
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

DESIGNATING HAWAII'S CORAL REEFS AS CRITICAL NATURAL
INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRONGLY SUPPORTING NATURE-BASED
SOLUTIONS SUCH AS CORAL REEF RESTORATION FOR RISK
REDUCTION.

1 WHEREAS, the islands of the State include environmental
2 resources such as coral reefs that, if healthy, effectively
3 managed, and functioning, can help mitigate the risks and
4 related loss and damage from floods and the effects of climate
5 change and natural disasters; and

6
7 WHEREAS, studies have shown that healthy coral reefs can
8 absorb up to ninety-seven percent of wave energy, protecting
9 coastal properties from the power of the sea by reducing wave
10 energy, trapping sediments, and attenuating storm surge, and one
11 study has estimated that Hawaii's coral reefs protect
12 \$836,000,000 worth of coastal infrastructure from flooding
13 annually; and

14
15 WHEREAS, in addition to coastal protection, Hawaii's coral
16 reefs provide residents with income from fishing and tourism,
17 food security, recreational opportunities, and a cultural
18 connection to their island home; and

19
20 WHEREAS, ten million visitors travel to the State annually
21 to experience the beauty of its beaches, reefs, oceans, and
22 other natural resources, and in doing so contribute nearly
23 \$17,000,000,000 to our state economy annually; and

24
25 WHEREAS, the State's coastal areas and infrastructure face
26 climate change-related risks and disaster events, including
27 exposure to storms, high wave events, sea level rise, and
28 flooding, and climate scientists and other experts predict an
29 increase in the number and severity of hurricanes, higher levels



1 of rainfall in fewer storm events, increasing sea surface
2 temperatures, and increased ocean acidification, which will
3 negatively impact coral reefs; and

4
5 WHEREAS, the health and sustainability of the State's
6 communities and economy are closely intertwined with the health
7 of our coral reefs but are being threatened by global stressors
8 related to climate change, such as sea level rise, as well as
9 coral bleaching and ocean acidification; and by local stressors
10 from land-based sources of pollution, unsustainable fishing
11 practices, and invasive species; and

12
13 WHEREAS, coastal ecosystems, such as coral reefs, that
14 serve as a first line of defense are being lost at alarming
15 rates; and

16
17 WHEREAS, live coral cover has declined by as much as forty
18 percent in some areas, and Hawaii has experienced three coral
19 bleaching events in the past ten years, including the first
20 statewide mass bleaching event in 2015; and

21
22 WHEREAS, storms impact national and local economic
23 productivity, threaten water and food security, increase
24 diseases, damage critical public infrastructure, and impede
25 basic services; and

26
27 WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is
28 responsible for responding to natural disasters and providing
29 technical and financial hazard mitigation support, and this
30 support is primarily distributed as grant funding through the
31 Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation
32 Assistance programs; and

33
34 WHEREAS, there is growing interest in the use of coral
35 restoration for hazard mitigation action to reduce risks to
36 people and property; and

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38 WHEREAS, coral reef restoration for risk reduction is an
39 active restoration strategy with the aim of increasing the
40 structural integrity and complexity of coral reef ecosystems to
41 attenuate wave energy and reduce coastal flooding; and



H.C.R. NO. 80

1 WHEREAS, a recent report by The Nature Conservancy
2 concluded that coral reef restoration for risk reduction is a
3 cost-effective hazard mitigation strategy in Hawaii; and
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5 WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency provides
6 financial assistance to all states, territories, and federally
7 recognized tribal governments of the United States through its
8 Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs, including its Building
9 Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program; and
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11 WHEREAS, legislative recognition of coral reefs as critical
12 natural infrastructure demonstrates political support for
13 nature-based solutions, and the level of a State's political
14 support is an important metric when the Federal Emergency
15 Management Agency directs activities and funding toward coral
16 reef restoration for risk reduction projects; now, therefore,
17

18 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
19 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
20 Session of 2023, the Senate concurring, that this body
21 designates Hawaii's coral reefs as critical natural
22 infrastructure and strongly supports nature-based solutions such
23 as coral reef restoration for risk reduction; and
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25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
26 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor,
27 Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, and
28 Administrator of the Hawaii Emergency Management Authority.
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OFFERED BY: *Rindechizone*
MAR 09 2023

