HB 1706
RELATING TO FISHERIES

House Committee on Ocean Recreation and Marine Resources

Public Hearing, February 6, 1999
8:30 a.m., Room 312, State Capitol

By
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HB 1706 would amend Chapter 188, HRS, to prohibit the possession, purchase, sale, or trade of shark fins, and would impose a bag limit of one shark per day per person.

Our comments on this measure are compiled from voluntarily submitted opinions of the listed academic sources, and as such, do not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Our reviewers strongly concur that the practice of "finning" is wasteful, as well as ecologically unwise. However, we note that at the reported prices and considering the nonselective nature of longlining and the size of the incidental shark catch, curtailing this practice will not be easy. Even if the practice of finning is eliminated, the wasteful dumping of shark carcasses will continue. An alternate approach might be to require complete documentation for every set of fins landed, and impose a tax on each set along with a requirement to land and use the carcass. This would eliminate finning, and the tax could contribute to state coffers.

However, we do have concerns about the "harvest" provisions, because clearly these will, from time to time, interfere with the aquarium collecting needs, as well as posing problems for researchers. We suggest that this could be easily resolved by writing in an exemption for research and for exhibition by public aquariums for educational purposes.