SR 189
SCR 175
RELATING TO FISHING REGULATIONS

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Energy and Ocean Resources
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SR 189 and SCR 175 requests the support of Hawaii's Congressional Delegation in the control of plastic and net pollution of our oceans. The statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Those involved in studies dealing with biota in both the marine and terrestrial environments have long been aware of the serious, life threatening problems to the biota, posed by the presence of discarded plastic and nets. Ingestion of plastics and entrapment of fish, turtles, seals and birds in various types of debris commonly lost or deliberately discarded is well documented by University researchers and federal and state agencies charged with natural resource management. The problem is not limited to nets and plastics but includes many other types of discarded small objects, particularly bright metallic items that are perceived as food items. For example, one of our University researchers has reported collecting three, 10 gallon containers of discarded "Bic" lighters from the shoreline of Laysan island in the course of field studies of just a few days duration. It was not possible to determine how many of the dead birds on the shoreline were the result of ingestion of the shiny lighters, but it was clear that at least some of the lighters and a great variety of other plastic debris were associated with bird skeletons. The effects of ingestion of plastics by seabirds is currently under investigation and there is reason to believe ingestion of plastics by seabirds as well as the green sea turtle may cause mortality.

The passage of the U.S. Congress Bill HR 940, referred to as the MARPOL Annex V, which addresses concerns of plastic and net pollution, would provide a significant step toward the development of much needed legislation to address this growing problem. Furthermore, the resolve encouraging research, legislation and education at the Federal level with regard to managing the impacts of persistent refuse [sic refuge] on the
marine environment of controlled lifetime plastics, is essential for management and enforcement purposes. The development of the recommended education and training programs are likely to provide the key focus in terms of assuring recognition of the problem and encouraging compliance with the law. The Environmental Center would also like to suggest that the State of Hawaii (e.g., via the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Department of Education) attempt to reach the broadest possible public audience with information about this problem, by cooperating with scientists from the National Marine Fishery Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Hawaii and public interest groups, such as, the Audubon Society and the Conservation Council of Hawaii, to develop brief informative educational materials such as posters and brochures.