



State Legislators Address Multiple Monk Seal Killings and Hawaii's Economic Dependence on Endangered Flora and Fauna

Senator Gary Hooser has introduced Senate Bill 2441, upping the penalty for harming or killing the Hawaiian Monk Seal and all other endangered species in Hawaii. Hooser's Senate Bill will change the existing penalty from a misdemeanor to a Class C Felony. This legislation responds to the recent tragic killings of three critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals.

Hooser said "Passing this legislation will send a message that the people of Hawaii will not stand by and allow individuals to take their anger out on innocent animals. Hawaii's people take the health and care of our unique species and their natural habitat very seriously." Hooser continued, "It is time to take action and address Hawaii's ill reputation of being the Endangered Species Capitol of the World. This bad reputation impacts the stability of our environment and an economy that depends on a healthy environment and safe communities."

Hooser will join conservation groups and the press at 1:00 pm Tuesday, February 2 prior to SB 2441 being heard in a joint Senate Committee hearing at 2:45 pm in Senate Room 225.

Keiko Bonk, Program Director for Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI) is coordinating a statewide non-government effort called the SOS or Save Our Seal Campaign, that includes Hawaii's key conservation and cultural advocacy groups, as well as individual seal supporters who are building a strong community base network to recover the rapidly declining population of our Hawaiian Monk Seal.

Bonk said "Our Hawaiian seal, found no where else on earth, has become an icon for saving Hawaii's natural environment, our rural lifestyle and local culture. People who deeply love Hawaii know that it is *pono* to care for the health of our environment, which is essential for all subsistence and sustainable livelihoods. Bonk reiterated that, "Because the problems that threaten our sacred Hawaiian mammal are much the same as the problems that threaten the well-being of the human species, saving the Hawaii monk seal is in many ways training for saving ourselves."

The SOS members are calling a press conference at 1:00 pm at the State Capitol rotunda, near the statue of Queen Lili'uokalani, prior to the Senate Hearing at 2:45 pm on February 2.

The recent monk seal deaths on Kaua'i and Moloka'i have inspired other legislators to introduce initiatives to protect the monk seal and other endangered species. Senator Mike Gabbard has introduced two conservation outreach initiatives, SB 2362 & SB 2363, which focuses on educating the more than 6 million visitors who frequent our ocean and beaches each year. Representative Mina Morita has introduced two of the monk seal companion House Bills; HB 2113 initiates endangered species informational kiosks at airports and HB 2235 initiates a Class C Felony for harming or killing a monk seal. Representative Chris Lee has introduced HB 2767, the companion bill to Hooser's SB 2441 upping penalty for Killing or harming all of Hawaii's endangered species. Representative Denny Coffman has introduced HB 2135, the House version of Gabbard's SB 2362 which initiates a public service announcement for endangered species on all in-bound airline flights to Hawaii.

Please refer to the attachment with details of all the Hawaiian Monk Seal initiatives that have been introduced in the 2010 Legislative Session.

Press Conference

February 2, 2010 @1:00pm

Hawaii State Capitol Rotunda

(near the statue of Queen Liliuokalani)

Senate Joint Committee Hearing

Energy & Environment

Water, Land, Agriculture & Hawaiian Affairs

Senate Bill 2441 Endangered Species; Felony; Private Right of Action

February 2, 2010 @ 2:45

Senate Conference Room 225

Save Our Seal Campaign Organizations

Marine Conservation Biology Institute * The Snorkel Bob Foundation * Conservation Council for Hawaii

* KAHEA The Native Hawaiian Conservation Alliance * Maui Tomorrow * Center for Biological Diversity

* Surfrider Foundation * Sierra Club * Hawaii Audubon Society * Earthtrust Hawaii * Greenpeace

Foundation Hawaii * Lost Fish Coalition * Save Our Seas * Life of the Land

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