



**TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND**

March 31, 2014 Conference Rm: 325 11:00 AM

Testimony in Strong Support of HR 129

**URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO
ADOPT RULES TO MANAGE MANTA RAY DIVE SITES.**

Chair Rep Cindy Evans, Vice Chair Nicole E Lowen and Committee Members,

My name is Melynda Dant, I am the Vice President of our third generation family snorkel business in Kona, Fair Wind, Inc.

The manta dive sites bring in millions of dollars to Hawaii Island and the State of Hawaii is currently recognized internationally as one of the world's top destinations for snorkeling and Scuba diving, therefore warranting better management practices."

The DLNR in Kona had asked the Kona manta tour operators to put together standards for safe viewing and boating last year. The DLNR needs to be open to our input from the current users for better managing these sites.

We need more mooring pins even for the current operators in the Keauhou Bay location. When the north site has "no shows" many of the boaters come down to the south site, Keauhou. The Keauhou site does not have the open sand area for anchoring, nor as much capacity for vessels as the north site offers.

The south site also has kayaks, free swimmers, and SUP coming out on their own, as uneducated, unguided viewers. These unguided viewers do not keep the column of water open to the manta's, they sometimes touch the manta's, they are in the channel where boaters can not see them in the dark and are an accident waiting to happen. This could potentially create a dangerous situation if not managed correctly.

DLNR needs to add the Manta education to their boater education program. The DLNR can take many steps to bring control and safety to the manta tour dive operations. This is needed to provide a safe environment for both humans and manta rays.