of Directors?

Visit our website - [Board of Directors](#)

How are positions on USA Surfing's Board of Directors determined?

USA Surfing maintains a Nominating and Governance Committee that recruits, vets, and fields candidates for the full board to review and vote on as openings occur. If you would like to be considered or nominate someone, email admin@usasurfing.org and put "Nominating and Governance Committee" in the subject line.

How can I help with USA Surfing and the Prime Series?

USA Surfing is always looking for parents to help support our programs with the Fundraising Committee. We'd love local help connecting with hotels, restaurants, trainers, coaches and other businesses to partner with us. If you would like to help email admin@usasurfing.org.

What kind of merchandise is available for purchase to rep USA Surfing?

Get geared out for the season with our Prime Series merchandise on the online store. We have NEW sweatshirts and hats available from the link below.

[USA Surfing Merch](#)

How do I file a complaint or resolve a dispute?

Visit [Complaints](#) on our website and/or email CEO gregh@usasurfing.org

