



2465 Olinda Road, Makawao, HI 96768
www.lifenetnature.org

August 20, 2009

Securing a Future for Maui's Coral Reefs

Maui Planning Commission
County of Maui, Hawaii

Submitted via Julia.Staley@co.maui.hi.us

Dear Commission Chair and Members:

We wish to express our deepest concern for Maui's coral reefs considering the magnitude of urbanization proposed for the Island's coastal areas.

Scientific authorities and environmental agencies worldwide are calling for bold measures to save coral reef ecosystems. Local and regional threats, most linked to urbanization, must be abated if we are to stand a chance to save our coral reefs given increased stress from higher sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and sea level rise as a result of global heating.

The Maui Island vision statement admirably calls for us to be good stewards, protect our resources, and ensure a sustainable environment for us and for future generations. A key goal, as stated by the General Plan Advisory Committee, is to improve reef health and protect intact and ecologically functional coral reef ecosystems in perpetuity.

Specific land-based threats to coral reefs include pollution from wastewater, construction sites, golf courses, and host of non-point sources of pollution including urban streets and highways, and recreational activities. Overfishing is also a prevalent problem. These threats all can be expected to intensify with more urbanization and higher human population densities.

In a letter to the Maui Council last December, we suggested that the pace of Island development be linked to progress made in protecting coastal ecosystems. You could, for instance, specify that development proceed in a staged, stepwise fashion consistent with our meeting environmental standards that will protect coral reefs. You could begin by commissioning a technical panel of experts to provide guidance on development

consistent with our Island's coral reef conservation goals, and begin an environmental monitoring program to track progress in improving the condition of our coral reefs.

You have the choice, of course, to advance development plans without such a precautionary approach, and simply hope for the best. But ignoring the coral reef crisis in that manner is tantamount to saying, quite bluntly, "damn the coral reefs, if they can't hack the development so be it!"

I am sure you agree that losing our reefs in this manner would not be the legacy anyone wants for Maui.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss these suggestions for integrating coral reef conservation and development on Maui.

Thank you for reviewing our concerns and suggestions for ensuring a future for the coral reefs of Maui.

Sincerely,

Tony Povilitis

Tony Povilitis, PhD
Director – Life Net Nature

Cc:

Mayor Charmaine Tavares
200 S. High Street
Kalana O Maui Bld. 9th Fl
Wailuku, HI 96793

Jeffrey Hunt
Planning Director
planning@mauicounty.gov