

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



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

POST OFFICE BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**Testimony of  
SUZANNE D. CASE  
Chairperson**

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

**Thursday, February 18, 2021  
8:30 AM**

**State Capitol, Via Videoconference, Conference Room 430**

**In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 1274  
RELATING TO SPORT FISH**

House Bill 1274 proposes to require the Department of Agriculture (HDOA) to allow for the permitted importation of northern largemouth bass and butterfly peacock bass into Hawai'i. Additionally, House Bill 1274 proposes to require the Division of Aquatic Resources of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to establish a pilot project to restock the Wahiawā public fishing area with northern largemouth bass, butterfly peacock bass, or both. **The Department appreciates the intent of this measure and offers the following comments.**

Wahiawā public fishing area is an important sport fishery. The Department has supported and will continue to support responsible freshwater recreational fishing for introduced target species including the northern largemouth bass and butterfly peacock bass. Wahiawā is also an artificial reservoir, thus the Department approaches management differently at this reservoir compared to natural water bodies. Fishing opportunities have declined in recent years at Wahiawā and stakeholders, scientist, and managers have identified several factors that may have contributed to this decline. These factors include lowering of the reservoir due to safety reasons, loss of shoreline habitat, undesirable introduced species preying on target species, limited prey or food for target species, poor genetics, limited stocking, and the uncertain future status of the Wahiawā reservoir due to private ownership. The Department is committed to working with stakeholders and partners to improve and enhance sport fishing opportunities at Wahiawā reservoir.

Comments regarding importation

In natural freshwater settings, the Department prioritizes management activities toward the conservation of indigenous species and habitats. Non-native species are one of the primary threats to indigenous species and the Department is committed to the prevention of non-native

**SUZANNE D. CASE**  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**ROBERT K. MASUDA**  
FIRST DEPUTY

**M. KALEO MANUEL**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

species introduction. Northern largemouth bass and butterfly peacock bass are considered invasive in natural water bodies due to their predatory nature, and both species have the potential to adversely impact Hawaii's native stream species such as the 'o'opu and 'ōpae. Given that these species already occur in Wahiawā reservoir, we see little threat in importing northern largemouth bass and butterfly peacock bass solely to be stocked in Wahiawā reservoir, assuming best management practices are followed to prevent disease and parasite transmission.

The Department notes that butterfly peacock bass is already on HDOA's conditionally approved import list, which means it may be imported with an appropriate HDOA permit. Largemouth bass is currently not on the HDOA approved list for importation and thus is prohibited from import without permit. The Department is concerned that reducing import restrictions would increase the likelihood of these species being introduced into natural freshwater settings inhabited by indigenous species in Hawai'i.

Release of the northern largemouth bass and butterfly peacock bass should only occur under the supervision of the Department. State law currently prohibits the "release [of] any live non-native fish or other live non-native aquatic life being held in an aquarium or other confinement for scientific study, exhibition, display, sale, or for any other purpose, into any waters of the State."<sup>1</sup> In regard to the importation of largemouth bass and peacock bass, we defer to the Department of Agriculture of which importation of aquatic species falls under their jurisdiction.

#### Comments regarding establishment of a pilot project

In principle, the Department appreciates the opportunity to engage the Legislature and other stakeholders to address any of the perceived detrimental factors mentioned above, including an activity to establish a pilot project to restock the Wahiawā public fishing area with northern largemouth bass, butterfly peacock bass, or both. However, the Department simply does not have the resources to do this. With COVID-19 related budget reductions and an inability to fill vacancies, administrative staff are already stretched thin. Additionally, the biologist that managed Wahiawā reservoir activities has recently retired, and the position has been frozen due to budget restrictions. With no appropriations, we simply lack the capacity to expand operations at the reservoir.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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<sup>1</sup> Hawaii Revised Statutes § 187A-6.5

To: House Committee on Water and Land  
Representative David Tarnas, Chair  
Representative Patrick Branco, Vice Chair  
House Committee on Finance  
Representative Sylvia Luke, Chair  
Representative Ty J. K. Cullen, Vice Chair

Re: **HB 1274 relating to Freshwater Sport Fishing in Hawaii**

Aloha ! My name is Howard Araki and I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 1274 The gist of this Bill is to streamline the process of importing live Northern strain Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides salmoides*) and Butterfly Peacock Bass (*Cichla ocellaris*) for the purpose of enhancing and supporting the pre-existing populations of these popular gamefish for continued recreational freshwater fishing opportunities in Hawaii.

“Pre-existing populations” are the keywords here. The Northern strain largemouth bass have been in the islands for 125 years, since 1896 ! The Peacock Bass or Tucunare were introduced here for sport fishing nearly 65 years ago. Both gamefish enjoy a faithful fan base in the islands, most notably on the Wahiawa Public Fishing Area, aka Lake Wilson on Oahu, and Waita Reservoir on Kauai. The populations of these two gamefish have been on a decline for many years now. The downtrend in the overall population, especially medium to larger size largemouth bass is a concern to anglers. Peacock Bass or Tucunare are experiencing a similar decline but to a lesser extent.

Over the years, the topic of genetics or more exactly the lack of genetic diversity within the largemouth bass population kept coming up for discussion. The bass on Lake Wilson have been inbreeding within the same gene pool for the last 125 years and counting. Perhaps an infusion of “new blood” is needed to bolster the bass population here. Ideally what’s needed is the same bass just from a different location, such as a lake or pond on the US mainland.

HB 1274 seeks to add the Northern Strain of Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides salmoides*) and the Butterfly Peacock Bass (*Cichla ocellaris*) on the list of conditionally approved animals that require a permit for import. Currently these two fish are not on the allowed to import list. Just to reiterate these two gamefish are already here on islands and have been for a long time. Generations of anglers have enjoyed catching them and I’m one em.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Howard Araki



DAVID Y. IGE  
Governor

JOSH GREEN  
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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TESTIMONY OF PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER  
CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

FEBRUARY 18, 2021  
8:30 AM  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1274  
RELATING TO SPORT FISH

Chairperson Tarnas and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1274, relating to sport fish. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture (“Department”) to allow for the permitted importation of northern largemouth bass and butterfly peacock bass into Hawaii and requires the Division of Aquatic Resources of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (“DLNR”) to establish a pilot project to restock the Wahiawa public fishing area with northern largemouth bass, butterfly peacock bass, or both. The Department offers the following comments.

The Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 150A and Hawaii Administrative Rules §4-71 sets forth the framework and permit conditions for allowing the importation of non-domestic animals, including the northern largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides salmoides*, and the butterfly peacock bass, *Cichla ocellaris*. The process includes a science-based review designed to assess and manage the risk of importing any non-domestic animal and requires Hawaii Board of Agriculture (Board) approval. Currently, the northern largemouth bass, is not listed as a species approved for importation and is prohibited from importation into the State. Statutorily placing the



northern largemouth bass on the List of Conditionally Approved Animals (CA List), would set a dangerous precedent by dispensing with and bypassing the scientific review that is essential as a first line of defense against the introduction of harmful invasive species to Hawai`i. Placement on the list is appropriate only after a rigorous review of the potential for harm has been conducted and appropriate conditions for the proposed use have been determined and imposed. The Board can already allow importation of butterfly peacock bass and establish appropriate permit conditions since it is already on the CA List and is eligible for importation.

As currently drafted, this measure could conceivably allow any person to import and release either of these species anywhere without restrictions. According to the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International, both species are known to be invasive in other parts of the world and with unrestricted importation, breeding and release, catastrophic impacts to Hawai`i's natural waterways is a real possibility. Such unrestricted importation could also be a pathway for new pests and diseases associated with these species to establish themselves in the State.

The Department has been informed that both species of bass are present in Lake Wilson. The presence or establishment of a species within the State is not a reasonable justification for further importation without proper review and assessment of their impacts on the environment. Over time, information about species and their effects on environments changes and the review process is designed to manage that risk. Additionally, if this position is adopted, smuggling and illegal release of prohibited animals would proliferate and be encouraged to legitimize future importation and possession of invasive species.

The approvals for importation of the two bass species in the measure would ordinarily require an environmental impact assessment pursuant to HRS Chapter 343, as a species being introduced in waters under the State's jurisdiction. Mandatory approval and permitting for these species without appropriate review or exemption appears to conflict with the State's environmental review laws.

In recognition of the potential economic, recreational, and aquacultural benefits sought by this measure, modifications or enhancements to the review and approval process for new species could be considered. While maintaining the rigorous standards of review under HRS Chapter 343, the criteria for assessing impacts could be clarified to allow a track record over a significant period that demonstrates no significant impacts have occurred or is likely to occur from the presence of a previously established but currently unlisted species, and can be a basis for eligibility under a categorical exemption. Such eligibility could be further conditioned upon appropriate precautionary conditions being imposed on the proposed activity to mitigate any potential for harm. Additional controls to disincentivize the illicit importation of prohibited animals could be achieved by allowing the application of these provisions to actions initiated and performed by State or County agencies only.

The DLNR, pursuant to HRS §187A-2(4), is the lead agency for the importation of aquatic life, such as the northern largemouth bass or the butterfly peacock bass, into to waters under the State's jurisdiction for propagation or dissemination. Provided DLNR has the resources and capability to manage the risks for introduction of the two species of bass, the Department will continue to collaborate and work with DLNR to implement the purpose of this measure.

The Department recognizes the need for aquaculture for food and other activities such as sport fishing, and supports these efforts, however, the Department believes that the processes that are already in place can adequately achieve those important objectives without compromising the State's efforts to keep out harmful invasive species.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-1274**

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 8:03:43 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/18/2021 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Timothy Ng	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am a long time resident of Wahiawa and I support this bill to restock the lake with bass.



Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Support for H.B 1274, Relating to Sport Fishing

Aloha Representative Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Branco, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kevin Hirokane, I am a resident of Wahiawa, avid fisherman, member of Hawaii Freshwater Fishing Association, and a registered voter. I am testifying in support of HB1274.

I've been fishing Lake Wilson/Wahiawa reservoir for over 35 years. I started fishing as a young kid with friends walking along the banks of Lake Wilson. Nowadays, I fish a few times a week for recreation with my own children and competitively with my Bass Fishing Club (HFFA) on bass fishing boats. I have seen a drastic decline in catch rates throughout the years, especially for largemouth bass. These days it's so rare to catch a largemouth bass, even after multiple outings, we are lucky to even catch one. Sport fish like the northern largemouth bass have been in Hawaii and fished here for over a century. Many generations of inbreeding and lack of genetic diversity, I feel, has been a detriment to the species, resulting in less fish.

I believe this bill is important for the sustainability of the present and future populations of largemouth bass and sport fishing in general. This bill will address one important component needed to improve bass population. Allowing the restocking of the Northern Strain Largemouth Bass with a different genetic pool, will have a vital role in improving and maintaining the quality of fishing in Lake Wilson/Wahiawa reservoir.

Furthermore, improving bass fishing would have great economic value for the Wahiawa community and the State. This could potentially create opportunities for fishing stores, boat sales, retail shops, food establishments, and could create additional jobs. The state would have an opportunity to generate revenue through the sale of fishing licenses, boat registration, ramp fees, tourism, etc. There are many communities in the U.S near public fisheries that are driven economically by recreational and sport bass fishing.

As a Father of two boys, I like to share the pastime of fishing with them. Having my sons off their electronics, and just experiencing this great activity. Moreover, I am happy to have my kids spend time outdoors experiencing nature, learning the sport of fishing, and making everlasting memories. I feel this is a great thing for them, and they love it.

I ask that you please consider supporting HB1274 so myself, my children, and many others can share the love for bass fishing for generations to come. Thank you for your time and effort. Mahalo and Aloha.

Sincerely,  
Kevin Hirokane  
176 Rose Street  
Wahiawa, Hi 96786

Chair Tarnas and Vice Chair Branco,

As an avid freshwater fisherman, a registered voter, and the President of the Hawaii Freshwater Fishing Association, I ask you to please schedule, hear, and support SB1313, Relating to Sport Fish, which would help improve the pre-existing population of fresh-water sport fish that have been fished in our state for over a century.

A hidden gem in Central O'ahu, the Wahiawa Reservoir (commonly known as Lake Wilson) is the only public freshwater fishing resource on O'ahu. Visitors worldwide come to catch the hard fighting Largemouth and Peacock bass that live there. Some of these visitors come to the island specifically to fish there. Consider the Japanese tourist who has three precious days to spend in Hawaii, and who will dedicate a whole day to fishing on the Lake. These visitors spend generously at our shops and restaurants and are the backbone to our economy.

I can remember days of my youth, riding my bicycle to the "river" to fish for bass. I would save every penny I earned to buy that certain "hot" lure from Sawada Store on cane Street. Or hoping to receive that "Mitchell 300" spinning reel for Christmas. I spent many days on the banks catching bass and still do to this day. For reference, the year that they stocked Peacock Bass was the year I graduated from high school.

Largemouth bass were introduced to the islands in 1896, the Peacock bass in 1975. Somehow, these fish were not listed on any list of conditionally approved, restricted, or prohibited animals. It's like they don't exist! But we know better.

With the large interest in so-called eco-tourism, I think that it would be in the best interest of the State of Hawaii to promote, foster and nurture the multi-million-dollar bass fishing industry in this state by providing stocking opportunities with the passing of this bill.

Please support SB 1313.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Paul Lacerdo  
President, Hawaii Freshwater Fishing Association  
1122 Kalauipo Place  
Pearl City, HI 96782  
(808)291-3856



# WAHIAWA

Community Based Development Organization (WCBDO)

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PO Box 861191, Wahiawa HI 96786 [wahiawacbdo.org](http://wahiawacbdo.org)

February 17, 2021

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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1274 RELATED TO SPORT FISH

Aloha Representatives:

I am writing as a long time resident and a representative for the **Wahiawa Community Based Development Organization dba Wahiawa Fresh!** in strong support of HB1274, relating to sport fishing. This bill will improve the pre-existing population of freshwater sport fish (bass) that has been fished in our state for over a century. A program to restock Lake Wilson in Wahiawa has great benefits.

Wahiawa Fresh! is committed to improvements in Wahiawa that foster balanced economic development for our residents and businesses. This bill has important economic potential for Lake Wilson in Wahiawa, bringing fresh water sport fishing to the area. Increased fishing activity will have a positive, ripple effect to local businesses near the lake, including restaurants, tour groups, and supply and equipment vendors. There are also opportunities for environmental education and youth activity groups at the lake. Increased fishing activity at the lake will also improve security (i.e. more people around) at the lake, thus inviting more families to regularly use this resource.

From an environmental aspect, the importation of new bass populations into Lake Wilson will strengthen the freshwater ecosystem by improving the genetic and species diversity. That means better fishing, which we believe brings better stewardship of the lake. Fishing enthusiasts and residents who want to utilize the lake for recreation are committed to taking care of Lake Wilson and the surrounding park. Also, water levels, planting of native flora, and cleaner water for agriculture are all future important considerations that can be built upon the improvements brought by this bill.

As the group that organized Wahiawa to be a Blue Zone community, we believe this bill will also help showcase our natural environment to get people moving and enjoying outdoor activities. As a young boy, I fished Lake Wilson for the bass—the same type of sport fish discussed in HB1274. Diversifying the fish population will ensure that this recreational opportunity is available for generations to come, and it secures a great natural resource for our youth and senior citizens to get outdoors and enjoy a wholesome activity.

Thank you for your consideration of HB1274. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Darin Uesugi  
Board Vice President  
Wahiawa Fresh!

**HB-1274**

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 11:22:13 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/18/2021 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Christy Martin	UH PCSU/Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species	Oppose	No

Comments:

Aloha Rep. Tarnas, Vice Chair Branco, Members of the Committee,

The Coordinating Group on Alien Pest Species (CGAPS) is opposed to HB 1274, *Relating to Sport Fish*. There is an established process by which interested parties may petition the Board of Agriculture to list non-domestic animals like these fish to allow for its importation and use. That process includes an evaluation of invasive species risk by the Plants and Animals Subcommittee and public meetings to discuss the petition. The petition process is intended to balance economic and community interests with economic and environmental interests of the public today AND future generations. As such, CGAPS is concerned that this legislation would bypass the established process. Mahalo for the opportunity to share our concerns with HB 1274.

Aloha,

Christy Martin, CGAPS

**HB-1274**

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 8:11:07 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/18/2021 8:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Clinton Dingal	Hawaii Freshwater Fishing Association	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Tarnes & Chair Branco,

As a avid fisherman, registered voter, and a constituent, I ask you to please schedule, hear, and support SB1313, Relating to Sport Fish, which would help improve the pre-existing population of fresh-water sport fish that have been fished in our state for over a century.

With this bill, it can boost the economy in so many ways. It can create jobs in supporting industries/ local areas. It can create more fisherman to be motivated to fish in our lake and be beneficial to the surrounding business areas. This bill passing will also catch the attention of other fisherman worldwide. This will boost tourism thus boosting our economy.

The state could also implement a parking fee which I would not mind at all, if this bill goes through and our fishery gets stocked regularly, I personally would not mind paying a parking fee.

I have only been fishing the lake for about a year now, and hearing stories of how great the fishing was back then, makes me want to experience the joy of fishing a well stocked/maintained lake. Creating joyful and unforgettable memories with the family along with their generations to follow is priceless (not considering the parking fee stated above). Regular stocked fish will bring more people, with more people equals an economy boosted.

Northern Largemouth Bass and Peacock Bass are currently in the lake and have been for awhile now. They have been in the lake as long as 1896 (Largemouth) and 1957 (Peacock). But their population has dwindled which caused the catch rate to be very difficult.

On the environmental standpoint, a well stocked lake will assist the natural processes of an aquatic ecosystem, which will improve water quality and control of pest species.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

