

MEDIA RELEASE

CONTACT: JOAN LLOYD - 808-269-0102 - joanl@snorkelbob.com

AQUARIUM FISH BILL WOULD LIMIT RAPACIOUS COMMERCIAL EXTRACTIONS Hawaii's Reefs Are Being Picked Clean of Fragile "Ornamental" Fish By International Dealers

OAHU, HAWAII: DRAFT5 OF JANUARY 8, 2008 — Supporters of two aquarium bills, Senate Bill 3225 and House Bill 3330, will hold a press conference at the State Capitol on Monday, February 11 at 12:30 at the Queen Lili'uokalani statue. The bill will be heard before the Senate Water & Land Committee on Monday, 2:30, room 414. The two bills propose bag limits for aquarium collectors of 20 "ornamental" fish per day per person, with five Yellow Tangs <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Tang> maximum in the mix. Rocky & Jerry Kaluhiwa of the Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club will be at the press conference to take questions on their views regarding aquarium collection in Kane'ohe Bay. Representatives of the Maui County Mayor Charmaine Tavares' office, Hawaii Audubon, KAHEA, the Marine Conservation Biology Institute and the Big Island Invasive Species Committee and others will also participate.

Robert Wintner, Executive Director of the Snorkel Bob Foundation said, "Our reef fish are being poached in record numbers with millions being exported and sold annually to European, Australian, and U.S. mainland collectors." Supporters will show that massive extraction for commercial gain and the resulting barren reefs are an affront to the Hawaiian way.

The aquarium industry reports a catch of \$1-2 million, though the estimated poached catch may push gross revenue to \$20 million. Wintner noted, "That's serious money for this small group of people. Water-based tourism generates 500 times that amount for thousands of people working in the engine that drives Hawaii's economy. Aquarium collecting leaves many of our fragile reefs picked clean and our reef systems should not be considered 'fisheries'". **Wintner also said the bill lists certain species as "no-take", because they are known to starve to death in captivity.** Still, they are being taken. "This industry has never been regulated in its catch and we are now being asked why Puffers <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pufferfish>> should not be taken" Wintner said. **"A Puffer on a reef may be enjoyed by hundreds or thousands of tourists — or that Puffer may be captured and shipped out for a sad, short life and a dollar. A dollar. You want to talk science, or plain common sense?"**

"One source of opposition to this fish bill is an aquarium collector's chat room in Utah. Wholesale clients were urged to clog the email & phone lines of Hawai'i legislators by a wholesale distributor of wild reef fish and 'responsibly collected wild corals'. This distributor is in Utah. If you go to coralplanet.com you'll be asked for your personal information for referral to a reseller. If you want to be a reseller, you'll be told: 'We currently have more customers than we can handle.'" "Obviously, we're not here to safeguard the economy of Utah — or of France or Australia," Wintner said. "We're here for Hawai'i. A few weeks ago, we saw a gala event on O'ahu, hailing the International Year of the Reef. Because we love and cherish our living reefs, we must begin to defend our reefs from exploitation. We recognize our reefs with Aloha, as the place where life began."

Read HB3330 at: www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/HB3330_.htm

Read SB3225 at: www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/SB3225_.htm

-###-