



University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Environmental Center

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SR 31 / SCR 19
REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING
TO CONDUCT A VISITOR CARRYING CAPACITY STUDY
OF THE WAIKIKI SPECIAL DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Tourism and Recreation

Public Hearing - March 28, 1995
1:00 P.M., Room 305 SOT

by

John T. Harrison, Environmental Center

SR 31 / SCR 19 seeks expedited implementation of a study of visitor carrying capacity in the Waikiki District.

Our statement on this resolution represents the considered position of the Environmental Center and not necessarily that of the University of Hawaii.

Our review of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the Convention Center revealed serious concerns relating to traffic and socio-economic impacts. In particular, our reviewers called attention to the unrealistic portrayal of traffic impacts and the inevitable requirement to expend public moneys equal to or greater than those already committed to the Convention Center project in order to remedy traffic problems which the Center would create. In the light of these findings, the need for detailed planning studies of the Waikiki area is urgent.

The Environmental Center was instrumental in the performance of carrying capacity studies of Hawaii conducted at the request of the Temporary Committee on Environmental Planning in the late 70's. At that time, we noted the inherent difficulties relating to determination of human environmental carrying capacity, mostly due to the general adaptability of human communities. While advances in measurement and assessment techniques have been made since

that study, it remains the case that human populations are versatile, and criteria of carrying capacity more likely should be viewed as benchmarks of tolerance for decreasing quality of life. Hence, while consideration of visitor capacity may provide urgently needed planning guidelines, we suggest that a fixed limit based on *human* factors alone is intrinsically arbitrary. Thus, we recommend that the study concentrate on those areas for which modeling techniques are most reliable, such as infrastructure capacities and resource availability, and we further suggest that the proposed 15-year planning horizon should be expanded by up to a factor of 2.