



## University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program

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School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

March 27, 2025

Chair Dawn N.S. Chang  
Board of Land and Natural Resources  
State of Hawai'i  
P.O. Box 621  
Honolulu, HI 96809

Re: University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program in Support of Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP)

Dear Board of Land and Natural Resources:

On behalf of the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant), I am writing to express our strongest support for the continued and expanded efforts of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP). We have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of their work on Hawai'i's ecosystems, public health, and marine science education, and we are deeply impressed by their professionalism and dedication.

PMDP has established itself as a national leader in marine debris cleanup, outreach education, innovation, and direct action. Their tireless efforts in removing derelict fishing gear and other debris from the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument are vital for protecting the fragile ecosystems and endangered species within this unique and irreplaceable environment. The impact of their work is clearly demonstrated in the collaborative research with PMDP, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Protected Species Division, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, and Hawai'i Sea Grant that was featured on the front cover of [\*Science Magazine\*](#), providing evidence that marine debris removal significantly reduced entanglement of endangered Hawaiian monk seals.

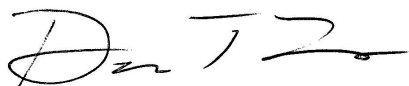
The national recognition of PMDP's innovative approach and effectiveness is evidenced by the NOAA National Sea Grant Marine Debris Challenge awarded to PMDP in 2023 for the "Development of New Cutting and Lifting Technologies to Increase Efficiency of Derelict Fishing Gear Removal," totaling \$1,830,345. This significant investment underscores the critical importance of their work, and the trust placed in their ability to develop and implement cutting-edge solutions. The Hawai'i Sea Grant Center for Excellence in Marine Science Education is currently developing a [\*Voice of the Sea\*](#) episode on this project and will be featured on local cable channels in Hawai'i, Guam, American Samoa, and Federated States of Micronesia as well as YouTube. This PMDP project demonstrates their dedicated leadership as ocean stewards and innovators, which has been recognized and lauded by former NOAA Administrator Dr. Rick Spinrad.

*The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program supports an innovative program of research, education, and extension services directed to the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources of the state, region, and nation.  
Science serving Hawai'i and the Pacific since 1968.*

Furthermore, PMDP has been an incredible partner in launching our annual science-art exhibit, “Refuse REFUSE” in November 2024 focused on marine debris. This free, month-long exhibit with PMDP featured a Youth Art Competition, artwork created from marine debris by 15 local artists, and a community-engaged artist. This collaborative event was instrumental in raising public awareness about the pervasive issue of marine debris impacting Hawai‘i. This event engaged K-12 educators, students, residents, scientists, local stewards, and tourists. We were particularly proud to partner with PMDP during their recent achievement of collecting one million pounds of marine debris from the monument, an accomplishment that underscores their exceptional commitment and impact.

The University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program strongly believes that the continued support and expansion of PMDP’s efforts are essential for the long-term health and sustainability of Hawai‘i’s marine environment. We urge the State of Hawai‘i Board on Land and Natural Resources to recognize the invaluable contributions of PMDP and provide the necessary resources to ensure their continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren T. Lerner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Darren" being the most prominent part.

Darren T. Lerner, PhD  
Director  
University of Hawai‘i Sea Grant College Program







# HISG\_PMDP\_LoS\_27Mar2025

Final Audit Report

2025-03-28

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**From:** [Marylou Staman - NOAA Federal](#)  
**To:** [DLNR.BLNR.Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Summer Martin - NOAA Federal](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony in support of PMDP  
**Date:** Thursday, March 27, 2025 9:33:36 PM

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Aloha,

On behalf of the NOAA Marine Turtle Biology and Assessment Program (MTBAP) at the Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, I would like to share my support of the important work that the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project conducts in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. MTBAP is proud to partner with PMDP to provide safe and respectful marine turtle handling and intervention trainings, and PMDP's clean up missions on Tern Island have provided direct life-saving interventions for wildlife caught in degrading infrastructure. Their highly skilled and thoroughly trained team have been a vital resource to the turtle program in the PMNM, from recognizing and mitigating wildlife hazards, to removing unimaginable quantities of foreign material from the ecosystems. Their efforts will have a positive impact on the honu population for years to come, especially if they are able to continue their grueling work!

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Mahalo,  
Marylou

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**Marylou Staman, M.S.**

*Marine Biologist | Marine Turtle Biology and Assessment Program (MTBAP)*  
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NOAA Fisheries | U.S. Department of Commerce  
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