

House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Legislature
Regular Session of 2008

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Hearing
Friday, February 8, 2008
9:15 a.m.

Testimony by: Ralph C. Boyea, Legislative Advocate, Hawai'i County Council

Testimony in favor of HB 3425 RELATING TO TARO

Chairpersons Tsuji, Herkes and Souki
Vice Chairs Brower, McKelvey and Nishimoto
Honored Representatives,

On behalf of the Hawai'i County Council, I ask that you to pass House Bill 3425. House Bill 3425 provides a grant for taro research, laboratory costs, and outreach for the control of the invasive apple snail.

Taro farmers on the island of Hawaii are united in their desire to control the apple snails. Representatives of the taro farmers have made it clear that they will appreciate any assistance the State Legislature can provide in controlling this serious threat to the taro industry.

The Hawai'i County Council is very supportive of any efforts by the State Legislature to control apple snails and other invasive species. Any efforts that the State can make to mitigate and control the apple snails will be greatly appreciated.

We urge you to pass HB3425.

LINDA LINGLE
Governor



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
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SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

DUANE K. OKAMOTO
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF SANDRA LEE KUNIMOTO
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
FEBRUARY 8, 2008
9:15 A.M.**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 3425
RELATING TO TARO**

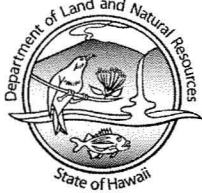
Chairperson Tsuji and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 3425. The purpose of this bill is to provide funding for taro research, laboratory costs, and outreach for the control of the apple snail. We support the intent of the bill and offer comments.

The department supports initiatives by the taro industry to find solutions to pest control problems. Most taro farmers agree that the apple snail is the most serious pest threat to taro production in Hawaii.

The consensus of the taro growers is that a Taro Task Force be established to provide guidance and support to taro initiatives. As such, the department supports this measure and other forms of initiatives as long as they are in concert with the Taro Task Force and provided that it not unduly or adversely affect the priorities of the Executive Biennium budget.

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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

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

on House Bill 3425 – RELATING TO TARO

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
AGRICULTURE**

February 8, 2008

House Bill 3425 provides a grant for taro research, laboratory costs, and outreach for the control of the invasive apple snail. The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) cannot support this measure as it would adversely impact priorities in the Executive Supplemental Budget request.

Unfortunately, there are large populations of apple snails on all of the main Hawaiian Islands. With current legal control methods apple snail populations can be suppressed. The Department supports the taro growers with their efforts to control apple snails statewide and because eradication is not currently feasible, agrees that an approach to control and contain this pest is the most appropriate. The Counties are the level of government best positioned to assist community control in this effort. The Department has concerns about starting up a community grant program for funding single species control efforts that is not distributed either competitively or as part of an agency partnership with appropriate oversight and accountability. The Department recommends that county efforts be implemented in coordination with a comprehensive statewide effort guided by the **“Statewide Strategic Control Plan for Apple Snail (*Pomacea canaliculata*) in Hawaii.”**

The Department also has concerns that the proposed research with an organic conditioner produced by Pacific Biodiesel will be lead to the widespread use of this substance as an unlicensed pesticide - which may have implications for the aquatic environment and food safety. The Department recommends that the any testing and use comply with all state and federal regulations.



HB3425, RELATING TO TARO
House Committee on Agriculture

February 8, 2008
Room: 325

9:15 a.m.

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** H.B. 3425, which would appropriate \$500,000 from the state's general fund for Fiscal Year 2008-2009 to E Kūpaku Ka ʻĀina - The Hawaiʻi Land Restoration Institute, to develop taro protection measures. The institute will use the grant-in-aid funding to cover laboratory costs, compensate taro farmers for their involvement in experiments and finance other activities relating to the development of taro protection measures, including apple snail controls.

Apple snails - an alien, invasive species - are devastating the kalo industry in Hawaiʻi, with a recent report claiming that the snail is responsible for up to a quarter of crop losses in kalo in recent years. Kalo is a sacred plant in Hawaiian culture, regarded as the elder brother of Native Hawaiians, and poi, made from the corm of kalo, serves as the staple food of the traditional Hawaiian diet. OHA strongly supports this effort that will both control one of the major threats to Hawaiian culture and ensure that kalo farmers will once again thrive in Hawaiʻi.

OHA requests that language be added to the bill to ensure that the activities funded by this legislation will not include genetic modification of kalo.

OHA urges the Committee to PASS H.B. 3425. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Regarding H.B. 3425 Relating to Taro
House Committee on Agriculture
Friday, February 8, 2008, 9:15AM, Room 325

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaii's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for rare and endangered native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i and also work closely with government agencies and private landowners on cooperative land management projects.

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i supports the use of general fund revenue to address invasive species issues, including research and control for devastating pests like apple snails.

However, we hope that the necessarily strong response to apple snails will not prevent the State and its partners from also devoting appropriate attention to other pests that have become established in Hawai'i. We hope that in addition to this bill, you will also support continued funding in the State budget for the prevention, early detection, control, research, and education programs of the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC), and the State Departments of Agriculture, Health, and Land & Natural Resources.

In order to meet needs, the Legislature has found itself in the position of shifting existing general and special funds back and forth between various invasive species and conservation programs. In Fiscal Year 2007, this practice caused layoffs in the Island Invasive Species Committees and a hiatus in the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council's research grant program. Similarly, funds to support coqui frog control and some Hawai'i Invasive Species Council activities have been diverted from the DLNR's Natural Area Reserve Fund. This is an unsustainable practice that will soon put the important Watershed Partnership and other Hawaiian forest conservation programs at risk.

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**Hawaii
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Testimony by: Sarah Styan
HB 3425, Relating to Taro
House AGR Committee
Friday, Feb. 8, 2008
Room 325: 9:15 am

Position: Support

Chair Tsuji, and Members of the House AGR 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.

Appreciation is expressed for this and other taro measures introduced this year. While HCIA member companies do not grow taro, nor do we plan to grow taro, we have in the past, and continue to, support the preservation and protection of taro in Hawaii. As testified in other sessions, HCIA respects the cultural significance of taro, and supports the Hawaiian community's discussion of research and development for taro.

As pointed out in the bill, the preliminary SCR 206 report and its discussions with the Hawaiian community states that the apple snail is of greatest concern to taro farmers. As such, we support this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.