



# Sierra Club Hawai'i Chapter

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, OCEAN RESOURCES & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 9:00 A.M.

**(Testimony is 1 page long)**

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 6

Chair Ito and members of the Committee:

The Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter, with 5500 dues paying members statewide, supports SB 6, making the sale of opihi illegal except for certain circumstances. Edible opihi has declined in Hawai'i, with one culprit being overharvesting due to opihi's popularity as a delicacy. This measure restricts the sale of opihi while preserving the right to gather opihi for personal use as long as they are larger than a certain size.

Please give the little guys a break.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

March 13, 2008

To: State of Hawaii  
Committee on Water, Land, Ocean Resources, & Hawaiian Affairs  
March 17, 2008 9:00am  
Conference Room 312

**Attn: Chairman Ken Ito**  
**1-800-535-3859**

From: Jarrad Sylva  
Keaau Hawaii

Re: Senate Bill 6 (SB 6)

Dear Sir,

My name is Jarrad Sylva and I am a resident of Hawaiian Paradise Park in Keaau Hawaii.

I am writing to voice my opinion **against** SB 6 banning commercial sales of opihi.

I have been an opihi picker on the Big Island of Hawaii for the past twenty years. I support a wife and three children.

The income I earn from opihi picking is used to pay my rent, food, clothing, and other expenses. I am paid \$4.50 a pound (raw opihi) and my income ranges from \$200 to \$900 each time I go to the ocean to pound opihi.

I pick opihi principally on the south and southeastern side of the big island of Hawaii. These areas include Kapoho, Kalapana, Hawaii National Park (Helena pali), Sea Moountain, Kau, South Point, Milolii (Pebbles), South Kona, Kailua Kona (near Keahole Airport, Hamakua Coast, and Waipio Valley.

I only pick "legal" size opihi (1 ¼" or larger). My opihi is sold to several fish markets on Oahu including Tamashiro Market and Taniokas Seafood.

I do not pick opihi every day. I go primarily when the low tide is at a reading of 0.00 to minus -0.4.

The idea that the opihi is soon to be extinct is "hogwash". There are millions of opihi in the above stated 11 coastline areas of the big island. I usually pick opihi along a ½ mile to 1 mile stretch of coastline. On a good day, my step son and I can pick in excess of 200 pounds. While access to some of these areas are tough to get to (including 2-4 mile walks, roping down 50 – 100 foot cliffs) there are tons of opihi out there. If I pick opihi at say a one mile particular stretch of land today, in two and a half month's time I can go back to the exact same spot and it will be covered with opihi again.

I keep reading in the newspaper and seeing on television how the opihi is going to be extinct soon. Let me tell you something. They have been saying this for years. I remember when I was a kid (mid 1970's) my dad told me that two University researchers (Kay, Magruder) did some kind of study and found that the opihi would be gone within ten years. Well its now thirty years later and there is still plenty of opihi out there.

The problem is two fold. 1. The TRUE amount of opihi harvested is not being reported to the State of Hawaii DLNR. I know of at least two dozen other pickers that pound opihi for a living but don't have a license and certainly don't report their catch to the state. 2. The easy access opihi areas such as my community of Hawaiian Paradise Park has been totally "fished out" by rookie opihi pickers that have no regard for picking legal size opihi. They pick or better yet "raid" the keiki opihis of the coastline and sell them in bags to the locals. Sad.

Instead of banning commercial sales of opihi, why not consider allowing say nine months of opihi open season and restricting or banning three months of harvesting. That way the opihi can regenerate. Make opihi picking seasonal instead of out right Banning. I honestly laugh when I hear or read about opihi being a thing of the past. If you could only see how many opihi are out there you would be amazed. They breed and breed and breed and love the violent white wash areas along our coastline.

In conclusion, please don't vote to ban commercial sales of opihi. I can't imagine what would happen without this income I earn. Don't believe the opihi fear mongers who say that opihi is going extinct. Its not true.

Thank you.