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## Experiment on Monk Seal Is Canceled

A controversial research experiment on a Hawaiian monk seal has been canceled, but scientists on both sides of the dispute say the studies are needed.

The research is aimed at learning why 20 to 50 young monk seals are dying annually at French Frigate Shoals.

At issue is a question of how the research should be done and on what seals.

The National Marine Fisheries Service yesterday canceled a plan to move Maka the seal from the Walkiki Aquarium to Sea Life Park for the research after Gary "Skip" Naftel said he was "willing to go to jail" as a private citizen to block the project. Naftel formerly operated research and fishing vessels, including the Easy Rider.

NMFS scientists brought three abandoned pups from French Frigate Shoals two years ago under a permit for research. The aquarium staff and volunteers hand-raised the seals — Maka, Tuffy and Nuka.

THE AQUARIUM agreed to let Maka go to Sea Life Park because NMFS has legal responsibility for the seals. But it opposed the research because Tuffy died from kidney failure after suffering "capture shock syndrome" during a similar experiment in January.

Aquarium Director Leighton Taylor learned of the NMFS decision to leave Maka and Nuka at the aquarium after returning from the Mainland yesterday. "I am pleased that these animals will not be subjected to what I think is a high risk," he said. "However, I am concerned that the research questions still get answered in some way to assure that the species doesn't go extinct in the wild."

While a confrontation has been avoided over Maka, "it doesn't resolve the real problem out in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands," said NMFS wildlife biologist William Gilmartin.

Gilmartin heads the Marine Mammals and Endangered Species Program, which includes the Monk Seal Recovery Team. Taylor also is a member of the team.

The NMFS scientist said he will request another permit to collect more seals from French Frigate Shoals for research. However, he said it will be another year before the scientists can do field work to evaluate what is causing a large number of young seals there to die.