

11/23/2016 HSA

Save breakwater at Doris Duke estate

By Fred Fong

I know the neighboring community has appreciated the efforts of the Doris Duke estate to keep the community informed of the estate's well-meaning intentions. However, to now propose a \$2.5 million plan to dismantle the basin's breakwater fronting its Black Point property may prove to be a tragic loss of a beautiful ocean-front structure.

I swim three times a week from the Doris Duke harbor along the shore to the Diamond Head lookout and back, so I am very aware of the dilemma confronting the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art in trying to protect the public from serious careless injuries while visiting the basin.

In 2014, when the foundation proposed to build a 6-foot-high fence to block reckless jumpers from the sea wall, I admit I was one of the skeptics believing juveniles, being as they are, would still climb over the fence. I was wrong. Of the number of visitors to the harbor before the fence was constructed, there were usually 50 to 75 people there at one time during a nice day or weekend.

Surprisingly, after the fence was installed, there is in the afternoon rarely more than one or two swimmers in the harbor, and infrequently, maybe two to four male juveniles in the late afternoon jumping from the fenced-off ledge. There is rarely anyone there in the mornings.



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Doris Duke Foundation's security cameras can confirm these observations. Did the fence work? Yes, though not 100 percent. For a recent article to state that "the jumping and diving into the former boat basin not only continued, it actually increased" is a gross misstatement ("\$2.5M project aims to alter breakwater near Shangri La," Star-Advertiser, Nov. 14).

In place of dismantling the breakwater, here is a rational alternative and relatively inexpensive proposal:

>> All jumping from the breakwater occurs on two small flat ledges between the fence and the ocean, and accessed by climbing up the rock wall from the ocean. To prevent such activity, simply build up a steep beveled ledge so there is no place to stand on to jump from. You could even grout in between the breakwater stones to prevent climbing up the wall.

>> In the unlikely scenario that someone might climb over the

fence and stand on the narrow 3-inch-wide ledge between the fence and the ocean, also build up a small beveled edge to make standing there impossible.

>> And for the rare offender who is determined to climb up to the fence top to jump off, simply put a beveled small tent-like structure on the top of the fence to make standing atop it impossible.

>> Redeploy one of the 24-hour security guards on Shangri La's premises to check the harbor periodically. Prior to the installation of the fence in 2014, a guard would walk along the wall where the people gathered, but he never would admonish or deter any jumpers. Reinstigate the presence of a guard and have him or her assert authority if any reckless youths are encountered.

I must also point out that in my swims, in the area directly offshore of the ewa seawall proposed for dismantling, I frequently encounter large turtles, never small ones. They are rarely elsewhere in this region, and never around or outside the opposite east groin. To destroy their feeding habitat would be unfortunate, not only for the turtles but for the fishermen.

I ask the Doris Duke Foundation, and the museum's new executive director, to honor their intent to be good community servants, and to try and save what is a beautiful and enjoyable legacy for our city. Once the seawall and sandy harbor are dismantled, it will never be restored.