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HB 1706 H.D.1 RELATING TO FISHERIES

House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Public Hearing, February 16, 1999
2:00 p.m., Room 325, State Capitol

By

John Harrison, Environmental Center
Richard Brock, Sea Grant
Bruce Carlson, Aquarium

HB 1706 H.D.1 would amend Chapter 188, HRS, to prohibit the possession, purchase, sale, or trade of shark fins unless possessing documentation that the fins were taken from a shark landed whole in the State.

Our comments on this measure are compiled from voluntarily submitted opinions of the listed academic sources, and as such, do not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Our reviewers strongly concur that the practice of "finning" is wasteful, as well as ecologically unwise. However, we note that at the reported prices and considering the nonselective nature of longlining and the size of the incidental shark catch, curtailing this practice will not be easy. Even if the practice of finning were eliminated, the wasteful dumping of shark carcasses would continue unless a market-driven processing industry for whole sharks arose. This measure provides incentive for such a market stimulus, while providing a means through simple documentation to allow a reasonable continuation of the lucrative shark-fin trade. Those boats with appropriate storage capacities could remain profitably involved in the shark fishery, while longliners lacking space to store sharks would be induced to release hooked sharks.