



University of Hawaii at Manoa

Environmental Center

A Unit of Water Resources Research Center
Crawford 317 • 2550 Campus Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
Telephone (808) 956-7361

RL:0937

HB 251 RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CORAL REEFS

Statement for
House Committee on Ocean and Marine Resources
Public Hearing - February 6, 1991

By
John T. Harrison, Environmental Center
Jacquelin N. Miller, Environmental Center
Paul L. Jokiel, HIMB

HB 251 appropriates \$43,000 to support a monitoring study to be performed by the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, with assistance from other University units. The purpose of the study is to evaluate an apparent disease outbreak in corals at Hanauma Bay, with corroborative control studies in Puako and Honalua Bays.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Early diagnosis of organismic disease in the marine environment is crucial if effective management is to be achieved. Coral reef experts have identified an apparently progressive discoloration and decay of coral tissues on reefs in Hanauma Bay. To date, we have no knowledge of the etiology of this phenomenon, but given the high level of environmental stress characteristic of this region, there is reason for concern that some form of management may be advisable to prevent this condition from worsening. The proposed research will establish the baseline of information necessary to evaluate the course of this coral decay.

Previous studies of Hawaiian marine ecosystems have documented the capacity of the environment to respond positively to a relaxation of stress, and to return to a high quality state. However, the degree of recovery has been shown to be directly dependent on the early diagnosis and remedial attention to the problem. The proposed funding would appear to be a modest investment in the maintenance of one of our most economically important natural resources.