



Response to June 24, 2007, Honolulu Star-Bulletin Editorial

HONOLULU (25 June 2007) “A lie repeated often enough gives the appearance of truth.” This seems to be the modus operandi of a small group of individuals who call themselves “leading environment advocates” and claim they have documented proof of illegal and unethical behavior by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and its staff regarding its sponsorship of the Hoohanohano I Na Kupuna Puwalu series (Honor Our Ancestors conference series).

These individuals issued press releases riddled with untruths, which the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* relied on as the basis of its Sunday editorial asking that Congress look into their claims.

Contrary to these allegations, the Puwalu series—which promotes the involvement of Native Hawaiian communities in the management of federal fisheries—is an integral part of ecosystem-based management and mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Thus the Council activities and expenditures of federal funds are entirely legitimate.

These individuals also allege that Council members have conflicts of interest. There are federal regulations that address conflicts of interest, which the Council strictly follows.

The complainants claim that the Council has used federal funds “to push three fishery related bills during the last legislative session.” This is simply not true.

The Council has a 30-year history of fishery conservation and management. Since the 1980s, the Council banned various destructive gears, such as bottom trawls and drift gill nets, and limited entry to five primary fisheries under its jurisdiction. The Council’s pelagic fishery management regime is the international standard for responsible fisheries—pioneering vessel monitoring systems for fisheries, establishing protected species zones, requiring up to 100 percent mandatory observer coverage and leading sea turtle conservation in the Pacific Ocean.

“The Council will continue its mission to responsibly manage fisheries—based on science and the ecosystem-based approach—with openness, transparency and inclusiveness in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act,” stated the Council Chair Sean Martin and Vice Chairs Ignacio Dela Cruz (Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands), Manny Duenas (Guam), Edwin Ebisui Jr. (Hawaii) and Frank McCoy Sr. (American Samoa).

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