



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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**DLNR SETS PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING ON MAUI TO SHARE REPORT
FROM INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION ON DAMAGE TO KEAWAKAPU REEF**

Report will be posted on DLNR webpage when completed

HONOLULU -- The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) will hold a public information meeting on Maui on Tuesday, March 30 to present to the Maui community the findings and recommendations of an independent federal investigation on damage caused to the Keawakapu reef last December. DLNR will be seeking public input on the recommendations and options for restoration of live coral in the future.

The meeting will be held in Kihei, Maui at Kamali'i Elementary School Cafeteria 180 Ke Alii Alanui Street, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Two federal agencies, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have produced an independent assessment on damage caused to live coral when a set of concrete modules were submerged by DLNR employees to expand the state's Keawakapu artificial reef off the coast of Maui on December 2, 2009. The federal report is being finalized this week.

The Department has reviewed a draft copy and should receive the final report and post it next week, in time for the public to review prior to the public meeting on March 30. The report will be posted on the DLNR website at hawaii.gov/dlnr/dar/pdf/keawakapu.pdf

The public may also send comments on the report's findings and preferences regarding further remedial action to keawakapu.comments@yahoo.com.

"We are extremely sorry and deeply embarrassed that live coral damage occurred during the deployment of an artificial reef project overseen and managed by the Division of Aquatic Resources, whose primary

mission includes the protection and enhancement of live coral on our ocean floors. The Division of Aquatic Resources apologizes to the citizens of the State of Hawai'i for this unfortunate incident," said Dan Polhemus, DAR administrator.

"As stewards of Hawai'i's natural resources, we take full responsibility and will hold ourselves to the highest standards to take all necessary steps to assure this type of incident does not occur in the future," said Laura H. Thielen, DLNR chairperson.

The investigation by the federal agencies was conducted in January and involved a site inspection, a preliminary assessment of damage to corals, preliminary recommendations as to immediate actions that may be undertaken to mitigate the damage, and best practices to avoid damage in the future.

The current federal assessment is the first phase of an agreement between DLNR and these agencies, and is focused on immediate mitigation of current damage and prevention of further potential damage. The second phase, which has not yet begun, will address the longer term mitigation work that might be required of the division and the Department.

Since 2008, DLNR has acted to set in place stronger enforcement measures to better protect Hawai'i's coral reefs. New legislation has increased penalties for reef damage, and strict operating conditions have been placed on private operator permits, including the stewardship conditions recently placed on commercial tour operators at Molokini.

The division has also brought a series of enforcement actions against private operators for damage to coral. Funds from a recent settlement will be utilized to install day use moorings around the state and to support the development of observation and compliance protocols for volunteers and DLNR-Enforcement-assisted trainings for current Makai Watch groups.

The State of Hawai'i established the artificial reef program in 1961 to create additional marine life habitat in sandy or barren nearshore areas, increase the diversity of reef fish in these areas and raise fish biomass and recreational opportunities. Since that time, five artificial reefs have been established -- four off O'ahu and one off Maui. The reefs are comprised mainly of concrete "z-modules", other concrete material, barges, large truck tires, and several small vessels. Together they comprise a total of 2,027 acres of underwater habitat for fish, invertebrate, corals and other sea life.

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For more information news media may contact:
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A map of the Keawakapu artificial reef may be found on the Division of Aquatic Resources website at <http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/dar/pubs/ARKeawakapu.pdf>