

To: Hawai'i Department of Aquatic Resources

RE: Support of proposed rule updates to the Maui/Lanai fishing regulations

To Whom it May Concern:

On behalf of Pacific Whale Foundation's staff, volunteers and 12,000 active members, this letter is to express Pacific Whale Foundation's support of the proposed rule updates to the Maui/Lanai fishing regulations.

Pacific Whale Foundation is a non-profit marine research, education and advocacy organization that funds its conservation work through its Eco-Adventure snorkel and whale watch tours. As such, Pacific Whale Foundation has a vested interest in protecting and enhancing Maui's coral reef ecosystems.

Over the years, Pacific Whale Foundation has advocated for numerous coral reef conservation and preservation programs, from supporting the installation and maintenance of mooring balls throughout Maui, to championing the "Pump don't Dump" method of vessel sewage disposal, to promoting responsible ocean use and snorkeling practices. We understand the complexities of coral reef ecosystems and coral reef declines, and recognize that the threats to coral reefs are numerous and span multiple stakeholder groups. As such, Pacific Whale Foundation advocates for a holistic approach to the elimination of coral reef threats, one that requires action, participation, and at times sacrifice, from the multiple community groups that utilize Maui's coral reef ecosystems.

Evidence of coral reef and reef fish decline have been documented throughout Maui, indicating that current fishing regulations are falling short of their intended goals. Large class sizes of important fish species are being eliminated from Maui's reef, severely undermining the species ability to 1. Effectively reproduce and 2. Maintain its ecological role as part of a healthy reef system.

Pacific Whale Foundation supports the proposed rules for their scientific basis, as well as for their careful consideration of the complexities of Maui's coral reef ecosystems. The rules address the antiquities and inadequacies of the current regulations, which are outdated with respect to current knowledge regarding the biology/life history of reef fish and ecosystem connectivities. The rules importantly do not propose a one-size-fits-all solution. Rather, an examination of the proposed rules demonstrates that the new regulations have been developed with utmost regard to enhancing the reproductive capabilities of declining fish stocks on a species by species basis.

While the rules specifically target fishers (commercial and recreational), it should be noted that a number of diverse community groups are currently engaged in a multitude of projects designed to address coral reef threats on numerous (for example the installation of rain gardens to regulate land-based pollution, promotion of sustainable coastline development, beach cleanups and coral reef awareness campaigns targeted at ocean users and the visitor industry, to name a few). The proposed fishing rules thus represent an essential aspect of any long-term coral reef management plan.

Pacific Whale Foundation appreciates the opportunity to express its support for the proposed updates to the Maui/Lanai fishing regulations. We believe that comprehensive and effective fisheries management represents one aspect of maintaining healthy coral reef communities, and that the proposed rules are the first step towards ensuring the revitalization of Maui and Lanai's coral reef fish populations.

Sincerely,

Lauren Campbell

Conservation Manager  
Pacific Whale Foundation