

LATE TESTIMONY

Hawaii Crop Improvement Association

Growing the Future of Worldwide Agriculture in Hawaii

Testimony By: Alicia Maluafiti

SB 145 SD 2 – RELATING TO IRRIGATION

The House Committee on Agriculture
Wednesday, March 16, 2011
Room 312, 9:00 a.m.

Position: Strong Support

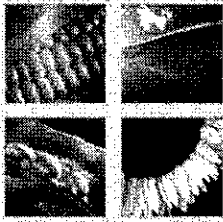
Aloha Chair Tsuji, Vice Hashem and members of the Committees:

My name is Alicia Maluafiti, Executive Director of the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association, a nonprofit trade association representing the seed industry in Hawaii. HCIA strongly supports SB 145 – authorizing the issue of general obligation bonds to make capital improvements to our irrigation systems across the state.

HCIA's member seed companies maintain operations on the islands of Kauai, Maui, Molokai and Oahu. They are vested in the agricultural future of this state and have invested millions into improving the irrigation, buildings and other infrastructure. But our 100-year old irrigation systems owned and maintained by the state are in disrepair and facing serious maintenance issues. Any disruption in delivering water to farmers could severely impact their viability as we saw after the earthquake on the big island.

HCIA has seen and testified on a number of bills to appropriate funds to fix Hawaii's failing irrigation systems critical to ensuring the viability of farmers and ranchers statewide. We believe this bill offers a more comprehensive approach to addressing these challenges. Assuming that the budget appropriations for the HDOA will not include funding for irrigation repair and maintenance, this bill becomes even more critical to the future of agriculture in Hawaii.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment.



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a member of the

Kunia Water Cooperative**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE****SENATE BILL 145, SD2****RELATING TO IRRIGATION****March 16, 2011**

Chairman Tsuji and Members of your Committee:

My name is Stephanie Whalen. I am Executive Director of the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC). I am testifying today on behalf of the center and our research and support staff. I also am the President of the Kunia Water Cooperative and I am testifying on its behalf

HARC strongly supports the intent of Senate Bill 145, SD2 which includes supporting the improvement of the irrigation infrastructure including the Waiahole water system. However, we ask that you insert \$0.5M for 2011-12 and \$2.5M for 2012-13 for the Waiahole system for siphon repairs: plan and design and replacement.

HARC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support agriculture in Hawaii through research and infrastructure preservation. Its experiment station is located at the urban/agricultural boundary in the Kunia agricultural area, essentially the gateway to this agricultural district. It has been stated in the past as being located among some of the best agricultural lands in the state. In the sugar era it produced some of the highest yields on record. It continues to show that with other crops.

HARC recently agreed to an agricultural easement on the property to protect this land for agricultural production in perpetuity. This prevents the encroachment of urbanization in the future as desired by the surrounding communities and expressed in the Central Oahu and Ewa Development plans.

The only source of agricultural water for HARC is the Waiahole Irrigation System. The Board of Water Supply limited the use of potable water to domestic use on this parcel and where available to other agricultural operations in the area. Without water there can be no viable agriculture on this land as it receives very little rainfall.

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The federal government and the state hold this agricultural easement requiring that the land remain in agriculture. Consequently, there is a public interest in ensuring that water is available to this property.

An additional state interest in the Waiahole Irrigation System is a 150-acre parcel owned by the state, located in Kunia, and destined to be one of its agricultural parks. The Department of Agriculture recently requested an allocation of water from the Water Commission from the Waiahole system to service the tenants of this new agricultural park.

The Kunia Water Cooperative was established to represent the producers using the Waiahole Irrigation System. It has 9 members and over 50 farms are serviced. For the majority of farms this is the sole source of water for their crops. For much of the acreage in the Kunia area developing a well is not an option. Under most of these lands the aquifer allocation has already been meted out.

The system is made up of a series of natural dikes and tunnels, 7 siphons, and open ditches. The system remarkably uses gravity to transport water for 25.3 miles through the central plain. Cooperative members along the ditch help in maintaining the integrity of the ditch as the Waiahole Irrigation System maintenance crew is too small to deal with all the maintenance issues for this system.

Three of the 7 siphons have been repaired but the other four remain perilously deteriorated. If one or more of these siphons collapse it would take several months to get the system back in service. It took over 18 months for one of the siphons in the Wahiawa Irrigation System to be replaced after a major storm took it out a few years back. Considering the number of farms, the diversity of crops, the economic contribution of this area and the 1,000s of acres of this prime agricultural area, support for irrigation infrastructure needs to be a high priority.

It is the desire of the Kunia Water Cooperative (KWC) and HARC that this system be made less risky over the next several years by approving this proposed measure and advancing it to the next committee. Any of the 4 remaining siphons could break at any time and the users would have no water for several months waiting for a repair.

HARC and the KWC strongly support efforts to maintain and improve the irrigation systems in Hawaii and for that reason respectfully request funding for the Waiahole Irrigation System be included in this measure. The sum requested would cover the planning, design and construction of 1 of the 4 siphons in need of repair.

HARC is supportive of the requests for all the agricultural water systems listed in this proposed bill over the biennium. HARC is appreciative of the legislature's past support and continuing recognition of repair needs for agricultural water systems in the state. These are valuable investments in the food, feed and fuel needs for the current and future generations.

We strongly urge you to approve Senate Bill 145, SD2 and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

MARCH 16, 2011

TESTIMONY ON SB 145, SD 2
RELATING TO IRRIGATION

Aloha Chair Tsuji and members of the committee:

My name is Alan Takemoto, Community Affairs Manager for Monsanto Company. We strongly support SB 145, SD 2 with amendments. **Our support focuses on the provision specific for Waiahole Irrigation System and respectfully request the committee to re-insert the appropriation of \$500,000 for FY 11-12 and \$2,500,000 for FY 12-13. The State Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) owns and manages the system and, therefore, we agree that this project should be under the jurisdiction of ADC.**

The Waiahole Irrigation System is a vital and critical irrigation system that services thousands of acres of prime agricultural lands in central Oahu. There are over 50 farm businesses that rely on the Waiahole Irrigation System that produce vegetables, nurseries, seed, aquaculture, research and fruit operations. There are over 2,000 jobs that have been generated by these farm businesses and in turn have positive growth for other businesses servicing this agricultural region.

The Waiahole Irrigation System is a hundred year old system that needs regular capital improvements to ensure a reliable source of agricultural water to farmers. There are a total of 4 siphons that needs to be replaced. One of the siphons has been identified as a priority which this bill addresses. There will be a need in the next few years to replace the other remaining siphons and other improvements to the system.

Monsanto is a member of the Kunia Water Cooperative which is the organization that represents all of the farming businesses utilizing the water from the Waiahole Irrigation System. Our Kunia operation is at the end of the Waiahole Irrigation System and fully relies on the consistent delivery of agricultural water. Monsanto employs about 300 employees at our Kunia site alone and has invested tremendously in our facilities and infrastructure.

The entire Kunia farming community is at risk if we do not make substantial capital improvements to maintain a very valuable water system. We urge your passage of SB 245, SD 2 with amendments. Thank you.