

**NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS
CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

10 February 2012

T. 'Aulani Wilhelm
NOAA Superintendent, Papahānaumokuākea
Marine National Monument and World Heritage Site
6600 Kalaniana'ole Highway, Suite 300
Honolulu, HI 96825

Dear Ms. Wilhelm:

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Reserve Advisory Council (RAC) received a presentation from the Pacific Islands Regional Director Allen Tom at our last meeting on November 2, 2011. We sincerely appreciate Allen's presentation on NOAA's continued efforts to develop an interpretive center on the island of Kaua'i.

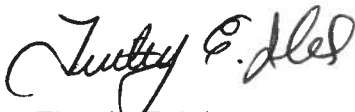
The island of Kaua'i is currently the northernmost boundary of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, and is also the largest and most populated island nearest to Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Kaua'i is an excellent location for natural and cultural outreach and education because of the island's proximity to both the Sanctuary and Monument.

An interpretive center on Kaua'i would likely be modeled on similar successful facilities such as Mokupāpapa Discovery Center in Hilo, and the Kīhei Learning Center on Maui. The Kaua'i center would provide a gathering place for residents and visitors of all ages that facilitates awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the marine and terrestrial environments of Hawai'i as well as Hawaiian cultural practices and values. The center would potentially be a partnership with local state and county conservation and education entities, and would focus on education, outreach, and the integration of nature and culture.

If we are to be successful in "bringing the place to the people" interpretative centers will continue to be a critical component of that strategy. While we are supportive about the proposed Kauai interpretative center, we recognize that such centers can be justified on every island. Given the competing demands for scarce budget resources, members of the RAC would find it helpful to better understand what criteria are used to establish priorities about the timing and location of new interpretive centers throughout the state. We urge staff to share their criteria for assessing the relative demand, educational importance and cost-effectiveness of new centers.

The RAC supports interpretive centers and would be happy to provide any assistance in assessing options for new centers. The strength of our islands lies in our ability to work together for a common purpose. With the support of this project, it will be a place of education and gathering for all people.

Sincerely,



Timothy E. Johns
Advisory Council Chair,
Northwestern Hawaiian Islands
Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve