
A BILL FOR AN ACT

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Hawaii
2 association of conservation districts, through coordination,
3 facilitation, and partnerships assists government agencies in
4 identifying and implementing culturally-sensitive projects and
5 practices to ensure the protection of Hawaii's environment. The
6 Hawaii association of conservation districts is comprised of
7 sixteen districts representing every community on all major
8 islands of Hawaii. Chapter 180, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
9 authorizes the soil and water conservation districts to operate
10 as government subdivisions to educate the public and construct
11 and maintain conservation projects and programs in Hawaii. Each
12 of the sixteen districts is governed by five volunteer directors
13 and is supported by staff. The department of land and natural
14 resources provides administration and maintains oversight
15 authority of the soil and water conservation districts.

16 The soil and water conservation districts have worked to
17 improve Hawaii's environment and economy through major projects



1 over the past sixty years. While these projects do not occur in
2 all districts every year, collaborative efforts with partners
3 and government agencies have brought millions of dollars to
4 Hawaii to improve farm practices, reduce erosion, improve ocean
5 and drinking water quality, fight invasive species, improve
6 public safety, protect property, conserve water, and strengthen
7 the economy. The soil and water conservation districts also
8 provide educational and community support for conservation
9 awareness. The districts participate in resource conservation
10 and development projects and statewide high school programs.
11 The districts also introduce conservation principles in
12 elementary schools.

13 In addition, the soil and water conservation districts
14 assist with reviewing each county's grading permits and
15 conservation plans. County grading permit reviews and
16 conservation plans are critical to preserve the environment,
17 stimulate the economy, and maintain individual livelihoods. The
18 demand and accompanying workload for this service have increased
19 dramatically with population growth and land use changes. The
20 districts receive hundreds of requests for conservation plans
21 and county grading permit reviews each year. As a result,
22 districts are currently struggling to keep pace with the demand.



1 The state department of health recently notified the Hawaii
2 association of conservation districts that the current oil
3 pollution funding would end on December 31, 2013, and a new
4 potential, but not guaranteed, funding mechanism will utilize
5 federal "Clean Water Act" funds (Federal Water Pollution Control
6 Act, title 33 United States Code section 1329) for the program
7 thus limiting services to those entities within priority
8 watershed areas that have approved watershed plans. This is
9 problematic as many of Hawaii's farming areas are not within
10 priority watersheds. On Maui, for example, the breadbasket of
11 Omaopio and Pulehu, including the county agricultural park and
12 the expanding Haiku flower production district, exists outside
13 of these areas. Therefore, a priority of the relevant soil and
14 water conservation district is the identification of solutions
15 that provide continued delivery of services to all farmers and
16 ranchers.

17 The legislature also finds that the current department of
18 health-proposed funding mechanism will result in delays within
19 the Maui county department of public works for farm-level
20 grubbing and grading permits. County funding currently
21 addresses review and recommendations associated with non-farm
22 plans. The existing department of health-funded soil and water



1 conservation district program covered all conservation plan
2 requirements on agricultural lands. However, as proposed, the
3 new department of health process will exclude many farms,
4 causing them to fall under the county grubbing and grading
5 permit process. Even as these farmers are referred to the soil
6 and water conservation district by the county of Maui department
7 of public works, there will be no one to assist them.

8 The county of Maui department of planning often requests
9 landowners to obtain farm plans. These plans are prepared by
10 the conservation specialist. This service would no longer be
11 available. Additionally, the department of health has requested
12 that the conservation specialist take a more active role in the
13 enforcement of conservation plan provisions. The soil and water
14 conservation districts have not assumed this role, since
15 advocacy and enforcement by the same entity may cause conflicts
16 and, more importantly, result in a reluctance by farmers and
17 ranchers to participate in conservation programs.

18 Finally, the legislature also finds that agriculture in
19 Hawaii is rapidly evolving. Many new farmers are immigrants who
20 commonly are unfamiliar with United States laws. Educational
21 assistance, including education about conservation measures,
22 will be important to ensure that these new farmers and ranchers



1 adopt good environmental stewardship as a core value while
2 seeking economic viability.

3 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the
4 Hawaii association of conservation districts to assist with its
5 staffing and operating costs to provide time for the districts
6 to develop sustainable funding mechanisms.

7 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2014-2015 for
10 staffing and operating costs of the Hawaii association of
11 conservation districts.

12 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
13 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

14 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2014.

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INTRODUCED BY:

Jessica Wong
John M. ...
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H.B. NO. 1916

Report Title:

Appropriation; Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts

Description:

Appropriates funds for the Hawaii association of conservation districts to assist with its staffing and operating costs.

Effective 07/01/2014.

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