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### **WAIKĪKĪ AQUARIUM TO REOPEN ON JULY 1**

HONOLULU (FINAL) – Get ready to swim on over to the Waikīkī Aquarium once again! After over a year of closure due to the pandemic, the Aquarium doors are re-opening to the public Thursday, July 1, 2021.

“We’re excited to finally be able to welcome guests back to our jewel of an aquarium,” said Dr. Andrew Rossiter, director of the Waikīkī Aquarium. “As the second oldest aquarium in the United States and one of the longest running establishments in Hawai’i, Waikīkī Aquarium has educated several generations and made a national and international impact in marine conservation efforts throughout the world. We were fortunate enough to survive through these hard times, and I am thankful that Waikīkī Aquarium can continue to spread its mission.”

Visitors can enjoy a safe and educational experience with safety guidelines in place. To control capacity, tickets may be purchased in advance online. Walk-ins are available on a limited first-come first-serve basis, and must pay using a credit card. There will also be a restriction on the number of guests allowed in the Aquarium galleries at a given time.

Other health and safety protocols include:

- Requiring facial coverings at all times for visitors over the age of two
- Social distancing of at least 6 ft.

- Clear acrylic barriers at the Front Desk and Gift Shop
- Hand sanitizer stations throughout the facility
- Frequent cleaning and sanitization of high-touch areas
- All touch screens, informational kiosks, and other high-touch technologies have been decommissioned until further notice.

COVID restrictions will be relaxed based on federal and state guidelines.

“It has been a challenging year, but we have exciting things planned for the Aquarium in the upcoming years,” Andrew Rossiter, Director of the Waikīkī Aquarium stated. “The money we were relying on for a renovation failed to materialize, but now the University is kindly getting involved. We’re now looking at doing more than the renovation, but a major construction project in the future. The University’s support, input, and expertise will allow us to undertake significant fundraising programs, and give us the ability to move into the future”.

The project will include work on the lawn area in order to make room for new exhibits, an education center, lecture rooms, and facilities to modernize the aquarium. While the Aquarium renovates and repairs the Hawaiian Monk Seal exhibit, resident seal Ho‘ailona is temporarily moved behind the scenes and will later be transferred to the mainland. He will be back with us in summer 2022. During his time away, he will be part of a one-year-long behavioral study of monk seals which will contribute towards conservation efforts for this endangered species in the wild.

With a mission to inspire and promote understanding, appreciation and conservation of Pacific marine life, the Waikīkī Aquarium features an array of indoor and outdoor exhibits. Visitors are able to come face to face with living corals, giant clams, weedy seadragons, and a diverse collection of other marine animals.

For more information or reservations call (808) 923-9741 or visit <https://www.waikikiaquarium.org/visit/hours/>.

### **About the Waikiki Aquarium**

Founded in 1904 and administered by the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa since 1919, the Waikiki Aquarium is located on the shoreline of Waikiki Beach next to a living reef

and across from Kapiolani Park. The Aquarium – second oldest in the U.S. – showcases more than 500 marine species, and maintains more than 3,500 marine specimens. Public exhibits, education programs and research activities focus on the unique aquatic life of Hawai'i and the tropical Pacific. The Aquarium typically welcomes more than 280,000 visitors annually, and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. except Honolulu Marathon Sunday and Christmas Day. Admission is \$12 for visitors; \$8 for local residents and active duty military with ID, \$5 for senior citizens and juniors ages four to 12; and free for children three and under and Friends of Waikiki Aquarium (FOWA) members. For more information about the Waikiki Aquarium, including membership, call (808) 923-9741 or visit [www.waikikiaquarium.org](http://www.waikikiaquarium.org).

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