

# Guide can help protect fish in vulnerable stages

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A local not-for-profit center is connecting West Hawaii communities interested in conservation and management of their fishery with easy-to-use tools that allow greater stewardship of fish populations.

The Kohala Center developed a voluntary spawning guide, a colorful poster rich with pictures and information teaching users to fish more responsibly, to help preserve Hawaii's vibrant and precious marine resources. During a workshop Thursday evening at the West Hawaii Civic Center, Matt Connelly and Cindi Punihaole from The Kohala Center's Kahaluu Bay Education Center explained the premise behind the guide and its workings to more than 20 attendees.

The free workshop was part of a fishing knowledge series presented by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The goal was to empower Hawaiians and others to practice self-regulation when gathering from the ocean, share knowledge, as well as promote fishing practices that are mindful, responsible and make sense, said Shane Palacat-Nelsen, outreach coordinator for OHA's Community Engagement Division.

"Sustainability is not just about saving the world," he said. "It's about how we, as a community, can contribute. Sustainability is about how we react and act where we live."

Other workshops will occur from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on May 23 at the Konawaena Elementary School cafeteria and on June 20 at the Hookena Elementary School cafeteria.

The idea for the guide was spawned by informal discussions with families who attended a sustainable fishing camp, organized by The Kohala Center and Hawaii Fish Trust, in 2011 at Kaupulehu. Several participants expressed interest in helping protect marine biodiversity, manage fisheries and improve the sustainability of those resources. They spoke about the importance of having a quick, easy, comprehensive tool that was science-based and uses traditional resource management methods, Punihaole said.

The Kohala Center received a Hawaii Community Foundation West Hawaii Fund grant to create the guide in 2011, which has since been revised and added to. Cultural experts along with experts from the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resource, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, University of Hawaii, University of the Azores, The Kohala Center provided the information for the guide, which suggests ways to reduce overfishing and protect marine species at vulnerable times in their life cycles, such as breeding seasons, Punihaole said.

The guide has detailed information about more than 20 reef and pelagic fish, their scientific, common and Hawaiian names, their peak spawning months, and the legal size limits. It also features a chart of Hawaiian lunar phases and the fishing activity that occurred at that particular time, as well as a list of pono practices, such as being concerned about future generations, practicing self-restraint and having reverence for ancestors and sacred places.

In the end, the presenters and organizers hoped attendees would become their own enforcers,

help curtail overharvesting and prevent further population declines of species highly targeted in the waters off the island's leeward coast.

Attendees were also encouraged to take what they learned and share it with others. But besides talking story with their family, friends, neighbors and visitors, they can share their ocean observations on a companion website and suggest ways to improve the guide, which can be downloaded for free at [kohalacenter.org/kahaluubay/spawningguide](http://kohalacenter.org/kahaluubay/spawningguide).

For more information about the workshops, call OHA's West Hawaii Resource Center at 327-9525.