
HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

1 WHEREAS, preserving and protecting our natural environment
2 and resources is 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,
6 natural resources are being lost 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 the processes we depend upon, such
11 as the carbon cycle, pollination, and our fresh water supply;
12 and
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14 WHEREAS, mauka land areas in Hawaii, including intact
15 forests, open woodlands, and pasture lands, help to control
16 flooding, hold soil in place, stabilize the climate by absorbing
17 atmospheric carbon, and soak up water like a sponge, gradually
18 meting it out to provide a steady, year-round supply of pure,
19 fresh water; and
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21 WHEREAS, these mauka lands provide scenic beauty for
22 residents and visitors, and many of the forests and woodland
23 areas are the last refuge for many of Hawaii's rare and
24 endangered plants and animals, many of which exist nowhere else
25 on earth; and
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27 WHEREAS, these ecosystem services are provided to the
28 public essentially for free as a natural occurrence; and
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30 WHEREAS, other lands in Hawaii, such as beachfront property
31 and agricultural lands, are easily valued by their resale and
32 production values; and
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34 WHEREAS, Hawaii's mauka lands and the goods and services
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 lands
5 is the apparent failure to recognize that the benefits of
6 protection and conservation accrue to a large public base, but
7 the responsibility for much of the care and management falls
8 predominantly on a small subset of the population that owns
9 mauka lands; and

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

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18 WHEREAS, a significant portion of important mauka lands is
19 restricted by state conservation land use limitations and,
20 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



1 WHEREAS, for example, the 100,000 acres of forested
2 watershed in the Koolau Mountains on the island of Oahu,
3 including their amenities, such as ground water quantity, water
4 quality, in-stream uses, species habitat, biodiversity,
5 subsistence, hunting, aesthetics, commercial harvests,
6 ecotourism, and climate control, have been valued at between
7 \$7,400,000,000 and \$14,000,000,000; and

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9 WHEREAS, enhanced groundwater recharge provided by Koolau
10 forests accounts for over \$2,000,000,000 of these total costs;
11 and

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

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

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28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DLNR is requested to submit an
29 interim report of its work to the Legislature, no later than 20
30 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2007, and
31 a final report of its findings and recommendations, including
32 any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than 20
33 days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2008; and

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35 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this
36 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
37 Land and Natural Resources.

