****

**DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**NEIL ABERCROMBIE**
GOVERNOR

**WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.**
CHAIRPERSON

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Oct. 21, 2014

**Hawaii Makai Watch Program Gains Official Recognition**

HONOLULU – In a unanimous decision, the state Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) granted official recognition of the Hawaii Makai Watch program. This action allows the program to apply for memorandums of agreement (MOAs) with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

Makai Watch is a community stewardship program aimed at enhancing near-shore resources by providing opportunities for people to participate and collaborate with resource managers and enforcement officers. The program includes training for volunteers, requirements for a sponsoring organization and a site coordinator at each location. Each Makai Watch community agrees to at least 20 hours of volunteer time each month.

“After many years, many hands, and dedicated efforts toward planning, coordinating, and collaborating with communities, organizations, and the government, we have now formalized the Makai Watch program with official recognition by the BLNR,” said Randy Awo, administrator for the DLNR’s Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE).

The Makai Watch program works collaboratively with the DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR) and DOCARE. These divisions also provide guidance as part of an advisory group, made up of other government agencies, program partners and funders. The advisory group provides support to the seven Makai Watch communities across the state, including Haena and Hanalei on Kauai, Pupukea and Maunalua on Oahu, Kaanapali on Maui, and Kaupulehu and Puako on Hawaii Island.

“This milestone is the result of hard work and dedication from those that have come before us”, said DOCARE Makai Watch coordinator Luna Kekoa. “Communities across the state want to be stewards of their areas and can now provide a critical resource to the DLNR through programs like this.”

Makai Watch training is offered on each island for volunteers to learn about the Observation and Incident Reporting (IOR) component of the program. This allows participants to learn and identify a resource violation, learn and clarify common rules and regulations, and also how to efficiently report a resource violation to DOCARE to allow for proper response and follow-up.

For a video presentation of the BLNR briefing on the Makai Watch program, visit: <http://dlnr.hawaii.gov/blog/2014/08/22/dlnr-makai-watch/>

**Information Contact:**

Luna Kekoa

Hawaii Makai Watch Coordinator

DLNR-DOCARE

Edward.L.Kekoa@hawaii.gov

**Media Contact:**

Dan Dennison

Senior Communications Manager

DLNR

808-587-0407

Dan.w.dennison@hawaii.gov