

# Leeward Islands Ecological Report Completed

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Fisheries development and wildlife preservation may be a compatible combination in future planning for Hawaii's pristine Northwestern Islands as a result of five years of research in that area.

The findings are expected to help resolve a conflict between those eyeing the rich fishery resources of the area and those who fear fishing will threaten the ecological system and endangered species.

More than 200 scientists participated in the research program, sponsored by four state and federal agencies. It was one of the largest and most complete multidisciplinary ecological investigations ever attempted.

Two volumes of data were presented to Gov. George Ariyoshi yesterday by Richard Grigg, University of Hawaii marine biologist, and Jack Davidson, director of the University of Hawaii Sea Grant Program.

Grigg, who coordinated the

massive scientific effort, compared it to the Challenger expedition sponsored by Great Britain in 1872. The ship took four years to go around the world. "What it did was to lay the foundation for modern oceanography and provided sort of an encyclopedia of information which is still 100 years later being used or drawn upon," Grigg said.

"IN LIKE FASHION, I think this study . . . should provide the state of Hawaii with an encyclopedia of information that could very well shape the course of history for the Hawaiian Islands for 100 years to come."

A special task force of the governor recommended in 1974 that resources of the Hawaiian Archipelago be surveyed and assessed to protect the unique wildlife and manage potential fishery resources.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, the state Department of Land and Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed a Tripartite Cooperative Agreement to undertake the

project. The Sea Grant Program joined the study in 1977.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands consist of a group of low, rocky islets and coral atolls extending more than 1,000 miles northwest from Nihoa Island to Kure Atoll.

Responsibilities for the area and its resources are divided between federal, state and city-county governments. The area is included in the City-County of Honolulu. It is part of the national wildlife refuge system and also a state wildlife refuge.

STATE AND federal agencies are developing various management plans for the region, its fisheries and endangered species, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is drafting a wildlife refuge master plan. City Council members also have suggested developing a plan for the area.

Interviewed separately, leaders of the investigating agencies expressed enthusiasm about the cooperative venture and use of the information to make management decisions about the

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

"The final measure of the success of the five-year study perhaps will be the degree to which the master plan successfully meets the needs of preserving wildlife while also providing for limited developmental opportunities throughout the Northwestern Hawaiian Island chain," said Grigg and Karen Y. Tanoue, editors of the research volumes.

"I'M NOT saying we're going to open the refuge for fishing," said Al Marmelstein, Pacific Islands administrator of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "But I think we are in a better position now to work with the state to develop potential fisheries in a manner that is most consistent with our objectives for preserving and protecting the unique natural heritage of the seabirds, monk seals and sea turtles."

Marmelstein said the five-year study "has provided us with a wealth of information and understanding we otherwise wouldn't have had to help us

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**HISTORIC PROJECT**—The results of a five-year research program in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are delivered to the governor by Richard Grigg, left, and Jack Davidson with the University of Hawaii Sea Grant Program. —Star-Bulletin Photo by Ken Sakamoto.