
[EXTERNAL] BLNR Board Meeting 2.27.2026. Kaupulehu Marine Replenishment Area

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Date Fri 2/27/2026 6:57 AM

To DLNR.BLNR.Testimony <blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov>

February 27, 2026
Land and Natural Resources Board Members
Honolulu, Hawaii

RE: Division of Aquatic Resources Agenda Item #3-KAUPULEHU Marine Protected Area-
Please EXTEND FOR ANOTHER 10 YEARS. Why?

- No real replenishment has occurred
- No enforcement for Try Wait bag limits (only 2 DAR enforcement officers for the whole westside)

Aloha Board Members-

The MPA at Kukio and near the Kona Village -- Kaupulehu (is due to expire in 2026) and the reef there is just getting back to "fair" after the tsunami of 2011 and 2 bleaching events. I snorkel and swim across the bay several times per week. I know each coral head and schools of fish. Please extend the Management Plan another 10 years at least, if not made permanent. I believe that protecting our near shore waters is a National Trust Issue. It states the public trust in the State Constitution. Matter of fact, MPAs should extend along the entire west coast of the Big Island to protect the fish stocks and prevent overfishing by fisherman and aquarium fishing. The fish stocks have not come back to pre-tsunami levels.

Here's why I think **there should be more MPAs**, if not ALL near shore waters protected.... fishermen can fish off the reef in the deeper water and catch larger fish if the reefs are protected.

There is little to **NO ENFORCEMENT**- The Try Wait plan all sounds good- but in the 22 years I have been swimming there I have never seen a DLNR guy. At a meeting I attended with a presentation on bag limits by the Try Wait group, they said that they rely on us to alert them to violations. I am not going to approach someone toting a spear gun and ask to inspect their bag and take photos as proof. Just last week I saw a dead lobster with a hole from a spear gun left to die near the haul out beach area.

Look at Maui and Oahu, you can see the dead reefs. This is where our reefs are headed if we don't protect them. Hilo Bay is contaminated. The reef at Kahalu'u in Kona is contaminated with sewage from 69 cesspools in homes around the bay, I ended up in the hospital close to sepsis with an awful infection that went to the bone. We need safe places to swim without contamination.

Please leave this Marine Protected area for 10 more years, there is no enforcement to be able to limit the take on the reefs.

With warm aloha,
Debbie Hecht

Please consider the following information:

A study by Alan Friedlander, a researcher at UH Mānoa's [Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology](#) and chief scientist with the [National Geographic Society Pristine Seas](#) (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/aqc.3043>) discovered that **while the state has many marine management areas, most are too small and allow multiple forms of human use within their boundaries, which limit their ability to conserve biodiversity and restore depleted fisheries.** Fully and highly protected waters cover only 3.4% of Hawai'i's nearshore areas, and only 0.5% are within MPAs where all fishing is prohibited, which provides full protection for fish to grow, reproduce and replenish adjacent fished populations. This study, along with the MPA guide, Friedlander says provides critical information to assist the state in reaching its 2030 goal.

“Key in reaching this goal is to create an ecologically connected network of marine management areas that can conserve Hawai'i's unique marine biodiversity and rebuild and sustain productive nearshore fisheries,” Friedlander said. “With climate change and increased coral bleaching already occurring in the islands, establishing larger and more management areas will help protect the state's nearshore resources into the future.”

<https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2021/09/09/marine-protected-areas-guidelines/>

"The state has a similar goal of effectively managing 30% of Hawai'i's nearshore waters by 2030. Alan Friedlander, with more than 40 biological and social scientists from 38 institutions across six continents authored [“The MPA Guide: A Framework to Achieve Global Goals for the Ocean](#) (<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abf0861>) to provide a consistent science-based framework to discuss, categorize, track and evaluate MPAs. The guide was published in *Science* on September 9, 2021.

“Marine protected areas are a central tool for ocean protection; however, there are different interpretations of what the ‘protected’ in ‘marine protected areas’ actually means. The reality is that not all MPAs are equal, and not all MPAs are set up to achieve their stated goals,” Friedlander said. “The guide aims to provide clarity around MPAs and deliver a new, evidence- based picture of where we stand on ocean protection and what we still need to do to safeguard ocean health.”

Scientific studies at UH show the following:

“This standardized global assessment illustrates the benefits that MPAs provide for recreational anglers, confirming the effectiveness of MPAs in enhancing fish biomass and local fisheries,” shared Simone Franceschini, principal investigator of the study and a postdoctoral researcher at HIMB. **“Our study found that MPAs may take more than 20 years to show tangible spillover effects in the adjacent areas, which helps to set realistic expectations about the timeframe over which a marine reserve can be expected to have this type of effect on surrounding fisheries.”**

"Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are having a positive spillover effect, producing more “trophy-size” fish just outside of the fully protected areas, and the effect is growing stronger over time. That's according to research led by University of Hawai'i at Mānoa scientists at

the [Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology](#) (HIMB) published in [Science Advances](#). The research provides the first global assessment of the benefits of MPAs. "Trophy-size" refers to fish that are exceptionally long or heavy and are considered a rare, prized catch.

https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2024/07/23/trophy-size-fish-mpas/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=UH+News+072424

I believe that protecting our reefs and fisheries is a public trust issue, protecting these natural resources is fundamental to protecting the health of our island ecosystem.

"Without leaps of imagination or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all is a form of planning."-**Gloria Steinem**

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