



**HB 3173, HD 1, RELATING TO GROUNDED VESSELS**  
House Committee on Finance

February 22, 2008

2:15 p.m.

Room: 308

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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB 3173, HD 1, which would allow the removal of grounded vessels from a living reef or other critical marine environments, at the vessel owner's expense, more quickly and with the safety of the public and the environment in mind.

Because all submerged lands are ceded lands, OHA takes seriously its trust responsibilities to protect and preserve these lands, and the water and air columns above them. A number of dangerous and expensive vessel groundings have occurred within Hawaiian state waters, just during the past decade. Because it is often difficult to find the owners of such vessels, the boats are left to disintegrate and to wreak havoc on fragile reef ecosystems throughout the Main and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Coral reefs take scores of years to grow and mature, and seconds to be demolished. These fragile ecosystems harbor shelter for many stages of marine animals' growth, reproduction and survival. So much impact on a fragile ecosystem which contains many endangered and endemic species cannot be ignored.

Amending existing statutes to clarify that such vessels will be specifically removed, instead of vaguely "directed to a safer location," is a vast improvement for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' ability to act decisively and immediately. The further amendment proposed by this bill, which would allow the boat owner 72 hours to remove the vessel on their own, provides a needed layer of fairness.

OHA urges the Committee to PASS HB 3173, HD 1. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.