
HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND HAWAII CATTLEMEN'S COUNCIL, INC., TO FORM A STATE PASTURE AND FOREST LANDS TASK FORCE AND TO INCLUDE ANY ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS.

1 WHEREAS, the proper management of the State's agricultural
2 lands is critically important to the health and welfare of the
3 residents of Hawaii; and
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5 WHEREAS, there are competing measures in the Regular
6 Session of 2020 relating to the management of the State's
7 agricultural lands by the Department of Land and Natural
8 Resources (DLNR) and Department of Agriculture (DOA); and
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10 WHEREAS, House Bill No. 2358, and its companion measure
11 Senate Bill No. 2914, represents the position of DLNR, while the
12 position of DOA and the cattle ranchers is presented by House
13 Bill No. 2035, its companion measure Senate Bill No. 2415, and
14 House Bill No. 2577, and its companion measure Senate Bill No.
15 2812, regarding implementation of Act 90, Session Laws of Hawaii
16 2003 (Act 90), relating to the issue of transferring a large
17 number of agricultural parcels then under DLNR's control to DOA;
18 and
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20 WHEREAS, from one viewpoint, this body is tasked with
21 deciding which state agency is best suited to manage lands
22 currently being used for the production of beef cattle, which
23 ostensibly was resolved by the enactment of Act 90 in 2003; and
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25 WHEREAS, since 2003, a different perspective has evolved
26 where the discussion has now shifted, in part, to what is the
27 best use of these lands from the standpoint of public purpose in
28 a time where global warming and climate change are recognized as
29 an existential challenge to the Earth; and



1 WHEREAS, the State should study and understand its island
2 history over the last three hundred or so years and align that
3 understanding with the new challenges of climate change; and
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5 WHEREAS, the ecological system of the Hawaiian islands
6 evolved in the absence of human beings until the last millennium
7 and was largely shaped by the forests of the islands; and
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9 WHEREAS, the Hawaiian islands' ecological system, including
10 the forests, has been tremendously damaged and degraded over the
11 last three centuries; and
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13 WHEREAS, prior to Western contact, the indigenous Hawaiian
14 culture established an isolated but ecologically sensitive
15 relationship with the land and waters of Hawaii that left the
16 native forests largely intact; and
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18 WHEREAS, subsequent to Western contact and the imposition
19 of an exploitative Western agricultural system involving
20 clearing of vast tracts of the forest for plantations of
21 primarily sugar cane and pineapple, the native forests
22 flourished; and
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24 WHEREAS, the unique isolation of the Hawaiian archipelago
25 required the islands to produce most of its own food resources,
26 including meat protein, predominantly from imported ungulates,
27 such as cattle, domestic sheep, and goats; and
28

29 WHEREAS, in the modern world with huge and speedy ships,
30 airplanes, refrigerated containers, and a sophisticated
31 transport system, Hawaii obtains most of its food, including
32 most of its beef, from outside its borders; and
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34 WHEREAS, while the sugar cane and pineapple plantations are
35 largely gone, the cherished paniolo beef cattle ranching culture
36 has persisted; and
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38 WHEREAS, the State should consider the history of the
39 destruction of the indigenous culture and ecology by the imposed
40 Western practices; and
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1 WHEREAS, in 1990, the book entitled *Alteration of Native*
2 *Hawaiian Vegetation*, found that: "Zoning and tax laws have
3 contributed to the conversion of native vegetation to ranchland
4 in Hawaii. Much biologically important forest and shrubland was
5 zoned Agricultural before its true value was recognized. If
6 privately owned, even Conservation-zoned forests are not immune
7 to development for ranches and other agricultural uses"; and
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9 WHEREAS, that book further stated that, "The tax laws in
10 Hawai'i encourage the clearing of forest and conversion to
11 cattle grazing by assessing such "low-grade pasture" at a lower
12 value than uncleared forest, so clearing forests may result in
13 lower taxes, increased real estate values and salability"; and
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15 WHEREAS, the book also pointed out that continued, "Much
16 upper-elevation rangeland was essentially native forest when
17 ranching commenced. As late as the 1960s nearly one-third of
18 the State's grazing land was actually forest, and State forest
19 land was considered by the Division of Forestry to have great
20 potential for live-stock production in a multiple-use approach
21 to forest resources"; and
22

23 WHEREAS, "State lands have been heavily impacted by cattle
24 even though they were included in the State Forest Reserve
25 System. Although fencing of reserves was an important element
26 in the protection of watersheds in the first few decades of the
27 1900s, by mid-century many fences separating reserves from
28 ranches and grazing lands had been allowed to deteriorate, and
29 little new fencing was undertaken. The subsequent ingress of
30 cattle and other alien animals has resulted in the degradation
31 of native vegetation and the loss of watershed values in many
32 forest reserves"; and
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34 WHEREAS, "The ability of cattle (whether feral or domestic)
35 to degrade vegetation and reduce native forest to grassland
36 pastures was recognized soon after large-scale ranching began
37 during the last century"; and
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39 WHEREAS, according to *Alteration of Native Hawaiian*
40 *Vegetation*, "the role of cattle in opening up native forests and
41 reducing their value as watershed was recognized and decried by



1 a number of foresters in the early decades of the 20th century.
 2 Judd (1927) estimated that only 25 [percent] of the Hawaiian
 3 Island was still covered by forest in the late 1920's, a small
 4 remnant of the original distribution before cattle"; and

5
 6 WHEREAS, there has been a resurgence of energy and concern
 7 from Native Hawaiians about the restoration of lands and waters
 8 degraded or disrupted by the Western agriculture and economic
 9 customs imposed upon them; and

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 11 WHEREAS, the new recognition of the effects of climate
 12 change mandates a reevaluation of the best public purpose for
 13 the lands and waters of Hawaii; and

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 15 WHEREAS, the 2003 joint committee report from the Committee
 16 on Agriculture and Committee on Water, Land Use, and Hawaiian
 17 Affairs regarding Senate Bill No. 1034, enacted as Act 90,
 18 stated "[y]our Committees note that serious concerns were raised
 19 regarding the proceeds from DLNR's leases on ceded lands.
 20 Currently, 20 percent of such proceeds are transferred to the
 21 Office of Hawaiian Affairs for the betterment of the conditions
 22 of native Hawaiians. However, with the transfer of agricultural
 23 ceded lands to DOA and the potential of lower lease rents levied
 24 by DOA, the funding for OHA may be reduced. Your Committees
 25 recognize this potential problem and support future legislative
 26 efforts to address this issue"; and

27
 28 WHEREAS, most of the lands proposed to be transferred from
 29 DLNR to DOA are in fact ceded lands, and the history of DOA
 30 leases, including thirty-day revocable leases, support the
 31 ongoing concern that the Office of Hawaiian Affairs will not
 32 receive compensation commensurate with the value of the lands
 33 leased; and

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 35 WHEREAS, the proposed transfer from DLNR to DOA of the
 36 subject lands is justified as it proposes to enhance the State's
 37 food supply; and

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 39 WHEREAS, since the enactment of Act 90 in 2003, more and
 40 more ranches have become cow-calf operations that ship most of



1 their calves to the mainland, which ultimately provides little
2 food to the State; and

3
4 WHEREAS, although beef cattle is the focus of the modern
5 livestock industry in Hawaii, domestic sheep ranching was
6 formerly important; and

7
8 WHEREAS, commercial domestic sheep production began in the
9 Hawaiian islands in the 1840s and 1850s and peaked in 1884 with
10 121,000 animals; and

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12 WHEREAS, while domestic sheep may also be destructive if
13 not managed and rotated, they are less likely to damage
14 established trees compared to cattle or goats; and

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16 WHEREAS, domestic sheep can be finished on grass of even
17 poor quality and, therefore, need not be shipped to the
18 continental United States for finishing, thereby greatly
19 contributing to the food supply of Hawaii; and

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21 WHEREAS, domestic sheep would be more compatible with
22 reforestation of the lands under consideration for transfer by
23 DLNR to DOA, while still providing a substantial contribution to
24 the local food supply; and

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26 WHEREAS, the dairy industry of Hawaii was once robust due
27 to Hawaii's isolation and provided all the milk needs of the
28 State; however, the local dairy industry has largely
29 disappeared; and

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31 WHEREAS, even as the world has recognized the importance of
32 forests as treasure houses of species diversity, forest
33 destruction has only accelerated in places such as the Amazon
34 and in Indonesia; and

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36 WHEREAS, the environmental and economic conditions leading
37 to prioritizing ranching on lands in the State should be re-
38 evaluated since it has been found that the two-lined spittle bug
39 and invasion of weeds reduce the productivity of these lands as
40 pasture; and

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1 WHEREAS, the latest challenge to Hawaii's forests is rapid
2 ohia death which threatens the predominant native forest trees
3 of the State; and
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5 WHEREAS, DLNR supports House Bill No. 2358, and its
6 companion measure Senate Bill No. 2914 (2020), which give DLNR
7 greater flexibility to deal with pasture leases by extending
8 such leases and allowing DLNR to issue new leases on lands
9 already in use as pasture; and
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11 WHEREAS, those measures also allow DLNR to provide
12 favorable rates to ranchers, who protect public trust natural
13 and cultural resources; and
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15 WHEREAS, the pasture lessees are in support of an alternate
16 measure, Senate Bill No. 2812 (2020), which, if enacted, would
17 mandate the transfer of most of DLNR's pasture lands to DOA; and
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19 WHEREAS, this body finds that natural resource protection
20 and local food production are both important to the State's
21 economic welfare; now, therefore,
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23 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
24 Thirtieth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of
25 2020, that the Department of Land and Natural Resources,
26 Department of Agriculture, and Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.,
27 are urged to form a State Pasture and Forest Lands Task Force
28 and to include any additional stakeholders, in its discussions;
29 and
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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include in its
32 discussions the following:
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- 34 (1) A representative of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs;
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- 36 (2) Dean of the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human
37 Resources of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, or the
38 Dean's designees;
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- 1 (3) Dean of the College of Forestry, Agriculture and
2 Natural Resources Management of the University of
3 Hawaii, or the Dean's designees;
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- 5 (4) A representative of the Department of Land and Natural
6 Resource's Na Ala Hele Trails System;
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- 8 (5) A representative of the Hawai'i Association of
9 Watershed Partnerships;
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- 11 (6) A representative of the State Game Management Advisory
12 Commission;
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- 14 (7) A representative of the Hawaii Forest Industry
15 Association;
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- 17 (8) A representative of the Hawaii Greenhouse Gas
18 Sequestration Task Force; and
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- 20 (9) Any other stakeholders, whose participation is
21 important, as unanimously agreed upon by the
22 Department of Land and Natural Resources, Department
23 of Agriculture, and Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.;

24
25 to address the competing demands for the use and stewardship of
26 state pasture lands; and
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28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Pasture and Forest
29 Lands Task Force meet at least monthly to:

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- 31 (1) Identify the public benefits of lands in use as
32 pasture for local food production and protection of
33 natural and cultural public trust resources;
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- 35 (2) Discuss alternative views on the best plan for
36 managing state pasture lands;
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- 38 (3) Work collaboratively to resolve differences of opinion
39 regarding such management;
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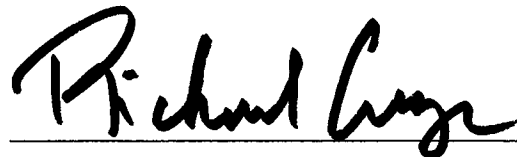
1 (4) Identify possible policy solutions that the Task Force
 2 could endorse regarding appraisals of rent for pasture
 3 leases, lease extensions, new leases, and natural
 4 resource protection; and
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6 (5) Address any related issues the Task Force may
 7 identify; and
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9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Pasture and Forest
 10 Lands Task Force submit an annual report on its findings and
 11 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
 12 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
 13 each regular session, commencing with the Regular Session of
 14 2021; and
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
 17 Resolution be transmitted to Chairperson of the Board of Land
 18 and Natural Resources; Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture;
 19 Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian
 20 Affairs; Dean of the College of Forestry, Agriculture and
 21 Natural Resources Management of the University of Hawaii;
 22 Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry
 23 and Wildlife, Na Ala Hele Trails System; Chairperson of the
 24 Hawai'i Association of Watershed Partnerships; Chairperson of the
 25 State Game Management Advisory Commission; President of the
 26 Hawaii Forest Industry Association; Chairperson of the Hawaii
 27 Greenhouse Gas Sequestration Task Force; and President of the
 28 Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.
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OFFERED BY:



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