

Resolution Supporting Legislative Action  
to End the Commercial Harvesting of Reef Wildlife for the Aquarium Pet Trade

WHEREAS, Hawai'i's coral reefs and the wildlife dependent upon them are severely threatened by the commercial harvesting of reef wildlife including the aquarium pet trade outside Hawai'i, in addition to climate-change-induced ocean heat waves, pollution, and sedimentation; and

WHEREAS, the aquarium pet trade targets herbivorous fish for ornamental purposes though they are critical to coral reef persistence in the face of climate change which is forecast to kill 70% of Hawai'i's coral reefs over the next 30 years;<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, the Ko'olau Poko Sustainable Communities Plan, adopted in August 2017, is founded on principles of sustainability that promote the long-term health of O'ahu, its people, and its community resources for current and future generations, and expressly focuses on the protection of physical and biological resources, and the use of resources "so they are not depleted, permanently damaged or destroyed"; and

WHEREAS, the Ko'olaupoko region includes Kāne'ōhe Bay, which is a unique open space resource known for its beauty, rich cultural heritage, and recreational value, and is the largest sheltered body of water in the main Hawaiian Islands; and

WHEREAS, commercial aquarium catch reports reveal that collection of the herbivorous yellow tang, *kole*, orangespine unicornfish (*umaumalei*), and Achilles tang (*paku'iku'i*) in Kāne'ōhe Bay dramatically increased from 8,593 in 2018 to 36,494 in 2019, with the yellow tang take exceeding the average island-wide take going back to 2000;<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS, coral reefs and the wildlife dependent upon them are a Public Trust resource "held in trust by the State for the benefit of the people" and 83% of residents polled support ending the destructive aquarium trade;<sup>3</sup> and

WHEREAS, legislative action to end the commercial harvesting of reef wildlife for the aquarium pet trade is consistent with the goals of the Ko'olau Poko Sustainable Communities Plan, which focuses on the long-term protection of community resources," including the protection and enhancement of Ko'olaupoko's "natural, cultural, historic, agricultural, and aquacultural/fishpond resources"; and

WHEREAS, commercial harvesting of reef wildlife for ornamental purposes outside Hawai'i is neither compatible with the local values and lifestyles of Hawai'i's residents, nor does it significantly contribute to the quality of life or economy of Hawai'i; and

WHEREAS, by reducing the abundance of marine life and diminishing the beauty and health of Hawai'i's coral reefs, the aquarium trade degrades the value and limits the myriad of benefits provided by these critically important ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, this highly destructive and wasteful enterprise can no longer be justified, nor be mitigated by mere regulation, given the challenges with enforcement.

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<sup>1</sup> *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II* [Reidmiller, D.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Mavcock, and B.C. Steward (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA.

<sup>2</sup> 2018-2019 DLNR Aquarium Trade Catch Reports

<sup>3</sup> Anthology Research, 2017: Hawai'i Resident Study

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council urges the Legislature to take action to end commercial harvesting of our coral reef wildlife in Kāneʻohe Bay for the aquarium pet trade and to provide adequate resources to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for enforcement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Hawaiʻi, President of the State Senate, Speaker of the State House of Representatives, Office of Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Office of Representative Scot Matayoshi, Office of Representative Lisa Kitagawa, Chair of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, Administrator of the Division of Aquatic Resources, and the Kāneʻohe Bay Master Plan Permitted Interaction Group.