

RESEARCH FACILITIES

Hawaii Marine Lab Fights to Stay Afloat

Just a few kilometers down the coast from Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, the death knell is tolling for the University of Hawaii's (UH's) Kewalo Marine Laboratory. The university has agreed to give up its lease on the 35-year-old lab 17 years early and plans to move the lab's faculty to its other marine lab on Coconut Island, or to the main Manoa campus, or even to the Waikiki Aquarium. The state redevelopment agency, which owns the land, plans to tear down the waterfront lab to expand a park and set up a public arts place.

Word of the lab's demise is spreading through blogs and listservs, setting off protests across the globe. Last week, biologist Paul "PZ" Myers of the University of Minnesota, Morris, called the decision "short-sighted" in his blog, Pharyngula. In a letter to UH officials, Alessandro Minelli of the University of Padua in Italy praised the lab's evolutionary and developmental research and warned: "Stopping this activity would be a disaster for biology."

But Gary Ostrander, UH Manoa vice chancellor for research and graduate education, insists that he has no alternatives. "I don't like the idea of closing a marine lab, but we are a university that's struggling with budgets, and I have needs that are more pressing right now," he told *Science*.

The lab was established in 1972 with a

focus on using marine animals and molecular methods to study cell and developmental biology. Given Hawaii's location and the central role marine resources play in Hawaii's

limited resources in the United States to do work on coral reefs, so this would be a significant blow to the research capacity of the United States."

But Ostrander says the lab is falling apart, and for several years the landlord, the Hawaii Community Development Authority, has been pushing to get the land back before the lease is up in 2030. Ostrander says he's looked into moving the lab a few blocks back from the water but has been unable to raise the \$30 million estimated to be needed to rebuild the facility in this new location.

Places like the Kewalo lab "tend to have a fragile existence," being small and off campus and therefore more vulnerable to being closed down, says James Sanders, president of the National Association of Marine Laboratories and director of the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography in Savannah, Georgia. Indeed, Kewalo has been overshadowed by UH's other marine

lab, the 15-year-old Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, which also has dorms and conference facilities. But Sanders says that Kewalo is "well-respected" and that he would like to see it protected somehow. "We tend to view marine labs as windows on the ocean," he says. "I hate to see any of those windows shut."

—ELIZABETH PENNISI



Waterfront property. The University of Hawaii's Kewalo Marine Laboratory may soon be demolished for a park.

economy, it would be "tragic" if the lab closes, says its director, Mark Martindale. "We will have the same number of marine labs as Alabama and Ohio."

The closure will be "really creating a deficit" both for Hawaii and the country, says George Boehlert, director of the Oregon State University Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. "You have very

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Two Strikes and You're Out, Grant Applicants Learn

Taking some by surprise, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced last week that scientists applying for grants will get only one chance to resubmit a rejected proposal. The current policy, which allows two revisions, bogged down the review process and forced investigators to wait in line for funding, NIH says. Giving applicants just one more try should fund the best science sooner.

The change is in response to an advisory panel that identified problems in peer review earlier this year. The panel found that because more researchers are applying for money at a time when NIH's budget has stopped growing, study sections are shying away from funding applications submitted for the first time. Instead, NIH data show, even investigators with very strong proposals

must resubmit at least once. This has increased the workload for reviewers and applicants, and it means that many grantees wait up to 2 years for a decision. The advisory panel had a radical solution: Abolish revised proposals and consider all applications "new."

Some scientists, including the 80,000-member Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), argued that was too harsh. In June, NIH officials said they planned to continue to permit more than one revision but would "rebalance" the system to lower the success rates for resubmitted proposals (*Science*, 13 June, p. 1404).

Over the summer, NIH decided to scrap the rebalancing idea, says Anthony Scarpa, director of NIH's Center for Scientific

Review. "This goes further and achieves the same thing," he says. Beginning in January, only one amended application will be allowed. If that is rejected, the applicant "should substantially re-design the project," states an 8 October notice.

"It's a reasonable compromise," says Princeton University geneticist David Botstein, a member of the peer-review advisory committee. "It will push study sections in the direction that we want them to go." But "there has not been a lot of enthusiasm" among FASEB members, says Howard Garrison, the society's public-affairs director. He worries that "meritorious projects" will not get funded. But as Garrison notes, there is little point in protesting, as the new policy is final.

—JOCELYN KAISER