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Environmental Center

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HB 1133 RELATING TO AQUATIC RESOURCES

House Committee on
Ocean and Marine Resources

Public Hearing - March 1, 1993
8:30 A.M., Room 1310 SOT

By

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Richard E. Brock, Sea Grant
Bruce Carlson, Waikiki Aquarium

HB 1133 would amend Chapter 200, HRS to prohibit feeding of fish by commercial operators of other than fishing vessels in waters off of Waikiki.

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

There are two possible arguments against the fish feeding targeted by this measure:

1. The nutritional subsidy might upset the balance of a delicate ecosystem; and,
2. Unwanted species might be attracted to the feeding site.

We have objected to the indiscriminate feeding of fish in Marine Life Conservation Districts such as Hanauma Bay for the first reason. There, large amounts of food, frequently nutritionally inappropriate for the fish, were contributing to a top-heavy population that was affecting other aspects of the ecosystem. This is not apparent in the area addressed in this bill, because both the amount and type of food used are assimilated into the ecosystem without disruptive impact. Simply put, the material input from tourist related fish feeding off Waikiki is insignificant in comparison with other land derived nutrient inputs affecting the coastal waters.

If it is the second concern which primarily motivates this measure, the proposed remedy is misdirected. Rather than engaging in concern over palu used by fishermen, a feeding subsidy derived from blood products, proponents of this bill voice concern over the grain-based foods used by the Atlantis operators to concentrate reef fish. This, we suggest, is a red herring, or, more accurately, a "red Alpo".

We do not seek to trivialize the entirely legitimate concern for the safety of Waikiki's waters for recreational use. Based on our current knowledge, however, the probability of a shark attack will remain the same with or without the proposed prohibition.