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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VISITOR IMPACT FEES.

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

1 PART I

2 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's natural  
3 resources, including reefs, oceans, forests, streams, estuaries,  
4 shorelines, and beaches, provide irreplaceable and invaluable  
5 benefits to visitors, residents, and the global community.

6 The Hawaii State Constitution makes clear that the State's  
7 natural and cultural resources are subject to the public trust  
8 and therefore must be managed and protected for the benefit of  
9 present and future generations. The Hawaii State Constitution  
10 further requires the State and its agencies to protect and  
11 enforce Native Hawaiian rights, including traditional and  
12 customary practices associated with, and dependent upon,  
13 carefully managed and abundant natural resources.

14 The legislature further finds that Hawaii's natural  
15 environment faces significant environmental pressure from the  
16 heavy use it receives from persons traveling to enjoy the  
17 State's natural resources. The current underinvestment in the



1 State's natural resources poses a significant liability to the  
2 visitor industry; the stability of natural systems, including  
3 food systems and water quality; and the ecosystems, services,  
4 fisheries, economic resilience, and health and safety of the  
5 State.

6 Hawaii residents currently contribute to the protection and  
7 management of natural resources through taxes, environmental  
8 care, subsistence, cultural practices, and the exercise of the  
9 values and practices embodied in the Hawaii State Constitution.  
10 However, with escalating visitor impacts and an increasing  
11 global threat to the island ecosystems, there is an immediate  
12 need for additional resources to protect, restore, sustain,  
13 manage, and conserve natural resources. A regenerative tourism  
14 fee has been suggested by the Hawaii tourism authority as a  
15 potential means to obtain these critical resources.  
16 Accordingly, the legislature finds that it is timely to ask  
17 visitors who enjoy and reap benefits of Hawaii's natural  
18 resources to further contribute to their protection, care, and  
19 restoration.

20 The legislature believes that a license requirement for  
21 visitors who enjoy Hawaii's public beaches, trails, parks, and



1 ecosystems could generate the necessary funding each year to  
2 offset the adverse impacts of visitors and conserve Hawaii's  
3 irreplaceable green infrastructure in perpetuity.

4 The legislature further finds that visitor impact fees,  
5 which are also known as "green fees" or "environmental  
6 protection fees", have been successfully implemented in many  
7 visitor destinations throughout the world, including the  
8 Galapagos Islands, New Zealand, and Palau. In these locations,  
9 the fees have demonstrated compounding benefits for visitors,  
10 residents, and natural landscapes and seascapes.

11 The legislature also believes that it is imperative to  
12 raise additional revenues to offset visitor impacts and ensure  
13 that a positive environmental legacy is left for future  
14 generations. A visitor impact fee provides a reasonable and  
15 appropriate way to generate these needed revenues.

16 The legislature believes that establishing a visitor impact  
17 fee of \$50 in Hawaii would be a significant and effective way to  
18 raise additional revenue to offset visitor impacts and ensure a  
19 healthy environment for future generations.

20 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a  
21 visitor impact fee program, to be administered by the department



1 of land and natural resources, and require a license for  
 2 visitors to use Hawaii's public beaches, parks, trails,  
 3 coastlines, and environment. The purpose of the visitor impact  
 4 fee program shall be to provide sustained funding for the  
 5 protection, restoration, regeneration, enhancement, and care of  
 6 Hawaii's natural and outdoor recreational resources and build  
 7 resilience of these resources to withstand the impacts of  
 8 increased visitor use.

9 PART II

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 171, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
 11 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and  
 12 to read as follows:

13 **"PART . VISITOR IMPACT FEE PROGRAM**

14 **§171-A Definitions.** For purposes of this part:

15 "Fund" means the visitor impact fee special fund  
 16 established pursuant to section 171-E.

17 "License" means a license issued pursuant to this part.

18 "Licensee" means a person who is issued a license pursuant  
 19 to this part.

20 "Nonprofit organization" means a private, nonprofit  
 21 organization that has been granted tax exempt status by the



1 Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the  
2 Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and that has among  
3 its charitable purposes the preservation, restoration,  
4 management, or interpretation of natural or cultural resources  
5 for scientific, historic, educational, recreational, scenic,  
6 wildlife, or open-space purposes; the protection of the natural  
7 environment or biological resources, or both; the preservation  
8 or enhancement, or both, of wildlife; and the protection or  
9 interpretation, or both, of Native Hawaiian cultural resources  
10 and practices related thereto.

11 "Program" means the visitor impact fee program.

12 "Resident of Hawaii" means an individual who has:

13 (1) Filed or paid state income taxes for the previous tax  
14 year; or

15 (2) Established domicile in the State, as evidenced by  
16 documentation showing the individual's address,  
17 including any of the following:

18 (A) A valid Hawaii driver's license;

19 (B) A valid Hawaii state identification card;

20 (C) A valid school identification card issued by a  
21 school in the State; or



1 (D) Any other official document issued to the  
2 individual within the last thirty days by a  
3 government agency, financial institution,  
4 insurance company, or utility company in the  
5 State.

6 "Visitor" means a person in Hawaii who is not a resident of  
7 Hawaii.

8 **§171-B Visitor impact fee program; license; signs.** (a)

9 There is established within the department the visitor impact  
10 fee program. The purpose of the program shall be to collect a  
11 fee from visitors through a license and allocate that revenue to  
12 protect, restore, and manage natural and cultural resources  
13 impacted by visitors.

14 (b) Beginning on a date established by the department by  
15 rule pursuant to chapter 91, each visitor who is fifteen years  
16 of age or older who visits a state park, beach, forest, hiking  
17 trail, or other natural area on state land, as designated by the  
18 department by rule pursuant to chapter 91, shall first pay a  
19 visitor impact fee to obtain a license pursuant to this part.

20 (c) The department shall place signs at state parks,  
21 beaches, forests, trail heads, or other natural areas on state



1 land to inform visitors of the requirement to pay a visitor  
2 impact fee and obtain a license pursuant to this part.

3 **§171-C License; purchase.** (a) The department shall  
4 establish convenient opportunities for visitors to pay a visitor  
5 impact fee and be issued a license, including through:

6 (1) A mobile application; and

7 (2) An internet website.

8 The department may authorize retail establishments and nonprofit  
9 organizations to accept payment of a visitor impact fee and  
10 issue a license.

11 (b) The amount of the visitor impact fee shall be  
12 \$ ; provided that the chairperson may increase the fee  
13 by rule pursuant to chapter 91 no more frequently than once  
14 every five years.

15 (c) Each license shall be effective for one year from the  
16 date of issuance.

17 **§171-D Penalties.** (a) A visitor who visits a state park,  
18 beach, forest, hiking trail, or other natural area on state land  
19 without first paying a visitor impact fee and obtaining a  
20 license, in violation of section 171-B(b), shall be liable for a  
21 civil fine not to exceed \$ . The assessment of



1 penalties shall not begin until at least five years after the  
2 effective date of this Act, to allow time for effective  
3 implementation, public education, and enforcement.

4 (b) Any civil fine provided under this section may be  
5 imposed by the circuit court or by the department after an  
6 opportunity for a hearing pursuant to chapter 91. Imposition of  
7 a civil fine shall not be a prerequisite to any civil fine or  
8 injunctive relief ordered by the circuit court.

9 **§171-E Visitor impact fee special fund; established.** (a)

10 There is established within the state treasury the visitor  
11 impact fee special fund, into which shall be deposited:

12 (1) All revenue from visitor impact fees, less any costs  
13 incurred in collecting those fees;

14 (2) All fines collected pursuant to section 171-D, less  
15 any costs incurred in collecting those fines;

16 (3) Appropriations made to the fund by the legislature;  
17 and

18 (4) Grants and gifts made to the fund.

19 (b) The fund shall be administered and governed by the  
20 department:

21 (1) With transparency and accountability; and





1           (2) In a manner that maximizes the effectiveness of the  
2           program.

3           (c) The department shall allocate moneys in the fund to be  
4 expended directly by state agencies for projects that help  
5 offset adverse environmental impacts caused by visitors, ensure  
6 that the State's natural resources are maintained for continued  
7 use by licensees, or both. Examples of permissible projects  
8 under this subsection include projects that directly restore,  
9 enhance, and protect, in perpetuity, natural resources and the  
10 State's unique and fragile ecological status, including projects  
11 that:

12           (1) Protect, restore, or enhance terrestrial and marine  
13 natural resources impacted by heavy usage of  
14 licensees;

15           (2) Increase the resilience and adaptation of Hawaii's  
16 natural resources with environmentally beneficial  
17 strategies to reduce the adverse impacts of climate  
18 change, including coastal erosion, sea level rise,  
19 damage to reefs, ocean acidification, coral bleaching,  
20 damage to land resources, and other impacts  
21 exacerbated by licensees; or



1 (3) Remove and control invasive species and propagate and  
2 plant native species in state-owned recreational areas  
3 utilized by licensees.

4 (d) The department shall allocate moneys in the fund to be  
5 expended directly by the department for administration of the  
6 program, including the creation and implementation of a visitor  
7 impact fee strategic plan that includes a timetable indicating  
8 how the objectives and policies of this part will be pursued and  
9 implemented.

10 (e) The department may allocate moneys to provide grants  
11 to the counties and nonprofit organizations; provided that the  
12 annual aggregate sum of grants to the counties and nonprofit  
13 organizations each does not exceed fifty per cent of the annual  
14 visitor impact fee revenue. In awarding grants, the department  
15 shall prioritize projects that satisfy at least one of the  
16 following:

17 (1) Develop nature-based solutions to environmental and  
18 climate issues exacerbated by licensees;

19 (2) Provide significant protection, restoration, and  
20 enhancement of Hawaii's natural resources in areas  
21 impacted by licensees; or



1           (3) Increase the resilience of state-owned natural  
2           resources impacted by licensees.

3           (f) The department may allocate moneys to provide  
4 cost-matching funds for federal grants that satisfy any of the  
5 following priorities:

6           (1) Develop nature-based solutions to environmental and  
7           climate issues exacerbated by licensees;

8           (2) Provide significant protection, restoration, and  
9           enhancement of Hawaii's natural resources in areas  
10          impacted by licensees; or

11          (3) Increase the resilience of state-owned natural  
12          resources impacted by licensees.

13          (g) The department may allocate moneys necessary for the  
14 enforcement of this part, including any enforcement or legal  
15 expenses incurred to enforce or collect penalties pursuant to  
16 section 171-D.

17          (h) Moneys allocated from the fund shall be used for the  
18 purposes described in this section; provided that these moneys  
19 shall complement but shall not supplant other moneys regularly  
20 appropriated for those purposes.



1           **§171-F Grants; qualifications and conditions.** (a) For  
2 purposes of grants awarded pursuant to this part, any  
3 organization requesting a grant shall:

4           (1) Be licensed and accredited, as applicable, under the  
5 laws of the State;

6           (2) Have at least one year's experience with the project  
7 or in the program area for which grant moneys are  
8 requested; and

9           (3) Be qualified to engage in the program or activity to  
10 be funded by the grant or employ or have under  
11 contract persons who are qualified.

12           (b) Recipients of grants shall be subject to the following  
13 conditions:

14           (1) Any county or nonprofit organization requesting a  
15 grant shall submit its request together with all  
16 information required by the department on an  
17 application form prescribed by the department;

18           (2) The recipient of a grant shall not use public funds  
19 for purposes of entertainment or perquisites;

20           (3) The recipient of a grant shall comply with applicable  
21 federal, state, and county laws;



- 1           (4) The recipient of a grant shall comply with any other  
2           requirements the department may prescribe;
- 3           (5) The recipient of a grant shall allow the department,  
4           legislative bodies, and auditor full access to  
5           records, reports, files, and other related documents  
6           so that the program, management, and fiscal practices  
7           of the grant recipient may be monitored and evaluated  
8           to assure the proper and effective expenditure of  
9           public funds;
- 10          (6) Each grant shall be monitored pursuant to rules or  
11          policies established by the department to ensure  
12          compliance with this part; and
- 13          (7) Any recipient of a grant under this section who  
14          withholds or omits any material fact, deliberately  
15          misrepresents facts to the department, or violates the  
16          terms of the recipient's contract is in violation of  
17          this section and, in addition to any other penalties  
18          provided by law, shall be prohibited from applying for  
19          a grant under this part for a period of five years  
20          from the date of termination.



1 (c) The department shall use best efforts to provide grant  
2 recipients with access to any state lands or natural resources  
3 necessary to effectuate the project for which the grant is  
4 awarded.

5 **§171-G Report to legislature.** (a) No later than twenty  
6 days before the convening of the regular session of 2025 and  
7 each year thereafter, the department shall submit a report to  
8 the legislature.

9 (b) The report shall contain information on ways that the  
10 fund restored, enhanced, and protected Hawaii's state-owned  
11 natural resources and its unique and vulnerable ecosystem during  
12 the previous fiscal year, as well as the benefits that have  
13 accrued or will accrue from those expenditures for the benefit  
14 of the State's natural resources.

15 (c) The department shall publish the reports on its  
16 website.

17 **§171-H Rules.** The department may adopt rules pursuant to  
18 chapter 91 necessary for the purposes of this part, including  
19 any rules necessary to increase license fees and to ensure that  
20 persons who purchase a license are aware that the license is  
21 broader than an entrance fee to visit a specific state park,



1 forest, hiking trail, or other natural area on state land, which  
2 is used explicitly for that park, forest, hiking trail, or other  
3 natural area."

4 PART III

5 SECTION 3. The department of land and natural resources  
6 shall submit a report on the creation and implementation of the  
7 visitor impact fee strategic plan and timetable indicating how  
8 the objectives and policies of the visitor impact fee program  
9 will be pursued and implemented, including its findings,  
10 recommendations, and any proposed legislation, to the  
11 legislature no later than December 1, 2023.

12 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
14 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 to be  
15 deposited into the visitor impact fee special fund.

16 SECTION 5. There is appropriated out of the visitor impact  
17 fee special fund the sum of \$ or so much thereof as  
18 may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 for the visitor  
19 impact fee strategic plan with a timetable indicating how the  
20 objectives and policies established in part of chapter 171,  
21 Hawaii Revised Statutes, will be pursued and implemented.



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

3 SECTION 6. The appropriation made by section 5 of this Act  
4 shall not lapse at the end of the fiscal year for which the  
5 appropriation is made; provided further that all moneys from the  
6 appropriation unencumbered as of June 30, 2025, shall lapse as  
7 of that date.

8 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general  
9 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
10 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
11 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
12 year 2024-2025 for the following positions for the visitor  
13 impact fee program:

- 14 (1) Two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program
- 15 specialists;
- 16 (2) One full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) office assistant;
- 17 (3) One full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) clerk V; and
- 18 (4) One full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) accountant.

19 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
20 of land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

21 PART IV





1 SECTION 8. In codifying the new sections added by  
2 section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute  
3 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating  
4 the new sections in this Act.

5 SECTION 9. This Act does not affect rights and duties that  
6 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were  
7 begun before its effective date.

8 SECTION 10. This Act shall take effect on June 30, 3000;  
9 provided that:

10 (1) Section 171-E, Hawaii Revised Statutes, shall take  
11 effect on July 1, 2023; and

12 (2) Part II of this Act, except section 171-E, Hawaii  
13 Revised Statutes, shall take effect on July 1, 2025.



**Report Title:**

DLNR; Visitor Impact Fee; Report; Appropriations

**Description:**

Effective 7/1/2025, establishes the visitor impact fee program within the department of land and natural resources, through which the department will collect a fee from visitors for a license to visit a state park, forest, hiking trail, or other state natural area. Establishes the visitor impact fee special fund effective 7/1/2023. Requires report to the legislature on strategic plan and timetable for objectives and implementation of the visitor impact fee program. Appropriates funds for the visitor impact fee strategic plan and positions for the visitor impact fee program. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD3)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

