

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
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Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Monday, March 30, 2026
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 32
REQUESTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MARINE LIFE CONSERVATION
DISTRICT CARRYING CAPACITY STUDY TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A
STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Senate Concurrent Resolution 32 requests the establishment of a Marine Life Conservation District (MLCD) carrying capacity study task force to develop a statewide implementation plan. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

The Department's Division of Aquatic Resources is coordinating the community-driven Holomua Marine Initiative (Holomua) to improve marine management practices across the state to ensure healthy ecosystems and abundant resources that allow the people of Hawai'i to enjoy coastal waters, support local livelihoods, and feed our families. One of the four pillars of Holomua is monitoring to measure current conditions, track progress following implementation of new management approaches, and to use data to identify areas where management actions need to be further adapted.

Events such as the extreme flooding in 2018 at Hā'ena, Kaua'i and the COVID-19 pandemic have provided unique glimpses into how nearshore marine resources and ecosystems respond to reduced human use. It is becoming increasingly evident that activities long considered "non-extractive" can still have significant impacts on nearshore ecosystems. It is critical that we better understand these impacts and human-use thresholds so we can prevent precious and unique areas like the state's MLCDs from being "loved to death."

There are currently ten designated MLCDs statewide:

- Hanauma Bay MLCD, O‘ahu
- Pūpūkea MLCD, O‘ahu
- Waikīkī MLCD, O‘ahu
- Kealakekua Bay MLCD, Hawai‘i
- Lapakahi MLCD, Hawai‘i
- Old Kona Airport MLCD, Hawai‘i
- Waialea Bay MLCD, Hawai‘i
- Honolua – Mokolē‘ia MCLD, Maui
- Molokini Shoal MLCD, Maui
- Mānele – Hulopo‘e MLCD, Lāna‘i

Carrying capacity studies have recently been conducted for Hanauma Bay and Pūpūkea. Additional carrying capacity studies for the remaining MLCDs would aid the Department in managing human use in these special areas. The Department agrees that the formation of a task force to develop a comprehensive framework for an MLCD Carrying Capacity Program and to identify administrative and financial resource needs would be beneficial.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.