

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



LORETTA J. FUDDY, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
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In reply, please refer to:
File:

House Committee of Agriculture

House Committee of Energy & Environmental Protection

**HCR 238, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO FULLY
SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE
INDUSTRY AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM
FOR SHELLFISH GROWING AREAS**

**Testimony of Loretta J. Fuddy, A.C.S.W., M.P.H.
Director of Health**

**April 1, 2011
10:00am**

- 1 **Department's Position:** The Department supports the resolution.
- 2 **Fiscal Implications:** Although the Department supports this measure, should the shellfish aquaculture
- 3 industry grow beyond this initial venture, the Food and Drug Branch and the State Laboratories Division
- 4 will require additional personnel and equipment to properly ensure shellfish products are appropriately
- 5 grown, harvested, processed, stored and distributed, and that all State food safety regulations are met.
- 6 **Purpose and Justification:** The resolution requests the Department to support the development of the
- 7 shellfish aquaculture industry. The Department is currently working very closely with industry and its
- 8 stakeholders to implement a statewide shellfish industry. The Department recently met with members of
- 9 academia and industry members to discuss the Department's proposed goals and timeline of the shellfish
- 10 program. We estimate by the end of 2011, the State Laboratory should be certified by the U.S. Food and
- 11 Drug Administration (FDA) to receive and process water quality samples. And also by the end of 2011,

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1 the Food and Drug Branch, in conjunction with FDA, should be able to start the certification process of
2 a shellfish growing area.

3 Thank you for this opportunity to testify.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Agriculture
and the
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
April 1, 2011 10:00 a.m.

by
Dr. Maria Haws
Assistant Professor of Aquaculture, CAFNRM, UH Hilo &
Aquaculture Extension Agent, University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College
and
Dr. Robert Howerton
Aquaculture Extension Specialist, University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College

HCR 238 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO FULLY SUPPORT THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY AND IMPLEMENT
A STATEWIDE CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM FOR SHELLFISH GROWING AREAS

Aloha Chairs Tsuji, Coffman, Vice Chair Hashem and Members of the Committees,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. The University of Hawai'i strongly supports HCR 238 as a Statewide Classification Program for Shellfish Growing Areas is critical to the development of a sustainable shellfish industry in Hawai'i.

Farming of shellfish such as oysters, clams and scallops is one of the simplest and most environmentally sustainable forms of food production. Hawai'i is the only coastal state in the U.S. where shellfish cannot be farmed and sold. This is entirely due to the lack of full implementation of the existing State Shellfish Sanitation Plan. If shellfish farming were to become possible in Hawai'i, it would reduce our dependence on imported seafood, offer opportunities for profitable "mom and pop" shellfish farms and provide a way for traditional Hawaiian fishponds to become fully productive.

Hawai'i has had several successful shellfish farms in the past, but these went out of business over 20 years ago. Due to the lack of a fully implemented State Shellfish Sanitation Plan, no new businesses have been started since then, and our shellfish industry essentially disappeared from memory, except for two large hatcheries located at NELHA in Kailua-Kona, and another on Kaua'i. Ironically, although these hatcheries are among the largest in the U.S., none of the shellfish seed they produce can legally be grown out and sold in Hawai'i because the shellfish sanitation plan has not been fully implemented.

For the last 12 years, we have conducted research in Hawai'i to establish the biological and commercial feasibility of shellfish aquaculture in Hawai'i as interest and shellfish farming has re-emerged. We have also developed a Hawaiian species of oyster for production, which offers an unique and tasty product for Hawai'i farmers.

Our research results indicate that farming shellfish such as clams and oysters is biologically

feasible in Hawai`i, with the traditional Hawaiian fish ponds being excellent farming sites for shellfish. Oysters in particular have shown high growth rates and we have obtained market sized oysters of 2-3 inches in six months, as compared to the Mainland U.S. where this takes 2-3 years. Additionally, oysters grown in ponds and at a shrimp farm on O`ahu, Moloka`i and Hawai`i Island have excellent taste and texture.

At the same time we have been working to demonstrate the feasibility of oyster culture in Hawai`i, world events have conspired to make shellfish farming less viable in other areas of the world. Disease has seriously affected production on the East Coast, France and China, which are major shellfish growing areas. Hurricanes and the BP oil spill have affected the Gulf Coast. The NW industry is suffering from ocean acidification and limited availability of growing areas. The Japanese industry has been devastated by the recent tsunami and nuclear issues. Hence, this is a opportune moment for Hawai`i producers to compete on the U.S. and international markets by offering a clean, high quality product that bears the "produced in Hawai`i" label.

There is a high level of interest among the public and potential shellfish farmers to start new farms. The Shellfish Working Group, comprised of researchers, potential farmers, agency representatives and managers of Hawaiian fish ponds, has been in dialogue with DOH personnel for over two years in trying to fully implementing the State Shellfish Sanitation Plan so that shellfish farms can be established in Hawai`i. The DOH personnel have been highly cooperative and helpful, and we are optimistic that DOH can move forward with full implementation of the plan. Moreover, since every other coastal state in the U.S. engages in classification of shellfish growing grounds, successful models exist which DOH can readily follow. Passing HCR 238 will express support for DOH to fully achieve their legal mandate to oversee implementation of the Shellfish Sanitation Plan.

If DOH is able to move forward and begin fully implement the existing State Shellfish Sanitation Plan, Hawai`i farmers could be selling oysters locally and exporting product by the end of 2012. Given our current economic crisis, this is one way in which environmentally sustainable small business development can be achieved with minimal effort on behalf of one State Agency.

Thank you for your support.



Hawaii Farm Bureau

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APRIL 1, 2011

JOINT HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Conference Room 312

10:00 am

Chairs Tsuji and Coffman; Vice-Chairs Hashem; and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation supports HCR 238, which requests the Hawaii Department of Health to fully support the development of the shellfish aquaculture industry and to implement a statewide classification program for shellfish growing areas. There are several individuals and businesses that are actively interested in establishing shellfish culture operations in Hawaii, but who cannot do so at present because of the absence of a state-sponsored, FDA-certified shellfish sanitation program. Anyone who wishes to grow bivalve shellfish for human consumption is required under Federal law to obtain certification through such a program for their shellfish and the growing waters, but Hawaii does not now have an active program.

Bivalve shellfish culture could be done in land-based facilities for its own sake, or in combination with other organisms such as shrimp whose effluent waters are often rich in algae on which shellfish thrive. There is also considerable interest in shellfish culture as a component of the revival of aquaculture in Hawaiian fishponds. The continuing strong sales of Kona-grown abalone (not subject to the same FDA regulations, because abalone is not a bivalve) in local farmers' markets indicates that there is a demand for fresh, Hawaii-grown shellfish among local residents and visitors.

We understand that the Department of Health has shown interest in establishing an FDA-approved shellfish sanitation program, and is working with industry representatives towards this goal. We commend the Health Department for these efforts, and hope that SCR 125 will provide additional impetus towards this worthy goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



THE HOUSE
THE TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2011

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Rep. Clift Tsuji, Chair
Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Rep. Denny Coffman, Acting Chair

HEARING DATE: Friday, April 1, 2011
TIME: 10:00am
PLACE: Conference Room 312, State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Subject: Testimony in Strong Support of HCR 238 Requesting the DOH to Fully Support the Development of the Shellfish Aquaculture Industry and Implement a Statewide Classification Program for Shellfish Growing Areas

Chair Tsuji, Acting Chair Coffman, Vice Chair Hashem, and Committee Members:

The Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association (HAAA) strongly supports HCR 238 requesting the DOH to fully support the development of a shellfish aquaculture industry in Hawaii, and to implement a Statewide Classification Program for shellfish growing areas to enable locally-grown shellfish to be legally sold in Hawaii for consumption.

At present the DOH has a certification program for imported shellfish but not for locally grown shellfish. Locally grown shellfish are presently exported as juveniles to West Coast sites for growout and then shipped back to Hawaii for local sale. This results in less revenues for Hawaii's shellfish growers, higher retail prices for Hawaii's consumers due to the double air cargo costs of shipping these shellfish back and forth across the Pacific, and lost economic and employment opportunities and taxes for the State of Hawaii.

The lack of a Statewide Classification Program for shellfish growing areas has been a roadblock to establishing a shellfish aquaculture industry in Hawaii for decades, with Hawaii being the only coastal State in the United States without such a program.

Fortunately, more progress has been made in the past several years than in the prior thirty years due to the much appreciated efforts of a few dedicated DOH staff members. What is needed now is the commitment of DOH management to see this effort through to an expeditious conclusion so that existing shellfish farmers can ramp up their production and fast track this promising new Hawaii aquaculture industry segment.

The HAAA believes that HCR238 provides the means to help make this important economic opportunity a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Ronald P. Weidenbach
HAAA President

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2011

Committee on Agriculture
Rep. Clift Tsuji, Chair
Rep. Mark J. Hashem, Vice Chair

Committee on Energy & Environment Protection
Rep. Denny Coffman, Acting Chair

HEARING DATE: Friday, April 1, 2011

TIME: 10 am

PLACE: Conference Room 312, State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

RE: HCR238 Requesting the Department of Health to fully support the development of the shellfish aquaculture industry and implement a statewide classification program for shellfish growing areas.

Chairs Tsuji and Coffman, Vice Chair Hashem, Committee Members, my name is Michael Buchal and I wish to offer my strong support for HCR 238. I have been involved in the shellfish industry, research and commercial production, for over 15 years and believe that this industry will grow and benefit the State of Hawaii if better supported by the DOH.

The longstanding absence of a DOH certification program for locally grown shellfish has limited development to the shellfish aquaculture industry in Hawaii. There is a need to develop sustainable food production and reduce Hawaii's reliance on imported foods. In terms of protein production, shellfish aquaculture is environmentally friendly and energy efficient (shellfish are low on the food chain). Hawaii is a highly desirable location for shellfish growing: high levels of solar irradiance year-round providing energy for growing algae, facilities such as NELHA provide access to seawater and land for research and nursery production, and extensive coastal areas are suitable for in water production.

This gap in certification capacity (DOH can certify imported shellfish but NOT locally grown shellfish) limits Hawaii's ability to pursue local sustainable food production and creates a model wherein shellfish seedstock produced in Hawaii must be exported to the mainland for on growing, and then shipped back to Hawaii for local sale. In addition to being inefficient, this production cycle results in less control of our food production and lost economic and employment opportunities locally.

State DOH support of shellfish aquaculture is reasonable and necessary. Hawaii is the only coastal state that does not have a certification program in place for local shellfish production. While DOH has made much progress in last few years towards this goal, this

matter needs to be brought to conclusion so that existing shellfish producers can increase production for local markets. In supporting this certification program through HCR 238 the State of Hawaii gains the ability to produce food locally and stimulates the local economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HCR 238.

Sincerely,

Michael Buchal, MSc.
POB 7046
Kamuela, HI 96743