
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO
CONDUCT AN ANALYSIS OF INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE LANDOWNER
PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT MAUKA FOREST LANDS.

1 WHEREAS, preserving and protecting our natural environment
2 and resources are critical to ensure a promising future for our
3 residents, especially our children; and
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5 WHEREAS, in Hawaii, the United States, and worldwide, we
6 are losing our natural resources at an unprecedented rate; and
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8 WHEREAS, human activity is driving the world's habitats and
9 species to extinction, including the very plants, animals, and
10 natural systems that control processes we depend upon, such as
11 the carbon cycle, pollination, and our fresh water supply; and
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13 WHEREAS, mauka forest areas in Hawaii help to control
14 flooding, hold soil in place, stabilize the climate by absorbing
15 atmospheric carbon, and soak up water like a sponge, gradually
16 meting it out to provide a steady, year-round supply of pure,
17 fresh water; and
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19 WHEREAS, mauka forest lands provide scenic beauty for
20 residents and visitors and are the last refuge for many of
21 Hawaii's rare and endangered plants and animals, many of which
22 exist nowhere else on earth; and
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24 WHEREAS, these ecosystem services are provided to the
25 public essentially for free as a natural occurrence; and
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27 WHEREAS, other lands in Hawaii, such as beachfront property
28 and agricultural lands, are easily valued by their re-sale and
29 production values; and
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31 WHEREAS, Hawaii's mauka forests and the goods and services
32 they provide are not easily traded either domestically or



1 internationally, hence there is no direct measure of their
2 economic value; and

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4 WHEREAS, one obstacle to protection of Hawaii's mauka
5 forests is the apparent failure to recognize that the benefits
6 of protection and conservation accrue to a large public base,
7 but the responsibility for much of the care and management falls
8 predominantly on a small subset of the population that owns
9 mauka forest lands; and

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11 WHEREAS, although the ecosystem services provided by mauka
12 forests are actually public necessities, a significant free-
13 rider problem creates a disincentive for individual landowners
14 to invest significantly in protection and preservation without a
15 reasonable financial return or any governmental assistance or
16 incentive; and

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18 WHEREAS, a significant portion of important mauka forest
19 land is restricted by state conservation land use limitations
20 and, therefore, cannot generate a significant revenue stream for
21 landowners who nevertheless are assessed real property taxes on
22 these lands; and

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24 WHEREAS, sound economic valuation should account for the
25 opportunity cost of a diminished natural resource and, although
26 these ecosystem services are essentially free, their elimination
27 or degradation and replacement will come at a significant cost;
28 and

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30 WHEREAS, the replacement cost of the fresh water filtration
31 system alone, including, for example, the cost of desalination
32 plants and the capital costs of flood control, would be
33 astronomically high; and

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35 WHEREAS, environmental economists recently have shown that
36 natural capital can be valued similarly to manufacturing
37 equipment since both provide economic value; and

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39 WHEREAS, for example, the one hundred thousand acres of
40 forested watershed in the Koolau Mountains on the island of
41 Oahu, including their amenities, such as ground water quantity,
42 water quality, in-stream uses, species habitat, biodiversity,
43 subsistence, hunting, aesthetics, commercial harvests,



1 ecotourism, and climate control, have been valued at between
2 \$7,400,000,000 and \$14,000,000,000; and

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4 WHEREAS, enhanced groundwater recharge provided by Koolau
5 forests accounts for over \$2,000,000,000 of these total costs;
6 and

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8 WHEREAS, we can begin to reform policy by thinking of the
9 environment not as a "free good", but as a capital resource that
10 will depreciate without appropriate care; now, therefore,

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12 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
13 Twenty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
14 of 2006, the Senate concurring, that the Department of Land and
15 Natural Resources, in consultation with mauka landowners, other
16 stakeholders, and persons with relevant scientific and economic
17 expertise, is requested to conduct an analysis of local,
18 national, and international incentives and other programs to
19 promote landowner protection of important mauka forest lands and
20 recognize the public benefits of the ecosystem services provided
21 by those lands; and

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23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Land and
24 Natural Resources is requested to submit an interim report of
25 its work to the Legislature, not later than twenty days before
26 the convening of the Regular Session of 2007, and a final report
27 of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed
28 legislation, to the Legislature not later than twenty days
29 before the convening of the Regular Session of 2008; and

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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
32 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
33 Board of Land and Natural Resources.

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OFFERED BY:

Calvin K. King
Speaker

MAR 15 2006

