

## **BALANCE OF RESOURCE USES AND RESOURCE PROTECTION COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL BOATING**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

President Clinton, Executive Order May 26, 2000

“Establish a framework for facilitating recreation and tourism. ... consistent with the protection and sustainable management of the ecosystem;”-

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING AND PRESERVING BOTH THE ECOSYSTEM AND THE SMALL BUSINESSES THAT PROVIDE THE ACCESS**

There are a very limited number of good snorkel dive destinations (coral reef and abundance of reef fish) that are also safe anchorage areas for vessels. These areas can be divided into two basic categories: Areas that are accessible only by boat and areas that are accessible by boat or land. Without the combination of safe anchorage and healthy reef ecosystem and a reasonable regulatory environment there can be no sustainable ocean tourism. Many of these anchorages have no day use moorings installed and most vessels are anchoring in sand, but unintended anchor reef damage occurs. There may be a finite limit to the number of vessels that can safely access a specific destination with a carrying capacity of how many snorkelers/divers can be on the reef and still provide a high quality guest experience.

Non-extractive use vs. extractive use: Some of these snorkel dive anchorages still allow commercial fisheries, net fisheries, and aquarium fish gathering that further deplete the resource. This happens even within some MLCD protected areas. Nearshore commercial fisheries produce about \$5 Million gross revenue. Ocean tourism is almost \$200 Million (non extractive).

Finally, these ocean tourism businesses are small, locally owned family businesses that need the basic business rights afforded all other businesses in the state in order to survive.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- The establishment of additional Marine Protected Areas with sustainable management would help meet this challenge.
- Establish Day use moorings state wide. Fast track permitting process.
- Consider MLCD status as a fish replenishment area where no commercial or net fishing allowed. Only non-consumptive use (snorkeling, diving etc. Take pictures leave bubbles)
- Carrying capacities based on good science.
- Artificial reef development (Dr. Craig MacDonald study). Creates additional revenue, creates fish habitat and takes pressure off more popular shore access reef areas.

- A Mature and Stable Ocean Tourism industry grows towards a stable, sustainable, stewardship model working in partnership with and not against government.
  - Companies are investing in the future, protecting the environment: (Day use moorings, better equipment, solid career path for employees, stable companies, better products, better experience for guests)
  - Commercial boats represent less than 3% of all registered boats. 300 businesses employing 2,000.
  - DOBOR depends on Commercial fees to cover cost of running boating program: Permitted commercial boats operating out of DOBOR facilities provide over 50 % of all boating generated revenue with less than 3% of the boat population yet is severely under funded.
  - DOBOR needs some General Funds money to support program
  - Current BLNR guidelines have a resource “use hierarchy”
    1. No human access if needed to protect resource.
    2. General public access to resource.
    3. Commercial access to resource.

(This “use hierarchy” model may not always be the best model to achieve the long-term goals for all MPA’s. Colorado’s Board of Parks and Outdoor Recreation River Outfitter Licensing Program give the Licensed River Outfitter priority above the general public to ensure the safety of the rafting public and the preservation of the resource.)

- Ocean Tourism Industry should be working in Partnerships with freestanding non-profits to educate public and protect resource, guided by Cultural (Hawaiian) values.
- Collaborative commercial use develops: Molokini Model where 41 companies share time on 25 moorings.
- Community based businesses provide best sustainable base for responsible use of MPA’s
- Continued stability of Ocean Tourism Industry is vital for long-term success with MPA’s. Basic business rights and reasonable expectation of permit renewal are essential.

#### **SUMMARY:**

There are Marine Protected areas that require boats and expertise to safely access. It is recognized by many resource managers that regulated ocean tourism businesses provide the best mechanism to providing this access for the vast majority of the public, while protecting the rights of the self-guided public. These **permitted** companies with well-trained staff have a track record for safety and responsible actions within the environment. Government also recognizes that these small companies make a significant contribution to the local economies--of which they are an integral part--as well as providing funding to administrate and manage the resource. These companies will not continue to invest in the future of their businesses and these resources without the reasonable expectation that if they operate responsibly and obey the laws they will be granted continued commercial access permits. Again, the main issue is to balance resource protection with safe public access, which is often provided almost exclusively by permitted commercial operators with many years of experience.