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Free events focus on ocean concerns

*By Don Robbins
Staff Writer*

Hawaii's beaches get hit with a double whammy of marine debris constantly, in addition to locally produced trash there is a swirling vortex of internationally generated garbage that hits our shores, according to environmentalist Suzanne Frazer.

Among Frazer's concerns are the health of sea turtles, other marine life and seabirds who suffer from entanglement, ingestion and habitat destruction from disposable waste products such as plastic bags, bottles and other items dumped into the ocean. Frazer said several types of plastic containers are harmful to human health.

Frazer and Dean Otsuki are the co-founders of the Hawaii Kai-based all-volunteer nonprofit organization Beach Environmental Awareness Campaign Hawaii (B.E.A.C.H) which has organized a series of free events which take place in April.

Titled "Plastic and Hawaii's Marine Life" the weekly series will cover topics such as marine life in the main and Northwestern Hawaiian islands and the impacts of plastic on health, marine life and the environment.

The events, which will take place every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, includes:

- April 1, architecture auditorium; film "Hawaii, Message in the Waves."
- April 8, art auditorium (note change of venue for this week), lecture by Regina Woodrom Rudrud, "Conflict, Collision and Confrontation: Sea Turtle Biology and Incompatibility with Marine Debris."
- April 15, architecture auditorium, film "Synthetic Sea Story."
- April 22, architecture auditorium, an Earth Day lecture by Suzanne Frazer, "Plastic: Impacts on our Health, Marine Life and the Environment."
- April 29, architecture auditorium, lecture by David Hyrenbach, "Albatross as Indicators of Plastic Pollution in the Marine Environment."

Originally from Australia, Frazer relocated to Hawaii to study dance at UH and said she had a shocking awakening. One day she walked along the beach and saw trash from around the world such as laundry baskets which had landed here. Ultimately she wound up putting her career on hold to help create B.E.A.C.H in 2006.

B.E.A.C.H. is focused on bringing awareness and solutions to the problem of marine debris and litter on Hawaii's beaches. It organizes litter prevention campaigns, presentations to schools and community organizations and beach clean-ups.

Frazer and Otsuki received the 2008 Living Reef award which honour groups and individuals that go above and beyond in their actions to make a difference in preserving the reefs.

For more information, visit www.b-e-a-c-h.org/april09series.html