

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Division of Aquatic Resources
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

July 24, 2015

Board of Land and Natural Resources
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

REPORT TO THE BOARD ON DISCUSSIONS ON SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF
MARINE LIFE IN HAWAII FOLLOWING ADMINISTRATIVE RULES, CHAPTER 13-77,
OAHU AQUARIUM LIFE MANAGEMENT, APPROVED BY THE BOARD AT ITS
MEETING OF OCTOBER 24, 2014 (NON-DECISION MAKING ITEM)

Submitted for your information is a preliminary report to the Board on a discussion during the Board's approval of Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR), Chapter 13-77, regulating the take of aquarium species for Oahu island only. At its meeting of October 24, 2014, the Board 1) approved the final adoption of Chapter 13-77, Oahu Aquarium Life Management and 2) made a request to staff. The request was to meet with stakeholders, including those who opposed the rules at the Board meeting, to discuss the question of sustainable take of marine life, determine what needs to be done, and to report back to the Board after six months.

First Stakeholder Meeting

The stakeholder meeting was held on November 7, 2014 in the Boardroom at 3:00 PM. In attendance were fourteen individuals ranging from scientists, commercial aquarium fishers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The meeting started with some background information for Board member Vernon Char to inform him of the issues around aquarium collecting.

It was decided quickly that a separate "science" group meeting should be held to better focus on the science behind the question of what is known about the resources. This science meeting should be held with scientists working in Hawaii knowledgeable about the local fisheries. In addition, it was agreed that the meeting should be held without the collectors or the NGOs in attendance to avoid some of the parallel discussions on issues rather than the science.

Science Group Meeting

The science group met on February 12, 2015 in the Boardroom at 4:00 PM and was attended by nine scientists from the NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, Chaminade University, UH Fisheries Ecology Research Lab, Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Hawaii Cooperative Fisheries Research Unit, and the Division of Aquatic Resources. The meeting purpose was to find out which researcher is doing what kinds of studies. This would provide a

basic idea of what information is available. Each person provided an overview of the kinds of work they were doing in Hawaii relating to reef fish status.

A number of general themes emerged from the discussion:

- 1) There exists a lot of different coral reef data and there are a lot of different tools available to determine stock status;
- 2) A combination of tools, i.e. managed areas, size limits, seasons, will likely be needed to adequately manage the State's marine resources (no one tool will be enough);
- 3) Some species appear to be doing fine in terms of estimated abundance and other metrics while some species are probably in need of more management;
- 4) DAR management needs to more clearly direct the science by asking more specific questions to answer;
- 5) DAR management needs to clearly define what sustainable (or a similar term) means and what are the management objectives (sustaining for what purpose);
- 6) There are federal resources available to fund scientific studies that will at least start to answer the management questions when they are developed;
- 7) There should be a management plan for sustainable fisheries, including aquarium collecting;
- 8) There should be an ecosystem-based management plan that includes managed areas;
- 9) Should include management strategy evaluation (MSE) to guide managers on which strategies are having the most affect; and
- 10) There is no immediate need to hold another science group meeting until management determines which questions to ask.

Delayed Reporting Back to the Board

While the Board directed staff to report back to them in six months, this report was delayed due to the following circumstances:

- 1) The new chairperson selection was delayed until late April and we did not want to brief the Board until the new chairperson was confirmed;
- 2) Changes in DAR management staff required shuffling of existing staff to fill the void;
- 3) The legislative session was on-going and there were a number of bills and budget matters to deal with and limited staff to handle the duties required;
New members were added to the Board during the session so we wanted to wait until the new members were confirmed; and
- 4) Other priority issues emerged that required more immediate attention.

Next Steps

A second stakeholder meeting is being planned to go over the science group meeting discussions. The science group meeting notes have been distributed to the stakeholders and scientists for their information but a discussion with the original group on the science group themes may be helpful.

The question of if the resources are being sustainably fished is dependent upon a good understanding of what "sustainable" means. While the State does not have a working definition

for sustainable, there are a number of terms used by federal and quasi-federal fisheries agencies under the guidance of the federal Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (MSA).

We will give the Board a more detailed briefing in the next couple months on how other fisheries agencies define this and related terms to measure fish population status. We will also be evaluating how the State might use these on-going efforts to not "re-invent the wheel" so we may focus our limited resources where they will provide the most benefit.

Respectfully submitted,



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APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



SUZANNE D. CASE
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