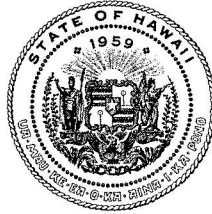
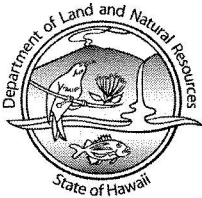


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ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

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

**on House Bill 2626 – Relating To The Designation Of The Hawaiian Monk Seal As The  
State Mammal Of Hawai‘I**

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

**February 25, 2008**

House Bill 2626 designates the Hawaiian monk seal as the State mammal. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure, as the Department believes it is fully consistent with our goal to foster community-based conservation of Hawaiian monk seals and other indigenous wildlife species.

The Department works in close partnership with the numerous conservation organizations and community groups, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service and National Marine Sanctuary Program, to promote the protection and recovery of our critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals. For example, with funding from NOAA, Department staff on Kau‘ai and Hawai‘i islands manage volunteer networks that each year set up hundreds of “seal protection zones” around seals “hailed-out” on popular beaches. These roped-off areas help ensure the protection of the seals and the safety of beach goers. As another example of cooperative conservation, Department and NOAA staff manage seal “pupping events” across the State, where nursing seal pups and their mothers are provided around-the-clock protection and monitoring during their six-week long nursing period on shore. These efforts are made possible with the invaluable support of the University of Hawaii at Hilo, Hawaii Pacific University, the United States Coast Guard, Hawai‘i Wildlife Fund, county lifeguards and police departments, numerous beach resorts and tour operators, individual volunteers, and many others.

The Department believes designating the Hawaiian monk seal as Hawai‘i’s State mammal would help raise public awareness of the plight of the seal and bolster public support for our conservation efforts. The Department notes that similar conservation benefits have resulted from the designation of the humpback whale as our state marine mammal. 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.



**HB 2626, RELATING TO HAWAIIAN MONK SEALS**  
House Committee on Tourism and Culture

February 25, 2008

9:00 a.m.

Room: 325

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** H.B. 2626, which would establish the Hawaiian monk seal, or 'Īlioholoikauaūa, as the official state mammal of Hawai'i.

OHA believes that bestowing this formal status upon the Hawaiian monk seal will direct more attention and public support towards the effort to improve the precarious predicament of this critically endangered mammal.

OHA urges the Committee to PASS H.B. 2626. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.