

# The West Hawai'i Fisheries Council

A community-based approach to fisheries management

## Establishment & Background

In 1998 the Hawaii State Legislature passed Act 306, which established the West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area (WHRFMA) under the Department of Land and Natural Resources Divisions of Aquatic Resources (DAR), Boating and Ocean Recreation (DOBOR), and Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE). This area encompasses the near shore waters from Upolu Point (North Kohala) to Ka Lae (Ka'u) a shoreline distance of approximately 147 miles.

The purpose of Act 306 is to: Effectively manage fishery activities to ensure sustainability, enhance near shore resources and minimize conflicts of use in the WHRFMA.

Act 306 specifically mandated that DAR shall:

- 1) Designate a minimum of 30% of the West Hawai'i coastal waters as Fish Replenishment Areas (FRAs) in which aquarium fish collection is prohibited.
- 2) Establish a day-use mooring buoy system and designate some high-use areas where no anchoring is allowed.
- 3) Establish a portion of the FRAs as Fish Reserves where no fishing of reef-dwelling fish is allowed.
- 4) Designate areas where the use of gill nets as set nets shall be prohibited.

A review of the effectiveness of the WHRFMA shall be conducted every five years.

Act 306 also required that management decisions within the WHRFMA be made with substantial community involvement via facilitated dialogs with residents and resource users. To provide community involvement and input, the West Hawai'i Fisheries Council (WHFC) was created in June 1998, drawing on members and work previously accomplished by the West Hawai'i Reef Fish Working Group. In order to accomplish the goals and tasks of the legislation, the DLNR empowered the WHFC to serve as a primary source for formulating and recommending West Hawai'i management actions to DLNR.