



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH: SEA GRANT IN WEST HAWAII

UH Sea Grant Extension Agent: Sara Peck

## The Issue

The University of Hawai'i (UH) Sea Grant College Program helps the West Hawai'i community on Hawai'i Island to maintain coastal environmental health by providing educational programs that promote responsible stewardship of the area's marine and coastal ecosystems.

To protect marine and coastal resources, West Hawai'i formed the only community-based Regional Fishery Management Area in Hawai'i. In addition, with help from the State Department of Land and Natural Resource's Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), UH Sea Grant and community volunteers, the West Hawai'i Fishery Council was formed to analyze issues related to ocean resource management—including protected areas, mooring buoys, gill netting and spear fishing with SCUBA.

## 2001 - 2002 Sea Grant Funding

\$83,468 SG; \$121,427 match

## Impacts/Economic Benefits

### Watching the Reefs

ReefWatchers is a program with trained volunteers who monitor nearshore habitats along the 147-mile coastline of West Hawai'i. Initially funded through the Coral Reef Initiative and private foundations, and developed in collaboration with UH Sea Grant, DAR and UH Hilo,



ReefWatchers monitor tide pools at Miloli'i

ReefWatchers collects data that helps DAR manage, conserve and restore Hawai'i's aquatic resources and ecosystems. The isolated Hawaiian village of Miloli'i has recently joined the ReefWatchers effort as youth learn to collect data on fish, invertebrates and algae.

### ReefTeach

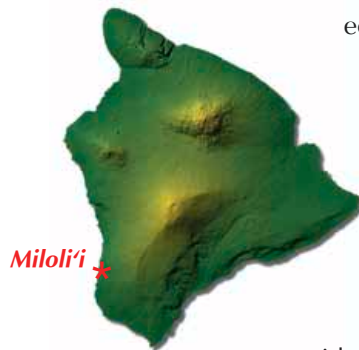
The ReefTeach program trains adult and teen volunteers how to teach snorkelers to identify and avoid live coral at the intensely used Kahalu'u Beach Park, where research has identified coral damage caused by trampling. Data collected during the program has proven the effectiveness of ReefTeach, which is supported by community donations, local businesses and federal funding.

### Exploring and Mentoring

UH Sea Grant works with West Hawai'i Explorations Academy (WHEA) students on several projects. In a cross-peer teaching project, approximately 3,000 elementary school students annually visit WHEA for an Aloha Kai marine science experience that includes a snorkel survey to expose students to basic marine survey work. UH Sea Grant aquaculture specialists mentor various students as they attempt to set up aquaculture and marine ecosystem projects.

### ReefTalk

ReefTalk offers the public 11 free, educational presentations on marine and coastal ecosystem topics each year. Sponsored by UH Sea Grant, ReefTalk garners supplementary funding through community donations to the Malama Kai Foundation.



The West Hawai'i Regional Fishery Management Area covers 147 miles of the West Hawai'i coastline.

### **Touring the Lab**

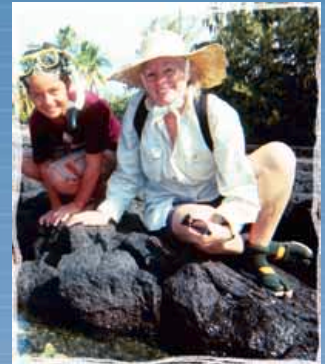
UH Sea Grant coordinates public tours of the Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i Authority (NELHA) facility in Kona. UH Sea Grant extension agent Sara Peck trains volunteer "NELHA Ambassadors" who educate visitors by increasing their understanding and interest in using the alternative natural resources of warm and cold sea water, and sunlight.

### **Parks "Teach"**

UH Sea Grant agents, the Hawai'i State Department of Land and Natural Resources, State Parks Interpretive Division, and the community met to design interpretive signs and displays explaining the natural and cultural history of West Hawai'i for Lapakahi State Historical Park, Kekaha Kai at Mahai'ula State Park, and Kealakekua Bay. An instructional mural produced by grade school students was also installed at Kahalu'u Beach Park with support from the Hawai'i County Parks and Recreation Department, the Kona Reefers dive club, ReefWatchers and a volunteer building contractor.

### **Significant Partners**

Harold K.L. Castle Foundation  
Hawai'i Community Foundation  
Malama Kai Foundation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Pa'a Pono Foundation  
Cottington Foundation  
Hawai'i State Coastal Zone Management  
Department of Business, Economic  
Development and Tourism  
Division of Aquatic Resources  
Department of Education  
Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation  
The Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawai'i  
Authority  
National Science Foundation  
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric  
Administration  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
The Kamehameha Investment Corporation  
The Kona Reefers Dive Club  
The Kona Underwater Photography  
Society  
InnerSpace Visions and the West Hawai'i  
community



Sara Peck has been the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program West Hawai'i Extension Agent for the last nine years. Under a Sea Grant program in the 1970s, she helped develop and eventually headed the Waikiki Aquarium Education Section. In addition, for 14 years Peck lead marine life study tours to the world's tropical waters for the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Scripps, and many other educational institutions. She earned a Master's of Education from Heritage College in 1997, focusing on environmental education. Sara's mission statement: to build in the West Hawai'i community – consensus, understanding and commitment to establish sustainable marine and coastal resource management along the Kona Coast.

For further information:

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SEAGRANT



*Aloha Kai ReefTeach volunteers teach students about marine science by engaging them in interesting activities.*

