

HFC Committee

From: Nicole Davis - NOAA Federal <nicole.davis@noaa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2020 3:39 PM
To: County Clerk
Cc: HFC Committee
Subject: Written comments on CC 20-268, Bill Proposal of Ordinance amending Maui County Code, Chapter 6.04, per agenda Council meeting May 8, 2020
Attachments: CC 20-268 - NOAA Fisheries.pdf

To: County Clerk

RE: Bill for Ordinance to amend the Maui County Code, Chapter 6.04, relating to Feeding Feral Animals transmitted by Council Member Hokama for the May 8, 2020 meeting

Please find attached a letter from the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office Protected Resources Division, submitted on May 7th at 15:40hr, in advance of the Council meeting on May 8, 2020.

Please let me know if you have any problems with the attached PDF.

Thank you,

~ Nicole

--

Nicole Davis
Maui Nui Marine Mammal Response Coordinator
Mobile: (808) 292-2372
Protected Resources Division, NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office
Email: nicole.davis@noaa.gov
726 South Kihei Road, Kihei, HI 96753



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Pacific Islands Regional Office
1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg 176
Honolulu, Hawaii 96818
(808) 725-5000 • Fax: (808) 725-5215

May 7, 2020

County Council
County of Maui
200 S. High Street
Wailuku, HI, 96793

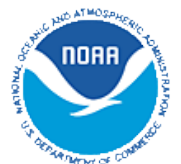
Dear Members of the Maui County Council:

In consideration of: Item CC 20-268, Councilmember Hokama, transmitting a proposed bill entitled "A Bill for an Ordinance to Amend the Maui County Code, Chapter 6.04.040, Relating to Feeding Feral Animals"

NOAA Fisheries Service would like to offer the following comments that we believe are relevant to your consideration of Amending Maui County code, Chapter 6.04, particularly sections 6.04.010 and 6.04.041, which pertain to a new definition of a 'feral animal' and to the feeding, or deliberate introduction of any food material, substance, or attractant directly to, or in the vicinity of any feral animal. Our interest in Chapter 6.04 of the Maui County Code stems from our responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act to promote the conservation and recovery of marine mammals, including Hawaii's whales, dolphins, and endangered Hawaiian monk seals.

Infected cats are the sole environmental source in Hawaii of the *Toxoplasma gondii* organism, which causes the infectious and potentially deadly disease toxoplasmosis. *T. gondii* can only reproduce in the digestive tract of a felid, and the large populations of feral cats in the main Hawaiian Islands are the primary reason why the disease has become a serious threat to the recovery of the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. We know that three Hawaiian spinner dolphins and at least thirteen monk seals have died since 2001 due to toxoplasmosis.

These three dolphins and thirteen seals represent the minimum number of marine mammals in Hawaii that have died from toxoplasmosis. We suspect that there are many more marine mammals that succumb to toxoplasmosis that we cannot account for because we cannot conduct mortality investigations on animals that disappear and die undetected, or on carcasses in advanced stages of decomposition. This number does not account for lost reproductive potential of female seals, which comprise about 70% of documented toxoplasmosis-related deaths. Only about 300 of the 1,400 Hawaiian monk seals estimated to be alive today occupy the main Hawaiian Islands, and at such low numbers even the loss of a small number of seals, particularly females of reproductive age, could seriously affect the species' extinction risk.



Toxoplasmosis has had serious population-level impacts on marine mammal species outside of Hawaii. For instance, in California an estimated 17 percent of all sea otter deaths annually are attributable to toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasma can enter the environment at any point from mauka to makai and wind up in the marine environment via surfacewater. Nourishing feral cat populations can increase the number of individuals potentially shedding infectious oocysts (eggs) on the landscape. Taking steps to reduce that number is a critically important step in protecting Hawaii's native marine life.

We would like to bring to the Council's attention that NOAA Fisheries is part of an inter-agency working group formed in 2016 to develop and share objective, science-based information regarding the complicated issue of managing outdoor and feral cats (collectively referred to as "at-large cats") in Hawaii. The group, called the Toxoplasmosis and At-Large Cat Technical Working Group, consists of representatives from federal, state, and county-level agencies or their major divisions/departments. The group's goal is to share information with the public, stakeholders, and legislators and facilitate collaboration between agencies to reduce the impacts of at-large cats, specifically predation and toxoplasmosis, on native wildlife and people in Hawaii. While the group's membership is currently limited to government agencies, it has and will continue to seek information from, and collaborate with, non-government stakeholders, non-profit groups, and any other interested parties as appropriate to achieve the stated goal. The working group is available and willing to provide information that will support and encourage implementation of at-large cat control and management strategies to reduce impacts to native wildlife.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure. We look forward to working with the Maui County Council, and other government and non-government partners on this issue which is so important for Hawaiian monk seal recovery and marine mammal conservation.

Ann M. Garrett

Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected
Resources Pacific Islands Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration