

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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FIRST DEPUTY

KEN C. KAWAHARA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

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BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING

FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

**TESTIMONY OF THE CHAIRPERSON
OF THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**on House Bill 2260 – Making An Appropriation For
The Hawaii Association Of Conservation Districts**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
FINANCE**

February 6, 2008

House Bill 2260 appropriates \$266,160 of general revenues in Fiscal Year 2008-2009 for staffing and operating costs for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD). The Department of Land and Natural Resources supports the intent of this measure, however has concerns with the budgetary implications this bill will have on the Executive Supplemental Budget request.

The HACD is comprised of sixteen Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), established under Chapters 180 and 180C, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and is administratively attached to DLNR. The 16 SWCDs represent every community on all major islands. The purpose of the SWCD program is to educate, construct, maintain, and assist in the development of conservation plans to protect soil and water resources. Each SWCD is operated by a 5-member volunteer board.

HACD and the 16 SWCDs currently receive \$84,000 per year in general funds toward their operating expenses through the LNR 141 program. Other required funds for their operation and implementation of projects must be sought in the form of grants from various agencies, such as the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service or the State Department of Health.



Hawaii Farm Bureau
F E D E R A T I O N

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February 6, 2008

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

AGENDA #1

HB 2260

**MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE
HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Committees:

My name is Alan Takemoto, Executive Director, of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation. **The Hawaii Farm Bureau strongly supports HB 2260**, which appropriates funds for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD) to assist with its staffing and operating costs.

There are 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) throughout the State which makes up the HACD. Each SWCD has a board of volunteers. The SWCD plays a critical role in educating, maintaining, and assisting farmers and ranchers in the development of conservation plans to protect soil and water resources. Without these plans, farmers and ranchers will be required to go through the county grading permitting process that could sometimes takes several months or years for approval. The SWCD has a tremendous record of accomplishments through the cooperation, partnership and technical expertise that consists of landowners and county, state, and federal agencies.

The HACD and its districts are well under funded to carry out the tremendous and important function in the agricultural industry. The existing funding barely covers existing operating expenses. Hawaii's agricultural industry has evolved over the past decade that consists of many smaller farm family operations covering thousands of acres of former sugarcane lands. We need to adjust to meeting the increasing demand for soil and water conservation plans. Thank you.



Maui County Farm Bureau

*An Affiliate of the American Farm Bureau Federation and Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation
Serving Maui's Farmers and Ranchers*

TESTIMONY

HB 2260

RELATING TO WATER RESOURCES

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Chair Oshiro and Committee Members:

My name is Warren Watanabe, Executive Director of the Maui County Farm Bureau, a non-profit general agriculture organization and an affiliate of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation.

Maui County Farm Bureau, on behalf of its member farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations **strongly supports HB 2260**, appropriating funds to the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts.

We appreciate the Legislature passing a measure during the 2007 Legislative Session, providing funding to the HACD. Unfortunately, the Governor did not release the funding and therefore, the districts remain underfunded with increased workloads.

Reduction in Federal funding, coupled with an increase in farmers and ranchers across the State has resulted in challenges within the HACD. During the plantation era, management of agricultural lands fell among a few landowners, and the task of conservation planning was done on very large parcels, thousands of acres in size. As individual farmers replace large plantations, individual plans are needed. This is a regulatory requirement and is in the interest of Hawaii to ensure that stewardship of the lands occur in the correct manner.

The HACD is a unique partnership between public and private entities. As such it is a good use of resources with public good accomplished using public funding and volunteer service.

We respectfully request your support of this Bill to provide for timely assistance to farmers and ranchers by the HACD.



WEST MAUI SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
P.O. Box 2993, Wailuku, HI 96793

Wes Nohara
870 Haliimaile Road, Makawao, HI 96768
(808) 870-8695

Re: HB 2260, Making an Appropriation for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts
Hearing Date:

Position: Support

Chair Marcus Oshiro
Hawaii House of Representatives
Committee on Finance

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Finance Committee:

I am Wesley Nohara, the Legislative Committee Chair of HACD. I also serve as Vice Chair of the West Maui Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD). I ask for your support of HB 2260. This bill is important to because the SWCD's of Hawaii has done tremendous work to protect our water and land resources, and our communities. With minimal financial support, our SWCDs continue to do good work, but we don't know how much longer we can operate in this manner.

Federal support through NRCS has been reduced, with further operational supports to be cut in the near future. Office spaces are at risk of being lost. Many districts are operating at a negative cash flow, with travel and operating expenses coming out of directors own pockets. This is occurring at the same time that work demands for conservation plans and grading ordinance reviews are escalating. We know our local issues, and we strive to protect people's lives, property and the environment.

Your support of this measure and funding for the HACD is needed and greatly appreciated. The HACD is a statewide organization, made of volunteers representing the 16 soil and water conservation districts.

Here are some facts about the HACD:

- Requests for soil and water conservation plans are not met on a timely basis because of lack of staffing
- \$2,360 annually goes to each district for administering the duties of the volunteer directors and staff. However, many directors donate personal money to help cover expenses.
- HACD's mission is to act, educate, construct, maintain and assist in the development of conservation efforts and projects within the State of Hawaii.

Please support this measure, and help HACD achieve the sustainability of Hawaii's land and water resources.
Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

Hawaii
Crop
Improvement
Association

Sarah Styan, President
P.O. Box 609
Waimea, Hawaii 96796
Phone: 808- 338-8300 ext 113

Testimony by: Sarah Styan

HB 2260, Making an Appropriation to the Hawaii Association of Conservation
Districts

House FIN Committee
Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2007
Room 308: 1:30 pm

Position: Support

Chair Oshiro and Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Sarah Styan. I am a Kauai resident, President of HCIA and research scientist of Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Waimea Research Station. The HCIA represents seed production and research facilities operating in Hawaii for nearly 40 years. The HCIA is comprised of five member companies that farm an estimated 8,000 acres on four islands, valued at \$97.6 million in operating budget (2006/2007 HASS). We are proud members of Hawaii's diversified agriculture and life sciences industries.

We urge your support for funding of the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD), which is comprised of volunteers who perform a very critical function in Hawaii. HACD's mission is to act, educate, construct, maintain and assist in the development of conservation efforts and projects within the State of Hawaii. It has a proven track record of accomplishments that involve partnerships with landowners, Federal agencies such as the NRCS, EPA, NOAA, State agencies such as the DLNR, DOH, DOA, and County Government.

Currently, \$2,360 a year goes to each district for administering the duties of the volunteer directors. However, many directors donate personal money to help cover expenses. It is appropriate for the state to support this volunteer effort that serves the public good.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

EAST KAUAI SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
4334 Rice St., Room 104
Lihue, HI 96766

Ted Inouye
P.O. Box 278
Hanamaulu, HI 96715
(808) 2453027

Re: HB 2260, Making an Appropriation for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts

Hearing Date: Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Position: Support

Chair Marcus Oshiro
Hawaii House of Representatives
Committee on Finance

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Finance Committee

My name is Ted Inouye, Chair of the East Kauai Soil and Water Conservation District and a member of the Hawaii Association of Conservation District (HACD) Legislative Committee. I humbly request your support and Finance Committee's support of HB 2260. It is an appropriation bill to fund the HACD in its operational expenses for all the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in the State of Hawaii.

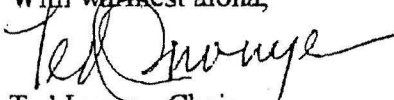
The SWCDs are legally constituted subdivisions of the Hawaii State government and the authority to establish and operate the SWCDs as governmental subdivisions are in Chapter 180 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes. The SWCDs are agriculture oriented, organized to protect and conserve natural resources, and promote health, safety and the general welfare of the people of Hawaii. The HACD is an organization of the sixteen SWCDs in the State to serve as the State instrument and voice for the conservation movement

For over sixty years the dedicated people of the SWCDs have volunteered their services to preserve the precious natural resources and enhance the quality of life in the State. The SWCDs are involved in environmental education programs, water quality protection, water resource protection and conservation, soil erosion prevention, Federal grant programs, and watershed restoration projects. In times of natural disasters, the SWCDs, in partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, are in a

position to help obtain federal funds from the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection Program to assist the Counties in their recovery efforts. Many of these functions have been or are been done with minimal financial support from the State and to a certain extent from Federal support. The Federal financial support is decreasing, while request for our services are increasing. Adequate State funding is needed to maintain the viability of the SWCDs.

We look forward to you and the Finance Committee's approval of HB 2260.

With warmest aloha,



Ted Inouye, Chair
East Kauai SWCD

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE
ON FINANCE

HOUSE BILL 2260

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION
OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

February 2008

Dear Chairman Oshiro and Members of the Committee:

STRONG SUPPORT.

My name is Loren Mochida, Chairman for the Puna Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in Keaau, Hawaii. The Puna District is one of 16 Conservation Districts that make up the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD).

We are in support of HB 2260, which will provide funds in its operational expenses for all of its soil and water conservation districts. On the Big Island alone, the Districts have over 200 backlog conservation plans to assist cooperators with. Most of these plans are on state leases with the Department of Land and Natural Resource and some with the Department of Agriculture.

We urge the committee to seriously consider the passage of HB 2260 to assist the conservations districts ability to hire conservation planners so that the cooperators will have the opportunity to enter into leases with the state agencies in a timely manner

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2260.

Re: HB 2260, Making an Appropriation for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts

Hearing Date: FIN 02-06-08_1

Position: Support

Chair Marcus Oshiro
Hawaii House of Representatives
Committee on Finance

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Finance Committee,

Having served in various Soil and Water Conservation Districts, I strongly support HB 2260.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's) are legally constituted self-governing sub-units of the Hawaii State government organized in 1947 under the Hawaii Soil and Water Conservation District Law, know as Chapter 180. Chapter 180 outlines the duties and powers of the SWCD's.

The current law contains the following major provisions:

- establishes a State soil and water conservation program for Hawaii
- establishes SWCD's as a governmental subdivision of the State
- describes the District organization, operations, and election of officers
- provides for DLNR administration of the program
- provides for DLNR to submit requests for State Funds for District operations

The first SWCD was formed in Olinda-Kula on Maui in 1948. Currently, there are 16 SWCD's throughout the State of Hawaii, which include: Hamakua, Ka'u, Mauna Kea, Puna, Kona, Waiakea, Olinda Kula, West Maui, Central Maui, Hana, Molokai-Lanai, South Oahu, West Oahu, Windward Oahu, East Kauai and West Kauai.

The primary function of the Districts is to take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for the protection and conservation of soil, water, and prime and unique farmland, rangeland, forest, wildlife, energy and other renewable resources on local, non-federal lands.

The duties and activities of the SWCD's include a wide variety of conservation needs by our communities such as: reviewing soil erosion and sediment control plans, development of conservation plans, participation in flood control prevention projects, assisting in surveys, investigations and research, conducting community out reach, grubbing and grading ordinance work, subdivision reviews, watershed planning and

protection and coordinating state wide Conservation Awareness Contest for Hawaii's high schools.

The Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD) was formally organized in 1969. Its basic purpose is to support and promote the interest of the SWCD's in Hawaii. All 16 Districts are members of HACD.

The basic funding for HACD and the SWCD's comes from the State through DLNR. The current funding levels of \$2,360 annually per District are inadequate. Besides donating their time, expertise and efforts, many of the Directors donate their personal money and equipment to help cover operating expenses. We have a strong core of skilled, dedicated SWCD leaders; however, we desperately need funding and resources to sustain current and future operations, programs and training.

I believe that the Soil and Water Conservation Districts serve an important role in protecting Hawaii's unique resources and with your help we can continue to do so.

I humbly ask for your support of HB 2260. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.

Sincerely,

Randy Cabral
Director – Ka'u Soil and Water District

Aileen K. F. Yeh
942 W. Kawaihāni St., Hilo, HI 96720
(808)936-2671

Re: HB 2260, Making an Appropriation for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts
Hearing Date:

Position: Support

Chair Marcus Oshiro
Hawaii House of Representatives
Committee on Finance

Chair Oshiro and Members of the Finance Committee:

I am Aileen Yeh. I live and work in Hilo, which might be the rain capital of the world right now. I ask for your support of HB 2260. This bill is important to me because the Soil and Water Conservation Districts work to protect our water and land resources, and our communities. All the members of the District boards serve on a voluntary basis with no compensation for time or money spent going to and from District meetings. We do it because we believe that we can help conserve our resources and our communities with our "on the ground" experience and knowledge of our local land areas, as well as point out potential or on going problems. The Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts is made up of the 16 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the State.

Federal support through NRCS has been reduced, with further cuts expected. The Puna SWCD district as well as many other districts in Hawaii are operating at a negative cash flow, with travel and operating expenses often coming out of directors own pockets. This is occurring at the same time that work demands for conservation plans and grading ordinance reviews are escalating

Your support of this measure and funding for the HACD is needed and greatly appreciated. Here are some facts about the HACD:

- Requests for soil and water conservation plans are not met on a timely basis because of lack of staffing.
- Subdivision of plantations and ranchlands into smaller land parcels with different owners create a need for more individual conservation plans. This increases the work load of the District staff.
- In Hawaii County, the District employees work with NRCS to design conservation plans for agricultural producers and landowners which enable the landuser/owner to fulfill the flood control requirements of the grading ordinance, in lieu of obtaining a grading/grubbing permit. From experience, I have heard many landowners testify that if they had not installed the practices in their conservation plans, their problems during heavy rains would have been disastrous.
- \$2,360 annually goes to each district for administering the duties of the volunteer directors and staff. However, many directors donate personal money to help cover expenses.
- HACD's mission is to act, educate, construct, maintain and assist in the development of conservation efforts and projects within the State of Hawaii.

Please support this measure, and help HACD achieve the sustainability of Hawaii's land and water resources.
Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.