**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Pacific Islands Regional Office
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December 7, 2006

Mr. Peter T. Young
Chairperson
Department of Land and Natural Resources
1151 Punchbowl Street Room 100
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Peter:

I am writing to encourage the Board of Land and Natural Resources to adopt the draft administrative rule for a revised network of Bottomfish Restricted Fishing Areas, developed by the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) at the Board's meeting on Friday, December 8, 2006.

The best available scientific information indicates that overfishing of the Hawaiian Archipelago bottomfish species stock complex is occurring, and that the overfishing is occurring in the main Hawaiian Islands. In order to achieve sustainable levels of harvest, fishing mortality needs to be reduced by 15% or more. In response, the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council has recommended that NOAA Fisheries Service close almost all of Penguin Bank and all of Middle Bank in Federal waters (3-200 miles). However, the ability of the closures in Federal waters to accomplish the necessary reduction in fishing mortality relies on the State of Hawaii adopting and implementing complementary closures. During the last year the DAR has revised the existing network of bottomfish area closures established in 1998 based on multibeam sonar mapping and analysis of bottomfish Essential Fish Habitat in the main Hawaiian Islands. The proposed revised network of bottomfish closures should improve the conservation benefits to bottomfish from the existing State regime.

The effectiveness of any fisheries management regime depends on adequate monitoring and enforcement. I urge the DLNR to allocate sufficient resources to enforce the Bottomfish Restricted Fishing Areas and to collaborate with NOAA Fisheries Service and the Fishery Management Council to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the closures on main Hawaiian Island bottomfish stocks.

Sincerely yours,

William L. Robinson
Regional Administrator

cc: Kitty Simonds