

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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

POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

LAURA H. THIELEN
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

RUSSELL Y. TSUJI
FIRST DEPUTY

KEN C. KAWAHARA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

on House Bill 2467, House Draft 1 - RELATING TO FIRE PROTECTION

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
WATER, LAND, OCEAN RESOURCES & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

February 20, 2008

House Bill 2467 House Draft 1 amends the State Fire Code to include requirements for any property on which the county does not have jurisdiction over road and sign standards, minimum private water supply reserves, fuel breaks, and green belts to improve fire protection. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) recognizes the need to improve fire protection and clarify and disseminate standards for firefighting in urban areas but cannot support this measure because of concerns about applying those standards to all wildland areas and to lands managed by the Department. The Department would comment that it may be feasible to establish standards in urban areas and subdivisions.

Wildland areas vary so greatly in the degree of fire danger and appropriate mitigative measures that standard features are difficult to fairly establish and apply statewide across all counties and all environments. The State Fire Code is directed at the protection of life and property from fire loss and the preventative measures related to storage, handling and use of hazardous chemicals and the design, use or occupancy of buildings and premises in urban settings or in the county subdivision and building permitting process. Applying these types of standards and preventative mitigation to all lands outside of urban areas, regardless of location, terrain, fire risk, or human use, is not appropriate and diverts resources from dealing with the high risk fire areas.

A combination of applying regularly scheduled road maintenance, outreach (fire prevention education including the Smokey Bear program), community education of how to protect homes (i.e. the community firewise program), and coordination with the Department on county and state planning and permitting efforts to provide comments on wildland fire protection on a case by case basis as sub-development projects occur may be a more feasible approach to improving fire protection in wildland areas. The best use of effort is to focus on developing and implementing Community Wildfire Protection Plans in high risk areas to address wildland fire hazards. These plans can bring in state and county agencies, private landowners, and the communities on a regional approach to identify and prioritize prevention and protection measures.