

SCR 125



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Health
Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Housing
and the
Senate Committee on Agriculture
March 31, 2011 at 2:45 p.m.

by
Dr. Maria Haws
Assistant Professor of Aquaculture, CAFNRM, UH Hilo &
University of Hawai'i Sea Grant Aquaculture Extension Agent

SCR125 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO FULLY SUPPORT THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY AND IMPLEMENT
A STATEWIDE CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM FOR SHELLFISH GROWING AREAS

Aloha Chairs Green, Dela Cruz and Nishihara, Vice Chairs Solomon and Kahele, and Members of
the Committees,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. The University of Hawai'i strongly supports SCR 125
as a Statewide Classification Program for Shellfish Growing Areas is critical to the development
of a sustainable shellfish industry in Hawai'i.

My name is Maria Haws, and I serve as Assistant Professor of Aquaculture at the University of
Hawai'i Hilo and as a University of Hawai'i Sea Grant Aquaculture Extension Agent.

Farming of shellfish such as oysters, clams and scallops is one of the simplest and most
environmentally sustainable forms of food production. Hawai'i is the only coastal state in the
U.S. where shellfish cannot be farmed and sold. This is entirely due to the lack of full
implementation of the existing State Shellfish Sanitation Plan. If shellfish farming were to
become possible in Hawai'i, it would reduce our dependence on imported seafood, offer
opportunities for profitable "mom and pop" shellfish farms and provide a way for traditional
Hawaiian fishponds to become fully productive.

Hawai'i has had several successful shellfish farms in the past, but these went out of business
over 20 years ago. Due to the lack of a fully implemented State Shellfish Sanitation Plan, no
new businesses have been started since then, and our shellfish industry essentially disappeared
from memory, except for two large hatcheries located at NELHA in Kailua-Kona, and another on
Kaua'i. Ironically, although these hatcheries are among the largest in the U.S., none of the
shellfish seed they produce can legally be grown out and sold in Hawai'i because the shellfish
sanitation plan has not been fully implemented.

For the last 12 years, my colleagues and I have conducted research in Hawai'i to establish the
biological and commercial feasibility of shellfish aquaculture in Hawai'i as interest and shellfish
farming has re-emerged. We have also developed a Hawaiian species of oyster for production,
which offers an unique and tasty product for Hawai'i farmers.

Our research results indicate that farming shellfish such as clams and oysters is biologically feasible in Hawai`i, with the traditional Hawaiian fish ponds being excellent farming sites for shellfish. Oysters in particular have shown high growth rates and we have obtained market sized oysters of 2-3 inches in six months, as compared to the Mainland U.S. where this takes 2-3 years. Additionally, oysters grown in ponds and at a shrimp farm on O`ahu, Moloka`i and Hawai`i Island have excellent taste and texture.

At the same time we have been working to demonstrate the feasibility of oyster culture in Hawai`i, world events have conspired to make shellfish farming less viable in other areas of the world. Disease has seriously affected production on the East Coast, France and China, which are major shellfish growing areas. Hurricanes and the BP oil spill have affected the Gulf Coast. The NW industry is suffering from ocean acidification and limited availability of growing areas. The Japanese industry has been devastated by the recent tsunami and nuclear issues. Hence, this is a opportune moment for Hawai`i producers to compete on the U.S. and international markets by offering a clean, high quality product that bears the "produced in Hawai`i" label.

There is a high level of interest among the public and potential shellfish farmers to start new farms. The Shellfish Working Group, comprised of researchers, potential farmers, agency representatives and managers of Hawaiian fish ponds, has been in dialogue with DOH personnel for over two years in trying to fully implementing the State Shellfish Sanitation Plan so that shellfish farms can be established in Hawai`i. The DOH personnel have been highly cooperative and helpful, and we are optimistic that DOH can move forward with full implementation of the plan. Moreover, since every other coastal state in the U.S. engages in classification of shellfish growing grounds, successful models exist which DOH can readily follow. Passing SCR 125 will express support for DOH to fully achieve their legal mandate to oversee implementation of the Shellfish Sanitation Plan.

If DOH is able to move forward and begin fully implement the existing State Shellfish Sanitation Plan, Hawai`i farmers could be selling oysters locally and exporting product by the end of 2012. Given our current economic crisis, this is one way in which environmentally sustainable small business development can be achieved with minimal effort on behalf of one State Agency.

Thank you for your support.

nishihara1 - Dale

From: HTHTestimony
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2011 11:03 AM
To: nishihara1 - Dale
Subject: FW: Testimony for SCR 125

From: pfang [<mailto:pfang@hawaii.rr.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 4:33 PM
To: HTHTestimony
Subject: Testimony for SCR 125

To: COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, AND HOUSING
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Malama Solomon, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Senator Gilbert Kahele, Vice Chair

Fr: Paul Bienfang, Ph.D.
President
Analytical Services Inc.

Re Support for SCR 125

I thank the legislature for the many efforts in support of this resolution. I also thank the Department of Health officials and technical staff for their past and ongoing support to establish a Hawaii shellfish aquaculture industry.

We have had several very positive meetings on issues required to gain the needed FDA lab certification, and to subsequently establish a certified laboratory evaluation officer that are needed to enable private laboratory involvement in the requisite monitoring process to certify the safety of the prospective growing areas.

Work to date has recognized the most significant issues toward the end of securing this most promising segment of local food production for local consumption. This supports the economic viability of small local producers. All evidence to date indicates the absence of growth, taste, economic or production hurdles to the revitalization of this local aquaculture; certification of the sanitary microbiological safety of molluscan growing areas is the only obstacles.

We at Analytical Services Inc. are committed to assisting this new industry. We have been in discussions with the State of Hawaii Department of Health and the FDA and are working closely to identify and implement ways that we may do so.

As you may be aware, we simply must resolve the certification process that is critical to marketing edible bivalves that are grown in Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity to give input



THE SENATE
THE TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2011

Committee on Health
Senator Josh Green, M.D., Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

Committee on Water, Land, and Housing
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Malama Solomon, Vice Chair

Committee on Agriculture
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Senator Gilbert Kahele, Vice Chair

HEARING DATE: Thursday, March 31, 2011
TIME: 2:45pm
PLACE: Conference Room 229, State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Subject: Testimony in Strong Support of SCR 125 Requesting the DOH to Fully Support the Development of the Shellfish Aquaculture Industry and Implement a Statewide Classification Program for Shellfish Growing Areas

Chairs Green, Dela Cruz, and Nishihara Vice Chairs Nishihara, Solomon, and Kahele, and Committee Members:

The Hawaii Aquaculture and Aquaponics Association (HAAA) strongly supports SCR 125 requesting the DOH to fully support the development of a shellfish aquaculture industry in Hawaii, and to implement a Statewide Classification Program for shellfish growing areas to enable locally-grown shellfish to be legally sold in Hawaii for consumption.

At present the DOH has a certification program for imported shellfish but not for locally grown shellfish. Locally grown shellfish are presently exported as juveniles to West Coast sites for growout and then shipped back to Hawaii for local sale. This results in less revenues for Hawaii's shellfish growers, higher retail prices for Hawaii's consumers due to the double air cargo costs of shipping these shellfish back and forth across the Pacific, and lost economic and employment opportunities and taxes for the State of Hawaii.

The lack of a Statewide Classification Program for shellfish growing areas has been a roadblock to establishing a shellfish aquaculture industry in Hawaii for decades, with Hawaii being the only coastal State in the United States without such a program. Fortunately, more progress has been made in the past several years than in the prior thirty years due to the much appreciated efforts of a few dedicated DOH staff members. What is needed now is the commitment of DOH management to see this effort through to an expeditious conclusion so that existing shellfish farmers can ramp up their production and fast track this promising new Hawaii aquaculture industry segment.

The HAAA believes that SCR125 provides the means to make this important economic opportunity a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Ronald P. Weidenbach
HAAA President

nishihara1 - Dale

From: HTHTestimony
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 12:19 PM
To: nishihara1 - Dale
Subject: FW: Testimony for SCR125 on 3/31/2011 2:45:00 PM

Dale,
Sending this to you to help with the automated function on my email mailbox. This is the only one I had. Thanks again.
Kehau

-----Original Message-----

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov [<mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 11:26 AM
To: HTHTestimony
Cc: rittew@hotmail.com
Subject: Testimony for SCR125 on 3/31/2011 2:45:00 PM

Testimony for HTH/WLH/AGL 3/31/2011 2:45:00 PM SCR125

Conference room: 229
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Walter Ritte
Organization: Keawanui Fishpond
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: rittew@hotmail.com
Submitted on: 3/29/2011

Comments:

We operate 60 acre Keawanui fishpond on Molokai. We have spent two years trying to grow clams and oysters. Diversification of the products grown in the ponds is a key to our future success. We are learning how to grow, and need the state to be ready to allow us to share these products with the rest of the state. It would be a shame if the state is identified as the barrier to our success. We are in strong support of this resolution.