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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO NATURAL RESOURCES.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that climate change is  
2 the overarching challenge for the State. The legislature has  
3 repeatedly taken actions, set goals, and created programs to  
4 reduce emissions in the energy and transportation sectors;  
5 establish statewide decarbonization goals; recognize a climate  
6 emergency; establish the state climate commission to facilitate  
7 interdisciplinary and cross-sector solutions; and understand and  
8 plan for the expected impacts of sea level rise and other  
9 threats to infrastructure posed by climate change impacts. Even  
10 with this clear commitment from the legislature in taking  
11 climate action, the state offices tasked with natural resource  
12 protection continue to lack sufficient resources, even though  
13 natural resource protection is critical to the State's success  
14 in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

15           Hawaii's native forests and coral reefs provide essential  
16 services that act as carbon sinks and help protect Hawaii's  
17 residents from climate change impacts. For example, coral reefs



1 protect shorelines and coastal infrastructure from storm surges  
2 and high wave impacts, providing a natural buffer to help  
3 prevent loss of life, property damage, and erosion. Native  
4 forests are not only the lungs of the Hawaiian islands,  
5 absorbing carbon dioxide and emitting oxygen, they are also  
6 sponges that capture moisture and rainfall to recharge  
7 groundwater threatened by changing weather, more frequent  
8 drought conditions, and the loss of native forests. Healthy  
9 forests also provide protection to the nearshore environment by  
10 reducing the impacts of stormwater runoff. In addition, both  
11 reefs and forests provide habitats for native species, many of  
12 which are threatened and endangered. Reefs and forests are also  
13 essential to Hawaii's culture, traditional practices, food  
14 systems, economy, and way of life.

15 At the same time, these resources that protect the State  
16 from climate change are threatened by climate change impacts.  
17 Hawaii's coral reef ecosystems are threatened by warming  
18 temperatures, which lead to ocean acidification and coral  
19 bleaching. Coral bleaching events have already caused extensive  
20 damage to Hawaii's reefs and are predicted to become more  
21 frequent and severe. Hawaii's forests are threatened by



1 changing weather patterns, invasive species, and wildfires which  
2 have increased by four hundred per cent in the past decade.

3 Invasive species impact both land and ocean resources and  
4 are defined as non-native species whose introduction causes  
5 environmental harm, economic harm, and/or harm to human health.  
6 Invasive species pose the single greatest threat to the health  
7 of Hawaii's native ecosystems and the State's economy, impacting  
8 not only forests and reefs but also agriculture, food security,  
9 drinking water, freshwater quality, and human health. Research  
10 shows that climate changes compound the impact of invasive  
11 species by contributing to invasive species' range expansion,  
12 increasing ecosystem stress, and worsening decline of native  
13 species and the ability of forests and oceans to sequester  
14 carbon. For example, with warming temperatures mosquitos that  
15 carry diseases that kill native forest birds have moved into  
16 higher elevations. Accelerated action and increased funding are  
17 needed to address invasive species.

18 The legislature finds that with the passage of recent  
19 federal legislation, including the Infrastructure Investment and  
20 Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58), Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (Pub.  
21 L. 117-169), and the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act (enacted as



1 part of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act  
2 for Fiscal Year 2023) as well as the proposed Recovering  
3 America's Wildlife Act, there is a record amount of federal  
4 funding available to help with natural resource protection.  
5 However, to best access, leverage, and maximize these federal  
6 funds, state agencies will need access to matching funds to draw  
7 in federal grants.

8 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds  
9 to address the impacts of climate change in the State.

10 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 to  
13 protect, manage, and restore natural resources, including native  
14 forests, native plants and animals, aquatic resources, coastal  
15 lands, and freshwater resources.

16 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
17 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

18 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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# H.B. NO. 952

**Report Title:**

Natural Resources; Climate Change; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to the department of land and natural resources to address the impacts of climate change in the State.

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