
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 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
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 ten per cent (approximately ninety thousand acres) of the
19 priority watershed areas are protected. This level of
20 management has taken forty years to achieve. The department of
21 land and natural resources' goal is to double the amount of
22 protected watershed areas in just ten years. This will require



1 approximately \$5,000,000 per year, and create over one hundred
2 fifty 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 \$ or so much
20 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.
(SD2)

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