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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 & LAND

Wednesday, February 17, 2021  
1:00 PM

State Capital, Via Videoconference, Conference Room 229

In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 1162  
RELATING TO FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Senate Bill 1162 proposes to amend Chapter 195F, Hawaii Revised Statutes, to clarify conditions that must be met by applicants to participate in the Forest Stewardship Program. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this Administration measure.**

66% of Hawaii's forested areas are privately owned and managed. The Forest Stewardship Program provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners in protecting, restoring, and managing Hawaii's forested lands. Senate Bill 1162 makes minor changes to the Forest Stewardship Program, modifying qualification requirements to increase program eligibility for private forest managers, and expand the services provided by private forests.

The proposed changes will accomplish the following:

- allow long-term leaseholders to participate in the program (currently only landowners are eligible);
- increase cost-share support from 50% to 75% for the development of forest stewardship management plans (developing plans is frequently a barrier to entry for many landowner/managers);
- allow non-timber forest products to qualify under the program (currently only timber products qualify); and
- modernize eligibility criteria language related to native forest protection and management.

The Forest Stewardship Program helps landowners develop forest stewardship management plans. Management plans help program participants responsibly and sustainably manage forest resources.

Increased cost-share support for writing management plans will improve forest management and allow smaller and/or underserved landowners to participate in the program by reducing financial barriers. There will be no increase in costs to the Department related to an increase in cost-share percentage – we will simply restructure existing funds.

This measure increases land eligible for participation in the program by removing language that only allows management of forest products if the land was cleared of native vegetation prior to January 1, 1991, a date-certain that is difficult to determine. The change will protect native forests and support working forests, including those found on agricultural lands. This will support forest management and promote agricultural diversification through integrated forest and pasture management, agroforestry, and active forest management.

Public-private partnerships are essential to the health of Hawaii's forests. The Forest Stewardship Program stimulates investment in forestry as an economically viable land-use alternative that provides jobs to Hawaii's rural communities, revenue diversification, locally grown products, and environmental benefits such as clean water and habitat for Hawaii's native wildlife.

This bill will improve forest management on private lands, expand conservation of native forests, increase reforestation of degraded lands, and stimulate investment in forestry as an economically viable, sustainable land-use practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

**SB-1162**

Submitted on: 2/16/2021 1:07:32 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/17/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Janet Pappas	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear WTL Committee Members,

I strongly support SB1162 which encourages forestry stewardship in Hawaii.

Hawaii landowners with forested land should be encouraged to manage, protect, and restore their forested areas. Doing so protects watersheds, forest resources, forest products, fish and wildlife habitats, rare and endangered plants and native vegetation and the forest itself, benefitting us all.

Please develop a program to financially assist landowners in caring for their forest land. It is important to all of us.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jan Pappas

Aiea, Hawaii