



fair catch

take what you need, not what you can

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Governor Signs Lay Gill Net Restrictions into Law

*Action widely applauded as vital step to help restore Hawaii's nearshore fish populations*

Honolulu (Wednesday, March 7) – Local fishers, scientists and conservationists today applauded the Department of Land and Natural Resources' new rule to severely restrict the use of lay gill nets in Hawai'i. The rule, now in effect after being signed by Governor Linda Lingle, means Hawai'i joins many other Pacific islands and all other U.S. coastal states in restricting the use of this indiscriminate fishing method.

Scientists have called lay gill nets the worst offenders in the overfishing of Hawaii's nearshore ocean. The restrictions have been discussed for nearly a decade and were presented by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) for final public hearings last July.

William Ail?, a native Hawaiian fisher who testified at the Wai'anāe public hearing in July 2006, said in an interview, "Most if not all k?puna, with their years of experience, teach us that fishing is a privilege that comes with the responsibility to care for the ocean. DLNR's lay gill net fishing regulations are a positive attempt to act on the side of caution. Fishermen who use gill nets or any other equipment, in ways that needlessly kill turtles, sea birds, monk seals, and damage coral reefs do not understand kuleana and do not honor their ancestors, nor their children and grandchildren."

Thomas Cummings, Jr., native Hawaiian and former lay gill net fisher said, "This decision is good for Hawaii's ocean and it is good for fishermen. In my lifetime, I've seen our reefs depleted of fish to a nearly irreversible point. We can no longer afford to fish in selfish, careless ways. These rules restricting the use of lay gill nets will give our fish the break they need so their populations can start to recover."

Lay gill nets are now banned entirely around the island of Maui and in three nearshore areas of O'ahu. Across the state, use of the nets is restricted. Net users will no longer be able to set them overnight, and net length can be no more than 125 feet, though two individuals can connect nets for a length of no more than 250 feet. To aid enforcement, lay gill nets must be registered and marked, and cannot be left unattended in the water for more than 30 minutes.

Dr. John Randall, Bishop Museum senior ichthyologist, said, "This is a landmark decision for Hawaii's nearshore resources. Our reef fish populations are in serious decline, and it's time for us to stop fishing in indiscriminate, wasteful ways. Restrictions on lay gill nets are long overdue, and I would support us going further to a complete statewide ban."

Dr. Randall and several other marine scientists including Dr. Charles Birkeland, Dr. Richard Pyle and Dr. Randall Kosaki submitted a paper to DLNR in 2006 supporting the department's proposed restrictions on the use of lay gill nets. Kosaki, an avid recreational fisher, added, "What's good for fish is generally good for fishermen. This is a great step forward in restoring our coastal fisheries."

Kim Hum, marine program director at The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i, said, "Fishing is part of our island lifestyle and depends on maintaining a healthy ocean. Lay gill nets threaten our way of life because they take too many fish from the sea at once, regardless of size or season, and can drown protected species such as Hawaiian monk seals and sea turtles. While we cannot overlook other threats that are impacting the ocean's health, such as pollution and sedimentation, neither can we downplay the impact that

lay gill nets have on our diminished marine resources. We commend Governor Linda Lingle, Peter Young and the Department of Land and Natural Resources for taking this much needed step to help ensure that Hawaii's ocean will provide for us for many generations."

In Hawai'i, the restrictions on lay gill nets had widespread public support, with 76% of Hawai'i residents, 72% of recreational fishers and 63% of native Hawaiians in favor, according to a Fair Catch poll conducted by independent local market research firm QMark in summer 2006. Fair Catch is a campaign of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i, M?lama Hawai'i, and SeaWeb to support responsible fishing in the Hawaiian Islands.

Wendell Ko, free diving spearfisher and former national champion said, "As a fisherman in Hawai'i for more than 35 years, I'm pleased that the Governor has decided to restrict the use of lay gill nets. Lay gill nets threaten not only our precious marine life, but also violate the Hawaiian way of taking only what you need."

Native Hawaiian fisherman and woodworker Douglas "McD" Philpotts added, "This is great news, but frankly, lay gill nets should have been banned 20 years ago. I've fished in Hawai'i for more than 40 years and I've seen with my own eyes how the resources have diminished. We don't have the right to deplete these resources. It's really our responsibility to preserve them for the future generations."

Other island nations such as Fiji have seen a remarkable improvement in nearshore resources after enacting similar restrictions on gill nets. In 1988, a Fijian province enacted a ban on gill nets. The province's chief, Ratu Aisea Katonivere, said, "The ban was a big breakthrough. Our fisheries scientists have done the research, and we have talked to fishermen, and it is clear that fish populations have recovered faster because they are no longer being harvested with gill nets."

Some bills introduced in the 2007 Legislative Session aim to delay or prevent implementation of the new lay gill net restrictions, including House Bill 1848 that passed out of the House Finance Committee last week. Hum said, "If House Bill 1848 were to become law, it would further delay the implementation of these rules which have already been debated for nearly a decade - 10 years in which our fish populations have continued to decline. Hawaii's ocean needs relief from this indiscriminate fishing method now, and it is vital that the restrictions be given a chance to work."

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For more information, visit <http://www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dar/announce.htm#laynet> and [www.faircatchhawaii.org](http://www.faircatchhawaii.org) <http://www.faircatchhawaii.org> . For lay gill net images please go to <http://www.faircatchhawaii.org/photogal.jsp> High resolution photos are available. For broadcast media B-roll, please contact Corinne at the below number.

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