



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Washington, D.C. 20235

F6:JCT

FEB 13 1979

Mr. George H. Balazs
Assistant Marine Biologist
Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology
P.O. Box 1346, Coconut Island
Kanehoe, Hawaii 96744

Dear George,

This is in response to your letter of November 27, 1978, commenting on the prohibitions against the subsistence take of sea turtles in Hawaii. I appreciate the concern you express that the Hawaiian subsistence take is normally for home consumption only and that the regulations against this are difficult to enforce.

It is our feeling that the sea turtle populations of Hawaii are sufficiently threatened that even the subsistence take by natives (a difficult to define category if an exemption for them were allowed) has an adverse effect on our efforts to conserve and restore their numbers. While we realize that enforcement is a real problem, we are acting in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to augment our own agency's efforts along these lines.

A number of people other than Hawaiian natives are variously impacted by our sea turtle conservation efforts, such as the shrimping industry and mariculture interests, not to mention beach development enterprises, but we hope to achieve understanding from all of these groups that we must attempt to eliminate any further reductions in sea turtle population strengths.

In regard to what you might expect in sea turtle research activities in our Southwest Region, including Hawaii, you are probably well aware of the recent severe funding and personnel constraints that have forced us so far to restrict our sea turtle conservation efforts mainly to our Southeast Region where most of our problems occur. Please be assured that just as soon as funds and personnel can be made available, we do plan to initiate a sea turtle Recovery Team in the Southwest Region, charged with proposing a Recovery Plan that will include suggestions of appropriate avenues of research leading to the type of status and structure of stocks data we require for our management regimes.

I look forward to your continued cooperation on Hawaiian sea turtle matters.

Best regards,

Richard B. Roe
Acting Deputy Director
Office of Marine Mammals
and Endangered Species

