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GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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**Testimony of
CARTY S. CHANG
Interim Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS**

**Thursday, February 26, 2015
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 211**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 1126, SENATE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO FOREST STEWARDSHIP**

Senate Bill 1126, Senate Draft1 (SD1) proposes to amend Chapter 195F, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), by allowing landowners, including long-term leaseholders, interested in participating in the Forest Stewardship Program to be eligible for an increased cost-share reimbursement rate for an approved forest stewardship management plan, as well as improving efficiencies in program implementation and increasing available eligible lands. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this Administration measure, but recommends modification to SD1 to incorporate necessary program updates to eligible lands.**

Specifically, Senate Bill 1126, SD1 clarifies conditions that must be met by applicants to receive funds under the Forest Stewardship Program, as well as increases the reimbursement rate for the development of forest management plans from 50% to 75%. The increase cost-share rate will incentivize private landowners to participate in the program and ultimately improve the management of Hawaii's forest lands. The proposed amendments also improve efficiencies and will allow the program to comply with the requirements of the State Procurement Code, Chapter 103D, HRS.

Payments to Forest Stewardship Program participants are made from the Forest Stewardship Special Fund established pursuant to Section 195F-4, HRS. The Department does not anticipate a need to increase current program funding levels to accommodate the increase cost-share rate for management plan development. The total cost for development of Forest Stewardship management plans is generally between \$3,000 to \$10,000 depending on the size and complexity of the land management project.

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With over one-half of Hawaii's forested areas being privately owned or managed, the Department recognizes that public-private partnerships are essential to the present and future health of forests throughout the State. The program affords many of Hawaii's private forest owners access to resource experts, as well as provides a plan to improved and sustainable management of the natural resources they steward. As such, unnecessarily restricting forest landowner access to the program is not in the best interest of the State.

Section 195F-5(b), HRS currently restricts landowners interested in sustainable forest management from participating in the program, unless they have cleared their land of native vegetation prior to January 1, 1991. Thus private landowners with native forests in the State Agricultural District cannot seek guidance through the State on the responsible management of this forest lands without the recommended modifications. The Forest Stewardship Program enables participants to responsibly manage important forest resources that provide vital public and private social, economic, and environmental benefits.

The Department recommends the following modification to Section 195F-5(a) and (b):

Section 195F-5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsections (a) and (b) to read as follows:

"(a) To participate in the forest stewardship program, the applicant landowner shall prepare and submit [~~to the board~~] a forest stewardship management plan that shall:

- (1) Identify and describe activities to be undertaken by the landowner to protect soil, water, aesthetic quality, recreation, timber, water, fish, wildlife, and native plant resources on the land in a manner that is compatible with the objectives of the program, is consistent with this chapter, and qualifies under the board's list of approved activities;

(2) Be signed by all parties having an interest in or holding any encumbrance upon the property, and shall state that the parties agree to comply with the plan upon its approval; and

(3) Be approved by the board and available for public review.

(b) The board and other cooperating natural resource management agencies shall develop a list of approved management activities and practices that shall be eligible for cost-share assistance under the program in the following areas:

(1) Enhanced management and maintenance of vegetation on vital watershed lands;

(2) Sustainable growth and management of forests for timber and other forest products on lands [~~from which all or most of the native vegetation had been removed prior to January 1, 1991~~];

(3) Protection, restoration, and enhancement of native plants and animals;

(4) Management, maintenance, and restoration of forests for shelterbelts, windbreaks, aesthetic quality, and other conservation purposes [~~on lands from which all or most of the native vegetation had been removed prior to January 1, 1991~~];

- (5) Agroforestry management on lands [~~from which all or most of the native vegetation had been removed prior to January 1, 1991~~];
- (6) Management and maintenance of native fish and wildlife habitats;
- (7) Management of outdoor recreational opportunities; and
- (8) Other activities approved by the board, which are consistent with this chapter."



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**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting S.B. 1126 SD1 Relating to Forest Stewardship
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
Thursday, February 26, 2015, 9:00AM, Room 211**

For more than 35 years, The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i has been working closely with government agencies, local businesses, private landowners, non-profit partners, and interested communities across the state to preserve the lands and waters upon which all life in these islands depends. The Conservancy is a private non-profit conservation organization that has helped to protect nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i. Today, we actively manage more than 35,000 acres in 11 nature preserves on Maui, Hawai'i, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Kaua'i, and support 19 coastal communities seeking to co-manage marine resources in partnership with the State of Hawai'i.

The Nature Conservancy supports S.B. 1126 SD1. The DLNR's Forest Stewardship Program is one of several effective tools used by the department to partnering with private land owners and managers to care for the state's forest resources. We support the DLNR's proposal in this bill to provide additional funding to Forest Stewardship Program participants to develop management plans and to clarify that the program is open to holders of long-term leases.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer our support for this bill.

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SB1126

Submitted on: 2/24/2015

Testimony for WAM on Feb 26, 2015 09:00AM in Conference Room 211

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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