



**HOUSE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION**

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A HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE REQUEST OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES TO SUSPEND THE PROPOSED CORAL CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATION PROCESS UNTIL THE CORAL 5-YEAR STATUS REVIEW CAN BE COMPLETED AND HAVE THE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES WORK IN CONCERT WITH NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) IN IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE CORAL CRITICAL HABITAT FOR AMERICAN SAMOA.

WHEREAS, coral reefs are ecosystems with high coral and fish species diversity and it has supported local fishing communities for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS, coral reefs sustain our local island communities through livelihood, subsistence and fish for customary exchange and cultural activities, and that fishing is integral to the robust yet vulnerable Samoan culture, the Fa'asamoa; and

WHEREAS, coral reefs face various threats such as climate change, land-based source of pollution, and exploitation and need continuous protection; and

WHEREAS, such regulatory protections for corals currently includes a multitude of local and federal regulatory programs that protect both ESA-listed species and coral reef habitat;

WHEREAS, in order to avoid implementing additional and redundant regulatory programs on our ESA (Endangered Species Act) protected coral species, critical habitat maps must be based on the best scientific information available which includes the results of the coral 5-Year Status review and local consultations with the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources; and

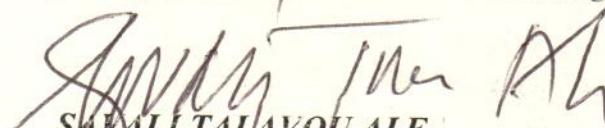
WHEREAS, there are existing local and federal regulations prohibiting coral take and protections of coral reef habitat, as well as other regulations under the marine protected area programs, AS-EPA water quality standards, and local/federal permitting and review system of proposed coastal development. These regulations collectively, already provide protection of ESA-listed corals and coral critical habitat. Additional burdensome regulatory programs have the potential to stymie the current regulatory processes, through lengthy and costly consultations and yet have no significant conservation benefit to ESA-listed corals.

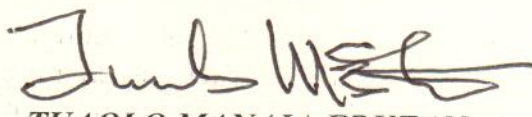
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TERRITORY OF AMERICAN SAMOA, THE SENATE CONCURRING:

THAT, the Legislature of American Samoa for itself and on behalf of the people of the Territory of American Samoa, extends its full support of the request by American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources:

- (1) to postpone the current proposed coral critical habitat designation process due to the complete disregard of local agency coordination by NMFS, critical habitat maps presented in the Proposed Rule are not based on best scientific information available as the coral 5-Year Status Review has not been completed;*
- (2) to allow the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources to develop the Territory's coral critical habitat map based on local current data in lieu of the recognized deficient NMFS critical habitat maps included in the Proposed Rule; and*
- (3) to reconsider the prudence of designating coral critical habitat in American Samoa as the process is redundant with existing regulatory programs. There are sufficient existing local and federal regulatory programs in place to protect our imperiled coral species and coral reef habitat.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this concurrent resolution be submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as part of the comments to the rules changes as announced in the Federal Register.


SAVALI TALAVOU ALE
Speaker, House of Representatives


TUAOLO MANAIA FRUEAN
President of the Senate