



23 E. Kawili St, Hilo, HI 96720 • Phone: (808) 933-3340
March 27, 2014

SUPPORTING HB 2312 RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE, ENERGY, AND FOOD SECURITY TAX.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
March 28, 2014 9:15 Room 211

BIISC SUPPORTS THIS MEASURE, AND OFFERS THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

The Big Island Invasive Species Committee **supports** H.B. 2312 SD1 and its provisions to redistribute the barrel tax revenue and to extend the sunset dates on the barrel tax to June 30, 2030. We believe this is an effective policy for investing in clean energy, environmental protection, and local agriculture initiatives that reduce our dependence on imported goods, decrease the risk of importing and spreading invasive species, and increase our environmental response capacity.

There is a strong and clear connection between the burning of fossil fuels, climate change, and the proliferation of invasive species. The changes in invasive species distributions expected with climate change will further reduce the water supply and health of native forests and the unique native species they support. Applying funds from the barrel tax to protect forests and agriculture and mitigate the effects of climate change has a sensible basis.

We strongly disagree with testimony suggesting that it is poor financial policy to set aside funds for emergency response. Land managers from the fields of natural resource management, agriculture, urban and regional planning, and civil defense all know that the opposite is true.

Maintaining a fund for an immediate response to environmental disasters ensures that the response is swift and cost effective. With every day that response is delayed, the total cost increases. Without special funds set aside for rapid response to environmental disasters, like an oil spill, watershed destruction, or the introduction of new threats like little fire ants or Coqui frogs, getting the money from general funds to get "boots on the ground" can take more than a year.

The island invasive species committees and other response agencies exist to respond to these disasters. Although we can scale up or down in staffing very quickly, the funds for equipment, supplies, and staff must be immediately available. Rather than hiding funds from the eyes of legislators, special funds used to improve environmental and economic resiliency, disaster planning, and response capacity ensure that the long term costs of any clean-up is minimized.

Investing in local energy, watershed protection, and agriculture security are essential components of building self-reliance and resilience. Using the barrel tax revenue for its originally intended purposes and extending the sunset date is a wise investment in our future.