

ORAL COMMENTS BY DAVE RANEY, SIERRA CLUB
U.S. CORAL REEF TASK FORCE MEETING, PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA

Talofa – Governor Tulafono, Task Force Chairs and Members, and fellow participants.

My name is Dave Raney. I am from Hawai‘i, where I have lived since 1968. I am a volunteer with Sierra Club and Reef Check.

I have provided written public comments on behalf of the Sierra Club, so will touch on a few key points.

In particular, we wish to commend Governor Tulafono for his leadership in focusing the Task Force’s attention on the need to address the causes of climate change, as well as the impacts. We also commend the All Islands Committee for developing the Resolution on Climate Change, including specific recognition of the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is a major step forward for the Task Force. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is also a major priority for the Hawai‘i Chapter of the Sierra Club, and for the 700,000 Sierra Club members nationwide.

We commend, and support, EPA Region 9’s well-documented Tentative Decision to deny the request by the City and County of Honolulu for a 301(h) waiver for the Honouliuli sewage treatment plant.

We also commend Chantal Collier of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for her letters responding to concerns raised by NGOs and the general public regarding the expired permits for the Delray/Boynton Beach sewage treatment plant in Southeast Florida. Chantal’s letter, included in our written comments, serves as an excellent example of how Task Force members could, and should, respond to public comments they receive.

This meeting of the Task Force has been especially valuable in its focus on the opportunities for achieving what Dr. Richmond referred to as a “marriage” of traditional approaches to resource management and science. The meeting also brought in other partners in the Region, and has helped launch and coordinate our combined efforts to engage in the International Year of the Reef – 2008, with its focus on taking the actions needed to address the threats facing coral reefs worldwide.

Finally, I would like to bring your attention to the written comments provided by Kahea, the Hawaiian Environmental Alliance. Kahea has raised concerns about an alleged research permit violation in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The research involves transport of coral disease bacteria, so is a serious matter. I understand there is an investigation underway, and I trust the investigation will be thorough, fair, and firm. Enforcement is important, for research permits as well as illegal fishing and other types of violations.

One additional comment: Regarding CO2 emissions related to Task Force meetings, I commend Hawaiian Airlines for minimizing CO2 emissions per passenger transported, by assuring that each seat of each flight was occupied.

Thank you,

Dave Raney