

# Vela

## Marine Weather Application



A large, powerful blue wave is crashing, with white foam and spray visible. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. In the background, a dark, forested hillside is visible. The overall scene is dynamic and energetic.

# Problem Statement

# Problem Statement

## Possible Problems:

- Difficult to locate all data on marine weather within one app.
- Not easy to pick the right NOAA weather report.
- Weather reports are long blocks of text and difficult to skim.
- Conflicting forecasts across apps.
- Lack of hyperlocal information such as beach closures and marine hazards.

## Problem Statement:

Our water sport enthusiast users need a single source of marine weather related information in order to research, locate, and engage with local community members in order to plan a great day on the water. We will know this to be true when we see our users begin interacting with one another while also providing the most up to date and accurate weather information available.

## Potential Solution:

Vela will be an app that provides easy to understand marine weather data at a glance. The app will source local users feedback to validate forecasting accuracy while also helping the users to research new locations to explore. The user interface will be easy to navigate, and simple to personalize.

A scenic photograph of a beach at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. In the foreground, a surfboard with a prominent blue fin lies on the sand. The ocean waves are visible in the distance, and a dark, silhouetted cliff is on the left side of the frame. The text 'Competitive Analysis' is centered in a white box with a thin black border.

# Competitive Analysis

# Objective

Begin to identify competitors using the three questions below:

- What are they selling?
- What are they communicating through their product?
- What are they missing in their messaging, product, and overall offering?

Create a competitor profile for two competitors to include:

- Overview
- Marketing Profile
- SWOT analysis

Complete a UX competitive analysis on one of the competitors identifying:

- Usability, Layout, Navigation Structure, Compatibility, Differentiation, and calls to Action.

# Overview

Looking at Vela's competitors

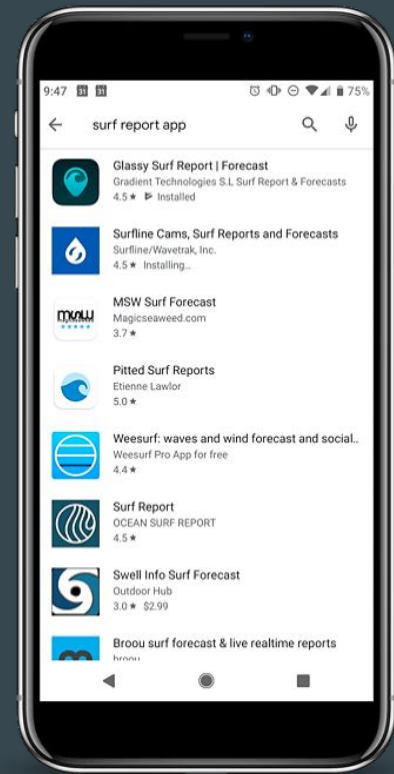
Our outdoor app is going to serve those who love water sports by providing the most current and accurate marine forecasts available. Therefore we are looking for competitors that provide weather tailored to different water sports to help identify what information our users may be looking for. We will learn more about our customers needs during potential user interviews soon.

## Search Criteria

Using water sport activities for keyword searches in the Google Play store I located 11 apps that provided various amounts of marine weather information.

Key word searches included:

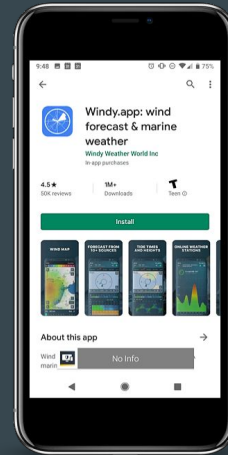
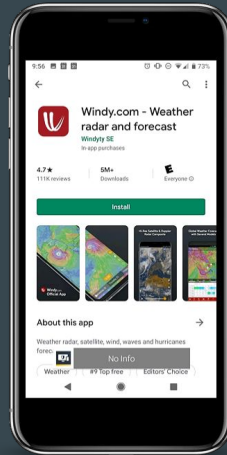
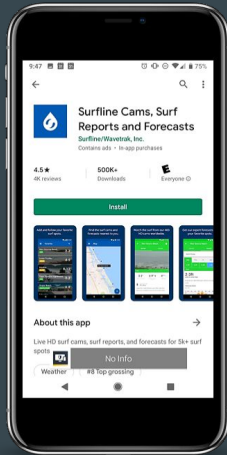
- Surf Report App
- Marine Weather Forecast
- Sailing Weather App



# Identifying Competitors

The thought is that apps that only provide static text information would not be easily understood by a novice, and that an interactive experience would keep the user engaged. The app should also provide maps to let a user look at a specific area they might be familiar with.

After a brief tour of each app, I narrowed the review group down to four competitors that offered more detailed maps and intuitive navigation tailored to a specific water sport. Based on the criteria above we will be reviewing Surflines and Windy.app for Vela's competitor analysis.



# Surfline

## Key Objectives

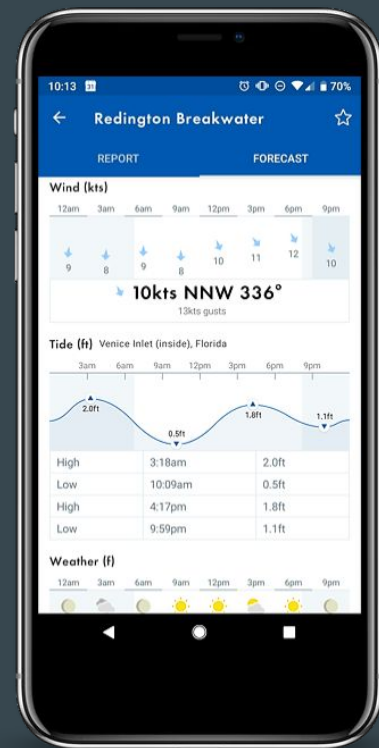
“Check the ocean from wherever you are”. Surfline stands out as the app of choice for the surfing community.

- Providing surfing forecasts since 1985
- 500+ live surf cams
- Both daily and long range surf reports

## Overall Strategy

The Surfline app is currently showing a 4 ½ star rating with ~4,800 reviews. Google searches show the company maintains their FaceBook (~712K likes), Twitter (~185K followers), and YouTube (~115K subscribers) accounts with frequent updates. They are posting more than just weather forecasts, SurfLine seems to be part of the surfing culture to include posting tips from pro surfers as well as competition news. They also send frequent emails that include product news and tutorials on the more popular features.

- Proprietary wave forecasting system
- Active social media
- Positioned as an expert with over 30 years of experience
- Ingrained in the culture and active in the community they serve
- Sell ad space for surfing related items/ services (4M unique users per month)





# Surfline

## Market Advantage

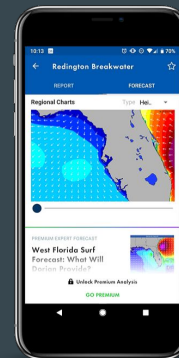
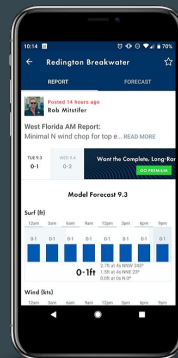
The website is currently showing as the forth result when searching Google for “Surfing Forecast”. They have over 500 live surf cams, and have a new service called Surfline Sessions. This free service allows you to record your surfing session on any of these cams and deliver the video directly to your Iphone.

- Has been a trusted source for over 30 years
- Endorsed by pro surfers and the world surfing league
- Founder named as one of the 25 most influential surfers of the century

## Marketing Profile

Surfline provides news updates related to weather events and competition results. This also allows them to market new or premium services to users on a regular basis without seeming to pushy.

- Entrenched in the user community
- Cross marketing with appeal and surfing equipment companies



## Analyze Your Session Data.

Surfline Sessions provides GPS-driven insights including waves ridden, top speed attained, and the length of your longest ride — in both feet and seconds.

**12**  
WAVES

TOP SPEED

**21mph**

LONGEST RIDE

**301ft**

**FAIR TO GOOD**

**3-5ft**  
SWELL HEIGHT

**1.2ft**  
TIDE

**3kts**  
WIND



# Surfline SWOT

## Strengths

- Strong values align with the community they serve
- Established in the industry
- Proprietary forecasting model
- Employees all share a love of the water as well
- Surfline Sessions. It's pretty cool.

## Opportunities

- Create clear separation in types of content on the website.
- Promote premium features and CTA's in a way that doesn't look like just another third party ad.
- Increase premium membership and remove unrelated ads.

## Weaknesses

- They provide a lot of information to wade through. It's easy to get lost.
- Premium subscriptions start at \$7.99 per month with what looks like limited benefits
- Large banner ads are the first thing you see on the website.
- Website is very busy.

## Threats

- There are other sites/ apps that provide a lot of the same information and resources.
- Competitors can leverage their network of surf cams to create a similar product to Surfline Sessions.

# Windy.com

## Key Objectives

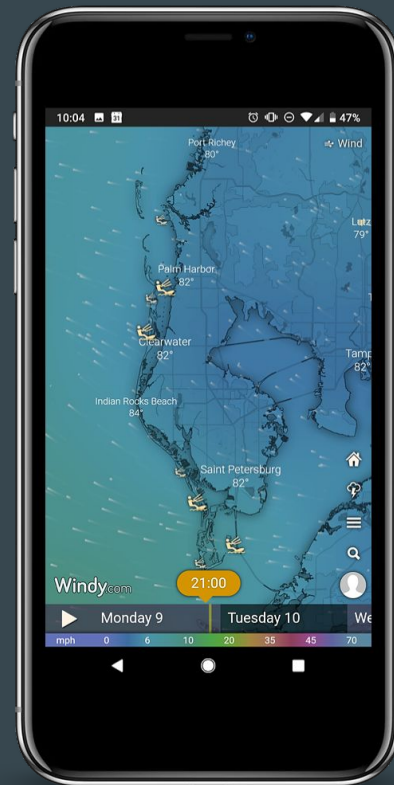
“Here in Windy, we believe, that people should have access to the best weather information available. It can save their life.” and “We also pay for the most expensive forecast data available, just to give them away for free.’ are main objectives listed on their website.

- Provide the best service because it’s the right thing to do.
- User satisfaction over profit.

## Overall Strategy

The Windy.com team are very active on social media. They currently have ~321K followers on FaceBook, and another ~21K followers on Twitter. There is a blog and community on the website including a post from July that received ~116K views promoting a new map layer.

- Active community promoting product.
- Funded by donations only.



# Windy.com

## Market Advantage

Windy.com was the first result when I did a google search for “Wind weather map”. Currently showing a 4.7 star review and 5M+ downloads from the Google Play Store. The Apple Store shows a 4.8 star rating. These states and the fact that it is completely free give Wndy.com a great market advantage.

- Free
- Cool wind animations
- Tailored experience to your watersport
- Trusted forecast model

## Marketing Profile

Windy.com began in 2014 as a hobby that grew into a small company. By creating a great product and a very active community of users and developers the company has been able to solicit donations. Currently they are reporting that 32K users have donated more than \$317K to support the app.

- Provide a great service for free
- Community groups for just about anyone who enjoys a day on the water.
- Supported entirely by donations showing that their users truly value the product.



# Windy.com SWOT

## Strengths

- Strong Community
- Cool animations
- 4.7 Star reviews
- Free

## Opportunities

- Make the menu icons a bit larger and easier to tap
- Update the UI in the forums

## Weaknesses

- High level options for weather overlays are easy to find, but advanced filters are a little buried.
- Blog/ forum is bare bones and less appealing than you would think based on the experience using the app.

## Threats

- Since the app and access to the online community is free they could be missing out on revenue needed to keep up with more expensive apps.

A low-angle shot of a sailboat's white sails against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The sun is visible behind the sails, creating a lens flare effect. The sails are taut and show the rigging lines.

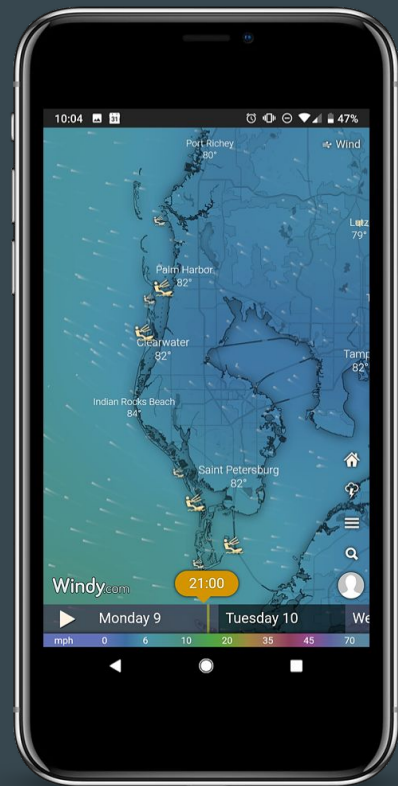
# Windy.com UX Analysis

# Usability

Honestly, Windy.com is a pretty cool weather app. The wind and lightning animations are fantastic for showing a user what is happening with weather.

The overall experience in the app feels polished, and allows you to focus on key aspects of the forecast that matter to your area and watersport.

The app functions smoothly, and translates the technical weather data into a visual representation that is easy understood.



# Layout

Windy.com's app layout is all centered around the weather map. The menus and timelapse slider are positioned in the lower right corner to reduce any obstruction to the view of the map.

The home screen displays the current weather along with a four day forecast overlay along the top of the screen.





# Navigation Structure

You navigate through the Windy.com app just as any other map, by sliding a finger around to locate the desired area.

There are five icons in the navigation bar to include a hamburger icon that opens the slide in menu from the right. There you can scroll through various settings and access advanced settings.

Clicking on a city will open a forecast panel displaying weather data for that location.

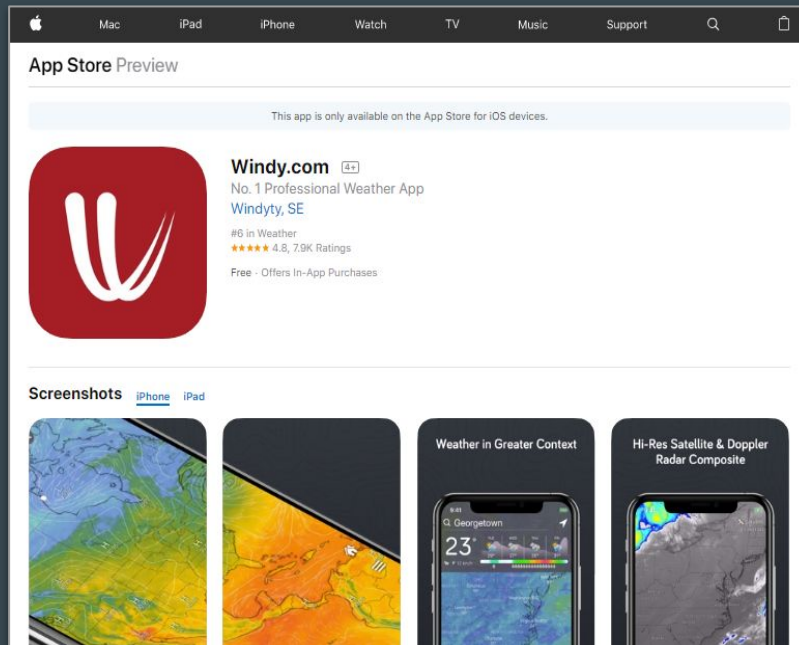
Navigation is fluid and optimized for right handed users. There is a minimal amount of far reaches.



# Compatibility

Windy.com is currently available on the following platforms:

- Android
- Web
- Iphone
- Ipad

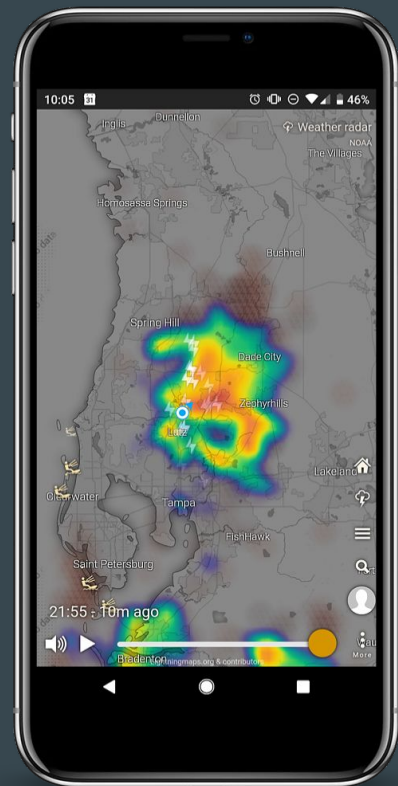


# Differentiation

Windy.com sets itself apart by offering a quality product for free.

Operated by a small company you can see that they have a high attention to detail. They appear to respond to comments and feedback in their forum, and post frequently on social media.

The key feature is by far the map. The wind and lightning animations and sound effects are cool to watch. There is easy access to additional data for locations that also allow you to switch the focus on watersports at anytime.



# Calls to Action

There are the normal prompts to log in at the top of the menu. Sometimes a banner displays showing the current goal status of the companies fundraising goal.

The website also shows a small link asking for donations, however you can access all content without even giving them an email address.



A person is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky, riding a wave. The water is a deep teal color, and the sky transitions from a soft pink to a bright yellow near the sun. The overall mood is serene and adventurous.

# Business Requirements

# Executive Summary

## Target Audience

Vela will be designed to provide weather forecasting and maps targeted to potential users that are very active in watersports. Activities can include boating, SCUBA Diving, windsurfing, kayaking, etc.

The age range of users will be 18 - 80 years of age. Since Vela will appeal to a variety of water sport enthusiasts, it will be just as valuable to a young surfer looking for their next set and a retired sailor planning a long trip offshore for the weekend. We will restrict those under the age of 18 from creating an account to avoid the collection of minor personal data without parental consent.

# Executive Summary

## Competition

There is quite a bit of competition between both paid and free weather apps across devices. Besides the big-name weather sites like The Weather Channel, we will also be competing with just about every news channel out there. Direct competitors will include more water sports specific apps/ sites such as Surf Line that provide weather information tailored to one sport.

# Executive Summary

## Risk/ Opportunities

There are some players in this space that have been providing marine forecasting services since before the internet, and the combination of experience and brand awareness will be our main threat.

There are several lesser-known apps that provide similar services, however, our opportunity lies in how we can combine forecasting information and location data to help users find areas to enjoy their sport that they may not be aware of.



# Executive Summary

## Conclusions

Vela can stand out among our competition by offering an easy to navigate and intuitive design allowing users to locate weather data that is meaningful to their sport of choice. Functionality that personalizes the user's experience and encourages them to explore previously unknown areas could create long term users. Marketing should focus on these features as differentiators in the marketplace, and promote them in a way that demonstrates their value to our new customers.

# S.M.A.R.T. Business Objectives

Create a minimum viable product focusing on one watersport that can be tested in a highly active year-round marketplace such as Florida.

- Measured by - Pushing a working MVP to the App Store.
- Deliverable by - 3 months

Recruit a minimum of 2,000 active users within the first three months of launch.

- Measured by - Combination of downloads and user activity reporting.
- Deliverable by - 90 days after product launch.

Add functionality to support one additional watersport.

- Measured by - Pushing updates to the app store and current users successfully.
- Delivered by - 6 months post app go live.

# Scope of Work

The weather application Vela will consist of the following basic pieces:

- A working application that includes all functional requirements listed in the applicable section below.
- A back end database sufficient in storing user profile information and supporting detailed data collection for analysis.
- Product Website with landing page to support the application and assist in converting visitors to new users.
- Marketing plan
- Social media promotion.
- Blog/ SEO/ Content marketing strategy.
- Endorsements from prominent water sports athletes.
- Email distribution.
- Reporting
  - Reporting dashboard to highlight user interaction and application performance data to include:
  - User demographics
  - Heatmap of user locations
  - Most used features
  - Watersports selected.
  - Locations searched
  - Error reporting
- Weather forecasting model
  - Identify and integrate with an existing open-source predictive model with good track record for accuracy.
  - Develop a proprietary weather forecasting model capable of accurate marine weather forecasts tailored to Vela's user base.
- Customer support structure.

# Functional Requirements

Below consists of the minimum overall requirements for Vela:

- Splash screen with the Vela logo.
- Login/ sign up process.
- To include social media options.
- Onboarding process/ flow for new users.
- User profile area.
- App navigation.
- Menu including settings.
- Location search function.
- Primary watersport selection.
- Realtime and forecast display of wind, wave, rain, algae, and other weather conditions.
- Recommendations on how users can stay safe.

# Delivery Schedule

<p>Sprint 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Competitive analysis</li><li>• User interviews</li><li>• Register domain name/ secure web hosting</li></ul>	<p>Sprint 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• User stories</li><li>• Information architecture</li><li>• Begin logo design</li><li>• Begin coding database</li></ul>	<p>Sprint 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low-fidelity prototypes</li><li>• Basic application structure</li><li>• User testing</li></ul>
<p>Sprint 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High-fidelity prototypes</li><li>• Start to code website</li><li>• Finalize logo design</li><li>• User testing</li><li>• Database complete</li></ul>	<p>Sprint 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• working prototype</li><li>• Begin writing a series of blog articles</li><li>• Set up social media accounts</li><li>• User testing</li><li>• Begin building report dashboard</li></ul>	<p>Sprint 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The production-ready version of Vela is completed</li><li>• Website complete</li><li>• App and website QA</li><li>• Complete report dashboard</li></ul>
	<p>Sprint 7 (Go Live)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Push app to production</li><li>• Go live with the website</li><li>• Post blog articles</li><li>• Begin social media campaign</li></ul>	

A dramatic photograph of a sailboat on a dark, choppy sea under a heavy, cloudy sky. The sailboat is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with its sails partially visible. The water is dark blue with white foam from the waves. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, suggesting an approaching storm or late evening light. The overall mood is somber and adventurous.

# User Stories

# Login/ Sign up Process

- As a user, I want a simple sign up process, so that I can begin using the app quickly.
- As a user, I want to be required to choose a strong password, so that my data is kept safe.
- As a business owner, I want to gather contact information of my users, so that I can let them know about new feature and upcoming sale events.

# Onboarding Process/ Flow

- As a new user, I want to be shown simple instructions when I log in the first time, so that I can become familiar with the app.
- As a business owner, I want to highlight my app's features to new customers, so that I can increase user retention.



# User Profile Area

- As a user, I want to view and edit my account information, so that I can ensure it is correct.
- As a subscriber, I want an easy process to update my credit card information, so that I don't lose access to premium features.
- As a potential subscriber, I want to easily locate information on premium features and pricing, so I can make a educated decision on if I should sign up.

# App Navigation

- As a user, I want an easy to locate back button, so I can easily navigate the app.
- As a user, I want a minimal navigation bar, so that I can view the map without obstructions.
- As a new user, I want easy to recognize icons, so that I can easily navigate the app.

# Menu Including Settings

- As a user, I want an easy to access menu, so that I can access my profile and settings.
- As a user, I want to easily locate the settings, so that I can customize my experience with the app.
- As a user, I want the menu to be large when opened, so that I can see all the options without scrolling.
- As a user, I want to see icons or descriptions of good size, so that I can click on them with minimal mistakes.
- As a user, I want to understand what all the options are in the menu, so that I can locate the features I want to use.

# Location Search Function

- As a user, I want a search function that pre-populates options as I type them, so that I can quickly choose the location I'm searching for.
- As a user, I want a search function that displays the distance from my current location, so that I know how far I will have to travel.
- As a user, I want to see suggested locations based on water sport, so that I can find new locations to enjoy.
- As a user, I want to see a quick snippet of information on the location I select, so that I get a general idea about the area
- As a user, I want to be able to save my favorite locations, so that I can easily access them at a later time.

# Primary Watersport Selection

- As a user, I want an option to select the watersports that I participate in, so that the weather data displayed is applicable to me.
- As a user, I want to select a primary watersport, so that the weather data provided defaults to my preferences.
- As a user, I want to only see data related to my watersport, so that I don't get confused on what is important to see.
- As a user, I want to be able to toggle between watersports, so that I can customize my experience as I see fit.

# Realtime and Future Weather Forecasting

- As a user, I want to see real time weather information around me, so that I can be up to date on the weather.
- As a user, I want to have access to accurate forecasting tailored to my watersport, so that I can plan trips well in advance.
- As a business owner, I want a proprietary weather forecast model, so that I can monetize the app by providing extremely accurate weather information with a subscription model.

# Recommendations on Safety

- As a user, I want to see occasional safety tips, so I can increase my awareness and remain as safe as possible.
- As an ethical business owner, I want to promote safe and sustainable practices that increase the safety of my customers, so that my customers can truly enjoy their time in the water.

# Reporting

- As a business owner, I want to have access to data showing how many active users I have, so that I can ensure the app can function correctly.
- As a business owner, I want to know how many active subscribers I have, so that I can estimate monthly income.
- As a business owner, I want to see which features my customers use the most, so that I can plan for future enhancements based on what they need.



Thanks!

