

September 16, 1973

"I want this statement to be read in its entirety at the Public Hearing so my testimony will be in its entirety in the records. Thank you."

TO: Division of Fish and Game, Land and Natural Resources.  
Honolulu, Oahu

FROM: Alike Cooper  
163 Kaiulani St., Hilo

Ano ai Ke aloha;

It is sad that the State Div. of Fish and Game is trying to set up affecting laws to stop turtle fishing in the eight Hawaiian Islands.

Let's look at the problem. The turtles start to leave these eight main Hawaiian Islands in March and April. A person who has fished at French Frigate Shoals, will know that turtles travel toward French Frigate Shoals in March, April and May. If you have fished turtles around these eight Hawaiian Islands, like I have since 1944, you will know that the green sea turtle is absent from these waters from March to October. The turtles start arriving at French Frigate Shoals in May and June.

Each mature female green sea turtle will lay three times, and at each laying will have about 100 eggs. In July and August and up till the middle of September, depending on the year, these small turtles hatch, crawl into the ocean and disappear. We start to see the small turtles about 7 or 8 months later around the flag lines 100 or so miles from shore. After that they start popping up around the Hawaiian Islands. This turtle weighs from 8 to 15 lbs.

Let me take you back to French Frigate Shoals when the turtles hatch. You can visualize many small sand islands a few feet above the water. The turtles are hatched by the millions. As the baby turtles reach the top of their nest,

the birds are a problem, for they eat the baby turtles before they reach the water. If these infant turtles survive the bird attack, the sharks, kahala, ulua, uku, etc., will whip them. I would estimate that less than 1/10 of 1% survivors become one year old. We don't see these turtles until about 8 months later when they start to arrive at Hawaii.

By the first week in September nearly all of the large sea turtles leave French Frigate Shoals and by October and November they have returned to our eight Hawaiian Islands.

In recent years, I have seen very few small Hawaiian born turtles. I could list 20 or more places where turtles laid eggs in the past.

How do we solve this problem of what appears to be a diminishing number of turtles in our Hawaiian waters. First of all, you ought to stop all spearing of turtles and shooting of turtles with powerheads. Other methods such as hooking, grabbing and netting ought to continue to be permitted. It would be highly advisable to program a team of fishermen to French Frigate Shoals during the hatching period; millions of young turtles can be brought back to Hawaii. All available resources can be used to raise these turtles up until about one year old. At this time the turtles can be released in the ocean. This proposal can be a joint venture with the State Division of Fish and Game, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, the University of Hawaii, Sea Life Park, Oceanic Institute, Undersea Research, Makapuu (they are doing lots of turtle work), and all others who would like to participate. In five years, if this program is put into effect, there should be a significant increase in turtles and all of the turtles needed will be available in these waters surrounding our islands.

Dr. John Hendrickson, of the Marine Division of the University of Arizona, would be an able resource person. For he is one of the turtle specialists in the world today. He has written many projects that were not funded years ago. If

these projects had been funded, the turtle decimation would be nonexistent today. Baby turtles have been raised successfully in Hawaii in the past.

There seems to be a growing string-like cancer-type growth on turtles that are caught around harbors and in polluted areas. This unique growth is also a subject worthy of research.

The decision to bar turtle fishing in these Hawaiian Islands is another instance where the people who will make decisions have not included the commercial fisherman in the decision making process. There are commercial fishermen who make their living by catching turtles.

To stop further fishing clearly deprives the fisherman of his livelihood. I wonder if the responsibility of the decision making group doesn't intend them to provide affirmative action steps for providing a viable income resource to the fishermen, especially if the decision making board be held in direct responsibility for displacing a fisherman. The required investigation preceding this decision has not been thoroughly undertaken.

The real causes of turtle desiccation is pollution, spearing, shooting, poisoning by man's waste, and many other causes that proper studies reveal.

As I look at the set of rules and regulations for control, I believe that these were drawn up on emotional biases and not on facts.

Let us look at some of the regulations for control.

1. Prohibiting the sale, etc. I ask you, what will happen to the fisherman who fishes turtle on a full or part-time basis? It seems that a control of this nature is an infraction of a citizen's Constitutional Right. For any law that deprives a person of his occupation is inappropriate. Now when the law has been based on inadequate research and little or no facts about the cause of turtle decimation, nor the exploration of alternative remedies, it can be a real

infringement of a fisherman's constitutional rights if the law proposed is carried out.

2. Permitting, etc. Why 36 inches, maybe 24 inches measurement would be more reasonable.

3. A permit seems to be unconstitutional also.

4. Prohibiting use of nets. Nets are the only humane way to catch turtles, for the turtles are not cut, bruised or hurt. My type of turtle nets, maybe one out of 200 turtles are found dead in the nets.

How many turtles were taken by nets? How many by spear, powerhead, shooting, hook or grabbing? Unless the facts can verify that net fishing is the contributor to the problem, a decision of this matter cannot be made.

Whose livelihood will be cut off, will the fisherman be reimbursed for his turtle equipment he now uses for catching turtles? Will he be able to claim a deduction on his state and federal taxes? These questions are realistic and must be answered by the group that makes the decision to cut off a person's source of income.

When I read the regulations for turtle control, I felt that they are unjust. I still believe this.

All of the people of the sea know that the solution to turtle decimation is not in a regulatory control measurement to stop the catching of turtles. This is an impractical, unreasonable and unconstitutional plan.

If a reasonable size of 24 inches shall be placed on turtles and stop all spearing, shooting, you will find that the existing laws are adequate. In the same instance, meaningful research should be undertaken to determine other alternative solutions to the problem. And last but not least this board should be made more accountable to its responsibilities by issuing a firm position against pollution.

In these alternative suggestions, I feel are the reasonable approach to practical solutions to an existing problem.

Aloha a Nui Loa Kakou,

Alika Cooper  
Commercial Fisherman

P.S. I would be very happy to work with your group.



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE**  
Southwest Fisheries Center Honolulu Laboratory  
2570 Dole St. • Honolulu, Hawaii 96822-2396

January 14, 1991

F/SWC2:GHB:JEG  
COOP-7L.GHB

Mr. Alika Cooper  
Golden Courie Complex Ltd.  
P. O. Box 128  
Deuba, Fiji

Dear Mr. Cooper

Kitty Simonds of the WPRFMC has been kind enough to provide me with your current mailing address in Fiji.

I wanted to write to you about the occurrence of tumors, called fibropapillomas, in Hawaiian honu (green sea turtles, *Chelonia mydas*). As you may have heard, this tumor disease has now reached epidemic proportions in Hawaiian honu, as well as in other green sea turtles at several sites in Florida and elsewhere. The tumors can grow rapidly to massive sizes, often covering over the turtle's eyes, throat, and flippers. Every week we have one or more turtles dead or nearly dead, covered with tumors, washing ashore in Hawaii. The situation has continued to worsen each year for the past five years, especially in Kaneohe Bay and along the south shore of Molokai (Palaaau to Kawela). I have enclosed an assortment of articles about this serious disease phenomenon which I felt you would find interesting.

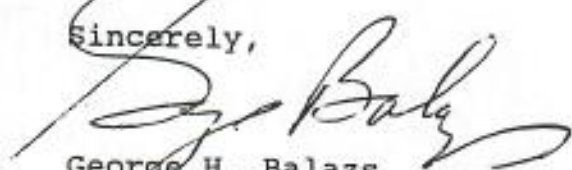
Based on historical records at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, it is my understanding that you encountered and captured green sea turtles with tumors in Hawaii during the late 1960s. Your experience may be one of the earliest documentations we have for this disease in Hawaii. I believe you first started to capture turtles in the early 1950s. When and where was the first time you recall seeing a tumor on a turtle? What percentage of the turtles had this disease once you started to notice it? For example, at present 65% (79) of the 121 turtles we captured and tagged in Kaneohe Bay during 1989-90 had the disease.

I realize that in the past years we have had many differences of opinion on matters pertaining to Hawaiian honu. However, I feel certain that we share a common view in wanting these turtles to be healthy in all respects. Epidemic proportions of sick turtles can have serious negative impacts to the turtle population, and also may be indicative of some greater problem in the marine environment. I therefore am hoping that you will write to me at



your earliest opportunity to describe what you know of this disease from past years of catching turtles in Hawaii. Thank you very much for any assistance you can provide.

Sincerely,



George H. Balazs  
Zoologist

3525 E. ~~108~~ BOX 123  
COMPLEX LTD DEUBA, FIJI

Jan 2, 1991

Att. Balazs;  
Phone 450194  
FAX (679) 450434

I want you to know that I have always been upset with you and W.M.F.S, for you always have and will continue to treat us Hawaiians as second class citizens. I don't think W.M.F.S has a Hawaiian working for them; since we are 20% in population in Hawaii, you should have 20% Hawaiians working for you - this shows how America treats us, as indigenous people - especially W.M.F.S -

You should know I still believe in our Hawaiian Gods, Kane, Ku, Lono, and still pray to them, for these are my ancestral Gods. There are many of us who do so. When you stopped indigenous people from using turtle for their religious rights, that was out of line. Even under the Freedom of Religion act of 1978, you were out of line and still are.

When I left Hawaii in 1985, the turtle population was stable. They were enough turtles so the indigenous people could have had a few for their religious rights. You have no track record, you haven't the years of knowledge, methods, moon phases, time of year, seasons, and the hundreds of years of experience that I have passed down from my ancestors.

My family had large acres in fish ponds in Pearl Harbor. Before the war we



used turtles both for food and to keep some of our fish ponds free of grass, weeds, mangrove, etc. We never used the turtles caught in our konohiki from Pearl River to Fort Weaver, inside Pearl Harbor.

We caught our turtles, by the shark pen at Fort Kamehameha and across the Pearl Harbor channel Ford Weaver. Every thing under 20 lbs was let go. We ate the males, the females usually used for weed controls and to stake up the ponds. Every few years, while catching the turtles in the Kupa season - Dec to March, we would let the turtles go and re stock them with new turtles. These condition was good, fat.

I can remember prior to the war, 1934, 1940 we did catch a few turtles which had this string cancer, as it was referred to then. My Grandfather was a doctor, M.D. - He, at that time, said this was a type of string cancer and not to eat them.

Dec. 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, our total property were taken from us, our fish ponds, homes, and the complex. We have never been paid for our Pearl River konohiki -

We moved to Hilo, Hawaii, where I lived most of the time and was the student of the strongest Kahuna Lapaau - a man named Jack Wainaku. He was a police man and a fisherman, turtle fisherman. We caught turtles from the break water to Pūmāke. I saw a few turtles with string cancer, caught by the Waialeale River, but not many - I think two.

Spent a part of '42, '43 in Waipio Valley with my kahu, Sam Kakaikua hui. In those days at Waipio or Waimanu, if you wanted a turtle, you could go to the right hand side of either valley before dark, you could grab a turtle in waist deep water. The turtles there, smell of Lepoa Lima. They feed in the big surf areas.

In the beginning of summer I would ride from Waipio to Kawahae on my mule, sheep by the water hole were dove service station is now in Kauhaoa. Maluwa hini, the historian for King Kalakaua, would ride with me to Keahou & up to Keinaku. Turtle was part of our diet & used as with Jack Kakaikua hui for religious rights. I saw no string cancer in the Kona & Kawahae waters.

When I returned from Guada Canal, the Solomon's, New Hebrides, Noumea, were our head quarter ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup>, Gilbert, the Philippines and Japan, as a dove for Gen. MacArthur. I finished college & fished. I also was in the Korean war.

I fished all the Hawaiian IIs except Kauai & Niihau - I dove, sometimes eight to ten hours a day, I studied, I learned many turtle grounds - From 1945 to 1955, I probably caught more turtles than any living man in Hawaii. I never killed any turtle under 150 to 200 LBS. Often I caught up to 200 mature turtles in 3 to 4 days of fishing.

The turtle is like a dove, you ~~should~~ <sup>should</sup> not catch him going to feed, but when he returns. The largest turtles come from Oahu, Molokai, Maui & Hawaii - Lanai has lots of small turtles. In Honolulu, the turtles

4  
and few. The Leeward Islands have  
a fairly large breeding stock, but since  
the breed every two or 3 years, it is hard  
to determine the number of breeding  
females. They also breed in the main  
Hawaiian Islands, or should I say lay.

I notice a continuous string cancer  
growth since the mid 50s - in areas of  
fresh water bays - Kihoo Lagoon, Kaneohe Bay,  
Kahala Harbor, Hilo Harbor. It seems after  
the sewer systems were taken out of  
use, this string cancer increased greatly.  
I believe it is some kind of a pollution  
in heavy <sup>human</sup> populated areas, but what, I  
don't know. Kahala is very heavy in <sup>arsenic</sup> arsenic.

I have been sending this string cancer  
growth to Germany, England, France, to my  
friend Tok Conston, the Smithsonian Inst. etc.  
I sent many samples to the Smithsonian  
Institute and under ~~was~~ sea water tank, for  
both were conserved. I did not fish  
turtles except for our religious rights, to  
eat from 1956 to 1965 -

In 1965 or 1966 I had a mullet study  
for Oceanic Institute, also the <sup>state</sup> shark contract  
for four years - a Rockefeller Foundation  
shark contract at Kaula, Hawaii also.

Dr John Henrikson, Director of  
Oceanic Institute, heard from cousin Gilbert  
that I knew about turtles. John spent  
a lot of <sup>time</sup> with me working on turtles.  
It was <sup>obvious</sup> that the turtle problem had  
to be addressed in...

We wrote a good project to catch and tag turtles in all the 8 main Hawaiian Islands, in the summer work the leeward islands, mainly French Frigate Shoals - due to the increase of the striking cancer, we both felt this was good timing.

The main thing, with my past records and our five year tagging program, we could come up with proper numbers to learn what the population was, was it endangered, ~~etc~~ was it stable, were was it.

You know what happened, W.M.K.S., reviewed it, we wrote our project, got alot of money to run the program, tagged 5 turtles at French Frigate Shoals and that was it. I have had several projects stolen and misused.

I had all my back records, all the equipment, the boats, skiffs, nets etc, with John being the worlds #1 authority on turtles, we would have learned if the turtle was an endangered animal in ~~how~~ the Hawaiian archipelago or not.

With the Mickey Mouse program you guys are running, who knows - what is your base line, what is your track record? ? ? what is your credibility - ?

In Fiji, there have been two turtles found with Hawaii tag on them.

One of the reasons I left Hawaii was due to the over number of traps,

continuous pressure toward my people,  
to see my people be used as second  
class citizens. It gets worse yearly -

Seeing W.M.F.s putting their standards  
on our people - trying to take our indigenous  
Rights away is ridiculous - For we have  
never been included in making any  
decision, never been asked, just told. You  
guys say I think, it, but where is your  
track record, what Credibility do you have - ?

I feel if John Henrickson and I  
had got funded and carried out our  
trustee project, you would have a strong  
base line, good credibility. But you have none.

It reminds me of the Native Hawaiian  
indigenous right that ex W.M.F.s. Rob Simpson  
and two other hooks put together, it is  
<sup>prejudice</sup> ~~prejudice~~, one sided, there is no way I can  
accept that negative report that is very, very  
one sided. Read it, what do you think?

I just saw a <sup>actual</sup> movie called Blood  
on the Hills about a ~~particular~~ case of a navy  
officers wife <sup>deeds</sup> another called Hawaii by  
much new ~~news~~ - you should take the time and  
see these videos - , sit back, you'll see none  
of you realize what you are doing - maybe then  
you might understand our side. This

prejudice still exist. when I was 19 years, I was  
a 65.12 - Also educated, Higher Education

If you want to keep me posted on your  
trustee situation, I would appreciate it.

aloha I mi loa kulanu,

P.S. As I evaluate the situation, it seems that Kihue Lagoon, Kahala Harbor area, Hilo Harbor, and Kaneohe Bay are the places where the turtles are most affected.

I don't believe the Red Limu from Kaneohe Bay is the problem. For 200 years boats have come to our islands with all kind of Limu on their hulls. Haven't found any Fluke, thought might be that dredged harbor might be the key, but Kawaihae does not affect the turtles. So it is something in the large population around the above harbors.

is turtle livers.

A water testing program should be set up in all harbors to learn what is different over a long period of time between the affected harbors and the others. Testing should be taken at 10<sup>to 12</sup> different locations and depths - where the turtles feed and sleep during the day, outlets of water into the harbors, etc.

I did all the water testing for years for Kennedy Engineering out of S.F. for the water pollution of all the mills and stream run of for the HSPA study, starting from about 1966 to 1968 or so. This was a Confidential Report, paid for by the H.S.P.A., so I'm not sure if you can get a copy. I have a copy, but since I left Hawaii my kids probably disposed of it. I think it was called water quality studies of the Sugar Industry in Hawaii for HSPA - by Kennedy Engineering - San Francisco - Calif.

We did all the harbors, including

Years,

There were some places very high in arsenic. Kalahele harbor, Hilo harbor, ~~half way between Lahaina~~ Olowalu half way to Lahaina on main - we tested every stream, every out let of water, for years, up to 100 fathom off shore from Hawaii to

The sugar plantations used a arsenic base spray to control weeds and grass in the sugar cane fields up to the early 1960 - over 100 years - it was called Denite a herbicide, that was ~~used~~ <sup>discontinued</sup> in the early 60s - Arsenic is a base that does not break down, it remains in the soil and eventually ~~ends~~ <sup>ends</sup> up in the ocean there is also natural arsenic in the soil. The crabs <sup>lobster</sup> seems to have a higher % of arsenic than fish, this is why when arsenic count is high, like Kalahele & Hilo, many people get liver - when eating crab, lobster etc. the squid is high in arsenic - also.

W. L. L.

I don't believe arsenic is a problem with the turtle, I think population. Chemicals might be a part of it, what types are question able -

I have never caught a turtle with the string ~~and~~ cancer on mokuai, Lanai, Kaunohau, Kaimpuna to Waipio on Hawaii - the leeward islands

Internal sicknesses later I will address - We as Hawaiians use everything of the turtle except the head. Alike