
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO STATE WATER CODE PENALTIES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that in 1987, the state
2 water code was adopted to protect the precious water resources
3 of the State. To better enable the department of land and
4 natural resources and commission on water resource management to
5 carry out that mission, the legislature further finds that the
6 water code's penalties and fines must be amended and increased
7 to serve as an effective deterrence to violators.

8 The legislature further finds that increasing potential
9 fines for water code violations will also:

- 10 (1) Help to preserve water resources by ensuring the
11 sustainable management and conservation of limited
12 water resources for future generations, particularly
13 in areas facing over-extraction or misuse;
- 14 (2) Protect the ecosystems by safeguarding wetlands,
15 rivers, and aquifers that depend on healthy water
16 systems to maintain biodiversity and environmental
17 balance;



- 1 (3) Promote public health and safety by preventing
2 contamination of drinking water supplies and reducing
3 health risks associated with waterborne diseases and
4 pollutants;
- 5 (4) Promote climate change resilience by regulating water
6 usage and protecting vulnerable water sources to
7 address challenges posed by prolonged droughts,
8 erratic rainfall, and rising sea levels;
- 9 (5) Promote economic stability by helping to avoid
10 economic losses in agriculture, tourism, and other
11 industries that rely heavily on consistent and clean
12 water supplies;
- 13 (6) Promote enforcement of equity and justice to ensure
14 fair access to water resources for all, including
15 marginalized communities that may be
16 disproportionately affected by water scarcity or poor
17 water management;
- 18 (7) Increase accountability for violations to deter
19 illegal activities such as unauthorized diversions,
20 pollution, or overuse of water resources by imposing
21 stricter penalties and fines; and



(8) Increase compliance with federal and state mandates to meet legal obligations under federal or state environmental protection laws, ensuring alignment with broader water management and conservation goals.

The purpose of this Act is to:

(1) Ensure that all violators of the state water code are held accountable for their violations by adding a minimum penalty and amending the maximum penalty, with scheduled incremental increases, per violation of the state water code and clarifying what constitutes a separate offense; and

(2) Require the commission on water resource management to consider certain factors when imposing penalties.

SECTION 2. Section 174C-15, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§174C-15 Penalties and common law remedies. (a) The commission may enforce its rules and orders adopted pursuant to this chapter by suit for injunction or for damages or both.

(b) Any person who ~~[violates any]~~:

(1) Violates any provision of this chapter~~[, or any]~~;



1 (2) Violates any rule adopted pursuant to this chapter[7
2 may];

3 (3) Violates any order of the commission;

4 (4) Fails to obtain a permit when a permit is required
5 under this chapter;

6 (5) Fails to comply with permit conditions; or

7 (6) Fails to comply with standardized water audit
8 requirements pursuant to Act 169, Session Laws of
9 Hawaii 2016,

10 shall be subject to a fine imposed by the commission. [Such
11 fine] The fine shall be no less than \$50 and shall not exceed
12 [\$5,000. For a continuing offense, each day during which the
13 offense is committed is a separate violation.] \$ _____ per
14 violation. Each day that a violation exists or continues to
15 exist shall constitute a separate offense. Penalties for
16 continuing violations shall be assessed from the earliest known
17 date of the violation. The earliest known date of a violation
18 shall be determined by the commission by a preponderance of the
19 evidence; provided that if the earliest known date cannot be
20 determined by a preponderance of the evidence, penalties for



1 continuing violations shall be assessed from the earliest date
2 the commission is made aware of the violation.

3 (c) When imposing a penalty, the commission shall consider
4 the following factors, including but not limited to:

5 (1) The nature, circumstances, extent, gravity, and
6 history of the violation and of any prior violations;

7 (2) The economic benefit to the violator, or anticipated
8 by the violator, resulting from the violation;

9 (3) The opportunity, difficulty, and history of corrective
10 action;

11 (4) Good faith efforts to comply;

12 (5) Degree of culpability; and

13 (6) Such other matters as justice may require.

14 ~~[(e)]~~ (d) No provision of this chapter shall bar the right
15 of any injured person to seek other legal or equitable relief
16 against a violator of this chapter.

17 ~~[(d)]~~ (e) Except as otherwise provided by law, the
18 commission or its authorized representative by proper delegation
19 may set, charge, and collect administrative fines ~~[or]~~ ; may
20 bring legal action to recover administrative fees and costs as
21 documented by receipts or affidavit, including ~~[attorneys']~~



1 attorney's fees and costs; ~~[or]~~ and may bring legal action to
2 recover administrative fines, fees, and costs, including
3 ~~[attorneys']~~ attorney's fees and costs, or payment for damages
4 resulting from a violation of this chapter or any rule adopted
5 pursuant to this chapter.

6 (f) The maximum fine per violation pursuant to subsection

7 (b) shall increase to:

8 (1) \$ beginning January 1, 2030;

9 (2) \$ beginning January 1, 2035;

10 (3) \$ beginning January 1, 2040; and

11 (4) \$ beginning January 1, 2045."

12 SECTION 3. If any provision of this Act, or the
13 application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held
14 invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or
15 applications of the Act that can be given effect without the
16 invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions
17 of this Act are severable.

18 SECTION 4. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
19 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
20 begun before its effective date.



1 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
2 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

3 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

State Water Code; Commission on Water Resource Management;
Penalties

Description:

Adds a minimum penalty and maximum penalty per violation of the State Water Code and makes each day that a violation exists or continues to exist a separate offense. Establishes factors the Commission on Water Resource Management must consider when determining the amount of the penalty. Increases maximum fines in five-year increments from 2030 to 2045. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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