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Subject: Submitted testimony for SCR98 on Mar 28, 2013 15:05PM
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SCR98

Submitted on: 3/27/2013

Testimony for AGL/WTL on Mar 28, 2013 15:05PM in Conference Room 229

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Penny Levin	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments: Aloha; I have strong concerns regarding SCR98 and SR64. While the intent of these bills seems good, there is clearly an agenda, as stated by the acknowledgement of SB1305 in the resolutions, to justify paying landowners to waste water on fallow lands under the guise of "replenishing our aquifers." These bills, nor the study proposed, do not acknowledge or address the larger ecological repercussions and needs of drought strategies and conditions that will heal our drought stricken islands, including: 1. We have yet to accept or follow the strong recommendations from models for aquifer depletion we already have, despite major Central Maui aquifers becoming so depleted that they are now under State management. This, while agribusiness continues to "pour water onto permeable surfaces" in Central Maui. If the groundwater studies/models used to monitor depletion of lao and other aquifers are not good enough, the studies proposed by these bills will not come even close to providing the necessary information for honest decision making and implementation of sound practices. 2. Removal of water out of healthy watersheds and aquifers to other areas short changes groundwater recharge in both places and pushes formerly wet areas into drought conditions. The cumulative effect of broadening drought conditions by encouraging water removal from one place to another will result in even deeper drought conditions across the islands. The inability of moisture to infiltrate into lands in Central Maui is directly tied to the level (or lack thereof) of organic matter in the soil. Sugar and pineapple lands are severely lacking in good soil composition. Nothing in the proposed study addresses this. The proposed measuring of permeability can not provide realistic data on aquifer replenishment which occurs over decades and centuries. SB1305 and these two bills propose we reward/compensate these same landowners for continuing to DE-WATER our critical aquifers and watersheds! 3. The heavy use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides by some landowners and lessees, including in urban areas, means that water directed to such lands in an attempt to increase deep soil moisture levels will result in further contamination of groundwater stores. The proposed study does not address this very critical drinking water source impact issue. 4. Deer and goat populations are a major contributor to vegetation, soil and water loss. We already have examples on Molokai, Kahoolawe, Lanai and Maui. The proposed study fails to consider measuring the impact of on-site soil and erosion level conditions on

infiltration capacity. Perc rates won't matter if such conditions persist. Should landowners be able to claim a tax credit for drought mitigation activities when counter-productive activities undermine good practices on those same lands? Or, rewarded for a failure to mitigate these conditions, the simplest of which will require dramatic changes in agricultural practice because they have been ignored for decades? 5. Continuing to water heavily drought stricken lands with out of watershed sources continues to short change recovery capacity. Study or no study, rewards should focus on demonstrated water conservation, placing large acreage of drought lands in long term fallow, removal of feral ungulates, changing crops from annuals to perennials, tree crops and intercropped mixed systems that increase the percentage of organic matter in soils (and therefore retain moisture longer) and direct more water to deeper soil levels through tap root intrusion. 6. The study should also consider enforcement and fines for bad actors. For example, where agricultural practices continue to result in wind and rain driven soil runoff onto our reefs which further reduces the capacity of soils to retain water. Fiscally, I question the need for these bills or SB1305. The practices proposed are already cost-shared and supported by NRCS and FSA programs which are our tax dollars spent at the federal level through the Farm Bill. NRCS provides engineering and other services for free as part of Cooperator services. The proposed tax credits supported by these resolutions, would allow landowners to double dip or charge the State for the landowner responsibility portion of the cost of soil management practices under federal programs. It is fiscally irresponsible for the State of Hawaii to support double dipping by landowners for existing and ongoing ag practices already covered under NRCS, FSA and other agriculture programs and ag disaster assistance programs. Landowners already paid for ag practices or already Cooperators under USDA NRCS or FSA programs should be required to show evidence that they are not already receiving benefit or engineering services for such practices. We should not be rewarding ongoing bad practices under the guise of drought mitigation that continue to undermine our overall ecological resilience and capacity for recovery. Please set these bills aside until there is a more wholistic discussion about drought mitigation with a broader group of knowledgeable partners and practitioners. mahalo for this opportunity to testify.
Penny Levin Wailuku, Maui

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