

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** [GSAF 1996.10.03.a](#)

**DATE:** Thursday October 3, 1996

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at North Salmon Creek Beach, near Bodega Bay, Sonoma County, California, USA. 38°21.9'N; 123°04.5'W.

**NAME:** Kennon Cahill

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 31-year-old male. He was dressed in a full-body, hooded black neoprene wetsuit with booties.

**SURFBOARD:** A two-metre white surfboard

### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The sky was overcast and foggy, and the air temperature was about 12°C. At 07h59, Bodega Bay recorded an overcast sky and visibility of 0.8 miles [1.2 km]. The air temperature was 51.8 F [11 C], dew point 51.8 F [11.0 C], humidity 100%, sea level pressure 30.05 inches [1017.5 hPa], and no wind.

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 60% of the moon was illuminated.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water temperature was also about 12°C. The ocean was "glassy smooth," with a rhythmic groundswell of less than a meter and underwater visibility of 5 to 6 meters.

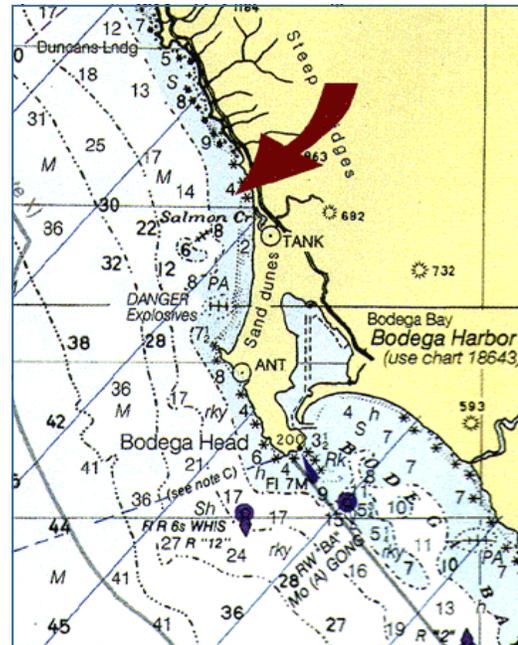
**ENVIRONMENT:** At the incident site the ocean floor is generally sandy, with a few scattered rocks but no dominant kelps. A channel runs from the creek out toward the open sea, then turns parallel to the shoreline for several hundred meters.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 125 to 150 metres.

**TIME:** 07h20

**NARRATIVE:** Cahill and his companion, Brendon Guinn, were surfing together. Relative to Guinn, Cahill was 6 to 10 meters farther out to sea and 15 meters farther north. Guinn checked his watch to confirm that he would not be late for work. It was 07h19 hours when Guinn turned to the north to tell Cahill he was heading in. Cahill's board was pointed toward Guinn when he saw, on the shoreward side of his companion's board, a dorsal fin protruding from the water at least 45 centimeters, and only one metre from the board. The fin tipped slowly over, away from the board, to an angle of 45 degrees. It appeared to Guinn as though the shark had rolled to better observe Cahill.

Guinn recalled what happened next: "Cahill, as if in a trance, had crouched on his board and was reaching out with his left hand, like he was going to try and grab the shark's fin. It only took a second or two before Cahill drew his arm back in to his chest and let out a loud groan, as his board rocked back and forth. The shark reacted almost immediately by rolling toward Cahill as it came out of the water like a nuclear submarine. Cahill started yelling, 'Shark! Shark!' as the shark thrashed its tail back and forth four or five times, striking the surfboard at least two or three times with its head. Then it appeared that Cahill was trying to ride his board over the shark's back toward the beach. I turned and started paddling toward



shore." While heading in, Guinn turned to his left to try to locate his companion. Cahill suddenly passed him, riding his board all the way through the surf until it ran aground in shallow water. Witnesses on the beach said the shark followed Cahill to within 30 meters of the beach as it repeatedly tried to strike his board.

**INJURY:** Neither Kennon Cahill nor Brendon Guinn suffered any physical injury, although Park Ranger Michael Wisheart said, "Both surfers were badly shaken by the experience." This was the second incident at this location.

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a five-metre white shark.

**SOURCE:** Shark Research Committee, [http://www.sharkresearchcommittee.com/unprovoked\\_surfer.htm](http://www.sharkresearchcommittee.com/unprovoked_surfer.htm)

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier