

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting S.B. 3001 Relating to Wildlife
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Tuesday, February 28, 2012, 9:00AM, Room 211

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of Hawaii's native plants, animals, and ecosystems. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands for native species in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 32,000 acres in 10 nature preserves on Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i. We also work closely with government agencies, private parties and communities on cooperative land and marine management projects.

The Nature Conservancy supports S.B. 3001 SD1 that would amend the State wildlife statute to prohibit interisland transportation of live wild or feral mammals.

Invasive animals, weeds, insects, diseases, and other pests are some of the greatest threats to Hawaii's economy, agriculture, natural environment, and the health and lifestyle of its people. Evidence from Hawai'i and around the world shows that preventing new pest establishment is exponentially more economical than eradicating a pest or, even worse, controlling it indefinitely once it becomes established.

Where established in Maui county, Axis deer are causing great damage to native habitat and agricultural crops, and are a danger to vehicle traffic on roadways. Unfortunately, the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture have not had the legal tools and authorities necessary to rapidly respond to the recent discovery of Axis deer on Hawai'i island. Clearly, these deer did not arrive on Hawai'i island under their own power. This bill will provide enforceable statutory authority prohibiting people from moving such animals between islands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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26FEB2012

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony on **SB 3001, SD1**, 28FEB2012

Chairman Ige and Committee Members:

I urge you to **pass** this bill that is meant to combat and respond to the unfortunate transportation of wild mammals interisland. Such activity threatens the receiving island's agricultural potential, its native wildlife and watershed values, and quality of life in general. This bill is in response to the recent unauthorized, multiple introductions of axis deer to the Big Island, but also pertains to potential transportation of other wild mammals interisland, the results of which could be disastrous when transported mammals breed and spread.

The main deterrent presented in this bill is the requirement for a convicted violator to pay for the cost of eradicating his transported wild mammal. Such a penalty is appropriate—to reverse the illegal action—but is difficult to estimate the monetary cost of the task. The bill's fines alone offer mere nuisance-level penalties to the persons that are serious about introducing a wild mammal to an island. The conspiracy that resulted in repeated introductions of multiple deer by helicopter would cost the perpetrators far more than the fines, but might just be taken as part of the cost of doing business without the eradication requirement. A less sophisticated event would likely cost less to reverse.

The cost to residents of an island having to bear the consequences of such an illegal wild mammal introduction is likely to be much, much larger than the cost of eradication. Using Maui as an example, fifty years after the introduction of axis deer to the island, we now have a rapidly expanding population of deer that is long past the point of eradication, that has spread over most of the island, and that has caused considerable economic impact to agriculture, golf courses, back yards, conservation activities (all conservation fences become ineffective due to the deer's high-jumping abilities) and more. There is also an ever growing realized risk of collisions with autos on Maui's highways and roads. An example to indicate the potential scale of collisions as the populations continue to grow, both axis deer and human: currently 20% of all human-caused mortality of the hunted, native deer in Pennsylvania is caused by deer-auto collisions (100,000 collisions a year, or 6-7% of the deer population). On Maui these frequent vehicle collisions are a real expense and risk to motorists (somebody has to pay, but it is the victims who do so), while it is also an ambiguous legal liability issue (who really **owns** those deer, or the ones released to the Big Island? Who owns the liability?). Let us prevent more such mistakes by passing this bill.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Rick Warshauer, Volcano