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HCR 291
REQUESTING THE ADOPTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES
TO LIMIT THE TAKING OF TROPICAL FISH FOR AQUARIUM PURPOSES

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Planning and Environment
Public Hearing - April 20, 1988

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HCR 291 requests that the Department of Land and Natural Resources review the state of aquarium fish resources and catch data and establish administrative procedures to manage and conserve these resources.

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

As presently drafted, the resolution assumes that sufficient baseline data exists on the population and biology of aquarium fish resources so that a simple review of the resources would provide the basis on which administrative rules could be drafted. We believe this premise may be in error. While we support the intent of HCR 291, it seems unlikely that sufficient baseline data exists on the population and biology of aquarium fish species to permit definitive decisions to be made for administrative rule making.

Aquarium fish like most of our coral reef fish have planktonic larval stages and some ecologists believe that the limit to the adult population occurs at the time of recruitment from the plankton. For example, ongoing studies being carried out by Sea Grant researchers suggest that predation on the juveniles is exceptionally high in the first 5 days after recruitment from the plankton. While a review of the existing information on the aquarium fish resources and catch data will provide some guidance to rule making, particularly with regard to addressing areas of conflict and overfishing, definitive solutions to the decrease in populations will require continued basic research on aquarium fish biology.