



February 2, 2008

**TO: Representative Ken Ito, Chair
Representative Jon Riki Karamatsu, Vice Chair
Committee on Water, Land, Ocean Resources and Hawaiian Affairs**

FROM: Bishop Museum

**SUBJECT: Support of H.B. 2955
Relating to Archaeological Data**

Bishop Museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife, Bernice Pauahi Bishop. The Museum is a non-profit organization whose mission is to "to study, preserve and tell the stories of the cultures and natural history of Hawai'i and the Pacific." The Museum houses 24 million natural history and cultural collection items, making it the 4th largest museum collection in the country. In 1989, the Legislature designated Bishop Museum as the State's Museum of natural and cultural and history. The Museum currently maintains numerous internet-based natural history and cultural collections databases which provide people with virtual access to our collections-based resources.

Bishop Museum supports the creation of the Archaeological Data Survey. The goal is to create an on-line resource of Hawaiian archaeology information and improve access to these materials. The database will provide a tangible benefit to archaeologists, researchers, educators, and the public. Anyone with internet access will have unprecedented access to a rich body of archaeological information. The database will increase the awareness of traditional Hawaiian material cultures and will facilitate improved preservation of Hawaiian archaeological resources. The online resource could include the development of finding aids and the digitization of materials from Bishop Museum, other private collections, and publicly available materials.

Bishop Museum asks this Committee to support creating a Hawaii Archaeological Data Survey by approving the passage of House Bill 2955.

-----Original Message-----

From: Thomas Dye [mailto:sha@tsdye2.com]
Sent: Saturday, February 02, 2008 10:18 PM
To: WLHtestimony
Cc: Society for Hawaiian Archaeology
Subject: Testimony in opposition to HB2955

TO: Representative Ken Ito, Chair,
House Committee on Water, Land, Ocean Resources and Hawaiian Affairs

FROM: Thomas S. Dye, Ph.D., President
Society for Hawaiian Archaeology
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HEARING: February 4, 2008, 8:30 AM, House Conference Room 312
COPIES: 5
SUBJECT: Testimony in Opposition to HB 2955, Relating to
Archaeological Data

I am Dr. Thomas Dye, President of the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology (SHA). We have over 200 members that include professional archaeologists and advocates of historic preservation in general. I am testifying in opposition to HB 2955, a bill that proposes to amend Chapter 6E, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) in order to create a Hawaii archaeological data survey as a program of Bishop Museum, the Hawaii State Museum of Culture and Natural History.

The survey is meant to be an online database of existing documentation of archaeological work from the Hawaiian archipelago. The bill further proposes to expand the use and knowledge of Hawaii's archaeological artifacts by conducting the archaeological survey in consultation with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and other appropriate organizations. In 1992, a Hawaii biological survey was established under §6E-61, HRS, at the Bishop Museum as the State of Hawaii museum of natural and cultural history. The proposed amendment may be intended to establish a cultural counterpart to this biological survey designation.

We testified in opposition to prior versions of this bill during the regular session of the 2007 Legislature. We support the intent of the current bill but still have serious questions over how it will be implemented as it is currently worded; some of these questions are as follows:

The establishment of such a database would have significant costs, both in materials and personnel; HB 2955 sheds no light on how these costs would be met, or who would pay them. SHA members familiar with successful and functional data bases elsewhere stress the need for significant and sustained funding, a long-term commitment to developing the system, and on-going coordination with all interested parties.

It is not clear who would participate in or contribute to the building of the archaeological database. Will participation be voluntary or required? Will it be limited to professional archaeologists? Will traditional cultural properties be included? HB 2955 appears to propose some duplication of functions currently fulfilled by DLNR. Archaeological activities are already regulated by

the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) as seen in §6E-3 (13), while archaeological survey, site inventory, and data collection programs are among the duties of DLNR outlined in existing §6E-3(1) and (3). In particular, §6E-3(3) contains the following mandate for DLNR: "Development of statewide survey and inventory to identify and document historic properties, aviation artifacts, and burial sites, including all those owned by the State and the counties;" Under Federal law, the State Historic Preservation Offices are also mandated to maintain such an inventory.

In view of the above, we have thus suggested to Bishop Museum that the focus of the subject bill be changed to develop a survey of archaeological collections - including recovered materials as well as associated documents - held by public and private agencies in the state. The long-term fate of curated archaeological collections is a looming crisis that will require the expertise of Bishop Museum and the cooperation of public institutions, state agencies, and private archaeological contractors to resolve. To that end, we propose that the following language replace the current language in Paragraph (a):

"§6_ Archaeological Collections Survey; designation. (a) There is established a Hawaii archaeological collections survey designated as a program of the State of Hawaii Museum of Natural and Cultural History. The survey shall compile and maintain a listing of all collections of archaeological materials and associated documents that are held by known repositories in the state. The survey shall: Include an enumeration of the types and amounts of materials and associated documentation in each collection; List the owner(s) of all materials and associated documentation in each collection; Provide an assessment of the condition of all components of each collection; Include any additional information pertaining to each collection that is deemed relevant to purpose of the survey; Publish the results of the archaeological collections survey in the form of an online database that shall be accessible to the public, and that shall be updated regularly to reflect any changes in the listed collections."

Paragraphs (b) and (c) of the subject bill would remain the same.

We believe that if this proposed survey of archaeological collections is carried out, the Bishop Museum will, by its leadership in this matter, render a great public service to the State of Hawaii and to the historic preservation community. The "curation crisis," as it is named by the National Park Service, will require expertise, cooperation, and commitment to resolve. We hope that an amended version of HB 2955, such as we have proposed, will bring about a successful resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the above telephone number and email address.

Thomas S. Dye, Ph.D
President, Society for Hawaiian Archaeology