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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that immediate action is  
2 needed to secure Hawaii's water supply. Hotter, drier  
3 conditions and damaged watershed forests are escalating the  
4 costs and conflicts over water.

5           While climate change is a problem on a global scale,  
6 simple, local actions can safeguard Hawaii's declining water  
7 sources. Through Act 152, Session Laws of Hawaii 2000, the  
8 legislature recognized that fresh water is not an infinite  
9 resource and its high quality, quantity, and sustainability  
10 depend upon forested watersheds. Without vegetation, most of  
11 our islands' rainfall would quickly run off into the ocean and  
12 be unusable. Instead, forests break the impact of heavy rains,  
13 reducing flooding and erosion and siltation of reefs and  
14 fisheries.

15           Protecting forest watersheds is the most cost effective and  
16 efficient way to absorb rainwater and replenish ground water.  
17 Watersheds also reduce impacts from climate change by absorbing  
18 greenhouse gases, which supports a component of the Hawaii clean



1 energy initiative's goal of helping the State reach its policy  
2 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by  
3 year 2020, as enacted by the legislature by way of Act 234,  
4 Session Laws of Hawaii 2007. Additionally, forests sustain  
5 irreplaceable cultural and natural values.

6 Half of Hawaii's forests have already been lost. Alien  
7 species, such as feral pigs and goats trample and devour  
8 vegetation, leaving bare ground or openings for alien plants  
9 that consume more water and increase runoff. The gradual  
10 invasion of alien plants into native forests may have already  
11 reduced the estimated groundwater recharge by up to ten per cent  
12 in certain aquifers. For example in east Hawaii, invasive  
13 plants have already reduced estimated groundwater recharge by  
14 eighty-five million gallons a day. Controlling these and other  
15 threats requires a large-scale effort to protect these  
16 irreplaceable natural assets.

17 Governor Neil Abercrombie's A New Day in Hawaii plan calls  
18 for the stewardship of the natural resources that our survival,  
19 economy, and quality of life depend on. Priority actions of the  
20 plan include managing invasive species, increasing Hawaii's  
21 ability to withstand impacts from climate change, and restoring  
22 capabilities of the department of land and natural resources by



1 finding additional sources of funding. The Abercrombie  
2 administration's new day status report also tasks the department  
3 of land and natural resources to ensure mauka watersheds are  
4 fully functioning so the people of Hawaii can use and enjoy  
5 fresh water resources in perpetuity. To implement these central  
6 goals of the Abercrombie administration, the department of land  
7 and natural resources released The Rain Follows the Forest - a  
8 plan to protect Hawaii's source of water.

9       The Rain Follows the Forest identifies priority watersheds  
10 and outlines on-the-ground actions and projects required to  
11 protect and sustain Hawaii's critical water sources. The  
12 forests and their ability to capture water depend on the  
13 protection provided by the actions listed in this plan. To be  
14 successful, these actions must occur on a large scale across  
15 ownership boundaries, through agreements and leveraged funds  
16 provided by the statewide watershed partnerships. Currently,  
17 only ten per cent, approximately ninety thousand acres, of the  
18 priority watershed areas are protected. This level of  
19 management has taken forty years to achieve. The department of  
20 land and natural resources' goal is to double the amount of  
21 protected watershed areas in just ten years. This will require



1 approximately \$11,000,000 per year, and create over one hundred  
2 fifty local jobs.

3 The legislature further finds that the State needs to  
4 direct revenues towards new priorities and move immediately to  
5 fund the protection of these watersheds and implement this  
6 comprehensive plan to ensure the availability and affordability  
7 of fresh water. Watershed protection and restoration must be  
8 funded commensurate with its essential role. Hawaii's leaders  
9 must come together and incorporate funding policies within the  
10 State's overall financial plan to reverse the grave decline of  
11 the islands' life-giving forests in order to sustain and enrich  
12 current and future generations.

13 The purpose of this Act is to provide funds to the  
14 department of land and natural resources for the immediate  
15 protection of priority watershed forests to replenish Hawaii's  
16 water supplies and provide many other fundamental benefits to  
17 Hawaii's environmental health.

18 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
19 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
20 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2012-2013 to be  
21 expended on projects undertaken in accordance with watershed  
22 management plans including invasive species removal,



1 construction and ongoing maintenance of fences, control of other  
2 forest threats, and forest restoration.

3 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
4 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2012.



**Report Title:**

Watershed Protection; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the immediate protection of priority watershed forests to replenish Hawaii's water supplies and provide many other fundamental benefits to Hawaii's environmental health. Effective July 1, 2012. (HB2520 HD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

