

**SB**

**774**

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**Cc:** [brynn77@hotmail.com](mailto:brynn77@hotmail.com)  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB774 on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM  
**Date:** Monday, February 02, 2015 9:01:54 AM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Brynn	Voyaging Foods	Comments Only	No

Comments: I am a business owner who makes food products from Hawaiian taro from the island of Oahu district of Honolulu. If this bill passes, it would provide young farmers as well our company with an opportunity to increase food security and local food manufacturing by growing kalo in my own district. 2. Hawaii imports 85 percent of our food and we import 50 percent of the taro consumed in our islands. That is just a crazy thing to happen knowing that these islands were food self-sufficient and famous for their kalo production 100 years ago. 3. Sealevel rise is a very real issue for existing low-lying taro lands such as Hanalei, Keanae-Wailuanui, and Waipio. Many of the lands may disappear or will be inundated by salt water. These are the primary taro-producing lands we rely on today. What happens when they are gone? By protecting mauka taro lands, we are planning for future food security. 4. I plan to grow kalo in the future but what happens when mine or your grandkid's grandkids want to grow taro and these lands are gone because we failed to find value or urgency in protecting them now? We are requesting that the legislature be foresighted and pro-active for all of our future by supporting this bill.

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**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB774 on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM  
**Date:** Friday, January 30, 2015 4:24:27 PM  
**Attachments:** [Evensen testimony SB774.docx](#)

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Carl Evensen	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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Carl I. Evensen  
45-744 Ko St.  
Kaneohe, Hi. 96744

## LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

### **Personal Testimony Presented before the Senate Committees on Water and Land, Agriculture, and Hawaiian Affairs**

#### **SB 774 RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF TARO**

*Chairs Thielen, Ruderman, and Shimabukuru, Vice Chairs Galuteria and Riviere, and  
Committee Members*

My name is Carl Evensen and I serve as the Interim Director of Lyon Arboretum, a botanic garden and research unit of the University of Hawaii. I am pleased to provide personal testimony **in support of SB 774**. This testimony does not represent the position of the University of Hawaii or Lyon Arboretum. I am a crop and soil scientist by training and have a special interest in the cultivation of taro. I also serve as a member of the Hawaii Taro Security and Purity Task Force and my testimony supports the position of this Task Force.

The purpose of SB 774 is to establish in the statues pertaining to the use of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources public lands a fourth class of intensive agriculture use designation to protect existing and historic wetland taro lands within public conservation districts. SB 774 also establishes a statutory definition of taro lands as lands in wetland taro cultivation prior to statehood, or any traditional taro lands that retain historic structural evidence of *lo'i kalo*, such as *'auwai* irrigation ditches, terraces or walls.

Wetland taro lands have very special characteristics, including rich soils which can retain impounded water and have position in the landscape where irrigation can be provided by gravity flow of water from streams and springs. These lands were among the most productive and valuable agricultural lands in ancient Hawaiian times, but have been treated as wastelands in modern times due to their propensity for flooding. This characteristic of being prone to flooding makes these lands unsuitable for other uses, such as residential or commercial development. Conversely, the protection and future use of these lands for *lo'i kalo* would provide many benefits such as increased food production, cultural preservation, and a wide variety of ecosystem services like wetland habitat, flood mitigation, and water quality improvement.

SB 774 acknowledges the value and helps to preserve these culturally and environmentally important lands for potential use by future generations. Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to support this important bill.

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**Attachments:** [SB0774\\_LNR\\_02-02-15\\_WTL-AGL-HWN.pdf](#)

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Carty S. Chang	DLNR	Comments Only	Yes

Comments: DLNR appreciates the intent of this measure, and will provide comments.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Courtney Bruch	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Taro cultivation is integral to feeding Hawaii for present and future generations. Thank you for perpetuating as much taro being grown as possible and supporting taro farmers.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/29/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Dana Keawe	Individual	Support	No

Comments: RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF TARO. Create a classification of agricultural public lands entitled "taro lands". Appropriate funds to the board of land and natural resources to create an inventory of lands classified as taro lands. Please protect our sacred taro lands.

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**Date:** Saturday, January 31, 2015 5:23:51 PM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/31/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Daniel Bishop	Individual	Support	Yes

Comments: I am in Strong support of SB774

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Subject: Submitted testimony for SB774 on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM  
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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Don Heacock	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Senators, I strongly support SB 774, Relating to the protection of taro lands. The passage of this bill is critically needed to protect these highly productive and valuable wetland agricultural lands that are culturally, environmentally and economically important . As a commercial taro farmer and professional biologist/ecologist, I assure you that taro lands function in many more ways that just production of taro, for example they: 1) Function as the “watersheds kidneys” or sedimentation basins that filter out and trap terrigenous sediments, leaf litter, woody debris and suspended organic matter which increase the productivity of taro lo’i, and this protects our coral reefs that needs clean, clear water to survive and to thrive; 2) Function as “breeding, feeding and nursery areas” for three species of endangered water birds: Hawaiian gallinules (‘Alae’ula), Hawaiian stilts (Ae’o) and the Hawaiian duck (Koloa), 3) Function as important wetland plants, highly adapted to floods, hurricanes, and other such environmental perturbations, thereby assuring that the taro plant, and taro growing in taro lo’i the most resilient food crop grown in Hawaii. I believe that this is the reason that in Hawaiian mythology Kanaka Maoli believe they evolved from taro (Kalo) as Haloa, their early ancestor. Finally, because of the unique attributes of kalo (taro) and of lo’ i kalo (wetland taro fields) in Hawaii, they represent the most culturally, socially, environmentally and economically important crop in Hawaii, historically and into the future, particularly relating to food security because of their extreme resilience to floods and hurricanes. Therefore, please pass SB 774. Sincere Aloha e malama pono e malama ‘aina, Donald “Lalakea” Heacock Niumalu Mahi’a (Niumalu Farm) 2265 Hulemalu Road Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii 96766

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**Testimony of  
TARO SECURITY AND PURITY TASK FORCE**

**MARK ALAPAKI LUKE  
Chair**

**Before the Senate Committees on  
WATER & LAND, AGRICULTURE, AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

**Monday, February 2, 2015, 3:15PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 774  
RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF TARO**

Senate Bill 774 creates a definition of “taro lands” as wetland taro lands in production prior to statehood. The bill also adds a fourth class taro lands to the list of classes of intensive agricultural use lands the Department of Land and Natural Resources under HRS171-10. The bill eliminates the need for a district boundary amendment for lands designated as fourth-class taro lands. Finally, the bill asks for an appropriation of funds to the Board of Land and Natural Resources to create an inventory of lands classified as taro lands. **The Taro Security and Purity Task Force strongly supports this bill.**

The Taro Security and Purity Task Force was created by the legislature under Act 211 in 2008 specifically to guide policy and research related to taro and taro farming, as well as to support the vitality, economic viability and perpetuation of taro and taro farming in the state. In bringing this bill to the legislature we are fulfilling a portion of the kuleana that this body was tasked with under Act 211.

The Task Force’s 2010 report to the legislature was the result of a yearlong community consultation and included 89 recommendations across seven key issues. Legislators received an update on task force progress in relation to the recommendations of that report at the start of the 2014 legislative session. Access to affordable lands to grow taro was of significant importance to young taro growers and organizations looking to create resilient options for food security in their communities as well as mentoring programs that develop new farmers. This represents a different sector than that of large acreage commercial taro growers. *Taro plays a significant role in addressing the need for staple starch production in Hawai‘i at a time when we are dependent on 85 percent of our food imported from outside Hawai‘i.*

The task force has worked closely with the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture over the past three years to refine the language of SB774 and address concerns relating to the broadness of applicability of the proposed legislation. HRS171 is specific to Public Lands. *This bill does not prevent or inhibit a private landowner from the sale or development of their private property to a private buyer, nor does it impact existing developed state-owned properties.*

Contact: Emily Kandagawa, Taro Task Force Coordinator (808) 754-7395 or [tsptfhi@gmail.com](mailto:tsptfhi@gmail.com)

*The bill creates a fourth class of taro lands specifically and only for undeveloped, unencumbered wetland taro growing systems on state (public) lands. These sites represent important traditional agricultural resources and features, centers for cultural practice, and places of tremendous food productivity. They are typically small in size, with clay soils prone to flooding, and fall within allowable uses of Conservation and Agriculture zones on public lands under HRS13-5. While taro lands have the potential to be designated as important agricultural lands (IAL), HRS 205-49.3 explicitly excludes “lands held in the conservation district” from the process of designation and adoption of IAL maps by the Land Use Commission.*

The task force finds that existing commercial and subsistence wetland taro farms are approximately 500-600 acres, less than one percent of all lands in agriculture. An estimated 30,000 acres of taro lands are needed to grow sufficient taro to feed Hawai‘i’s 1.3 million people, as just one portion of a basic set of starch crops necessary for residents’ wellbeing over the course of a single year. The state imports an estimated 2 million pounds of taro from other countries annually, to supplement the 4 million pounds grown in the islands, placing Hawaii and taro growers at high risk from invasive pests and pathogens not currently found within the state. The gap between existing and projected acreage, the narrow range of characteristics required for wetland taro production, the rapid loss of such lands to other uses in the private sector, and the rising cost of land and leases in the private sector necessitates the protection of such sites on public lands.

The Island of O‘ahu is dependent on the neighbor islands as its source of raw taro in the production of poi. An estimated 30 acres of commercial taro is currently recorded for an island with a population of almost 1 million residents. In the event of environmental disasters, such as floods or hurricanes on Kaua‘i, or earthquakes that disrupt large portions of O‘ahu, the island will suffer from extreme taro and poi shortages. Even the lowest estimates for sea level rise indicate that lowland areas like Hanalei, Kaua‘i, Ke‘anae-Wailuanui, Maui, Hālawā, Moloka‘i and Waipi‘o, Hawai‘i Island will be inundated with brackish water unsuitable for kalo production. The road to districts such as the taro-producing region of Windward, O‘ahu will be cut off from Honolulu. Having mauka wetland taro sites in each conservation district protected now for cultivation in the future will help ensure future food security in the midst of climate change. *Adoption of SB774 represents a foresighted and critical first step by the legislature in sea-level rise planning for our most vulnerable food-producing lands.*

There is a growing interest in taro farming, as well as the traditional Hawaiian taro cultivars, as indicated by the more than 200 signatures gathered by the taro task force from potential new farmers, and the distribution of almost a million huli (taro planting stock) of 40 traditional taro varieties since 2013. Many of these varieties are best suited to mid-elevation, cooler lo‘i sites that are found on Conservation zoned lands under DLNR jurisdiction. With additional growth in the demand for high-quality raw taro, particularly the hand-pounding pa‘i ‘ai market, along with value-added taro products is evidence of an untapped economic potential that this diversifying taro industry represents and is in need of support. *The passage of SB774 will create opportunities for small-scale and subsistence farmers to earn a living growing kalo and contribute to the health and well-*

Contact: Emily Kandagawa, Taro Task Force Coordinator (808) 754-7395 or [tsptfhi@gmail.com](mailto:tsptfhi@gmail.com)

*being of their communities.*

In addition, the task force notes that lo'i kalo retains wetland soil characteristics, whether they are active or have long been fallowed. The physical geographic character of such sites is a primary indicator for existing flooding and future flood potential. Functioning taro lands are known to assist in the absorption and control of floodwaters as well as runoff. The high costs of flood mitigation for the state and all counties are well documented. This includes where groundwater levels rise quickly and persistently in lowland areas, as the State and County have learned in such areas as the Mapunapuna industrial district, or where topography indicates locations are collection points for upstream surface water flows such as Mānoa, Pālolo, Kuli'ou'ou, and Punalu'u – all former lo'i kalo lands. The instability of wetland clay soils translates to increased costs and higher risks for long-term structural integrity. *SB774 provides state agencies with a measure of liability protection by prohibiting the development of such lands for other purposes.*

SB774 is prudent in relieving the State and the Counties of the expense and staff time involved in the boundary amendment process under HRS-171, where fourth-class taro lands designations are applied. It prevents abuse of the application of this new class by requiring that fourth-class lands be specified for wetland taro production. The DLNR retains authority over district boundaries for Conservation zoned lands (Chpt183C).

The task force agrees with the DLNR that existing rules may be sufficient to support the changes in statute created by these amendments. We note that suggestions in the previous legislative session to require attachment of a list of sites to the proposed statute would 1) require immense resources on the part of DLNR; 2) require DLNR to come before the legislature every year to add hundreds of sites to the statute as survey work progresses, a process that would negatively impact staff time and duties already stretched thin by budget cuts, as well as lengthening the proposed statute to the extreme; and 3) fails to recognize that these taro sites are located primarily within state Conservation lands, a zoning category for which DLNR has agency jurisdiction to define use through the HAR process.

We encourage full support from Senate committee members to steward this bill forward as a proactive measure in support of family farms and food security in Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa



Mark Alapaki Luke, Chair  
Taro Security and Purity Task Force

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Emily Kandagawa	Taro Security & Purity Task Force	Support	Yes

Comments:

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Felicia Cowden	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please support the designation of Taro Lands in Hawaii. I am an active participant in the making of poi at Waipa Foundation in Kauai on a weekly basis. I grow dry-land taro in my home "yarden." My experience helps me to understand the regenerative cycle of taro thrives with human cultivation and specific growing environments. This crop was once the staple of survival in Hawaii and may need to be again. I am an active member in Regenerations Botanical Garden, Hawaii Farmers Union United (Kauai Chapter) among other organizations with a central goal of localized food production. Protection of taro and taro lands is a relevant issue to the broader population as well as the kanaka ma`oli on Kaua`i.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
George Kahumoku	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please submit for me. I can't seem to find email address to submit Thx GK Testimony for SB# 744 To whom this may concern: Aloha from Kahakuloa Maui 2-1-15 My name is George Kahumoku Jr. Besides being a musician & a retired School teacher from Lahainaluna HS where I taught for over 20 years and the the retired Director of the UHMC Institute of Hawaiian Music where I taught for over 6 years, I come from a family of Native Planters who have been planting Kalo for over 2000 years. I come from Kealia S Kona where we plant Kalo Mala or dry land style. I practice Mala style Farming on my current farm at the Clifts of Kahakuloa where I now live where we have no stream running through our land. If this bill passes , it will reserve our Kalo lo'i lands around our water sources such as Kahakuloa, Waihee , Waiehu, & Waikapu, Oluwalu Honokowai, Ukumehame , Kauaula, Honokohau, and many other water sources located on the West Maui mountains as well as Lo'i lands across the State of Hawaii . I have been a mentor for many of the Haumana & students who are the next generation interested in Kalo Lo'i farming. Another reason for saving our Kalo lands is because the Kalo is part of our Hawaiian Geneology . Our Hawaiian words for family , "Ohana," come from the word "Oha" or young off shoots of the Kalo plant and "Na" meaning many young off shoots of the "Na Makua," the Hawaiian word for parents. The young Kalo plants are also called "Keiki" , the Hawaiian word for Children, & the Kalo that has been consumed is our "Na Kupuna" or the Hawaiian word for our Grandparents. Please help us to preserve our Hawaiian Geneology and families or Ohana by preserving our Kalo Lo'i lands. On our current farm at the Clifts at Kahakuloa ,we are blessed to grow over 80 varieties of Kalo on our aina or land. Though I do sell a percentage of my Kalo corms leaves & stems towards commercial sales though "Local Harvest "our farm broker located in Napili and Kahului ( we also sell Kapoho Sunrise Non GMO papaya, Hawaiian herbal teas, local Herbs, celery, Okinawan . Korean, and New Zealand Spinach , over 40 varieties of Bananas , 30 varieties of Sweet Potatoe, 6 varieties of breadfruit, 35 varieties of citrus , goats, sheep , cattle, ducks & chickens, eggs ) We grow most of our Kalo to share with family & friends for Pa'ina celebrations or rights of passage events such as 1 year baby party, graduations , weddings, birthdays, house or canoe warmings, funerals & 1 year after death celebrations. I feel that it is more important to reserve these Lo'i lands for subsistence farming and Pa'ina celebrations for our families & generations yet unborn. Please help us preserve these lo'i lands for our

future generations. To me every Hawaiian Family should be growing their own kalo to provide for their family and their friends. It is the Hawaiian thing to do, Call or email me if you have any questions regarding our interest in reserving our Lo'i lands for Kalo farming . Mahalo Nui loa George Kahumoku Jr. Hawaiian Native Planter for over 63 years, Mentor, retired teacher, and musician C: 808-280-9948 E: Georgekahumoku@me.com Mail: POB 12804 Lahaina Hi 96761 Farm Address: 555 Kaukini loop The Clifts of Kahakuloa Ag Subdivision Wailuku Hi 96793

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**Subject:** SB 774  
**Date:** Thursday, January 29, 2015 3:20:21 PM

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Aloha,

my name is Pat Simmons Jr. I speak as a private citizen and small-scale Taro farmer from the Moku of Hamakualoa on Maui. I feed my family with organically homegrown Taro. I believe the State has a valuable opportunity to designate certain lands as "Taro Lands" here in Hawai'i. Long before Europeans came to these islands, the original inhabitants sustained a massive population close to current numbers, with many different food crops that depended on water, Taro in particular. Designating "Taro Lands" gives people the choice to continue sustainable local food production with an amazingly high yielding crop such as Taro. In a community where over 80% of our food is imported from overseas, it is more urgent than ever that the citizens of these islands have the opportunity to grow and consume more locally produced food, especially a food that was the number one Hawaiian staple for generations. Taro production is time tested and proven to nurture and sustain many human lives healthfully as well as provide local economic opportunities. Please consider the measure to protect, preserve and designate "Taro Lands" for the use of current and future generations.

Mahalo,

Pat Simmons Jr.



## **Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs**

P. O. Box 1135

Honolulu, Hawai`i 96807

### **SB 774 RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF TARO**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

Monday, 2/02/15; 3:15 p.  
Room 224

Aloha Madam Chair Thielen, Chairman Ruderman and Madam Chair Shimabukuro of the joint hearing of the Senate Committees on Water and Land, Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs. I am Annelle Amaral, President of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs here to testify in support of Senate Bill 774 Relating to the Protection of Taro.

The Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu was founded 95 years ago by Prince Kuhio and a group of prominent Hawaiians when he was a Delegate to the US Congress trying to pass the Hawaiian Homestead Act. There are now 67 affiliate clubs in Hawaii and 16 states of the continent chartered by an Association that was developed in 1959. There are five councils in the counties of the State and one on the continent. While clubs and councils meet quarterly or even more often, the Association meets at an annual convention to take up issues and positions that impact on Native Hawaiians.

Over the years we have consistently supported taro production and food sustainability as essential to Hawaii. Prior to contact these islands were able to be self-sufficient and provide for an estimated population of 800,000 to one million people. The lands were “aina momona” with many native crops under intense, diversified cultivation providing in abundance. Taro provided a corm for poi and the leaf for luau – nothing is wasted, even today. Other edible food plants were planted along the banks of the lo`i and there were times when lo`i converted to loko`ia and fish were cultivated.

With contact came corporate agriculture and former land for native food production, especially taro lo`i, lessened dramatically. What were lo`i became rice

paddies and shipping rice to Chinese laborers during the California '49er gold strikes was the corporate precursor to sugar and pineapple production and mono-crop agriculture.

With the renewed interest and an increased taste for all things taro it makes good sense to protect taro and those lands that could be productive again.

We absolutely support this bill that will amend HRS to protect pre-statehood taro land not only for its food production but also the cultural, historical and social value.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Contact: [jalna.keala2@hawaiiantel.net](mailto:jalna.keala2@hawaiiantel.net)

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**Attachments:** [Taro SB774.doc](#)

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/31/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Jalna Keala	Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs	Support	Yes

Comments: AHCC president Annelle Amaral will be the person testifying.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Joan Lander	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Please help Hawaii's people become food self-sufficient by passing this bill. It is both a tribute to the ancestors who cleared and landscaped these taro lands and terraces, and a promise to today's generations that they will have the resources to feed their families.

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Aloha to the WTL, AGL, HWN and WAM Committees,

I am writing in strong support of SB 774 relating to the protection of Taro and the needed classification of agricultural land designated for the growing of Taro.

I am in strong support of appropriating funds and creating a classification of agricultural public lands for taro production.

This is a very important bill and greatly needed to ensure food security and the perpetuation of traditional farming of taro across our island chain. Not only is this of benefit for food production but as we look at the future and the potential change in sea level over the coming decades, additional lands should be designated for taro production.

I can think of no greater use for available land than designation for taro loi. Not only will taro feed our people but the growing of taro will help create more jobs for farmers and perpetuate the Hawaiian culture and educate young and old farmers on the importance of taking care of the land.

Please support this bill for our farmers and for future generations.

Mahalo,  
Jeri Di Pietro  
PO Box 338  
Koloa, HI 96756  
808 651 1332  
[ofstone@aol.com](mailto:ofstone@aol.com)

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**Date:** Friday, January 30, 2015 12:36:16 AM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Kalawai'a Goo	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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**Date:** Friday, January 30, 2015 6:17:00 PM  
**Attachments:** [SB 774 AGR 2-2-15 WTL-AGL-HWN.doc](#)

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Ken Kakesako	State Department of Agriculture	Comments Only	Yes

Comments: Defer to DLNR.

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DAVID Y. IGE  
Governor

SHAN S. TSUTSUI  
Lt. Governor



State of Hawaii  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

SCOTT E. ENRIGHT  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
Deputy to the Chairperson

**TESTIMONY OF SCOTT E. ENRIGHT  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON WATER AND LAND, AGRICULTURE,  
AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS**

February 2, 2015  
3:15 P.M.  
ROOM 224

**SENATE BILL NO. 774  
RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF TARO**

Chairpersons Thielen, Ruderman, and Shimabukuro and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill No. 774 that requests the Department of Land and Natural Resources to identify and inventory lands qualifying as taro lands, amends Chapter 171 by establishing taro lands as a new class of public land in intensive agricultural use, and prohibiting the reclassification of this land. The Department of Agriculture supports the intent of this measure that seeks to support, protect, and return historic taro lands to use, but defers to the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

We note there may be inconsistencies in the bill as Section 1 references taro lands within the State's public conservation districts, however, in Section 2 of the bill this connection between taro lands within the conservation districts does not seem to be made clear.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony.



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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Mary Lacques	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I am submitting testimony in strong support of SB774 because I feel it is vitally important that within the Department of Land and Natural Resources a fourth class of state agricultural land is created specifically for the protection of taro lands which would streamline the leasing process for present and future generations of taro farmers. Knowing that Hawaii was food self sufficient ten decades ago, I find it ludicrous that Hawaii imports fifty percent of the taro that is consumed today. Increasing food self sufficiency, especially with a crop that ensures high productivity and carries the incomparable cultural significance as taro, is a key component of the Hawai'i 2050 Sustainability Plan which defines sustainability as: respecting the culture, character, beauty and history of Hawaiian communities; striking a balance among economic, social and community and environmental priorities and meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. I am not a farmer but am a strong supporter of farmers that are dedicated to growing the food that sustains us in such geographically and politically challenging conditions. Mahalo for supporting SB774 which will safeguard and benefit future generations.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Megan Blazak	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Dear Chair Senator Thielen, Vice Chair Galuteria and Members of the Committee, Please support SB774. Kalo is a significant crop ecologically, culturally and for the sustenance of Hawaii's people. The integrity of Kalo lands should be preserved so future generations can continue the practices of their ancestors. Kalo is integral to supporting local food self-sufficiency, and the cultivation of Kalo keeps our watersheds clean and wetlands pristine. Please support SB774. Mahalo for your attention. Best, Megan Blazak Hilo, HI Senate District 2

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Nancy Jones	Hydroponics Alternatives LLC	Support	No

Comments: We submit this testimony supporting SB774 to establish a classification and inventory system for taro lands under the Dept. of Land and Natural Resources. As farmers in Wai`anae, we definitely see the value of identifying those lands, currently farming taro or those possessing the ideal characteristics for producing this staple food of the Hawaiian diet. Naturally, such a system would not exist without proper funding. So, we fully support this bill's intention to appropriate funds to the board of land and natural resources for this purpose of identifying and classifying taro lands. For this reason, we respectfully urge you to support SB774 and pass it out of your committee. Mahalo for this opportunity to present comments supporting this measure.

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**Date:** Friday, January 30, 2015 7:12:04 AM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Nancy Redfeather	Individual	Support	No

Comments: In order for taro to be grown in the quantities we need for institutional purchasing taro lands need to be protected by law.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Paul Towers	PAN	Support	No

Comments: Dear Committee Members, On behalf of PAN North America, and our 8500 members throughout Hawai'i, we are writing in support of SB774. PAN works on behalf of small-scale farmers to ensure their continued success and prosperity, and supports indigenous community efforts to grow the marketplace for healthy food and farming products, especially traditional foods. In particular, this legislation affirms the state's commitment to growing taro and sourcing kalo locally, which is not only good for local economies, but also generating new jobs. SB774 also ensures farming lands are put to the best use possible, providing healthy food to people of all economic backgrounds. Given the importance of this legislation, we respectfully ask for your support. Mahalo, Paul Towers Organizing & Media Director

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**TESTIMONY**  
**SB774 Relating to the Protection of Taro**  
before the Senate Committees on  
Agriculture/Water and Land/Hawaiian Affairs  
Monday, 2 February 2015, Rm 224 3:15PM

*Board of Directors*

Ana Zir, President

Michelle Cockett, VP

Deborah Ward, Secretary

Juenlee Brown, Treasurer

*Project Coordinator*

Penny Levin

Aloha Honorable Chairs and Committee Members;

E kūpaku ka 'āina – the Hawai'i Land Restoration Institute (EKKA) is in strong support of SB774.

EKKA is a Maui-based, registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is *bringing severely degraded lands back to places of ecological health and abundance*. We are dedicated to fostering an economy of abundance through the critical business of land restoration and the art of traditional cultural practice. We do so by assisting agencies, organizations, landowners and communities to develop practical skills and affordable strategies for degraded lands and native ecosystems recovery and agriculture fit to the land - because if the 'āina is not well, neither are we.

Along with habitat restoration, EKKA has been engaged in taro lands revitalization projects and the recovery of the Hawaiian kalo varieties in partnership with many individuals and organizations since its formation in 2004. During the course of our work, we have given away thousands of huli to new taro farmers and families ready to grow kalo on a broader scale than their backyards. We have also observed the stone walls, terraces and 'auwai of numerous ancient lo'i kalo sites still present on state lands throughout the islands, particularly on the Island of Maui; many well-suited to rehabilitation.

In the last several years, we have provided mentorship for interns, students and individuals whose interest is in learning how to grow kalo, from the building of lo'i to caring for the soil, from planting to harvest to plate. Our challenge has been to connect these future growers to affordable lands where they can begin their own practice as new farmers. In the last two years, at least a dozen individuals and families have become successful members of the taro farming community in Maui; most under the age of 35, half the age of the average farmer in Hawai'i.

Senate bill 774 provides the next generation with the opportunity to grow taro in the communities they live by creating a fourth class of agricultural land use specifically for wetland taro lands found within the jurisdiction of the state public lands. Based on our own observations, historic record, and the modeling of Ladefoged and Gon (2009, 2010), we note the total acreage of wetland taro lands that might be found on public lands will likely remain small, between 5-7,000 acres. A significant number of these sites are found in mid-elevation uplands, dominated by invasive species and zoned as Conservation or Forest Reserve. As

the loss of ancient lo'i kalo increases on private lands, it is essential that these rare sites retain their fourth class taro lands status.

As the first, and most intensely productive, agricultural crop in Hawai'i, kalo supported a thriving population. In the late 1800's, and well after significant declines in cultivation had occurred, wetland taro lands were still estimated at 30,000 acres and described as some of the richest food producing lands in the islands. This is not much different than a predicted need for taro lands as part of statewide food security efforts, today. Yet, we currently farm just 1.7 percent of the acreage necessary to fulfill those needs.

Our dependence on imported foods (85%), including 30 percent of taro consumed in the state, demands that we consider the implications of this lack of food security in the face of events that might sever our import streams, interisland and intra-island food distribution networks. It can happen in an instant. An earthquake, hurricane, tsunami or an act of war could cut our line. At this level, the issue of protecting taro lands becomes one of homeland security and disaster planning. We urge the legislature to actively support the necessary steps that will increase our food security and capacity to create local food abundance.

Global warming is a second and undeniable factor in future food security planning in Hawai'i. Even at the lowest projected levels (1-2 meters), sea-level rise will have significant impact on our most vulnerable low-land taro growing places. We are beginning to plan for climate change impacts in conservation but not in agriculture, nor for the continuity of cultural practice. This bill provides us with a collective opportunity to implement pro-active solutions to ecological changes we know are coming.

For quite some time, we have been making decisions based on old data sets and industry models, conventional practices, and what a retiring generation of farmers and legislators believed is the trend in agriculture. The landscape is shifting from large farms to small, to a growing generation of subsistence growers, and Hawaiian traditions are calling thousands of students back to the lo'i. It is no longer our choice. Our young farmers, our keiki and mo'opuna are telling us to preserve these lands for them for *their* future.

We encourage the members of the Committees on Agriculture, Water and Land, and Hawaiian Affairs to vote YES on SB774!

Mahalo,



Penny Levin  
Project Coordinator



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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
penny levin	E kupaku ka aina	Support	No

Comments:

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Puanani Rogers	Ho`okipa Network - Kauai	Support	No

Comments: My name is Puanani Rogers, a kupuna that was born, raised and still lives in the ahupua`a o Kealia on the mokupuni o Kauai. I testify in strong support of this measure to locate and designate all lands that are suitable for the propagation of our sacred food...kalo! I believe this should have been done a long time ago. I support this because it gives me hope that I may continue to enjoy eating kalo and poi for the rest of my life, my ohana as well. Please pass this bill. Mahalo!

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
robyn smith	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha, I am a member of Hawaii Farmers Union United and support this bill because I know it helps my farming brothers and sisters. It is very important to save this heratige crop and this bill is a step in the right direction.

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/30/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Samuel K. Kapoi	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Aloha! I've traced back 8 generations on paper of my Kalo Farming 'Ohana in Wai'anae, O'ahu. I yearn and pursue to return to the 300 acres of 'Aina that once was farmed in Wai'anae valley. Please protect these Taro Lands that is proposed in this bill. Mahalo.

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**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB774 on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM  
**Date:** Saturday, January 31, 2015 10:36:00 AM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/31/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Scott Crawford	Kipahulu Ohana, Inc.	Support	No

Comments: For the last 20 years, Kipahulu Ohana has operated Kapahu Living Farm, a traditional wetland taro farm, through a partnership with Haleakala National Park. We provide educational and community groups an opportunity to experience and learn about taro farming hands-on, and we provide poi and other traditional, nutritional foods for the local community. While Kapahu is one ancient terraced area that has been brought back into active cultivation, in Kipahulu and other areas of East Maui there are extensive old lo'i systems along nearly every stream. These are the legacy of the ancestors of this land. Many of these areas have the potential to be reopened in the future, as families return to their traditional homelands and more and more people seek a self-sufficient lifestyle based on the sophisticated agricultural system developed by the people of old, adapted to the modern needs and technologies. It is critical that these precious lands, with ancient agricultural systems still more or less intact, be preserved for future generations. This bill would help do that. The Kipahulu Ohana urges your support for this important measure.

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**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB774 on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM  
**Date:** Thursday, January 29, 2015 10:26:02 PM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 1/29/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Strongly Support! Mahalo for all of the great bills protecting 'real farmers' this year! I'm impressed.

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**Cc:** [legechair@gmail.com](mailto:legechair@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Submitted testimony for SB774 on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM  
**Date:** Sunday, February 01, 2015 8:47:27 PM

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Simon Russell	Hawaii Farmers Union United	Support	No

Comments: Aloha Kakou, We at the Hawaii Farmers Union United feel that when Taro is protected, and we are providing for our needs, it will be a good sign for all food producers throughout the state as to our government's willingness to truly have food security in Hawaii Nei. The fact that we import massive quantities of taro every year, putting our kalo producers at risk of invasive diseases, as well as having large amounts of cheap foreign product on the market is problematic, to put it mildly. Mahalo to the good people on the Taro Security and Purity Task Force, and mahalo to everyone who supports this measure. Me ka ha'aha'a, Simon Russell HFUU Vice President and Legislative Committee Chairman (808) 269 8162

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To: Senators

From: Vince Dodge, `Ai Pohaku- The Stone Eaters  
86-557 Hakalina Road  
Wai`anae, Hawaii 96792  
c. 808 478-6492  
[aipohaku@hotmail.com](mailto:aipohaku@hotmail.com)

Re: **SB 774**

**February 1, 2015**

**Aloha mai kakou Senators,**

**Please support SB774. I am a former part-time taro farmer, and a business man. The simple action proposed by SB774 will preserve for present and future generations land formerly in wetland- lo`i taro cultivation, now under State control. Taro- kalo and poi are amazing foods that are currently making a phenomenal comeback as a hand pounded staple. Good starchy taro and poi are diabetic friendly and poi has been used to raise infants who could not eat other foods. For the past 14 years I have been actively exposing and training our Westside youth to become growers of kalo. We/they need `aina to grow kalo on, as well as support to be successful farmers.**

**By passing SB774 you will be ensuring that such lo`i lands will be still there for present and future generations of kalo farmers.**

**Please support our youth, our future to provide our communities with food by passing SB774.**

**Aloha nui!**

**Vince Kana`i Dodge**



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**Cc:** [aipohaku@hotmail.com](mailto:aipohaku@hotmail.com)  
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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/1/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Vince Kana`i Dodge	`Ai Pohaku	Support	No

Comments:

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**SB774**

Submitted on: 2/2/2015

Testimony for WTL/AGL/HWN on Feb 2, 2015 15:15PM in Conference Room 224

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Walter Ritte	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I am in strong support of this important bill. Taro is an important traditional crop that needs and deserves protections and incentives.

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