

Notice of Availability for Public Comment:

January 14th, 2011

M/V CASITAS Vessel Grounding Draft Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment State and Federal agencies (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, also known as the natural resource Trustees) working on the restoration of natural resources injured by the M/V CASITAS vessel grounding today released a Draft Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment (Draft DARP/EA), opening a 30-day public comment period.

The M/V CASITAS, a 145 ft contract vessel, ran aground at Pearl and Hermes Atoll within the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge (now also part of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument) on July 2, 2005. The grounding resulted in injuries to natural resources, as did response actions taken to prevent or reduce the threat of a release of oil from the vessel into the environment.

The Draft DARP/EA describes a course of action to restore habitat equivalent to the natural resources injured by the grounding of the M/V CASITAS at Pearl and Hermes Atoll. Specifically, the plan describes a proposed project to remove marine debris in the vicinity of the grounding. This project would be paid for by damages from a legal settlement between the natural resource Trustees and the owners and operators of the M/V CASITAS.

The release of the Draft DARP/EA begins a 30-day public comment period, that will close on February 14th and will include a public meeting to discuss the plan on Tuesday February 15th, 2011. An electronic version of the Draft DARP/EA is available online at <http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/>. Hardcopies of the DARP/EA can be found at the following State Libraries:

Hawaii, Hilo: 300 Waianuenu Ave, Hilo 96720 933-8888
Hawaii, Kailua - Kona: 75-138 Hualalai Rd., Kailua Kona 96740 327-4327
Kauai, Lihue: 4344 Hardy St., Lihue 96766 241-3222
Maui, Kahului: 90 School St., Kahului 96732 873-3097
Oahu, Hawaii State Library: 478 S. King St. 96813 586-3500
Oahu, Liliha: 1515 Liliha St. 96817 808-587-7577

For more information, contact Matthew Parry at 944-2211. Comments may be submitted at the public meeting or to Matthew.Parry@noaa.gov.

Public Meeting:

Tuesday, February 15th at 6pm
Liliha Public Library
1515 Liliha St. 96817
Honolulu, HI
808.587.7577
(SA272685 1/14, 1/15/11)