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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 Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND**

**Monday, March 18, 2019
1:15 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1368, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
OPERATING BUDGET**

House Bill 1368, House Draft 1 proposes to make appropriations for the Fiscal Biennium 2019-2021 operating budget of the Department of Land and Natural Resources' (Department) LNR407 Natural Area Reserves and Watershed Management Program. **The Department supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

The House Draft 1 includes additional general funds to be used for removal of the hooved animals remaining within recently constructed fence units. The longer these non-native animals remain, the more they reproduce and the cost and duration of removal multiplies. These animals damage the forest by eating and uprooting plants, spreading diseases and weeds, preying on native birds, and causing erosion. This request will improve the health of these forests so they will be more resilient to threats such as climate change and diseases like Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death (ROD). Indeed, preliminary studies are finding significantly fewer dead 'Ōhi'a trees in areas fenced from hooved animals in ROD hotspots on Hawai'i Island. A healthy forest improves storage and purification of fresh water, reduces flooding and sedimentation of reefs, stores greenhouse gases, harbors plants and animals sacred to Hawaiian culture, and provides many other benefits to residents and visitors.

The special fund ceiling increase for the Natural Area Reserve Fund (S342) would allow the expenditure of funds gained by revenue generation from parking fees at the 'Āhihi Kina'u Natural Area Reserve. This self-sustaining funding source is an innovative way to fund maintenance and

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

conservation of the Reserve – home to spectacular coral reefs, rare plants and wildlife, unique anchialine pools, and archeological sites.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i
Supporting HB 1368 HD1 Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Water and Land
Monday, March 18, 2019, 1:15PM, Room 229

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 preserves and work in over 30 coastal communities to help protect the near-shore reefs, waters and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands. We forge partnership with government, private parties and communities to protect forests and coral reefs for their ecological values and the many benefits they provide to people.

The Nature Conservancy supports HB 1368 HD1, which would provide funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources' forest and watershed management programs. State funds are leveraged at least one-to-one with matching funds from county, federal and private sources to help to ensure healthy, managed natural resources that are critical for our isolated island chains.

Easily available fresh water is not a limitless resource here in the middle of the Pacific. Several locations in the state have experienced prolonged drought in recent years. Science indicates that the likely effects of climate change in Hawai'i will include:

- More frequent and more severe storms that can increase runoff and siltation; but
- Overall, less rainfall in many locations and therefore less fresh water; and
- Higher temperatures that affect watershed health and can be beneficial to pests.

Hawai'i is already exhibiting telltale signs of climate change. UH's Rainfall Atlas catalogues a century of declining rainfall and fewer trade wind days. Summer temperature records have been broken across the state and a record number of storms have taken aim at Hawai'i over the last few years.

In response to these conditions, we must plan and implement mitigative and adaptive measures to ensure the resilience of our natural and human systems. Healthy Hawaiian forests that are not overrun by invasive species act like a sponge, collecting rain and moisture, slowly delivering fresh water into streams and aquifers, absorbing greenhouse gases, and reducing runoff and siltation into near shore waters during storm events.

Thank you for your support of this measure.