

JAN 15 2025

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CORAL REEFS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that coral reefs are an
2 extremely valuable resource. They are fundamental to the fabric
3 of local communities, providing a source of food, materials, and
4 traditional activities, while also providing tremendous economic
5 value. The State's coral reefs generate over \$800,000,000 per
6 year in gross revenues, and the estimated total economic value
7 of coral reefs in the main Hawaiian islands exceeds
8 \$33,000,000,000. Despite their extreme value, many reefs around
9 the island of Oahu have been degraded by poor land use practices
10 and are dominated by dead coral covered in seaweeds.

11 The legislature further finds that the maintenance and
12 recovery of coral reefs require an abundant and diverse variety
13 of coral reef herbivores, which are fishes that eat seaweeds,
14 including parrotfishes (uhu), surgeonfishes (kala, kole,
15 manini), and chubs (nenu). However, the population of coral
16 reef herbivores around Oahu is the lowest in the State, leaving
17 coral reefs dominated by seaweeds rather than corals, reducing



1 opportunities for fishing and other recreational, commercial,
2 and traditional cultural activities.

3 The legislature also finds that ever-increasing ocean
4 warming causes coral bleaching events that kill corals and are
5 predicted to occur every year in Hawaii before 2040. The
6 legislature notes that reefs that bleach recover more quickly
7 and fully when coral reef herbivores exist in abundance.
8 However, existing statewide fishing rules concerning coral reef
9 herbivores may be insufficient to replenish herbivore
10 populations around Oahu before coral bleaching becomes an annual
11 event.

12 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the
13 department of land and natural resources to:

- 14 (1) Conduct a study on the population status of certain
15 coral reef herbivores; and
16 (2) Analyze policies and strategies to restore the
17 populations of coral reef herbivores around Oahu.

18 SECTION 2. (a) The department of land and natural
19 resources shall:



- 1 (1) Conduct a study on the population status of individual
2 species and families of coral reef herbivores around
3 Oahu, prioritizing uhu and kala;
- 4 (2) Conduct an analysis of policies and strategies to
5 substantially increase the populations of coral reef
6 herbivores around Oahu within a decade; and
- 7 (3) Consult with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
8 Administration Pacific Islands Fisheries Science
9 Center and other experts as necessary.
- 10 (b) The department of land and natural resources shall
11 submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including
12 any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than
13 December 1, 2025.

14 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
16 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
17 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
18 year 2026-2027 for the study on the population status of
19 individual species of coral reef herbivore and families around
20 Oahu.




1 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
2 of land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

4

INTRODUCED BY:





S.B. NO. 246

Report Title:

DLNR; NOAA; Coral Reef Herbivores; Coral Reefs; Report; Appropriations

Description:

Requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to conduct a study on the populations of coral reef herbivores around the island of Oahu and an analysis of policies and strategies to increase the populations of coral reef herbivores around Oahu, in consultation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center and other experts. Requires a report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

