



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF HAWAII'S CORAL REEFS KICKS OFF AT STATE CAPITOL

HONOLULU -- Numerous government agencies, nonprofit organizations and community groups are collaborating to launch the International Year of the Reef in Hawai'i on Friday, Jan. 25 at the Hawai'i State Capitol.

The event, which runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., will officially launch the State campaign that is part of a world-wide initiative. In Hawai'i, Malama Hawai'i and the Department of Land and Natural Resources along with several partners will be coordinating outreach events and activities throughout the year.

The mission of the campaign is to raise awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs and threats to their sustainability, and to motivate people to take action to protect them.

Gov. Linda Lingle will sign a declaration announcing the official start of the International Year of the Reef in Hawai'i at 10 a.m. in the Executive Chambers on the fifth floor of the State Capitol. She will urge all citizens to commit to the obligation of protecting Hawai'i's unique coral reef ecosystems for today and future generations. The ceremony can be viewed as a livecast on the Governor's website at <http://hawaii.gov/gov/>

The kick-off event will also feature educational booths and displays about threats to Hawai'i's coral reefs and actions being taken to protect this valuable natural resource. Nainoa Thompson, navigator and executive director of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, will speak about the health and importance of Hawai'i's oceans.

“The mission of this year-long campaign is to raise awareness about the value and importance of Hawai‘i’s coral reefs and threats to their survival,” said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson. “We hope to motivate people to take action to protect this vital resource that is essential to preserve if we are to create a sustainable future for our islands.”

Coral reef ecosystems provide food, shoreline protection, white sandy beaches, underwater paradises and surf breaks. The reefs in Hawai‘i support more than 7,000 species of which one quarter are found nowhere else in the world.

More than 80 percent of all visitors to Hawai‘i participate in ocean recreation activities, which depend on healthy coral reef ecosystems and contribute to a diversified local economy by generating an estimated \$700 million in gross revenues.

Like elsewhere in the world, coral reefs in the Hawaiian islands are experiencing a decline in populations of many species of reef fish, corals, invertebrates and marine algae. In addition, these ecosystems are suffering from the impacts of land-based pollution, irresponsible fishing, the proliferation of non-native species, coral disease and bleaching worsened by rising sea temperatures, high recreational use and the interruption of stream water flow.

For more information about Hawai‘i’s coral reefs, their unique ecosystems, their importance to the state and its economy, their threats and what people can do to help protect this important natural resource, visit www.iyor-hawaii.org.

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