

MAR 08 2024

SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO WORK WITH THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER EXPERTS TO CONDUCT A STUDY ON THE POPULATION STATUS OF DEPLETED CORAL REEF HERBIVORES AROUND THE ISLAND OF OAHU AND DEVELOP EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE POLICIES FOR SUBSTANTIALLY REPLENISHING THOSE POPULATIONS WITHIN A DECADE.

1 WHEREAS, coral reefs provide extremely valuable ecosystem
2 goods and services for the people of Hawaii, including habitat
3 for nearshore fisheries, opportunities for various tourism and
4 recreational activities, coastal protection from waves, storms,
5 and erosion as sea level rises; and

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7 WHEREAS, reefs are also fundamental to the fabric of local
8 communities, providing a source of food, materials, and
9 traditional activities; and

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11 WHEREAS, Hawaii's coral reefs generate over \$800,000,000
12 per year in gross revenues, with coral reefs in the main
13 Hawaiian Islands having an estimated total economic value of
14 over \$33,000,000; and

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16 WHEREAS, many reefs around the island of Oahu are degraded
17 from poor land use practices, resulting in reefs dominated by
18 dead coral covered by seaweeds; and

19
20 WHEREAS, maintenance and recovery of coral reefs requires
21 abundant and diverse herbivores, which are fishes that eat
22 seaweeds, including parrotfishes (uhu), surgeon fishes (kala,
23 kole, manini, etc.), chubs (nenu), and others; and

24
25 WHEREAS, parrotfishes are also known producers of sand that
26 replenishes beaches; and

27
28 WHEREAS, abundant and diverse populations of coral reef
29 herbivores are known to keep reef surfaces clean so corals may
30 flourish; and



1 WHEREAS, declining coral reef herbivore populations result
2 in reefs dominated by seaweeds rather than corals, reducing
3 fishing opportunities and impacting other goods and services;
4 and

5
6 WHEREAS, the abundance of coral reef herbivores around the
7 island of Oahu is five percent below its potential, the lowest
8 in the State; and

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10 WHEREAS, coral reef herbivores are frequently targets of
11 spearfishing at night around the island of Oahu when the fish
12 are inactive and highly vulnerable, resulting in unsustainable
13 exploitation and unreported catch; and

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15 WHEREAS, ever-increasing ocean warming has caused coral
16 bleaching events that kill corals and are predicted to occur
17 every year in Hawaii before 2040; and

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19 WHEREAS, reefs that bleach are known to recover more
20 quickly and fully when coral reef herbivores are abundant; and

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22 WHEREAS, current statewide herbivore fishing rules are
23 insufficient to replenish herbivore populations around the
24 island of Oahu before coral bleaching becomes an annual event;
25 now, therefore,

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27 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-second
28 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2024,
29 that the Department of Land and Natural Resources is requested
30 to:

- 31
32 (1) With support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
33 Administration Pacific Islands Fisheries Science
34 Center and other experts, to conduct a study on the
35 population status of individual species and families
36 of coral reef herbivores around the island of Oahu,
37 prioritizing the severely depleted uhu and kala
38 populations; and
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40 (2) Conduct an analysis of alternative policies for
41 substantially replenishing populations of coral reef



1 herbivores around the island of Oahu within the
2 decade; and

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4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Land and
5 Natural Resources is requested to submit a report of its
6 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
7 legislation, to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2024;
8 and

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10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
11 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
12 Land and Natural Resources and Administrator of the National
13 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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OFFERED BY: 

