
HOUSE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER EXPERTS TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE POPULATION STATUS OF CORAL REEF HERBIVORES AROUND THE ISLAND OF OAHU AND DEVELOP EFFECTIVE POLICIES FOR SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASING THOSE POPULATIONS WITHIN A DECADE.

1 WHEREAS, coral reefs provide extremely valuable ecosystem
2 goods and services for the people of Hawaii, including habitats
3 for nearshore fisheries; opportunities for various tourism and
4 recreational activities; and coastal protection from waves,
5 storms, and erosion as sea levels rise; and

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7 WHEREAS, reefs are also fundamental to the fabric of local
8 communities, providing a source of food, materials, and
9 traditional activities; and

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11 WHEREAS, Hawaii's coral reefs generate over \$800 million
12 per year in gross revenues, and the estimated total economic
13 value of coral reefs in the main Hawaiian Islands exceeds \$33
14 billion; and

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16 WHEREAS, many reefs around the island of Oahu have been
17 degraded from poor land use practices and are dominated by dead
18 coral covered by seaweeds; and

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20 WHEREAS, the maintenance and recovery of coral reefs
21 require abundant and diverse herbivores, which are fishes that
22 eat seaweeds, such as parrotfishes (uhu), surgeonfishes (e.g.,
23 kala, kole, manini), and chubs (nenu); and

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25 WHEREAS, parrotfishes are also known producers of sand that
26 replenishes beaches; and

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28 WHEREAS, abundant and diverse herbivores are known to keep
29 reef surfaces clean so that corals can flourish; and



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2 WHEREAS, the depletion of herbivores results in reefs being
3 dominated by seaweeds rather than corals, thus reducing fishing
4 and other recreational, commercial, and traditional cultural
5 opportunities; and

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7 WHEREAS, the population of coral reef herbivores around
8 Oahu is the lowest in the State, existing at below five percent
9 of its potential; and

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11 WHEREAS, ever-increasing ocean warming has caused coral
12 bleaching events that kill corals and are predicted to occur
13 every year in Hawaii before the year 2040; and

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15 WHEREAS, reefs that bleach are known to recover more
16 quickly and fully when herbivores exist in abundance; and

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18 WHEREAS, existing statewide fishing rules concerning
19 herbivores may be insufficient to replenish herbivore
20 populations around Oahu before coral bleaching becomes an annual
21 event; now, therefore,

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23 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
24 Thirty-second Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular
25 Session of 2024, that the Department of Land and Natural
26 Resources is requested to:

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28 (1) Work with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
29 Administration Pacific Islands Fisheries Science
30 Center and other experts to conduct a study on the
31 population status of individual species and families
32 of coral reef herbivores around Oahu, prioritizing uhu
33 and kala; and

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35 (2) Conduct an analysis of policies and strategies to
36 substantially increase the populations of coral reef
37 herbivores around Oahu within a decade; and

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39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Land and
40 Natural Resources is requested to submit a report of its
41 findings and recommendations, including any proposed



1 legislation, to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2024;
2 and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
5 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
6 Land and Natural Resources and Director of the Pacific Islands
7 Fisheries Science Center.

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OFFERED BY:

Rinde Ichizome

MAR - 7 2024

