

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor



State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture
LATE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL S. KOKUBUN
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, AND OCEAN RESOURCES
MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2012
9:15 a.m.
Room 325

HOUSE BILL NO. 2595
RELATING TO SPECIAL PURPOSE REVENUE BONDS TO ASSIST DAM AND
RESERVOIR OWNERS

Chairperson Chang and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No.2595 that authorizes the State to issue special purpose revenue bonds and use the proceeds from the bonds to assist owners of dams and reservoirs who undertake implementation of improvements necessary to meet safety standards. In turn, this promotes the retention of these dams and reservoirs for agricultural irrigation and other beneficial uses. The Department of Agriculture strongly supports this measure as many dams and reservoirs are facilities critical to maintaining a reliable and sufficient supply of irrigation water for agricultural production on agricultural lands and, in turn, supports the State's efforts to achieve food security.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**Ka'u Farm Bureau
PO BOX 1109
Naalehu Hawaii 96772
808-929-9550**

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER LAND AND OCEAN RESOURCES

TESTIMONY ON HB2595
"RELATING TO SPECIAL PURPOSE REVENUE BONDS TO ASSIST DAM AND
RESERVOIR OWNERS."

Room 325
9:15 AM

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Har, and Members of the Committee:

Ka'u Farm Bureau supports the aforementioned measure.

While dam and reservoir safety rules represent an important public safety initiative, the rules codified in HRS chapter 179D will have an adverse effect by reducing water storage capacity across the state. At a time when changing weather patterns have demonstrated alternating periods of drought punctuated by significant storm events, coupled with the noble goal of achieving food security for our island state, water storage is more critical than ever. The new rules, once enacted, will discourage new dam and reservoir construction, and in many cases cause dam and reservoir owners and to minimize the capacity or decommission existing storage capability.

Many of the reservoirs – built in an era of plantation agriculture—no longer generate enough revenue to be economically sustainable. But they are needed in ways few people have yet imagined. The issue of how to pay for the upgrading and maintenance of this critical infrastructure is now gaining more attention as the state's budget comes into focus.

Dams and reservoirs are the key not just to a future of sustainable agricultural system in Hawaii, but to the entire water and environmental health of the State. In addition to the conventional benefits of storing and delivering reliable water for agriculture in dry times, flood control during large storms, erosion control and the reduction of sediment loading on our near shore ocean reefs, reservoirs also ensure a supply of potable drinking water (after treatment).

Reservoirs also help recharge our ground water aquifers by capturing storm water (for later release) that would otherwise rush to the ocean. There is growing evidence is that there will be a pattern of fewer, but larger storms separated by longer intervals of drought. If the large rainfall flows are not captured, overall ground water recharge may be significantly reduced. Groundwater is our primary source of drinking water and demand is relentlessly rising. We already face declining groundwater recharge every time we place hard impermeable surfaces (e.g. concrete) over previously open ground (agriculture).

The new Dam and Reservoir Safety rules will levy an additional burden on reservoir owners and Hawaii farmers. Fuel, labor, equipment, transportation, and other expenses are already higher in Hawaii than on the mainland, placing locally grown products at a competitive disadvantage.

LATE TESTIMONY

Inevitably, increased costs will be passed on to consumers and are counterproductive to efforts to grow more food in Hawaii. Some landowners will simply decommission their dams, abandon their reservoir systems and decide what to do with their now fallow lands when agriculture is no longer viable.

The issuance of Special Purpose Revenue Bonds will help owners and operators comply with the laws without placing undue burden on the already stressed state budget. Please lend your support for HB 2595.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Manfredi", written in a cursive style.

Chris Manfredi
President