HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE DIVISION OF STATE PARKS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND
NATURAL RESOURCES TO ASSESS POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS OCEAN
CONDITIONS AT BEACH PARKS AND ENSURE THAT SAFETY CONCERNS
ARE ADDRESSED PRIOR TO UNDERTAKING ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS THAT
WILL INCREASE USE, AND TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT
POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS AT STATE BEACH PARKS ON
THE DIVISION’S WEBSITE AND IN ITS PRINTED MATERIALS.

WHEREAS, the Division of State Parks of the Department of
Land and Natural Resources is tasked with the management,
maintenance, and development of park facilities, including beach
parks; and

WHEREAS, beach park improvements such as paved access
roads, restrooms, showers, and picnic tables tend to greatly
increase the use of those parks, particularly by visitors who
are less likely to go to remote beaches that are not easily
accessible and have no amenities; and

WHEREAS, improvements were made in 2005 at Kua Bay in North
Kona on the Island of Hawaii, and these improvements have led to
greatly increased use of this beach, particularly by visitors
who are inexperienced with the ocean; and

WHEREAS, although it is common knowledge among local
residents that Kua Bay can experience rip tides, strong
currents, rough shore break, and generally dangerous conditions,
the environmental impact statement for the access road and other
improvements to Kua Bay did not include any consideration of
potentially hazardous ocean conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Division of State Parks website describes
Hapuna Beach as having "dangerous rip currents and pounding
shore breaks during periods of high surf. Waves over 3 feet
high are for experts--all others should stay out of the water
and out of the shoreline", but describes Kua Bay as "a section
at the north end of the park that has been developed with a paved access road, parking lot, and comfort station with an outdoor shower", with no mention of the frequent rough and dangerous conditions at Kua Bay; and

WHEREAS, there have been three drownings and twenty-eight emergency calls from the Kua Bay area since 2013, as well as seven spinal cord injuries between 2009 and 2013; and

WHEREAS, drownings at state beach parks accounted for five percent of the total fatal injuries in Hawaii for residents and forty-nine percent of the fatal injuries for non-residents between 2010 and 2014; and

WHEREAS, conducting a thorough assessment of potential hazards before making remote beaches more accessible could provide insight that would save lives; and

WHEREAS, these safety assessments should include input from residents who can provide local knowledge about potential hazards, information regarding the distance from hospitals, as well as medical data from emergency medical services to advise the Division of State Parks regarding high-risk locations and past incidents; and

WHEREAS, a safety assessment of a location should also include a recommendation of whether a lifeguard is necessary there, whether access should be improved if a lifeguard cannot be stationed there, and whether improved access is not advisable; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2018, that the Division of State Parks of the Department of Land and Natural Resources is urged to conduct an assessment of potentially hazardous ocean conditions at beach parks prior to undertaking access improvements that will increase use, and to provide information about potentially hazardous conditions at state beach parks on the Division's website and in its printed materials; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the Administrator of the Division of State Parks.