

RL:2224

SB 1280
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Senate Committee on Higher Education
Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

Public Hearing – February 5, 2009
2:00 p.m., State Capitol, Conference Room 22e

By
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SB 1280 appropriates funds to the University of Hawaii for a study relating to beach erosion at Kailua beach. We emphasize that our testimony on this measure does not represent an official position of the University of Hawaii.

University of Hawaii researchers and extension agents are already involved along with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) in examining the causes and extent of erosion at Kailua Beach. There is already planning, coastal research, sea-level calculations, public participation, and inter-agency components built into a DLNR and University of Hawaii Sea Grant project to address the problem.

The study proposed in this bill may be duplicative of ongoing research of erosion at Kailua beach. The funding allocated in support of the proposed study could be better spent supporting the present DLNR and Sea Grant effort to address the problem. It is already tasked with long-term solutions/options and providing viable management strategies.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill.



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SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

February 5, 2009, 2:00 P.M.

(Testimony is 2 pages long)

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 1280 WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Tokuda, Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committees:

The Sierra Club, Hawai'i Chapter, with 5500 dues paying members statewide, supports an amended version SB 1280, which funds a study of beach erosion at Kailua Beach.

The erosion problems at Kailua Beach are fairly well-understood. Although a report from a neutral task-force may accomplish greater community involvement, *we believe the general steps to help alleviate Kailua Beach's problems are already known.* To this end, we suggest two specific amendments.

Managed Retreat

Given the realities of sea level rise caused by global climate change and the accompanying loss of shoreline-protecting coral reef, a policy of "managed retreat" makes the most sense to protect private property, taxpayers, and public shoreline. Setting a significant setback from the shoreline for new construction or redevelopments is the best managed retreat strategy for Hawai'i.

Further, a significant setback allows for protection of our beach dunes, which preserve sand during the natural accretion/erosion cycles that occur during each season.

To this end, we suggest immediately protecting the undeveloped portions of Kailua from development near the coastline while the task force proceeds. A moratorium would ensure that no further harm occurs to Kailua beach while scientists and the general public are able to decide the next immediate steps. Specifically, we suggest the language used in HB 593.

There is hereby established an interim coastal construction line along the length of Kailua beach, as defined in section 205A- , Hawaii Revised Statutes, extending along the makai faces of coastal residences as they exist at the time of the effective date of this Act. The coastal construction line for any vacant parcel shall extend across the parcel from the mauka most point of the coastal construction line of its abutting parcels. The coastal construction line shall establish an interim limit for construction at Kailua Beach for beach preservation purposes. There shall be no new development makai of the coastal construction line [until June 1, 2011.]

Inconsistent Management

One problem with the current regime is the separation of responsibility and management for the different beach zones between the state and the City and County of Honolulu. Long-term decisions made by DLNR to protect the dunes, for example, can easily be undone by the City permitting construction in the dune area. Accordingly, it is suggested that any land makai of the shoreline setback (proposed above) be placed under one agency -- perhaps DLNR, which already has an obligation to protect the conservation district -- until the task force complete its recommendations and this legislature has an opportunity to act. This allows for consistent management and stewardship by one entity.

Kailua beach is a natural treasure that deserves protection. The concepts in this bill and the suggested amendments could become the example on how to protect our "special" beaches in the future, particularly as we begin to understand and see the effects of sea level rise impact our beaches. We respectfully request you proceed expeditiously with this bill, as amended.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Charles Fletcher, Professor
University of Hawaii
SB1280

2/5/09

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for SB1280. Although I am a professor at the University of Hawaii, I submit this testimony as a private citizen.

This bill seeks to fund a study of Kailua Beach. However, there is an existing study of Kailua Beach, funded by DLNR to the UH Sea Grant program; Sea Grant has in turn contracted two local commercial firms to perform the study. The study has just started. It is designed to produce place-based management recommendations for ensuring conservation of Kailua Beach during the 21st century. The study will account for sea-level rise, erosion trends, and community development patterns along the beach. The goal of the study is to define new and better management strategies for Kailua and to serve as a template for place-based management on other Hawaii beaches.

While the existing study is innovative, it is under funded. Two elements, in particular require additional funding: the economic and planning component, and the engineering component. I recommend that the funds in SB1280 be reprogrammed to the UH Sea Grant program to augment the existing study.