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SB 2649 SD 1
Relating to Marine Life Conservation Areas

House Committees on
Transportation
Ocean and Marine Resources
Public Hearing - March 23, 1988

By
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SB 2649 S.D. 1 would amend HRS 190 by adding a new section directing the department of land and natural resources, in consultation with the department of transportation, to adopt rules for the regulation of moorings in each marine conservation district.

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

Destruction of coral reef areas due to dragging anchors and mooring chains has become a serious problem in marine life conservation (MLC) districts. It is highly appropriate to provide DLNR with the statutory authority to regulate mooring in these areas and we are in general support of the intent of this bill. However, we do not concur with the committee report that only commercial mooring should be prohibited in the MLC districts. It should be recognized that coral reef regrowth after breakage from mooring lines and anchors is very slow. Hence even though the private, non-commercial visitors to a MLC district may be few in number, a single boat can inflict damage to a coral area that may take years to recover. We urge that subsequent committee reports encourage DLNR to develop whatever mooring regulations are needed to achieve protection of the marine life conservation districts without committee direction relative to prohibitions or allowances for commercial or non-commercial moorings.

To address the problem, we suggest that DLNR and DOT be encouraged to install permanent moorings in those conservation areas where anchoring facilities are needed and thereby permit both commercial and private enjoyment of the MLC district while eliminating the source of reef destruction caused by dragging anchors or mooring line scour. We understand that The Ocean Recreation Council of Hawaii (TORCH), has developed a prototype mooring system that has minimal environmental impacts. These mooring systems are presently being tested at Molokini island MLC district.

A Unit of Water Resources Research Center

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