

---

# 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, a component of the Hawaii Clean Energy



1 Initiative to help the State reach its policy targets to reduce  
2 greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by year 2020, enacted by  
3 the legislature by way of Act 234, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007.  
4 Additionally, forests sustain irreplaceable cultural and natural  
5 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 10 per cent  
12 in certain aquifers. For example in East Hawaii, invasive  
13 plants have already reduced estimated groundwater recharge by 85  
14 million gallons a day. Controlling these and other threats  
15 requires a large-scale effort to protect these irreplaceable  
16 natural assets.

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



1 natural resources by finding additional sources of funding. The  
2 Abercrombie Administration's New Day status report also tasks  
3 the department of land and natural resources with ensuring that  
4 mauka watersheds are fully functioning so fresh water resources  
5 can be utilized and enjoyed by the people of Hawaii in  
6 perpetuity. To implement these central goals of the Abercrombie  
7 administration, the department of land and natural resources  
8 released "The Rain Follows the Forest - a plan to protect  
9 Hawaii's Source of Water."

10 "The Rain Follows the Forest" identifies priority  
11 watersheds and outlines on-the-ground actions and projects  
12 required to protect and sustain Hawaii's critical water sources.  
13 The forests and their ability to capture water depend on the  
14 protection provided by the actions listed in this plan. To be  
15 successful, these actions must occur on a large scale across  
16 ownership boundaries, through agreements and leveraged funds  
17 provided by the statewide watershed partnerships. Currently,  
18 only 10 per cent (approximately 90,000 acres) of the priority  
19 watershed areas are protected. This level of management has  
20 taken 40 years to achieve. The department of land and natural  
21 resources' goal is to double the amount of protected watershed



1 areas in just 10 years. This will require approximately  
2 \$5,000,000 per year, and create over 150 local jobs.

3 The legislature further finds and declares that the State  
4 needs to direct revenues towards new priorities and move  
5 immediately to fund the protection of these watersheds and  
6 implement this comprehensive plan to ensure the availability and  
7 affordability of fresh water. Watershed protection and  
8 restoration must be funded commensurate with its essential role.  
9 Hawaii's leaders must come together and incorporate funding  
10 policies within the State's overall financial plan to reverse  
11 the grave decline of the islands' life-giving forests in order  
12 to sustain and enrich 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 \$5,000,000, 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 but not limited to invasive species



1 removal, construction and ongoing maintenance of fences, control  
2 of other forest threats, and 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:**

Appropriate 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.  
(SD1)

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

