
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AQUARIUM AQUATIC LIFE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the aquarium aquatic
2 life collecting industry has operated for over 50 years without
3 limits or constraints on its catch or the number of collectors
4 in the state.

5 The aquarium industry focuses on juvenile reef fish and
6 small invertebrates and exports 82 per cent of its catch to the
7 mainland United States. However, with expanding Asian markets,
8 collectors are targeting more remote and deeper reefs as
9 evidenced by the species sold on many internet websites.
10 Endemic species such as the bandit angelfish and the masked
11 angelfish sell for hundreds or even thousands of dollars each,
12 with no regulation or limit.

13 Home aquariums in China reflect the new prosperity there,
14 with large aquariums covering multiple walls that display adult
15 eels and other large animals from Hawaii's reefs. Aquarium
16 collecting is having major impacts on Oahu and Hawaii reefs and
17 moderate impacts on Maui reefs where over-harvesting is reducing
18 the marine tourism experience. Many coral reef fish and



1 invertebrates have complicated relationships to the overall
2 ecology of the reef. Their removal may affect the long-term
3 stability of these ecosystems. Significant population declines
4 and major shifts in species diversity are now evident in coral
5 reef areas where collection is occurring. The aquarium catch is
6 mostly herbivore. Their removal could result in increased algal
7 growth, due to a lack of grazers to keep the algae in check,
8 with a corresponding decrease in coral cover.

9 The lack of regulation enables the industry to supply the
10 growing demand for color, shape, and rarity. The Hawaiian
11 cleaner wrasse is one of the most popular fish species collected
12 and is known for its radiant color and lively movement. These
13 fish pick parasites from many other fish, are found nowhere else
14 in the world, and are collected and shipped daily without
15 limitation. The Hawaiian cleaner wrasse will not eat fish food
16 in captivity and eventually dies of starvation. Likewise,
17 coral-eating butterfly fishes, prized by aquarists for their
18 beauty, starve in a short period of time.

19 The purpose of this Act is to enhance and improve the
20 regulation of aquarium aquatic life collecting to protect and
21 preserve Hawaii's aquatic life and marine environment.

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1 SECTION 2. Chapter 188, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding two new sections to part II to be
3 appropriately designated and to read as follows:

4 "§188- Definitions. As used in this part, unless the
5 context clearly requires otherwise:

6 "Aquarium collecting gear" means any equipment used to
7 collect aquarium fish or animals including but not limited to
8 hand nets, fence or barrier nets, fiberglass or metal "tickle
9 sticks," catch buckets, keeps, or baskets.

10 "Aquarium purpose" means to hold saltwater fish, freshwater
11 nongame fish, or other aquatic life alive in a state of
12 captivity as pets, for scientific study, or for public
13 exhibition or display, or for sale for these purposes.

14 "Collect" means to take, catch, capture, harvest, confine,
15 or to attempt to take, catch, capture, harvest, or confine
16 aquatic life. The use of any aquarium collecting gear to take,
17 catch, capture, harvest, or confine, or to attempt to take,
18 catch, capture, harvest, or confine aquatic life by any person
19 who is on or about the shores of Hawaii or in a vessel in
20 Hawaiian waters shall be construed as collecting under this
21 section.



1 "Department" means the department of land and natural
2 resources.

3 "Endemic" or "endemic species" means any aquatic life
4 specimen found nowhere else other than Hawaii.

5 §188- Aquarium aquatic life; collection. (a) The
6 department shall develop and maintain an aquarium collecting
7 white list of aquatic species for each county. No aquatic
8 species shall be collected or sold for aquarium purposes in the
9 state unless the species appears on the aquarium collecting
10 white list of the county where the species is collected or sold.

11 (b) The aquarium collecting white list shall only include
12 species that are shown by an official, published department or
13 equivalent federal agency study to meet the following criteria:

14 (1) The species can survive capture, transport, and
15 captivity for at least one hundred eighty days; and

16 (2) Based on historical evidence, the species is part of a
17 stable or increasing population trend in the
18 collection area.

19 (c) In addition to the requirements of subsection (b), the
20 following criteria shall apply:

21 (1) The collection of the species in a county shall not
22 exceed the average annual collection in that county



1 for the calendar years 2005 through 2007, based on
2 department collection reports for those years;

3 (2) The removal of the species does not negatively impact
4 the reef ecosystem by contributing to algae overgrowth
5 for herbivores, parasite overload on other reef fishes
6 for cleaner wrasses and cleaner shrimp, or other
7 harmful results; and

8 (3) The species is not endemic to Hawaii.

9 (d) The department shall inform all permit holders under
10 section 188-31 of the species included in the aquarium
11 collecting white list and the penalties for failure to comply
12 with the restrictions regarding the collection of aquatic life.

13 (e) Any person who collects or sells aquatic life for
14 aquarium purposes not on the aquarium collecting white list
15 shall be fined \$1,000 for each specimen collected or sold.

16 (f) In addition to any other penalty or fine provided by
17 law, any person violating this section shall be sentenced as
18 follows:

19 (1) For a first violation, a fine of not more than \$1,000
20 or thirty days imprisonment, or both;



1 (2) For a second violation within five years of a previous
2 violation, a fine of not more than \$2,000 or sixty
3 days imprisonment, or both; and

4 (3) For a third or subsequent violation within five years
5 of a previous violation, a fine not more than \$3,000
6 or ninety days imprisonment, or both."

7 SECTION 3. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
8 matured, penalties that were incurred, or proceedings that were
9 begun before its effective date.

10 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

11 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on June 1, 2009.

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INTRODUCED BY: Mele Carroll

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Report Title:

Aquarium Aquatic Life; DLNR

Description:

Regulates the collection of aquarium aquatic life.

