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SPLASH

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**Bring Honu Conservation Home.** As a citizen volunteer and as the Co-Chair of the Oceania Region of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, George Balazs recently wrote a letter-to-the-editor to newspapers around the state. The letter says it's time to bring U.S. federal endangered specie efforts for green sea turtles back home to Hawaii.

Balazs, a 33 year NOAA zoologist working with Hawaii marine turtles, writes in the Hawaii Tribune Herald:

“The cultural revival of the Hawaiian people through out the past century is one of the many joys I’ve witnessed since making Hawaii my home in 1965. Caring for the land and sea, speaking Hawaiian, ocean voyaging, self-determination and the quest for justice all come to mind.

“Who we are is tied to where we are and where we come from.’ And so it is for the green sea turtle- the honu of Hawaii. The honu is bonded to the Hawaiian culture genetically, geographically and ecologically. In the early 1970’s the honu’s survival was in serious jeopardy until

sensible management was restored when the state banned all commercial harvesting of the turtles.

“Since then, the turtle, like the Hawaiian culture itself has flourished and expanded beyond all expectation.

“The time now has come to return stewardship of the honu home to Hawaii, where it rightfully belongs.”

Balazs writes that there are 7 species of ocean turtles swimming the world. As descendants of ancient reptiles, these turtles are culturally woven into sea peoples lives who used them for food, fortune telling, as pets and as funeral totems.

All green sea turtles in Hawaii share the same genetic lineage. This is a unique subset of the greater global population of green sea turtles. This subset is known as a “Distinct Population Segment” or “Regional Management” unit. In 2012, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs petitioned NOAA Fisheries that the Hawaii green sea turtles be a distinct population segment, and to remove it from listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Ninety percent of turtle’s nesting is on French Frigate Shoals controlled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The turtle disease fibropapilloma virus first appeared in 1930’s. This widespread affliction manifests as lobed

tumors on skin, eyes, mouth and internal organs. The infection frequency seems to be declining.

Balazs with his wife Linda presented their paper “Fall and Rise of the Hawaiian Honu: A 50-Year Witness to Cultural and Conservation” at this August’s University of Hawaii Hilo 23rd Annual Hawaii Conservation Conference.

Here they said the good news is that “In 2012 Hawaii's green turtles or honu (*Chelonia mydas*) were downlisted from Endangered to the category of Least Concern following a comprehensive assessment by the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group.”

The IUNC Species Survival Commission Marine Turtle Specialist Group states it has “230 experts in over 80 countries and the MTSG is the global authority on marine turtle research and conservation.”

According to Balazs the Oceania Region of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group changed the green sea turtle “listing based on a very thorough 2-year long assessment by a team of 10 globally respected sea turtle scientists.”

“The IUNC Red List of Threatened Species” report itself comments “Analysis of published peer-reviewed literature indicates that the endemic and genetically-isolated Hawaiian Green Turtle is approaching full

recovery to pre-exploitation levels, continues to grow, and anthropogenic hazards do not appear to be restricting population recovery.”

In it's Pacific region of over 100 million square miles, IUCN Oceania is committed to “community-based protected area management.” With honu recovery the need for federally mandated Endangered Specie Act control diminishes. The Switzerland based IUCN supports Hawaii home rule for conservation efforts.

Should the same home rule logic be applied to humpback whale recovery? Instead of seeking ecosystem management and control of one third of Hawaiian waters, the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary should it pat itself on the back for ESA recovery, pack their bags and migrate back to Washington D.C.?

Not all are rushing to embrace the Balazs and IUCN honu recovery. NOAA now wants to reclassify the turtle from endangered to threatened. The geographical isolation of the Hawaiian green sea turtle is seen as a detriment to recovery.

One cautious view is seen in “Using historical data to assess the biogeography of population recovery.” written by John N. Kittinger , Kyle S. Van Houtan , Loren E. McClenachan and Amanda L. Lawrence.

Kittinger and his group say “Our data suggest the current concentration of green turtle nesting on French Frigate Shoals is a historical anomaly. Nesting was once widely distributed across the Hawaiian archipelago, from the inhabited MHI throughout the remote atolls of NWHI. Eighty percent of historically major nesting sites have been extirpated or are severely depleted.”

In what could be seen as a barb to IUCN’s opinion, Kittinger says their “research suggests that assessing recovery without historical data on spatial patterns may overlook important ecological dynamics at the population or ecosystem level, which can result in improper or inadequate conservation assessments and recovery targets.”

Like the humpback whale, the honu though recovering is still caught in the “land and power in Hawaii” throw net. With the U.S. bureaucracy’s opihi like grabbing power, bringing conservation home to Hawaii may be harder to untangle than recovering a drowning endangered species from an illegal cross net.

Until September 25, NOAA is accepting comments on delisting Hawaii green sea turtles. Submit all electronic comments via [http://www.regulations.gov/#!](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2012-0154) docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2012-0154, click the

“Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

Mail: Submit written comments to Office of Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Want to see more on IUCN see: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/16285718/0>

Read Kittenger et al at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1600-0587.2013.00245.x/abstract>

**No Marina Pays \$27 Million.** A Circuit Court awarded an Ewa Beach class-action lawsuit \$27 million for a marina that was never built. Haseko, a Japanese developer, was told to pay the 1,800 homeowners \$1,300 each. This nearly \$7 million was for a marina not built between Oneula Beach Park and White Plains Beach. The additional \$20 million was tacked on as punitive damages for violating the state’s consumer protection laws.

Haseko citing environmental planning delays and cost overruns has applied to rezone the marina to a “recreational lagoon.” Haseko, with 40 years of business experience in Hawaii, says the punitive damages are ridiculous. Homeowners saw their properties increase in value without a marina and with a lagoon.

**Microbes Win \$766,792.** Dr. David Karl of The Hawaii Center for Microbial Oceanography: Research and Education has won the \$766,792 Balzan Prize. The Italian based prize recognized Karl for “his fundamental contributions to the understanding of the role and immense importance of microorganisms in the ocean and of how microorganisms and phytoplankton control oceanic carbon, nitrogen and iron cycles, work that has yielded significant insights into global change.” In 2014 Dr Karl and Edward DeLong, both UH Manoa professors, were awarded \$40 million by the Simons Collaboration on Ocean Processes and Ecology. This was the largest gift ever to U H Manoa and was to study how microorganisms effect ocean energy and nutrients.

**Your Eyes of the Reef Network.** The Eyes of the Reef Network wants your help. It says it is “a volunteer member-based organization developed to increase public awareness in the monitoring and reporting of coral bleaching and disease, marine invasive species, Crown-of-Thorn Sea Star (COTS) outbreaks and other reef diseases.”

The statewide network was developed by the Division of Aquatic Resources, Climate Change and Marine Disease Local Action Strategy and by Reef Check Hawai'i. The Eyes of the Reef network includes recreational reef swimmers, tourism professionals, researchers, and fishers. who voluntarily monitor and report on conditions at reefs that they visit regularly. Eyes of the Reef network will train interested persons. Want to get involved contact Eyes of the Reef Network online at <http://eorhawaii.org>.

**Where are the FADS?** Heard from Donnell Tate of HFN's "Lahaina Seawatch:"

"Aloha Bob, Any update on the status on the timeline on the replacement of the FAD's? I was going to contact our Representatives: Gabbard, Takai, Schatz and Hirono. Think I might get a response or help from them? Any other avenues that might be beneficial? Need to stir things up and get the paperwork signed. It had been way too long. It has really killed the fishing for the West side charter and recreational boats and restaurants that rely on the "buoy" fish."

Placed a call into Warren Cortez the state of Hawaii FAD coordinator. Eric Kingma Enforcement/NEPA Coordinator at WESPAC said: "On the state FADs, pretty



much the issue is that the State can't deploy any new FADs (or replace old ones) until the USFWS completes a NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process.”

The State gets its money for FADs from Sports Fish Restoration Funding administered by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Kenneth Foote the USFWS Information and Education Specialist has a SPLASH call in.

Maui's Mike Morris told SPLASH in April that “K buoy is now gone so 9 out of 10 Maui buoys are not fishing.” With the Fall seeing summer fish schools gone and with FADS missing, things are not much better on the other islands.

Bottomline contact your elected representatives at all levels tell them about missing FADS, the no need expanded recovered whale sanctuary, plenty green sea turtles and what's on your mind about the Hawaii ocean scene.

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