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Subject: Introducing DAR's new Program Managers

Aloha,

I'm very pleased to announce that we have selected the three new DAR Program Manager Positions.

Brian Kanenaka (Recreational Fishery/District Offices)

Ryan Okano (Ecosystem Resources & Ecosystem Protection)

David Sakoda (Commercial Fishery & Resources Enhancement Branch)

This is the first time in many years that DAR has had a fully staffed leadership team. All three Program Managers bring a strong background and passion for aquatic resource management and are committed to serving the people of Hawaii in carrying-out our mission. I've included a short bio about DAR's new Leadership Team below. Please join me in congratulating Brian, Ryan, and David on their promotion.

Brian Neilson

Brian Kanenaka was born and raised on Kauai, and received a bachelor's degree from Colorado State University in Fisheries Biology. After working for the Colorado Division of Wildlife in 1975, he stopped in Honolulu on his way to Kauai to spend the holidays before heading out for another seasonal job conducting creel census on steelhead fishers in Washington state. While in Honolulu he visited the Fish & Game Division and was offered a job surveying the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. This was the beginning of his career at DAR (1976), working as a temporary Aquatic Biologist II compiling and analyzing green sea turtle data and aquarium fish catch reports in the new Kalanimoku office building. After working for about a year writing reports on various sport fish projects, he wanted to get back into the field and took a job as a fisheries technician at Anuenue Fisheries Research Center. He describes this time as some of the most exciting work of his career – sampling the rainbow trout catch at Koke'e, Kauai, diving for channel catfish eggs in Nuuanu Reservoir, raising Malaysian prawns, initiating surveys at Pupukea (now an MLCD) and the Waikiki-Diamond Head Fisheries Management Area, and fish survey trips to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. One of Brian's first major projects was the artificial reef program. After testing various designs, he developed the "Z-modules" artificial reef design and added tens of thousands of these units to all the existing nearshore artificial reefs on Oahu and Maui to enhance fishing opportunities. In addition, he piloted a deep-water reef off of Ewa to provide habitat for bottomfish. All this wonderful fieldwork ended in 2003 when his second career and greater calling began as the Division's budget person. Brian says that it's not nearly as fun as field work - conducting fish transects and building fish houses, but keeping a watchful eye on our funding levels for over 16 years continues to be a very gratifying job for Brian in helping the Division to protect and manage Hawaii's aquatic resources. Brian's budget expertise is well-regarded at DLNR and the State

Legislature. Brian has also been a major supporter of neighbor Island staff and Programs and will continue this in his new role as Programs Manager.

Ryan Okano, grew-up in the plantation village of Pepeekeo, where aquatic resources abound. Streams, estuaries, rocky intertidal, submerged boulder fields, and their affiliated biological communities can all be found at Ryan's home grounds. During his youth and young adult years he actively participated in the numerous fisheries of Hawaii. It was during this time that Ryan began to understand the importance of Hawaii's fisheries in the context of community and culture. Academically, Ryan received a BA in Natural Sciences from the University of Hawaii at Hilo in 1995. Later he moved to Oahu and received a MS in Botany in 2001 and a PhD in Botany in 2011, both from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Ryan is considered an expert in Hawaiian limu and Hawaiian reef ecosystems. After completing his PhD, Ryan worked as a Program Manager and Ecologist in Saipan for seven years, before moving back to Oahu to work for DAR as an Aquatic Biologist in 2017. His primary responsibilities have focused on commercial fisheries and to serve as a liaison between the State and WesPac, but he has also participated in marine and stream surveys, watershed restoration, community outreach, and limu initiatives.

David Sakoda, grew-up on Oahu. He first worked for DAR in 2001 as a temporary summer hire and also spent some time at the Honolulu Fish Auction working as an Auction Hand. His love for fishing inspired him to pursue a career in marine resource management. After earning his Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology from Wheaton College in 2005 and his Juris Doctor and Environmental Law Certificate from UH Manoa's William S. Richardson School of Law in 2010, he served for two years as a law clerk for the First Circuit Court, State of Hawaii. In 2013, David returned to DAR as the Marine Law Fellow, and in 2018 he accepted a position as a DAR Program Specialist V. He specializes in marine resource law and policy, and his work includes legal research, administrative rulemaking, legislation, and administrative enforcement of natural resource damage cases. In his role as legal fellow and Program Specialist, he has successfully integrated his biology and law degrees with his experience as a fisher and participation in Hawaii's fishing community. David has also taken an active role in connecting fishers to management, by promoting opportunities for fishers to have open dialogue with DAR managers. David is also an avid free-dive spearfisherman, who loves to eat and share what he catches.

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