
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.

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



1 and county grading permit reviews each year. As a result,
2 districts are currently struggling to keep pace with the demand.

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

19 The legislature also finds that the current funding
20 mechanism proposed by the department of health will result in
21 delays within the Maui county department of public works for



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

11 The county of Maui department of planning often requests
12 landowners to obtain farm plans. These plans are prepared by
13 the conservation specialist. This service would no longer be
14 available. Additionally, the department of health has requested
15 that the conservation specialist take a more active role in the
16 enforcement of conservation plan provisions. The soil and water
17 conservation districts have not assumed this role, because
18 advocacy and enforcement by the same entity may cause conflicts,
19 and, more importantly, result in a reluctance by farmers and
20 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 \$100,000 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, 2016.

20



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.

(SD1)

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