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GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND

Wednesday, February 15, 2017
2:45 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 414

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 1240
RELATING TO AQUATIC LIFE

SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

KEKOA KALUHIWA
FIRST DEPUTY

JEFFREY T. PEARSON P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Senate Bill 1240 proposes to place a moratorium on aquarium fish permits until a definition of sustainable and sustainable practices and limits are proposed to the legislature and enacted. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of this measure to sustainably manage marine resources and offers the following comments. Further, the Department strongly opposes one provision of this measure and offers an amendment.**

The Department has required commercial aquarium collectors to report monthly fishing effort information under Section 189-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), for over forty years. The Department has also collected extensive underwater visual survey data on the status of reef fishes along the Kona Coast of West Hawai'i Island for over fifteen years. A report of these surveys was submitted to the 2015 Legislature in compliance with Section 188F-5, HRS. The data indicates that the aquarium fishery is currently operating at a level that does not indicate significant population declines or major shifts in species diversity in areas where collecting is occurring.

The West Hawai'i Aquarium Project (WHAP) has been monitoring West Hawai'i reefs since 1999 and a number of long-term studies extend over multiple decades. Over 16 years of monitoring, a total of 70 survey divers have conducted over 6,700 transects for the WHAP project in addition to hundreds of other surveys for related projects. Fifteen years after closure, the population of Yellow Tang has increased 64.5% in the closed areas while its abundance in the open areas has not declined significantly. Overall Yellow Tang abundance in the 30'-60' depth range over the entire West Hawai'i coast has increased 58% (over 1.3 million fish) from 1999/2000 to 2012-2013 to a current population of 3.6 million fish.