

Testimony of Ms. Julie Leialoha

March 20, 2015

Support: HB 1478, HD1 Relating to the Hawaiian Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

Committee on Water & Land/ Committee on Energy & Environment
Hearing Scheduled Friday March 20, 2015 2:45 p.m. Conference Room 224

Honorable Chair's Sen. Thielen, Sen. Gabbard, Vice Chair's Sen. Galutaria, Sen. Green and Committee Members, I am testifying in support of HB 1478 to provide funding to support co-management of the Hawaiian Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HHWNMS).

I have been actively involved with the sanctuary process from the very beginning in a number of capacities; as a member of the original cultural assessment and review team with NOAA sanctuary staff; as a current Hawai'i Council member of the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council since 2010; and as current Vice-President and Hawai'i Island Board Member of the non-profit Conservation Council for Hawai'i.

The State's obligatory duties as co-manager of the HHWNMS are clear, yet the co-management program has never been formally established within State law, and State funding has been non-existent since its inception in 1992. In addition, funding resources for this program has come directly from NOAA since 1998 and are set to expire in July of this year. In order for the State to underscore its primary commitment to this program and integration of State regulatory aspects, not to mention sovereign authority of State resources, it must support, at bare minimum, a full-time staff person within the DLNR- Department of Aquatic Resources. This should be of particular interest at this point since NOAA is looking at expanding management aspects to include "all natural and cultural" resources within its boundaries, of which a presentation was recently provided to the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council at its meeting held in Honolulu on March 16th – 18th, 2015 by NOAA sanctuary staff Ms. Malia Chow.

As committee members are aware, there are concerns in the general community not only of the sanctuary itself, but current proposals to include all of the natural and cultural resources within the HHWNMS, particularly within the local fishing community and cultural practitioners. The State must be involved to ease, what some may perceive, as Federal control of State waters especially with the current expansion being proposed. I am personally, extremely concerned of the potential volatility of not only the proposed expansion of HHWNMS set for this Spring, but also the Main Hawaiian Island Monk Seal Habitat Plan and proposed critical habitat also expected this Spring. These are two extremely sensitive issues right on the heels of each other, that the State has obligatory authority too, but has put forth little to no funding towards actual "management" and protection of marine mammals within State waters.

I ask that you humbly support this Bill and move it forward.

Julie Leialoha
P.O. Box 1792
Kea'au, HI 96749

