

JAN 23 2015

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING 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.  
6 Chapter 180, Hawaii Revised Statutes, authorizes the soil and  
7 water conservation districts to operate as government  
8 subdivisions to educate the public and construct and maintain  
9 conservation projects and programs in Hawaii. The Hawaii  
10 association of conservation districts is composed of sixteen  
11 districts representing every community on all major islands of  
12 Hawaii. Each of the sixteen districts is governed by five  
13 volunteer directors and is supported by staff. The department  
14 of land and natural resources provides administration and  
15 maintains oversight authority of the soil and water conservation  
16 districts.



1           Soil and water conservation districts have worked to  
2 improve Hawaii's environment and economy through major projects  
3 over the past sixty years, such as improving farm practices,  
4 reducing erosion, augmenting ocean water quality, improving  
5 drinking water quality, and fighting invasive species. In  
6 addition, the districts assist with reviewing each county's  
7 grading permits and conservation plans that are critical to  
8 proper county grading permit reviews, preserving the  
9 environment, stimulating the economy, and maintaining individual  
10 livelihoods. The soil and water conservation districts also  
11 provide educational and community support for conservation  
12 awareness, including introducing elementary school students to  
13 conservation principles and participating in high school  
14 resource conservation and development projects.

15           The legislature further finds that the demand and  
16 accompanying workload of the conservation districts have  
17 increased dramatically with population growth and land use  
18 changes. The districts receive hundreds of requests for  
19 conservation plans and county grading permits reviews each year.  
20 As a result, districts are currently struggling to keep pace  
21 with the demand, and adequate funding for the work of the Hawaii



1 association of conservation districts is in serious jeopardy at  
2 a time of critical demand for its services. Soil and water  
3 conservation districts are authorized to accept contributions in  
4 money, services, materials or otherwise from any source, and use  
5 or expend them in carrying out its operation.

6 The legislature also finds that the lack of funding for the  
7 Hawaii association of conservation districts results in many  
8 negative impacts on agriculture, despite efforts to build the  
9 agricultural industry in Hawaii. Due to funding shortages,  
10 services provided by the Hawaii association of conservation  
11 districts are limited to entities within priority watershed  
12 areas that have approved watershed plans, although many of  
13 Hawaii's farming areas are not within priority watersheds.  
14 Additionally, many farmers in Maui county who require a grubbing  
15 and grading permit and are referred by the county to a soil and  
16 water conservation district will go unassisted due to funding  
17 shortages. The service of farm plan preparation will no longer  
18 be available to landowners who are requested by Maui county to  
19 obtain a farm plan. Furthermore, new farmers, many of whom are  
20 immigrants and often unfamiliar with United States laws, will  
21 not be educated by soil and water conservation district staff on



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1 conservation measures or advised to pursue environmental  
2 stewardship as a core value while seeking economic viability.

3 The purpose of this Act is to make an appropriation for the  
4 operational expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii  
5 association of conservation districts.

6 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$350,000 or so much  
8 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the  
9 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year  
10 2016-2017 for the operational expenses and staffing costs of the  
11 Hawaii association of conservation districts.

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

14 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2015.  
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INTRODUCED BY:

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# S.B. NO. 313

**Report Title:**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Appropriation

**Description:**

Makes an appropriation to the department of land and natural resources for the operational expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii association of conservation districts.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

