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

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the House Committees on
WATER & LAND
and
PUBLIC SAFETY

Thursday, April 16, 2026
9:45 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 411

In consideration of
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 79
ENCOURAGING THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE ERADICATION OF OCTOCORAL AND OTHER INVASIVE SPECIES
FROM THE WATERS OF PEARL HARBOR, INCLUDING WEST LOCH,
MIDDLE LOCH, AND EAST LOCH

Senate Concurrent Resolution 79 encourages the United States Navy to take responsibility for the eradication of octocoral and other invasive species from the waters of Pearl Harbor, including West Loch, Middle Loch, and East Loch. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure and offers the following comments.**

One of the Department's missions is to conserve the State of Hawai'i's unique aquatic ecosystems for present and future generations. A critical threat to these ecosystems lies in the introduction of invasive species, which can outcompete native species for light and space or impact their health in other ways. Hawai'i's native aquatic species are particularly susceptible to the effects of invasive species due to a high rate of endemism, which means they lack natural defenses against foreign organisms. Many aquatic invasive species especially impact native stony corals, which form the foundation of our marine ecosystems and provide natural infrastructure to our islands. Each new invasion decreases the resilience of our reefs. The State of Hawai'i is facing what may be the most catastrophic aquatic invasive species introduction it has seen, and it is critical that the United States

Navy continue to take action to prevent the spread of octocorals and other invasive species from the Pearl Harbor watershed to state waters.

The invasive octocoral *Unomia stolonifera* has made headlines in the past few years for its aggressive and damaging characteristics that have allowed it to occupy over 60 miles of Venezuelan coast, in some areas accounting for 100% cover on the reef. Left unchecked for too long, this uncontrollable spread of *U. stolonifera* in Venezuela has smothered native coral and led to a large decline in herbivorous fish reproduction. Since its introduction to Venezuela, it is now known to be invasive in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Pearl Harbor on O'ahu. The dense mats of swaying tentacles that can be seen from the shore near the mouth of Pearl Harbor have terrifying implications, as one imagines a future where 60 miles of Hawai'i's coast is covered causing unknown devastation to the marine life beneath. Perhaps equally concerning are several of the other nonnative species that have been introduced to Pearl Harbor, likely through aquarium releases, of which we have no other examples of invasions to examine to understand their impacts. This includes a second octocoral, *Capnella spicata*, which may be equally aggressive as *U. stolonifera*, and the Manjano anemone (*Anemonia manjano*).

While the invasive octocorals are only known to be contained within Pearl Harbor, it is only a matter of time until they spread or are found to have already spread to State waters. Currents and storm events could carry fragments of these species out of the watershed, potentially allowing further colonization and reproduction through fragmentation. Additionally, some of the species are fouling species, which means they have the potential to travel longer distances on vessels or marine debris to other Hawaiian Islands, to the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, or even to our neighbor Pacific jurisdictions. It is the responsibility of the United States Navy to eradicate these species as stewards of the waters of Pearl Harbor, and it is the Department's duty to support this measure as stewards of the waters of the State of Hawai'i.

The Navy is currently attempting to eradicate *Unomia stolonifera* from Pearl Harbor, with approximately 14 of 82 reported acres completed. The Navy has also given the Department's Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) access to continue monitoring surveys in restricted waters outside the known infestation zone. Both DAR and the Navy continue to collaborate in this effort, including attending bi-weekly Hawai'i Invasive Octocoral Working Group meetings.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

‘Ōlelo Hō‘ike ‘Aha Kau Kānāwai

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 79
ENCOURAGING THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
ERADICATION OF OCTOCORAL AND OTHER INVASIVE SPECIES FROM THE WATERS
OF PEARL HARBOR, INCLUDING WEST LOCH, MIDDLE LOCH, AND EAST LOCH

Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Wai a me ka ‘Āina
(House Committee on Water and Land)
Ke Kōmike Hale o ka Palekana Lehulehu
(House Committee on Public Safety)
Ke Kapikala o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

‘Apelila 16, 2026

9:45AM

Lumi 411

Aloha e Chairs Hashem and Belatti, Vice Chairs Morikawa and Iwamoto, and Members of the House Committees on Water and Land and Public Safety:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS SCR79**, which encourages the United States Navy to take responsibility for the eradication of octocoral and other invasive species from the waters of Pu‘uloa (Pearl Harbor), including Kaihuopala‘ai (West Loch), Wai‘awa (Middle Loch) and Komoawa (East Loch).

Ke awa lau o Pu‘uloa (the many harbors of Pu‘uloa) were famous for their abundance of marine resources such as manō (sharks), awa (milkfish), akule (big-eyed scad fish), and especially the pipi (pearl oyster) of which Pearl Harbor was named for. Before it was dredged by the U.S. Navy, ‘Ewa Moku’s greatest resources was its access to the dozens of loko i‘a (fishponds) of Pu‘uloa.¹

¹ See Kamehameha School’s Cultural-Historical Overview of ‘Ewa at: https://www.ksbe.edu/assets/site/special_section/regions/ewa/Halau_o_Puuloa_Cultural-Historical-Summary.pdf.

Since becoming a military base, Pu‘uloa has suffered tremendous ecological harm from the dredging of its coral reefs to the continued leaking of oil from the USS Arizona and USS Utah since 1941.²

The widespread proliferation of invasive octocoral *Unomia stolonifera* is a continuation of the destruction of the momona (abundance) of Pu‘uloa. First detected at the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam channel in 2020, octocoral is a popular aquarium species introduced through illegal aquarium dumping.³ Starting in 2023, the U.S. Navy began clearing the invasive octocorals, but more must be done. Currently, the invasive species is contained to the Pearl Harbor area, but without aggressive action, these octocorals will move and cause more devastation in other areas. Our corals are the foundation of our marine ecosystems that are already under tremendous stress across Hawai‘i due to coral bleaching, toxic run-off and cesspool leaching, other aquatic invasive species, and other impacts exacerbated by climate change and overtaxing of our reefs. It is only a matter of time before the octocorals spread out from Pu‘uloa into other coral reefs on O‘ahu; the U.S. Navy must take aggressive action to prevent this spread by eradicating these species.

For the reasons stated above, OHA respectfully urges this committee to **PASS SCR79**.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue.

² See Caulfield, Claire. “Oil Constantly Leaks from the USS Arizona. Is That an Environmental Problem?” *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 24. Feb. 2020, <https://www.civilbeat.org/2020/02/oil-constantly-leaks-from-the-uss-arizona-is-that-an-environmental-problem/>.

³ See Pearl Harbor AIS at <https://www.bishopmuseum.org/hawaiiis/#two>



**TESTIMONY ON SCR 79
ENCOURAGING THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ERADICATION OF
OCTOCORAL AND OTHER INVASIVE SPECIES FROM THE WATERS OF PEARL HARBOR, INCLUDING
WEST LOCH, MIDDLE LOCH, AND EAST LOCH.**

House Committee on Water & Land
Representative Mark Hashem, Chair
Representative Dee Morikawa, Vice Chair

House Committee on Public Safety
Representative Della Au Belatti, Chair
Representative Kim Coco Iwamoto, Vice Chair

Thursday, April 16, 2026 at 9:45 AM
Conference Room 411 or via Videoconference

Chairs Hashem and Belatti, Vice Chairs Morikawa and Iwamoto, and Members of the Committees:

The Hawaii Military Affairs Council ("MAC") offers **comments** on SCR 79.

The MAC was established in 1985 when the Chamber was appointed by the State to serve as the liaison to the military. The MAC advocates on behalf of Hawaii's military, and is comprised of business leaders, academic institutions, State and County officials, members of the CODEL, community leaders, labor unions and organizations and retired U.S. flag and general officers. The MAC works to support Hawaii's location as a strategic U.S. headquarters in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region which is crucial for U.S. national and homeland security.

The MAC wishes to update the Committees that the U.S. Navy is actively implementing efforts to address the presence of octocoral and other invasive species in Pearl Harbor. These efforts involve coordination with an interagency group of subject matter experts, including federal and state partners.

The U.S. Navy continues to work closely with these partners to refine response strategies, evaluate methodologies, and identify the resources and expertise necessary to support effective, large-scale management and eradication efforts. Initial response actions have demonstrated that a combination of control methods can be effective in the short term, and these approaches are being further evaluated to inform future operations.



Looking ahead, the U.S. Navy is focused on expanding and sustaining these efforts, including pursuing additional funding opportunities and strengthening collaborative partnerships to support long-term success.

The Navy remains committed to keeping the Committees informed of its progress and, at this time, believes additional action through this resolution is not necessary.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit comments.



The House
Committee on Water and Land
Committee on Public Safety
Thursday, April 16, 2026
9:45 AM Conference Room 411 & Videoconference
State Capitol

Testimony in Support of SCR 79

Aloha Chair Hasheem, Chair Belatti, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Iwamoto, and Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is **in support of SCR 79**, which encourages the United States Navy to affirmatively take responsibility for eradicating invasive octocorals and other invasive species from the waters of Pearl Harbor.

Two species of invasive octocoral, *Unomia stolonifera* and *Capnella spicata*, were discovered spreading in Pearl Harbor. The Navy has led a tremendous multi-agency effort to remove and prevent the spread of the octocorals with the ultimate goal of eradication. While the Navy has made great progress, eradication takes a continued effort over many years. We believe this resolution is a prudent step in communicating the importance of the issue to the state. Further, eradication of invasive octocorals is only the first step and effective management of this area will require continued monitoring of both the waters and shoreline of Pearl Harbor to ensure that invasive species do not repopulate the area and to prevent the re-introduction of invasives to these waters.

Preventing spread of this highly invasive species into reef environments and nearshore waters across the state is everyone's goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and to support SCR 79.

Aloha,

Christy Martin
CGAPS Program Manager

Andrew N. Porter
CGAPS Legal Fellow

SCR-79

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 9:48:09 AM

Testimony for WAL on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chairs and Committee Members,

I urge you to support this legislation to make the US Navy accountable for protecting our marine resources from invasive coral species that could threaten our reefs.

Sincerely,

Fiane Ware 96785

SCR-79

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 10:22:13 AM

Testimony for WAL on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnnie-Mae L. Perry	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I BELIEVE ANY AGREEMENT PRIVATE, PUBLIC, AND GOVERNMENTAL REGARDING THE ENVIRONMENT, LAND, WATER, AIR ETC SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE STEWARDS OF ITS AGREEMENT WRITTEN OR OTHERWISE.

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

79 SCR ENCOURAGING THE UNITED STATES NAVY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ERADICATION OF OCTOCORAL AND OTHER INVASIVE SPECIES FROM THE WATERS OF PEARL HARBOR, INCLUDING WEST LOCH, MIDDLE LOCH, AND EAST LOCH.

SCR-79

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 4:32:19 PM

Testimony for WAL on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kalae Correa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Pearl Harbor’s waters are being overwhelmed by invasive species like octocoral, which spread rapidly and smother native marine life. These infestations reduce fish populations, damage reef ecosystems, and make it harder for our communities to care for the harbor and its shoreline.

The Navy has already documented how widespread these species have become. What we need now is a coordinated, consistent response. SCR79 encourages the Navy to take responsibility for removing these invasive species and maintaining the health of West Loch, Middle Loch, and East Loch.

This resolution is an important step toward restoring the ecological integrity of Pearl Harbor and protecting one of Hawai‘i’s most significant natural and cultural resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SCR-79

Submitted on: 4/14/2026 8:32:49 PM

Testimony for WAL on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Our coral reefs in Hawaii are in major trouble due to the negative impacts of pollution, invasive species, and global warming on this fragile environment. Steps need to be taken to eradicate invasive species that are killing our native coral or we will lose an entire ecosystems of coral, native fish, and other marine life in Pearl Harbor, West Loch, Middle Loch, and East Loch. The situation is critical and should not be ignored.

Beth Anderson

Kailua, Hawaii

SCR-79

Submitted on: 4/15/2026 9:36:42 AM

Testimony for WAL on 4/16/2026 9:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kala'e Correa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure encouraging the United States Navy to take responsibility for addressing octocoral and other invasive species in Pearl Harbor. These invasive species, including *Unomia stolonifera* and *Capnella spicata*, spread quickly and harm native marine life and habitats. With the Navy serving as the primary caretaker of Pearl Harbor, it makes sense for them to take the lead in efforts to manage and remove these threats.