

***MARINE SAFETY GROUP - PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION***

***Hawaii bans shark feeding; second US statewide ban signed into law***

**Honolulu. June 6.**

Hawaii has become the second US state within a year to completely prohibit shark feeding dives.

Gov. Ben Cayetano signed the measure - which was passed by the Legislature with virtually no opposition - into law yesterday.

The new law, which goes into effect July 1, bans feeding sharks in state waters and also prohibits businesses from advertising or soliciting shark feeding.

William Devick, administrator of the Division of Aquatic Resources, said that the new law takes a proactive approach "and prohibits such activities before they become established in Hawaii."

Devick said that there have been reports of people getting injured while feeding sharks in Hawaii, but none have been documented. However, he added, "attacks on people involved in feeding operations have been documented" on the mainland.

Despite continuing claims by the dive industry that shark-feeding dives are "perfectly safe" and "educational", virtually every jurisdiction that has recently examined the issue in depth has opted to ban or strictly regulate the practice in order to better protect both the public and marine life.

Florida passed a similar ban last November, while the Cayman Islands - a popular Caribbean dive destination - passed a law prohibiting shark-feeding dives this past February.

Bob Dimond, President of the Marine Safety Group - an environmental organization that led the Florida fight to stop the practice - praised the Hawaii decision.

"Like Florida, Hawaii has taken a big step to protect its huge ocean tourism industry and its marine life", Dimond said.

"The MSG will now diligently pursue adoption of a complete ban of the feeding of all marine wildlife in the U.S. National Marine Sanctuary Program, Dimond added. "We expect the Sanctuary Program to be a leader when it comes to protecting marine wildlife and habitat, not the last ones to wake up and smell the coffee."

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