



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 20, 2021

Brian J. Neilson
Dept. of Land and Natural Resources
Division of Aquatic Resources
1151 Punchbowl Street, Room 330
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Support for Waikiki Marine Life Conservation District Coral Restoration Project

Dear Mr. Neilson,

This letter is provided to express our strong support for the State of Hawaii's proposal for coral restoration within the Waikiki Fisheries Management Area (FMA). This project will use existing resources at the Division of Aquatic Resources' Hawaii Coral Restoration Nursery (HCRN) to produce large living coral modules for outplanting in a concentrated area within Waikiki FMA, thereby enhancing shallow-water marine tourism for the area.

The work of the HCRN is crucial to preserving and restoring valuable reef resources, particularly in the face of vulnerability from tourism and environmental pressures, and their previous work speaks loudly to the benefits of the program for restoring Hawaii's degraded nearshore reefs. This project provides an opportunity to expand the benefits of the HCRN to degraded areas within one of Oahu's few no-take areas. Waikiki is a primary destination for tourism, and this project would contribute to an enhanced free and maintained reef snorkeling experience that will also help relieve intense visitor pressure on reef habitats around the island. In addition, the proposed work will support revival of Hawaii's tourism industry following the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We encourage the reviewers to support funding of this project, as it is in alignment with goals for restoration of both nearshore reef environments and Hawaii's post-pandemic economy. Expansion of the HCRN's coral restoration efforts will improve Hawaii's reef habitats, while enhancing recreation opportunities for visitors and local communities alike.

If you have any questions or require clarification as to anything I have written, please feel welcome to contact me by phone at (808) 587-8388 or by email at senlee@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Respectfully,

Chris Lee

Senator Chris Lee
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