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**Leading reef health expert to speak in Kona**

KAMUELA, Hawai'i—March 28, 2008—Are coral reefs getting into hot water?

Ask coral reef expert and featured La 'Ike lecturer Dr. Catherine Drew Harvell, who teaches and studies the biology of the ocean. She travels the world researching why corals get “sick” and how global warming affects coral reef ecosystems.

Coral reefs are under pressure from the triple threat of ocean warming, acidification and infectious disease. Harvell and fellow scientists are just beginning to unravel the direct and interacting effects of this environmental change on coral reef ecosystems.

Harvell will explain how coral reef scientists are developing new knowledge to improve management of reef ecosystems in her lecture, “What Corals Are Telling Us about Climate Change” at 10 a.m. Saturday, April 5, in the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort’s Kahalu'u Ballroom. This lecture is presented as part of the La 'Ike Kahakai O Kahalu'u culture and science series.

Joining Harvell to discuss the monitoring and management of coral reefs in West Hawai'i is Dr. Bill Walsh. Walsh is an aquatic biologist with the Hawai'i Division of Aquatic Resources, Department of Land and Natural Resources, and an affiliate faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

La 'Ike is the first of three April appearances for Harvell. She will share her knowledge of coral reef ecosystems with viewers on KHNL-TV's “Earth and Sea Project: Going Green in Hawai'i,” and is also a featured lecturer in Bishop Museum’s three-part series, co-sponsored by The Kohala Center, celebrating the International Year of the Coral Reef. Harvell’s lecture, “Trial by Fire: Will Coral Reefs Weather Warming and Disease?” is at 6 p.m. April 10 in the museum’s Atherton Halau in Honolulu.

Harvell’s research brings her to Hawai'i Island, where she has assumed a post as senior scientist with The Kohala Center. She comes to The Kohala Center as a full professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University. She is also a leader in organizing the World Bank—Global Environmental Fund worldwide coral reef health team, which has research sites in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific.

“We are honored to have Dr. Harvell join our group of senior scientists and senior scholars,” said Roberta Fujimoto Chu, president of The Kohala Center's Board of Directors. “In the Year of the Coral Reef, I can think of no more important research than the global effort Dr. Harvell is heading. Coral reefs are, indeed, the rainforests of the sea.”

As senior scientist with The Kohala Center, Harvell will assist with developing research projects that will serve Hawai'i Island communities and enhance island environments. She will work with scientists and community members to establish an environmental health monitoring project, building on the momentum of water-quality monitoring and marine ecosystem health efforts at Kahalu'u Bay.

“It is wonderful to be working with community leaders, with teachers and with Island experts such as Sara Peck from UH Sea Grant and Bill Walsh to develop programs that benefit the Island and the world—all at the same time,” Harvell said. “What we learn here will be of great value to our understanding of marine ecosystem health and coral reef health, especially in the Pacific.”

Walsh received his Ph.D. in Zoology from University of Hawai'i-Mānoa with a research emphasis on the behavioral ecology of coral reef fishes. He works with the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) to manage, conserve and restore the state's unique aquatic resources and ecosystems for present and future generations.

The DAR manages the State's aquatic resources and ecosystems. Projects include managing or enhancing fisheries for long-term sustainability of the resources, protecting and restoring the aquatic environment, protecting native and resident aquatic species and their habitat, and providing facilities and opportunities for recreational fishing.

Other senior scientists and senior scholars at The Kohala Center are Dr. Lois-ellin Datta, widely recognized as one of the founders of the field of Evaluation Research; Dr. Charles Greene, internationally recognized oceanographer; Kekuhi Keali'ikanaka'oleohaililani of the Edith Kanaka'ole Foundation; and Dr. Karen Kemp, the author of the recently published "Encyclopedia of Geographic Information Science." The Kohala Center is an independent academic institution for teaching and research about and for the environment.

The La 'Ike series is part of the Kahalu'u Bay preservation and restoration project. The series is sponsored by the Bishop Holdings Corporation/Kamehameha Investment Corporation, Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort, Hawai'i Tourism Authority, The Kohala Center and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).