

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

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

**Before the House Committee on
FINANCE**

**Wednesday, February 20, 2013
3:30 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 760, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT**

House Bill 760, House Draft 1 proposes to require lessors of rental motor vehicles to include an option to the lessee in the motor vehicle agreement to contribute a sum to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) for the preservation and protection of the environment. **The Department supports this bill that could supplement funding for the Natural Area Reserve Fund and the Land Conservation Fund.**

Check-offs are used in 36 states to provide funding for conservation programs.ⁱ The funds receiving the check-offs support a variety of critical natural area protection and land acquisition programs. Protection and restoration of natural areas provides the dual benefit of ensuring a fully functioning water supply as well as preserving the unique cultural and natural resources that attract visitors to Hawaii.

The visitor industry clearly relies on natural resources. The Koolau Forest Watershed on Oahu is estimated to provide a net present value of \$1-3 billion for ecotourism alone.ⁱⁱ Forest protection also prevents erosion that muddies beaches, coral reefs, and fisheries. Protection sustains the native plants and animals unique to our islands and important to the Hawaiian culture.

Forests also mitigate climate change effects from rental vehicles by absorbing greenhouse gases. Reducing and preventing deforestation is the mitigation option with the largest and most immediate carbon stock impact in the short term, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.ⁱⁱⁱ In Hawaii, destruction of native forests by hooved animals can reduce or practically eliminate stored carbon. Invasive plants can reduce aboveground biomass by 19-38%.^{iv} Thus, enormous carbon emissions have already and will continue to occur from forest degradation in Hawaii. Over half of Hawaii's forests have already been lost.

WILLIAM J. AILA, JR.
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ESTHER KIA'AINA
FIRST DEPUTY

WILLIAM M. TAM
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

The Natural Area Reserve Fund supports the Natural Area Partnership Program, the Natural Area Reserves, the Watershed Partnerships Program, and the Youth Conservation Corps. These programs protect Hawaii's invaluable ecosystems and forested watersheds.

The Land Conservation Fund (LCF) supports the Legacy Land Conservation Program (LLCP). The LLCP protects rare and unique cultural, natural, agricultural, and recreational resources from destruction by funding the acquisition of fee title or conservation easements by nonprofits, counties, and state agencies.

House Bill 760, House Draft 1 supports programs that protect Hawaii's world-renown beauty and the natural resources needed to sustain the visitor industry.

ⁱ Department of Land and Natural Resources. 2001. Annual Report to the Twenty-First Legislature 2001 Regular Session on Act 152 SLH 2000 (HB 2835, HD2, SD2, CD1) Relating to Watershed Protection.

ⁱⁱ Roumasset, J., J.B. Kaiser, N. Krause, D. Mecham and J. Wooley. 1997. Draft Environmental Valuation and the Hawaiian Economy. University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization, UH- Mānoa.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pachauri, R.K., A. Reisinger (Eds.). 2007. Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Geneva, Switzerland.

^{iv} Asner, G. P., R. F. Hughes, T. A. Varga, D. E. Knapp, T. Kennedy-Bowdoin. 2008. Environmental and Biotic Controls over Aboveground Biomass Throughout a Tropical Rain Forest. *Ecosystems*. DOI 10.1007/S10021-008-9221-5.



HB760 HD1
RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT
House Committee on Finance

February 20, 2013

3:30 p.m.

Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HB760 HD1, which will allow Hawai'i's visitors to voluntarily contribute towards the maintenance and conservation of our natural and cultural resources.

Numerous studies in Hawai'i and abroad have indicated that visitors to areas of natural beauty and importance are generally more than willing to contribute financially to maintaining the environmental quality of these areas. Given the prominence of our natural environment as a tourism driver, these "user fee" studies thus indicate the existence of a currently untapped revenue source, i.e. visitors who may be willing to contribute financially to the environment they travel thousands of miles to enjoy.

By allowing visitors to voluntarily contribute to our natural environment at the time of their visit, this measure will allow the state to tap into a source of substantial potential revenues for the protection and conservation of our islands' resources. Given the clear need for greater financial investment in our watersheds, coastlines, and other natural and cultural resources, and given the growing strain placed on these resources by visitors and the carbon-emitting vehicles they drive, this measure thus provides much-needed revenues from an appropriate source of funds, without burdening taxpayers or our existing tourism industry. In addition, visitors who contribute funds under this measure will know that they played a part in protecting the natural resources and environment that are critical to our tourism economy, and to the welfare of the entire state.

Therefore, the OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HB760 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting H.B. 760 HD1 Relating to the Environment
House Committee on Finance
Wednesday, February 20, 2013, 3:30PM, Rm. 308

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a private non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which life in these islands depends. The Conservancy has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands 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 H.B. 760 HD1, which would allow an optional contribution by rental car customers to the natural resource protection programs of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

The DLNR's Natural Area Reserve Fund and Land Conservation Fund are the State's primary source of funding for forest and watershed protection, invasive species control, and land preservation across the state. Many of the programs supported by these funds have experienced up to 50% reductions in State funding since 2008 as a result of the weakened economy as well as the growing need for conservation work since invasive pests don't recognize economic cycles. While the optional contribution proposed in H.B. 760 HD1 may not be a major source of revenue for natural resource programs, it should provide an opportunity for more visitors and Hawai'i residents to learn about these worthy programs, appreciate their value, and make a much appreciated and helpful contribution to them.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

S. Haunani Apoliona Alan H. Arizumi Christopher J. Benjamin Anne S. Carter Richard A. Cooke III Peter H. Ehrman Kenton T. Eldridge
Thomas M. Gottlieb James J.C. Haynes III Mark L. Johnson Dr. Kenneth Y. Kaneshiro Eiichiro Kuwana Duncan MacNaughton
Bonnie P. McCloskey Wayne K. Minami James C. Polk H. Monty Richards Chet A. Richardson Jean E. Rolles Scott C. Rolles
Crystal K. Rose Dustin E. Sellers Dustin M. Shindo Nathan E. Smith James Wei Eric K. Yeaman

HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION

To: Rep. Sylvia Luke, Chair
Rep. Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice Chair
Rep. Aaron Ling Johanson, Vice Chair
Committee on Finance

From: Kiersten Faulkner
Executive Director, Historic Hawai'i Foundation

Committee Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2013
3:30 p.m., Agenda #2
Conference Room 308

Subject: **HB 760 HD 1, Relating to the Environment**

On behalf of Historic Hawai'i Foundation (HHF), I am writing in support of HB 760 HD1, which requires lessors of rental motor vehicles to include an option to the lessee in the motor vehicle agreement to contribute a sum to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the preservation and protection of the environment.

Since 1974, Historic Hawai'i Foundation has been a statewide leader for historic preservation. HHF's 850 members and numerous additional supporters work to preserve Hawaii's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believe that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, economic viability and environmental sustainability of the state.

The bill would establish a mechanism by which voluntary contributions could be made to provide financial support to the natural area reserve system and the legacy lands program. These programs within the Department of Land and Natural Resources are used to preserve and protect both native ecosystems and other important lands, including those of historic or cultural significance.

The voluntary contribution program would provide a convenient means for members of the public to support the natural and cultural resources that are critical to the welfare of the state and its citizens. The program would have the added benefit of educating visitors and residents who lease vehicles about the resources that many are visiting Hawai'i to enjoy. The moneys raised would go towards two established and successful programs and lead to additional protection and preservation of the environment, including cultural resources.

Therefore, Historic Hawai'i Foundation supports HB 760 HD 1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Historic Hawai'i Foundation

680 Iwilei Road, Suite 690 • Honolulu, HI 96817 • Tel: 808-523-2900 • FAX: 808-523-0800 • www.historichawaii.org

Historic Hawai'i Foundation was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities on all the islands of Hawai'i. As the statewide leader for historic preservation, HHF works to preserve Hawai'i's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, environmental sustainability, and economic viability of the state.