
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE COCO PALMS RESORT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Coco Palms
2 Resort location in Wailua on Kauai's eastern shore is of
3 historical importance.

4 The ancestral home of Kauai's alii (royalty) since the
5 thirteenth century, the area around the mouth of the Wailua
6 river was an important royal center where high chiefs and
7 chiefesses conducted business and entertained visitors. The
8 area includes a group of sites now designated as the national
9 historic landmark known as the Wailua Complex of Heiau. Within
10 this complex are some of the oldest heiau, which is a place of
11 refuge and birthing of chiefs, in Kauai.

12 In the mid-1800s, the area encompassing the Coco Palms
13 Resort was the home of Kauai's last reigning queen, Queen
14 Deborah Kapule. At the turn of the century, agricultural
15 pursuits in the area included the copra and coconut plantation
16 planted by William Lindeman in 1892 and numerous rice and taro
17 farmers. The two thousand-tree coconut grove within the resort,



1 which is the largest of only three similar groves in the entire
2 State, was originally planted with coconut tree nuts imported
3 from Samoa by Mr. Lindeman in 1896.

4 The Coco Palms Resort originally opened on January 25,
5 1953, taking advantage of the expansion of the tourism industry
6 resulting from the introduction of air travel. Under the
7 visionary and promotional eye of Grace Guslander, the Coco Palms
8 Resort grew consistently, reaching 416 rooms by the 1970s.

9 In 1961, the Coco Palms Resort became famous as the
10 location of the finale wedding scene in Elvis Presley's film,
11 *Blue Hawaii*. As Kauai's oldest hotel, the Coco Palms Resort
12 stands as a model of the travel-trade history, a history only
13 now beginning to be appreciated as a notable component in the
14 study of Hawaii's past.

15 When Hurricane Iniki damaged the resort in September 1992,
16 the Coco Palms Resort was shut down indefinitely as repairs
17 proved too costly during a period of recession. Having been
18 left to decay for over a decade, the Coco Palms Resort property
19 and the adjoining coconut grove are neglected and currently in
20 extreme disrepair.

21 The legislature also finds that the Coco Palms Resort site
22 currently contains approximately 12.63 acres zoned RR-20



1 (resort) and 19.29 acres zoned open, and includes adjacent lands
2 owned by the State and leased by the Coco Palms Resort owners.
3 The latter includes the historic coconut grove, the former
4 tennis courts, and a small segment at the entry to the property.
5 Mauka of the property is conservation land which extends back
6 into the valley and consists of extensive wetlands.

7 Recently, cancellation of development plans caused by a
8 real estate market downturn combined with many development
9 challenges, resulted in the property being placed back on the
10 market. Proposed residential development of department of
11 Hawaiian home lands' property in the immediate area has created
12 additional interest in converting the Coco Palms Resort property
13 to a public, historical, and cultural preserve.

14 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for the
15 board of land and natural resources to acquire the land commonly
16 referred to as the Coco Palms Resort located on the east side of
17 Kauai, Hawaii. The acquired lands are to be used as a public
18 resource and a public or nonprofit entity shall be selected to
19 manage and operate a public historical park and cultural
20 education center that would serve to preserve and benefit the
21 native Hawaiian culture.



1 SECTION 2. The board of land and natural resources shall
2 secure public and private partnerships, enter into negotiations,
3 and in partnership with other public and private nonprofit
4 entities to acquire the land commonly referred to as the Coco
5 Palms Resort located on the east side of Kauai, Hawaii. The
6 acquired lands are to be utilized as a public resource and a
7 public or nonprofit entity shall be selected to manage and
8 operate a public historical park and cultural education center
9 that would serve to preserve and benefit the native Hawaiian
10 culture.

11 The board of land and natural resources shall communicate
12 with and seek partnerships to support the purchase and
13 operations by entering into discussions with major public and
14 private nonprofit organizations, including but not limited to:

- 15 (1) The office of Hawaiian affairs;
- 16 (2) The department of Hawaiian home lands;
- 17 (3) Kamehameha Schools;
- 18 (4) The county of Kauai;
- 19 (5) Members of the Kauai state legislative delegation;
- 20 (6) Appropriate federal officials and agencies;
- 21 (7) The Kauai Public Land Trust; and
- 22 (8) The Kauai Planning and Action Alliance.



1 The board of land and natural resources, working in
2 conjunction with the before mentioned entities shall also
3 conduct community outreach meetings designed to ascertain
4 community needs and desires in regard to this project and to
5 formulate a citizens advisory group composed of native Hawaiian
6 practitioners familiar with the history of the area, residents
7 of the Wailua and Kapaa area, and those residents who have
8 historically been associated with the Coco Palms Resort as
9 former employees, and Kauai state legislators. The citizens
10 advisory group shall develop recommendations on the long-term
11 vision, goals, operational nature, and scope of a community-
12 based, Hawaiian-centered, public historical park and cultural
13 education center facility.

14 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$500,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for the
17 planning and preparation necessary for the purchase of the Coco
18 Palms Resort and the development of the location into a
19 community-based, public historical park and cultural education
20 center facility that will preserve and benefit the native
21 Hawaiian culture.



1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the board of land
2 and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 4. The director of finance is authorized to issue
4 general obligation bonds in the sum of \$10,000,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary and the same sum or so much thereof
6 as may be necessary is appropriated for fiscal year 2008-2009
7 for the purpose of providing matching funds for the purchase of
8 the Coco Palms Resort and the development of the location into a
9 public historical park and cultural education center that will
10 preserve and benefit the native Hawaiian culture.

11 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.



Report Title:

Coco Palms Resort; Board of Land and Natural Resources;
Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates matching funds for the board of land and natural resources in partnership with other public and private nonprofit entities to acquire the Coco Palms Resort and convert it into a public historical park and cultural education center to preserve and benefit native Hawaiian culture. (SD1)

