

LATE TESTIMONY

Rep. Ken Ito, Chair
Rep. Sharon E. Har, Vice Chair
Committee on Water, Land, & Ocean Resources
Friday, March 13, 2009

In support of HCR 104 and HR 84

As a commercial aquarium fish collector and member of the Hawaii Tropical Fish Association, I am in support of these measures. Although it has been clear that the aquarium fishery in Hawaii has remained at sustainable levels for many years, we have recently been faced with several attempts by special interest groups at passing legislation to put us out of business. In each of these cases, the justifications have been based largely on emotion and false information that has no valid scientific basis.

I firmly believe that the local aquarium industry is a valuable asset to the state of Hawaii. It provides employment to hundreds of Hawaii residents. It is a critical part of a diversified economy, supporting numerous small businesses both directly and indirectly. It provides enjoyment and recreation to thousands of aquarium owners in the state and around the world, helping to share the beauty of our oceans and educate others about our marine resources.

If our fishery is to be sustained into the future, it is vital that the state conduct the proper studies to understand the resource and manage it in a responsible and appropriate manner. Although I understand the concerns of the department that the current budget may not provide adequate funds to complete such a study, I would like to remind the committee that the benefits of investing in our natural resources far outweigh the cost. The aquarium industry brings millions of dollars into the state each year, and the cost of performing a stock assessment would be trivial compared to the long-term benefits of maintaining a sustainable fishery.

One point I would like to emphasize is that, as mentioned in the text of the resolution, it is critical that fishermen be involved in the design of the study. This is especially important on Oahu, which has a very large reef area compared with other islands, containing a wide diversity of habitats that many in the scientific community are not aware of. Also, fish populations in certain areas can vary greatly depending on the time of year, weather, and many other factors. As fishermen, we understand the resource like nobody else, and if any study is to accurately reflect the nature of the resource it is important that we be involved.

Thanks you for the opportunity to testify,



Matthew Ross

LATE TESTIMONY

March 12, 2009

Chairman Ito and Committee Members,

Please pass HR 84. I am a commercial fisherman for marine aquarium fish. As long as I can remember we have been dealing with legislation trying to ban the commercial collection of aquarium fish. It is always based on someone's arbitrary perception that we are depleting a fisheries resource.

This resolution, calling for studies of various marine fish species, will undoubtedly aid the state of Hawaii, and fisherman, in any future laws concerning the management of an important near shore fishery. I am also confident these studies will confirm the resources we utilize are indeed sustainable.

Thank you,

Dennis T Yamaguchi