



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:
Caroline Witherspoon
or Tess Staadecker
Becker Communications, Inc.
(808) 533-4165

**PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT CORAL
ARRIVES AND THRIVES AT THE WAIKIKI AQUARIUM**
Corals to be Featured in New Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Exhibit

Honolulu, HI (October 28, 2009) – Capitalizing on its outstanding history of propagating corals, the Waikiki Aquarium is receiving live coral specimens from Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument for a new Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Exhibit scheduled to open in late 2010 or early 2011. The Waikiki Aquarium has a 30-year long history of growing corals and is world renowned for its pioneering and successful coral propagation program.

The coral fragments were collected in waters off French Frigate Shoals and Maro Reef during the annual Reef Monitoring and Assessment Program and were returned to O‘ahu in specially designed holding tanks on October 21, 2009.

Aquarium biologist Rick Klobuchar explains that the corals collected in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands include species not commonly found in the main Hawaiian Islands. “French Frigate has abundant and well known *Acropora cytherea*, a massive table coral that is virtually absent in the main Hawaiian Islands”. He explains that in some cases individual colonies grow so large they topple under their own weight. “Our permit allows us to collect whole colonies of specific species, however it is less invasive to collect 3 inch pieces of coral or single branches of coral, so the mother colony remains 99% intact on the reef. It’s exactly like taking a small cutting from a plant to grow it out. Not only will the transplanted corals double and triple in quantity and size within a year, the colonies in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands will swiftly overgrow, in a relatively short amount of time, 1-3 weeks, what’s removed. Once we have corals thriving in our tanks, we can continue to propagate fragments from them, greatly reducing the need to collect these species from the wild in the future.”

The Waikiki Aquarium’s Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Exhibit will feature a 5,100-gallon tank which will contain an authentic reef ecosystem from the area with signature species of fish and

coral not commonly found in the main Hawaiian Islands. It is being developed in partnership and with support from the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Exhibit at the Waikiki Aquarium furthers the mission of both the Monument to “bring the place to the people” and the Aquarium, “to promote research, education and conservation of Pacific marine life.”

About the Waikiki Aquarium

Founded in 1904, the Waikiki Aquarium is the third oldest public aquarium in the United States. A part of the University of Hawaii since 1919, it is located next to a living reef on the Waikiki shoreline. Exhibits, programs, and research focus on the aquatic life of Hawaii and the tropical Pacific, with roughly 320,000 people visiting the Aquarium each year. Over 3,000 organisms are on exhibit representing more than 500 species of aquatic animals and plants. The Waikiki Aquarium is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. except Christmas Day. Admission is \$9 for visitors; \$6 for local residents, active duty military with ID, students with ID and seniors; \$4 for youths ages 13-17 and persons with disabilities; \$2 for juniors ages 5 to 12; and free for children 4 and under and Friends of Waikiki Aquarium (FOWA) members. For more information, call (808) 923-9741 or visit online at www.waquarium.org.

###