
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 comprises 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.

17 Soil and water conservation districts have worked to
18 improve Hawaii's environment and economy through major projects



1 over the past sixty years; collaborative efforts with partners
2 and government agencies have brought millions of dollars to
3 Hawaii to improve farm practices, reduce erosion, improve ocean
4 and drinking water quality, fight invasive species, improve
5 public safety, protect property, conserve water, and strengthen
6 the economy. The soil and water conservation districts also
7 provide educational and community support for conservation
8 awareness. The districts participate in resource conservation
9 and development projects and statewide high school programs.
10 The districts also introduce conservation principles in
11 elementary schools.

12 Additionally, soil and water conservation districts assist
13 with reviewing each county's grading permits and conservation
14 plans. County grading permit reviews and conservation plans are
15 critical to preserve the environment, stimulate the economy, and
16 maintain individual livelihoods. The demand and accompanying
17 workload of the conservation districts have increased
18 dramatically with population growth and land use changes. The
19 districts receive hundreds of requests for conservation plans
20 and county grading permit reviews each year. As a result,
21 districts are currently struggling to keep pace with the demand,



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

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



1 not be educated by soil and water conservation district staff on
2 conservation measures or advised to pursue environmental
3 stewardship as a core value while seeking economic viability.

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

7 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the special land
8 and development fund the sum of \$450,000 or so much thereof as
9 may be necessary for fiscal year 2017-2018 for the operational
10 expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii association of
11 conservation districts.

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

14 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2017.



Report Title:

Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts; Appropriation

Description:

Makes an appropriation from the special land and development fund to the Department of Land and Natural Resources for the operational expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts. (CD1)

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