



STAFF REPORT TO THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY BOARD

May 24, 2023

REQUEST: To provide a presentation and discussion regarding DLNR's proposed EDA project – O'ahu Coral Restoration Project.

FACTS:

1. At the April 26, 2023 HTA Board meeting, the board voted to not use EDA funds for the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (DLNR) Waikiki Snorkel Coral Restoration Trail Project. The main reasons being ocean safety and user conflict.
2. HTA Director of Planning, Caroline Anderson, convened a meeting on May 2, 2023 with DLNR staff and HTA board and staff to discuss DLNR's proposed Waikiki Snorkel Coral Restoration Trail project. Present at the meeting were HTA Board Chair, George Kam; HTA Ho'okahua Chair, Keone Downing; HTA Chief Administrator, Daniel Nahoopii; Ryan Okano, Program Manager, DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources; and Chelsea Wolke, Project Manager, Hawaii'i Coral Reef Initiative at the University of Hawaii'i, Social Science Research Instituted (UH).

DISCUSSION:

1. At the May 2 meeting, DLNR briefed HTA on their intention for the Waikiki Snorkel Restoration Trail Project. The HTA board and HTA Ho'okahua chairs communicated their concerns with the restoration of coral in the proposed areas. Ideas were discussed such as moving the coral restoration area to be further from the shore and focus on dive sites that need restoration. Also focus on other areas such as Kewalo and Maunalua Bay and Kane'ohe Bay.
2. DLNR and UH also shared their efforts on how they grow coral, and invited HTA to their facility for a site visit. A meeting date is currently being scheduled.
3. DLNR has revised their proposal based on the May 2 discussion. In lieu of a Waikiki snorkel trail, the revised proposal consists of enhancing living coral resources at an existing degraded south shore dive site (25 - 40 ft depth) off Kewalo, Waikiki, or Maunalua Bay.
4. The requested amount is \$750,000.00 from HTA's EDA Grant for the Recovery of Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation. This is the same amount as what was originally proposed.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of DLNR's O'ahu Coral Restoration Project in the amount of \$750,000.00.

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