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

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**Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND**

**Friday, February 3, 2017
9:00 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 479**

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR HIKER SAFETY AND PREPAREDNESS

House Bill 479 proposes to appropriate funds to support the establishment of a public awareness campaign to educate the public about hiker safety and preparedness. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

The Department recognizes the need for a stronger effort in the form of a campaign to educate trail users about hiking safety. According to the review of rescue data from the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD), there has been an increase in mountain rescues from the year 2006 to 2016. Three hundred and fifty mountain rescues were recorded last year, which is almost three times the amount of documented rescues per year prior to 2006. In addition, over the last 10 years, the amount of annual rescues has noticeably increased over previous years by 10% to 20% per year. If this trend continues, it is projected that the number of rescues will potentially double in the next eight years or less. That's the equivalent of two rescues a day. If appropriated, a Hiking Safety Campaign would focus on stopping this trend.

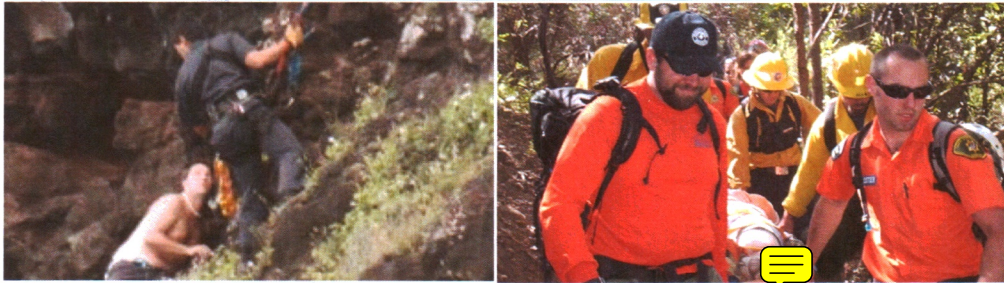
It is no secret that much of the information regarding trails currently found on the internet is wrong and/or misleading and such information can easily put hikers in harm's way. The Department sees this as one of the biggest problems and challenges when trying to address hiking safety. Therefore, finding ways to mitigate this problem or warning people about it would be one of the main objectives of the campaign, if established.

Although the focus of the proposed campaign would be on hiking safety, the Department also recognizes an additional need for hiker etiquette education and outreach. On Oahu in particular, some trails in small, quiet residential neighborhoods have gained immense popularity, thus

resulting in a dramatic increase in trail head problems caused by naive or disrespectful trail users. Reports received from residents include loud noise and talking during the late hours of the night or early morning, blatant littering, tracking mud on homeowner lawns and illegal parking, such as blocking residential driveways and trash pick-ups. The Department feels strongly that the hiking safety message is clearly the main objective of the campaign. However, hiker etiquette should also be recognized and included within such a campaign.

Potential campaign objectives and tasks include: (1) Conduct surveys to identify target audience and develop potential strategies to better educate the public about hiking safety; (2) Identify and implement ways to counter misleading information about trails found on the internet and social media; (3) Use HFD rescue data to implement a higher level of risk management at identified rescue hot spots, identify target audience and identify best time of the year to advocate for hiking safety; (4) Create television and radio commercials advocating for hiking safety; (5) Work with visitor industry constituents, such as airlines and hotels to create and promote hiking safety, i.e. in flight/room safety videos, activity desk education, etc.; (6) Further expand and enhance existing hiking safety program, including the promotion and distribution of the "Hiking Safety in Hawaii" brochure; and (7) Expand efforts to provide safety presentations to public organizations, such as the military and schools.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Hiker Safety and Preparedness

State of Hawai'i

MOUNTAIN RESCUES INCREASE WITH GREATER OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL INTEREST

Promoting Safe Hiking and Preparedness on Hawai'i Trails

Benefits of Safer Hiking and Being Better Prepared

- **Risk Mitigation** – Trail visitors will know what challenges they may encounter in outdoor environments
- **Community Respect** – Improved relations between trail users and trailhead communities
- **Cultural Awareness** – An increased appreciation of the pathways that sustained old Hawai'i
- **Healthy Living** – Promoting healthy and inexpensive venues for exercise
- **Green Thinking** – Safely appreciating Hawai'i's natural beauty
- **Safer Tourism** – Encouraging visitors to travel with safe and eco-friendly businesses

Partnership Opportunities

Successfully implementing effective safety strategies requires the collaboration of government, business, and resident entities. Help is needed to expand efforts to provide accurate information to public organizations, implement ways to counter misleading information on the internet and social media, and create media material advocating for hiking safety among other campaign tasks.

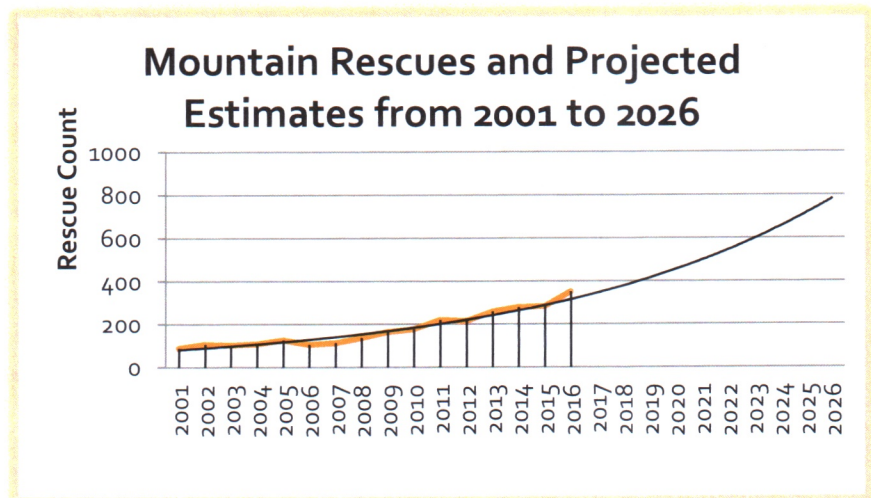
The Goal: Educate the public about hiker safety, preparedness, and etiquette

Other Potential Campaign Tasks

- Identify and target at-risk audiences
- Counter misleading trail information on the internet and social media
- Implement better risk management at identified rescue hot spots
- Advocate for hiking safety on television and radio
- Work with visitor industry constituents such as the Hawaii Tourism Authority, airlines, and hotels
- Expand efforts to provide safety presentation to public organizations like the military and schools

Example Project: Hiking Safely in Hawai'i Brochure

Na Ala Hele Trails and Access System, DOFAW updated and distributed the *Hiking Safely in Hawai'i* brochure in November 2016. Content on the brochure includes user group etiquette, pet owner information, and planning tips. The brochure also links readers to the Na Ala Hele, official trails website, and reliable weather resources. With added support and resources, it is hoped that brochure distribution can be expanded to major tourist venues and Hawai'i airports.



Mountain rescues are increasing with the growing popularity of outdoor recreation. If this trend continues, the number of annual rescues will double by 2024.



Hiker killed after falling from Kaaawa trail remembered as outgoing, athletic

Published: Wednesday, December 14th 2016, 6:27 pm HST
 Updated: Friday, December 16th 2016, 1:27 pm HST
 By Chelsea Davis, Reporter CONNECT



NEW AT 10
FRIENDS REMEMBER KAISHA CHU
 OAHU WOMAN DIED IN HIKING ACCIDENT



COLIN SZARMES

Hiker Rescued After Falling Down Cliff



by: Beth Hilmyer
 (KHNL) - He set out yesterday on what would be the hike of his life. Instead, it nearly cost him his life.

This afternoon firefighters rescued an injured hiker who spent the night stranded after falling down a cliff.

Rescuers feared finding the hiker would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.



22-year-old Dylan Sanchez started at Aina Haina trailhead and planned to hike miles over the Koolau's ending at the Maunawili trail. However, he never made it.

Captain Gary Lum of the Honolulu Fire Department says the last contact Sanchez made was around 4:30 yesterday afternoon. An then, there was no contact for 24 hours.



Rescue crews say from the air, they did not know where to look. Fortunately, the stranded hiker made a fire and waved a blue tarp at the passing rescue chopper.

Rescue worker, Corey Lau says, "He was kinda tucked in pretty tight and the aircraft pilot did a good job getting us into the area. Sanchez's mother says "We are so relieved they found him so relieved these guys are great." His father even expressed his gratitude saying, "They were willing to endanger their own lives to save our son's life."

Hiker dies from fall from Olomana trail

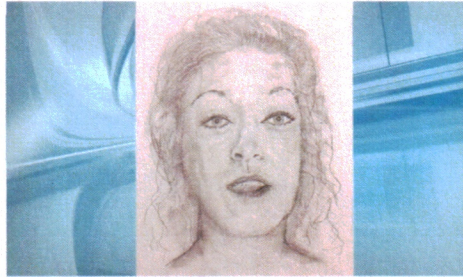
By Web Staff
 Published: June 27, 2015, 2:13 pm | Updated: June 19, 2015, 4:34 pm



6:00
DEADLY FALL FROM OLOMANA TRAIL
 MAUNAWILI

Police identify body found in waters off Na Pali Coast

By Web Staff
 Published: June 11, 2015, 4:11 pm | Updated: June 11, 2015, 4:11 pm

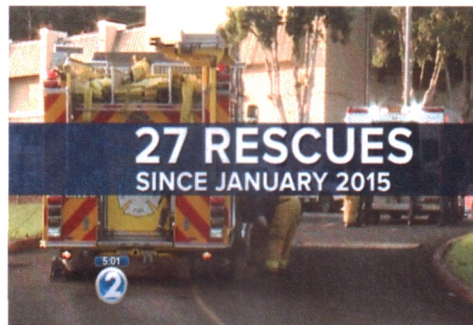


Hiker seriously injured in fall from Kalihi Valley waterfall



Extremely dangerous addition draws thrillseek to forbidden Haiku Stairs

By Briggette Namata
 Published: June 11, 2015, 4:11 pm | Updated: June 11, 2015, 4:11 pm



Woman falls to her death while hiking off-limit trail

MEGAN BARRETO, AOL.COM
 April 2015



MOUNTAIN RESCUES

FIRST 3 MONTHS

- 2012 - 14
- 2013 - 26
- 2014 - 35
- 2015 - 50

5:59

Warning for owners, hiking without precautions can be deadly for dogs

By Briggette Namata
 Published: June 11, 2015, 4:11 pm | Updated: June 11, 2015, 4:11 pm

DOG HEAT EXHAUSTION

15 - 20 deaths each year

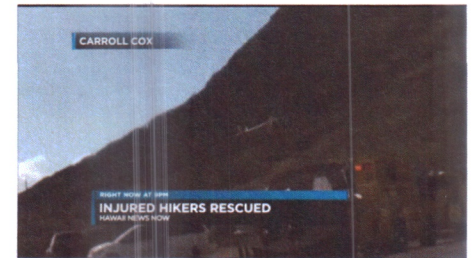
Makapuu, Lanikai pillboxes

5:59



Mother and toddler injured in hiking accident at Kaena Point

Published: Saturday, June 25th 2016, 5:38 pm HST
 Updated: Saturday, June 25th 2016, 9:24 pm HST
 By HNN Staff CONNECT



TESTIMONY

Rep. Ryan I. Yamane, Chair

Rep. Sam Satoru Kong, Vice Chair

House Committee on Water and Land

Re: H.B. 479, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR HIKER SAFETY AND PREPAREDNESS

Hearing date: February 3, 2017, 9:00 a.m.

I am writing **in strong support of H.B. 479**. I am a volunteer outings leader for Sierra Club, O'ahu Group submitting testimony as a private individual. Each time I go hiking, I encounter poorly prepared, uninformed hikers who start hiking late in the day, without water, and/or unaware of the potential for getting lost or injured on O'ahu's hiking trails. Each week, I see the Honolulu Fire Department helicopter headed to another trail to rescue a hiker who overestimated his or her abilities or failed to understand the risks. There is a desperate need to inform both locals and visitors of the hazards of hiking in our islands. It's not enough to post signs or make brochures; we need to engage with hikers on social media, where most of them learn about hikes and receive mistaken impressions about trail conditions. Outreach is also needed to the visitor industry, military bases, and schools. H.B. 479 will support critically needed efforts to help hikers assess risks and be prepared.

Please support H.B. 479.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Gwen Sinclair

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kong2 - Crystal

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, January 31, 2017 9:54 PM
To: waltestimony
Cc: jamesjtz@aol.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for HB479 on Feb 3, 2017 09:00AM

HB479

Submitted on: 1/31/2017

Testimony for WAL on Feb 3, 2017 09:00AM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
James Gauer	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I find this bill especially appropriate now that people are using geocaches and various color markers and flagging tapes to mark their own paths diverting from official trails. This is dangerous because hikers unaware can become lost.

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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