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GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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

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LAND
STATE PARKS

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

on SENATE BILL 2465 – Relating To Hawaiian Monk Seal Day

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
WATER, LAND, OCEAN RESOURCES, AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

March 12, 2008

Senate Bill 2465 designates the third Saturday in April of each year as “Hawaiian Monk Seal Day.” The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure as the Department believes it is fully consistent with our goal of fostering community-based conservation of Hawaiian Monk Seals and other indigenous wildlife species.

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.

fax 586-8494



Conservation Council for Hawai'i

Testimony Submitted to the House Committee on Water, Land, Ocean Resources, and
Hawaiian Affairs

Hearing: Wednesday, March 12, 2008
9 am
Room 312

Support for SB 2465 Relating to Monk Seal Day

Aloha. The Conservation Council for Hawai'i supports SB 2465, which designates the third Saturday in April Hawaiian Monk Seal Day.

We also support funding for monk seal response coordinators on each island to help save seals in danger of entanglement, harassment, and other threats. The coordinators are often the first line of response when seals are in trouble.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Ziegler



Working Today for the Nature of Tomorrow!

Telephone/Fax 808.593.0265 • email: info@conservehi.org • web: www.conservehi.org
P.O. Box 2923 • Honolulu, HI 96802 • Office: 250 Ward Ave., Suite 212 • Honolulu, HI 96814

Hawai'i Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

President: Julie Lalalohe • Vice-President: Nelson Ho • Secretary/Treasurer: Kim Ramos • Directors: Fred Kraus, Ph.D. • Douglas Lamerson,
George Robertson • Claire Shimebukuro • Helene Takemoto • Mashuri Waite • Executive Director: Marjorie Ziegler

From: Kfletchb@aol.com [mailto:Kfletchb@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2008 3:08 PM
To: WLHtestimony
Cc: jennifer.metz@noaa.gov
Subject: SB 2464 (SSCR2650) & SB 2465 (SSCR2651)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have just recently become a Monk Seal Responder.

I am a Navy wife and currently serve as a Guardian in the Honu Guardian program at Laniakea Beach. Through 2 years of tourist observation around the honu, I have come to realize that the monk seal should be protected as well.

Nine out of ten individuals are respectful of our wonderful sea creatures, but it only takes one person to endanger the life of these animals while they are hauled out on our beaches.

I strongly support Hawaiian Monk Seal Day and making the monk seal the State Mammal of Hawaii. Public awareness of the monk seal is the way to protect this species so that they can continue to thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Banes

98-1731B Kaahumanu St.
Aiea, HI 96701

cell: 780-7297

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From: donnafesta@aol.com [mailto:donnafeasta@aol.com]

Sent: Monday, March 10, 2008 10:28 PM

To: WLHtestimony

Subject: Support for SB2625 Hawaiian monk seal Day

Testimony IN SUPPORT of SB2625, Establishing an annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Day

Please make eight (5) copies.

March 11, 2008

Dear Representatives Ito, Karamatsu, and committee members,

Thank you for raising SB2625 Hawaiian Monk Seal Day. Please accept this testimony expressing my STRONG SUPPORT for this bill.

This bill is important to me because I spent 27 days in January watching over a Hawaiian Monk Seal on Kailua Beach. I was unaware of how close these mammals are to extinction. I volunteered my time because I honestly felt I had to be there, someone needed to keep this seal (Chester) safe. Although I had no knowledge of these animals prior to Chester's visit, I have learned a great deal in a short time. I am also planning on dedicating more of my time and energy to save these beautiful creatures.

It is critical that the state legislature act to pass this bill because the State of Hawaii needs to be involved in the protection and use its power to provide a safe haven for these animals. As a volunteer I need to know the right agencies and departments are involved to combat the rapid decline of the Hawaiian Monk Seals.

While the population of monk seals is declining in the northwest Hawaiian Islands, it has been increasing in the Main Hawaiian Islands during recent years. There are a variety of factors contributing to this occurrence, including disappearance of beachfront pupping habitat due to global warming, but we should also consider the return of Hawaiian monk seals to the Main Hawaiian Islands as a direct appeal to all Hawaii's residents to participate in the protection and recovery of this twelve million year old species.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my strong support for this bill.

Sincerely,

Donna Festa (RA)
CENTURY 21 Kailua Beach Realty
130 Kailua Road Suite 110
Kailua, HI 96734
808-561-8112 (cell)
808-262-8275 (fax)

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TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, OCEAN RESOURCES, AND
HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Mr. Ken Ito, Chair
Mr. John Riki Karamatsu, Vice Chair

VIA: WLH FAX: 586-8494

FR: Georgette Yaindl
1312A 13th Ave.
Honolulu, HI 96816
808-732-3138
yaindl@hawaii.edu

RE: **For Public Hearing, Wednesday, March 12, 2008**
8:30 am; Conference Room 312

Please make eight (8) copies.

Testimony IN STONG SUPPORT of SB2465, Designating an Annual Monk Seal Day

March 11, 2008

Dear Representatives Ito, Karamatsu, and Committee members,

Thank you for raising for public hearing SB2464, the bill designating the Hawaiian monk seal as our State Mammal. This bill contains the same language as HB2625 as amended by your committee in HD1.

The WLH Standing Committee Report (HSCR 371-08) advancing the amended House bill stated,

Your Committee notes that the intent of the Committee is to designate every third Saturday of April as Hawaiian Monk Seal Day. This is the day an annual seal count is conducted, along with community activities held by the National Marine Fisheries Service, DLNR, and community organizations across the state.

It is imperative that we establish an annual Hawaiian monk seal day - if every day cannot be so designated!- for many reasons. One of these is because while the population of monk seals is declining in the northwest Hawaiian Islands, it has been increasing in the Main Hawaiian Islands during recent years. There are a variety of factors contributing to this occurrence, including disappearance of beachfront pupping habitat due to global warming. I think we also should consider the return of Hawaiian monk seals to the Main Hawaiian Islands as a direct appeal to all Hawaii's residents and visitors to participate in the protection and recovery of this twelve million year old species. The third Saturday in April corresponds to the start of pupping season so this is the perfect time for us to schedule the annual Hawaiian monk seal day.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Georgette Yaindl
Kaimuki

From: Karen Rohter [mailto:karenrohter@hawaii.rr.com]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2008 9:10 PM
To: WLHtestimony
Subject: SB2464, SB2465 Monk Seal

FROM: Karen Rohter
5th grade Teacher, St. Andrew's Priory

TO: Rep Ken Ito, Chair
Rep. Jon Riki Karamatsu, Vice Chair

House Committee on Water, Land, Ocean Resources & Hawaiian Affairs

Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT for SB2464 (SSCR2650) Designating the Hawaiian Monk Seal as the State Mammal

Testimony in STRONG SUPPORT for SB2465 (SSCR2651) Designating an Annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Day

For Public Hearing, Wednesday, March 12, 2008; CR 312; 9:00am.

Please make 8 copies.

Dear Representatives,

The Hawaiian monk seal population has been steadily declining, with only about 1200 living today. We must initiate action that will increase public awareness of the plight of this very special endemic mammal. Having an official Hawaiian Monk Seal Day and designating it as our State Mammal will help bring that critical awareness to both our citizens of Hawaii and tourists who are enthralled by seeing seals haul out on our beaches. A perfect example is Chester the seal who hauled out on a Kailua beach for his yearly molting this last January. As Senator Fukunaga stated, "The purpose of this measure is to recognize the importance and uniqueness of the Hawaiian monk seal to the Hawaiian Islands".

Thank you for your attention to this very special bill.

Sincerely
Karen Rohter
St. Andrew's Priory