

LINDA LINGLE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**LAURA H. THIELEN**  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**RUSSELL Y. TSUJI**  
FIRST DEPUTY

**KEN C. KAWAHARA**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
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CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT  
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

**TESTIMONY OF THE CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**on House Bill 2625, House Draft 1— Relating To The Designation Of April 19 As  
"Hawaiian Monk Seal Day"**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
TOURISM AND CULTURE**

**February 25, 2008**

House Bill 2625, House Draft 1 designates the third Saturday in April of each year as "Hawaiian Monk Seal Day." While the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports the intent of this measure, as it believes it is fully consistent with the Department's efforts to foster community-based conservation of Hawaiian monk seals and other indigenous wildlife species, the Department brings to this Committee's attention a potential flaw with this measure as currently written, as wording in the title of this bill, specifically the words "April 19", is inconsistent with language in the House Draft 1 which would designate the "third Saturday in April" as the Hawaiian Monk Seal Day and not "April 19". In as much, the Department offers the following comments.

The Department works closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service and National Marine Sanctuary Program, and numerous conservation organizations and community groups to promote the protection and recovery of our critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals. For example, with funding from NOAA, Department staff on Kau'ai manages a network of over 50 volunteers who set up "seal protection zones" around seals "hailed-out" on shore. These roped-off areas help ensure the protection of the seals and the safety of beach goers. Our Kau'ai seal response network typically conducts more than 400 such responses every year. Department staff also manages a similar NOAA-funded seal response network on Hawai'i Island. In addition, Department staff across the State, coordinates rescue responses for injured or entangled seals, and conduct a wide variety of research, education and outreach activities devoted to monk seal conservation.

The Department believes designating a state Hawaiian monk seal day would help raise public awareness of the plight of the seal and bolster public support for seal conservation efforts. The Department looks forward to working with the Legislature and all concerned parties toward the continued protection of Hawaiian monk seals and their ultimate recovery from endangered species status.