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SB 729
RELATING TO ANGUILLA

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Agriculture and Environmental Protection
Public Hearing - March 7, 1991

By
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James Parrish, Hawaii Cooperative Fishery Research Unit
Richard Brock, Hawaii Institute for Marine Biology/Sea Grant
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SB 729 would amend HRS 150A-6 to permit a government agency to bring into the state eels of the genus and species Anguilla rostrata and Anguilla japonica for experimental or other scientific purposes under certain conditions to be set by the Board of Agriculture.

Our statement on this bill does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Since 1973, the Environmental Center with guidance from a broad base of professional biologists and natural scientists has presented testimony calling attention to the environmental damage that could result from the introduction of Anguillid eels to Hawaii. Each year, bills are introduced that would modify HRS 150A-6 to permit the introduction of eels and each year overwhelming testimony has been presented against the passage of those bills. This hearing today marks the 15th year on which I have had the task of soliciting information from my colleagues at the University of Hawaii with special expertise in the natural history and biology of eels. The information I have gathered this year is consistent with that given in the earliest hearings in 1973 and 1977 with perhaps one major exception. The evidence of the environmental threat of these animals has become more thoroughly documented with each passing year. The literature is filled with

reports of the eel's abilities to escape and to carry out substantial overland migrations across only damp grass with resulting risk to native ecosystems and existing aquaculture facilities. Furthermore, their predatory accomplishments in feeding on young water birds, voracious appetites for virtually every other stream creature, as well as evidence of their potential for carrying bacterial and fungal pathogens, have all been fully documented in the literature.

We continue to oppose legislation that would permit the introduction of Anguillid eels for the reasons previously noted in all our past testimonies.