

L. Paul's Comments/Concerns given to the USCRTF meeting in Pago Pago, American Samoa, August, 2007, during public testimony (five minute limit)

Good afternoon, falofa, and aloha. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address some concerns.

1. The need to preserve high quality coral reef habitat in a pan-Pacific network of sufficiently-large MPAs to protect coral reef biodiversity for the future and to mitigate the rapidly accelerating impacts of global warming and climate change.

We need to move much faster in this endeavor. There are numerous indications that we may seriously under-estimating the rate of change. Specifically the Task Force should support the protection of important reefs and waters across the Pacific through the creation of a network of World Heritage Sites.

In the North Pacific, in addition to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), the Task Force should support the nomination of the Central Pacific Line Islands, the Pohnpei-Kosrae Island Cluster, and the Mariana Islands as new additions to the list of World Heritage Combined Cultural & Natural Sites. And the Task Force should schedule its 2008 summer meeting in the North Pacific region.

2. The expanding global economy contributes to the degradation of coral reefs in many other ways besides the production of greenhouse gases. I would like to mention five ways in particular global trade is impacting coral reef biodiversity. Some, but not all of these, have been discussed at this meeting.

I. Spread of alien aquatic invasive species.

Much attention given to the impact of ballast water discharge, but it's been determined that hull fouling is approximately 80% of the problem. More than 350 alien invasive aquatic species have become established on reefs in the main Hawaiian Islands and inter island barges and commercial and recreational vessels continue to spread them around the State. Some 6-12 species have already spread to Midway Atoll in the NWHI and invasives remain the biggest threat to these pristine ecosystems. While the hulls of NOAA vessels are now cleaned and inspected before going to the NWHI, the hulls of commercial bottomfishing vessels, which will be fishing there until 2011, are not, but should be required to. In addition, I'd like to bring the Task Force's attention to legislation is currently pending in Congress that may prevent States from enacting aquatic invasive species regulations that are stricter than federal standards. [S 1578, HR 2830]

II. The legal and illegal harvest and trade of wild juvenile reef fish for the marine aquarium trade.

Marine ornamentals are exported in huge numbers from Pacific Island States, including Hawaii, Palau, Kiribati, and Fiji, as well as the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia. The impact of this trade on coral reef habitat has not yet been determined. Many of the highly desired species such as yellow tang are herbivores and are critically needed to graze down invasive algae. A series of technical workshops are needed to assess the impacts of the aquarium trade on coral reef populations, habitats, distributions, trophic structures, and marine biodiversity.

III. The trade in red and pink corals for the jewelry trade.

The *Corallium* family was proposed by the U.S. for listing on Appendix II of CITES this past June at CoP 14 in The Hague, along with a plan to hold technical workshops in the Mediterranean and the Pacific on the extent and impact of this trade. Western Pacific populations of these long-lived, slow-growing octocorals are being wiped out within 4-5 years after discovery and collection methods destroy entire colonies and associated habitat.

Foreign poaching in U.S. waters has been a problem in the past. Some estimates suggest that nearly half of the global production during the 1970s and 1980s was poached from Hawaiian territorial waters. During the 1980s, coral vessels from Japan and Chinese Taipei continuously violated the U.S. EEZ near the Hancock Seamounts. In 1985, about 20 coral draggers from Chinese Taipei poached approximately 100 mt of *Corallium* from seamounts within the U.S. EEZ north of Gardner Pinnacles and Laysan Island (Grigg 1993). The CITES proposal failed in the final plenary, but the U.S. should go forward and hold a technical workshop in Hawaii. It will help get this species get listed at the next meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES in Qatar. The contact person in NOAA is Dr. Andy Bruckner.

IV. The taking of live reef fish for the restaurant trade.

The Napoleon wrasse was listed on Appendix II of CITES in 2004 because the take of pre-reproductive, plate-size specimens of this long-lived species is unsustainable throughout its range. However, the Napoleon wrasse is so threatened that it qualifies for listing on Appendix I of CITES and should be proposed for that listing at CoP 15.

V. The shark fin trade.

Despite the Shark Finning Prohibition Act of 2000, the U.S. still imports and consumes a huge quantity of processed shark fins. Elimination of this top carnivore from reefs across the globe to supply the fin trade has drastically altered many marine ecosystems.

In December 2006 the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 61/105 urging States to ban directed shark fisheries conducted solely for the purpose of harvesting shark fins and to take measures to minimize waste and discards from shark catches. Also in December the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission passed a conservation and management measure that requires full utilization of any retained catches of sharks.

The Task Force should support a prohibition on imports of all processed fins into the U.S., as well as a restriction on the flow of fins through our borders under free trade customs tag protection.

Thank you.