



The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
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Date 3/9

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Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
(Provided by Mark Fox, Director of External Affairs)
Strongly Supporting the Intent of S.B. 2957 SD1 Relating to the Environment
House Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection
House Committee on Water, Land & Ocean Resources
Tuesday, March 9, 2010, 9:30am, Rm. 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 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. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) strongly supports the intent of S.B. 2957 SD1, particularly the goal of streamlining the environmental review process for legitimate projects that will be beneficial to the environment. We appreciate the concern about whether to address an exemption process for beneficial projects in the statute versus an administrative process where agencies establish lists of exemptions. Either way, this issue needs to be addressed right away because projects to protect and enhance our natural resources are being delayed if not stopped entirely.

Conservation work that protects, preserves, or enhances the environment, land, and natural resources is often caught up in the same time consuming and expensive environmental assessment process as projects that have negative impacts on the environment. While it is appropriate that higher protection is afforded to lands with conservation value, e.g., lands in the State Conservation land use district, it often comes at a stroke too broad that does not distinguish between constructing residential homes versus engaging in conservation work to protect native forests. Currently, many beneficial conservation actions have to go through the same expensive level of review for environmental impacts as development.

Environmental review under HRS Ch. 343 for TNC's conservation work has been a significant burden:

- Each Environmental Assessment (EA) takes 6-12 months;
- Each EA takes ~1 FTE (part of 2-4 people's time);
- Each EA costs \$100,000-\$200,000;
- TNC has done 15 EAs in the last 15 years;
- Five of our nature preserves have had two EAs each;
- One nature preserve is getting its third EA for conservation work.

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