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# 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 comprises sixteen  
7 districts representing every community on all major islands of  
8 Hawaii. Chapter 180, Hawaii Revised Statutes, authorizes the  
9 soil and water conservation districts to operate as government  
10 subdivisions to educate the public and construct and maintain  
11 conservation projects and programs in Hawaii. Each of the  
12 sixteen districts is governed by five volunteer directors and is  
13 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.



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

15           In addition, the soil and water conservation districts  
16 assist with reviewing each county's grading permits and  
17 conservation plans. County grading permit reviews and  
18 conservation plans are critical to preserve the environment,  
19 stimulate the economy, and maintain individual livelihoods. The  
20 demand and accompanying workload for this service have increased  
21 dramatically with population growth and land use changes. The



1 districts receive hundreds of requests for conservation plans  
2 and county grading permit reviews each year. As a result,  
3 districts are currently struggling to keep pace with the demand.

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

20 The legislature also finds that the current funding  
21 mechanism proposed by the department of health will result in



1 delays within the Maui county department of public works for  
2 farm-level grubbing and grading permits. County funding  
3 currently addresses review and recommendations associated with  
4 non-farm plans. The existing department of health-funded soil  
5 and water conservation district program covered all conservation  
6 plan requirements on agricultural lands. However, as proposed,  
7 the new department of health process will exclude many farms,  
8 causing them to fall under the county grubbing and grading  
9 permit process. Even as these farmers are referred to the soil  
10 and water conservation district by the county of Maui department  
11 of public works, there will be no one to assist them.

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



1           Finally, the legislature finds that agriculture in Hawaii  
 2 is rapidly evolving. Many new farmers are immigrants who  
 3 frequently are unfamiliar with the laws of the United States.  
 4 Educational assistance, including education about conservation  
 5 measures, will be important to ensure that these new farmers and  
 6 ranchers adopt good environmental stewardship as a core value  
 7 while seeking economic viability.

8           The purpose of this Act is to appropriate moneys to the  
 9 Hawaii association of conservation districts to assist with its  
 10 staffing and operating costs while providing time for the  
 11 districts to develop sustainable funding mechanisms.

12           SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
 13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$           or so much  
 14 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2016-2017 for  
 15 staffing and operating costs of the Hawaii association of  
 16 conservation districts.

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

19           SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



**Report Title:**

Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates moneys for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts to assist with its staffing and operating costs.  
(HB2420 HD1)

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