Hawaii’s Sustainable Marine Tourism Challenges and Opportunities

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Acknowledging Our Cultural Roots

From the Kumulipo, the Hawaiian creation chant…

Hanau ka uka ko `ako `a
Hanau kana, he ako `ako `a, puka

“Born the coral polyp
“Born of him a coral colony emerged”
25% of Hawaii’s marine life is endemic.
Tourism Impacts
Hawaii Tourism Overview

- 7 million + visitors/year (~540,000/month)
- Mass market tourism the ‘norm’ as a mature destination
- Traditional marketing go towards getting people to Hawaii
- Ocean-based activities are not a part of mainstream tourism marketing (considered a niche)
- 1,000 ocean recreation businesses
- $800+ million in annual gross revenues
- Snorkel/scuba diving 5th most popular among visitors from the West
Value of Marine Protected Areas as Economic Assets

- Hawaii has been setting scenic areas aside as MPAs for nearly 40 years
- Recommended by all facets of tourism industry
- Marketed as ‘must see’ destinations
- Visitor is assured of a wildlife experience
- Easily sold as an activity
- MPA sites represent some of the largest ocean recreation destinations for that island
Hanauma Bay MLCD
Established 1967
101 acres
Hanauma Bay: 1988

- 3 million visitors/year
- Averaged 10-12,000 visitors/day
- 81 tour companies
- 1 busload of 42 passengers every 56 second
- Feeding fish up to 1/2 ton of bread/day
Hanauma Bay: Present

- 3,000-5,700 visitors/day (1 million/yr.)
- Ban on fish feeding
- 21 commercial permits issued with only 6 persons/company
- No commercial operations on weekends or holidays
- Park closed one day/week
- Entrance fee ($5) and parking limits
- Mandatory visitor education/friends group
Value of Management Actions

- Hanauma Bay generates over $37 million each year; it pays for itself
- Visitors generally go to 2-to-3- additional sites during their stay
- Residents dive at about 10 sites/year
- Cumulative annual effect of improved behavior = 10.4 acres of reef undamaged statewide
Human Use Impacts

Current use patterns at Hawaii MPA’s = low but chronic impact
- Activities dominated by snorkeling in ~15% of total area
- In most sites, fragile corals situated below snorkeling depth
- SCUBA not common and usually at sites with resilient habitat
- ‘Most fragile’ coral genera absent
- Most contact is with ‘inert’ substrate at entry/exit points
Additional Management Actions to Consider

- Rotate opening and closing to visitors
- Regulate activities
- Limit access
- Disperse use
Community-based Management
Volunteer Groups

Numerous volunteer groups at MPA & other coastal sites statewide…

• Engaged in visitor interpretation
• Organize events such as beach clean ups and monitoring programs
• Assist with observation and compliance of enforcement
• Key advocates to policy makers
• Supported by $ and other resources
Community Guidebook

• Developed to assist communities in caring for our coastal and ocean resources
• Provides step-by-step instructions for getting involved
• Ensures community-based management
Reef Awareness Awards

• Individuals and organizations that actively participate in reef environmental programs
• Individuals and organizations that contribute financially or in kind support
• Individuals or organizations that go above and beyond in striving to preserve the reef
Community Participation

Recommendations

• A fully engaged and informed community will become your advocates for not only the establishment of MPAs but all resource management initiatives

• Education is an essential element to gaining community support
Community Participation Recommendations (cont.)

- A community-based process will result in much greater compliance and assistance in reporting violations
- We no longer have the staff or financial resources to do an adequate job without this partnership
Reverence
Wisdom
Respect
Responsibility
Mahalo!