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GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of**  
**WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.**  
**Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on**  
**WATER & LAND**

**Monday, January 28, 2013**  
**9:00 AM**  
**State Capitol, Conference Room 325**

**In consideration of**  
**HOUSE BILL 561**  
**RELATING TO THE WATERSHED INITIATIVES**

House Bill 561 proposes to establish a watershed initiatives program in the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department), subject program employees to the civil service laws, and appropriate funds. The Department supports this bill provided that the funds appropriated does not adversely impact the Department's priorities in the Executive Budget.

Funding would support the Department's *The Rain Follows the Forest* plan (available online at <http://Hawaii.gov/dlnr/rain>) to implement on-the-ground actions needed to stabilize Hawaii's water sources. Projects are ready in each county to begin reaching job creation and accomplishment targets. Funds would be allocated in a statewide competitive process to maximize effectiveness and accountability.

The Department leverages funding and capacity by partnering with other land managers and agencies to protect priority watershed forests across State, Federal and private lands. This is made possible by supporting projects implemented by organizations such as the eleven statewide watershed partnerships and the invasive species committees that work across landowner boundaries. This model has provided the Department flexibility to most effectively afford landscape-level watershed protection, in addition to supporting projects implemented by civil service employees on State land.



# Sierra Club Hawai'i Chapter

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND

January 28, 2013, 9:00 A.M.  
(Testimony is 2 pages long)

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 561

Aloha Chair Evans and Members of the Committee:

The Sierra Club, Hawaii Chapter, with over 10,000 dues paying members and supporters statewide, **supports** HB 561. This bill would establish a watershed initiatives program within DLNR and provides funding.

Watersheds are just one example of "free services" that are provided by nature and consumed by the human economy--services that have immense economic value, but that go largely unrecognized and uncounted until they have been lost. Many of those services are indispensable to the people who exploit them, yet are not counted as real benefits, or as part of GNP.

Janet Abramovitz writes in WorldWatch's State of the World 1997, "A forest's watershed protection values alone can exceed the value of its timber. Forests also act as effective water pumping and recycling machinery, helping to stabilize the local climate. And through photosynthesis, plants generate life-giving oxygen and hold vast amounts of carbon in storage, which stabilizes the global climate." Unfortunately, these services aren't "free." Without proper management and protection, they will fail to provide the products we require: clean water, topsoil, and scenic areas, fresh air, and habitat.

Hawaii's watersheds also contain some of the best native Hawaiian ecosystems on state-managed land. While programs to protect these areas struggle for budget appropriations annually, resource experts estimate that at least \$11 million is needed annually to maintain the integrity of the watersheds for our children and future generations.

Our natural resource areas protect unique Hawaiian plants, animals, and ecosystems on 109,000 acres of public-trust lands. These areas include habitat for threatened and endangered species, and portions of essential watersheds that support our economy and way of life. Protection for these areas is seriously underfunded and understaffed. The result is increasing encroachment by invasive species, decrease in healthy habitat for native plants and animals, and the loss of the native essence of Hawai‘i.

We appreciate the funding proposed for this year, but suggest that we need to establish a source of permanent funding for future years. There are other measures introduced this year that would create regular annual revenue, which we encourage this Committee to hear and approve.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.