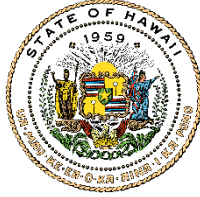


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND

Wednesday, February 5, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 19
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Senate Bill 19 proposes to appropriate funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this bill, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget Request.**

The mission of the Department's Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) is to work with the people of Hawai'i to manage, conserve and restore the state's unique aquatic resources and ecosystems for present and future generations. This measure would provide much-needed capacity for DAR to carry out this mission.

DAR processes up to 300 environmental reviews and 75 Special Activity Permits (SAPs) per year. In recent years, the number of requests for SAPs, film permits, and environmental reviews has increased, and DAR has struggled to keep up. This is despite DAR assigning additional staff to assist with permitting and environmental review, as well as efforts to streamline the processing of SAPs through modifications to the online application portal. Establishing two (2) new Aquatic Biologist positions for permitting and environmental review will enable DAR to process permits and environmental reviews thoroughly and in a timely manner to ensure that impacts to aquatic resources and habitats are minimized and mitigated.

Natural disasters and acute anthropogenic impact events are occurring with increasing frequency. Emergency preparedness is key to minimizing long-term damage when they occur. This bill would establish a new lead Aquatic Biologist position to coordinate environmental response to

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BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
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CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
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

emergencies, including response to storm events, ship groundings, oil spills, and other disasters. This position would develop response plans and provide training and coordination with DAR District Biologists and other agencies, such as the Hawai'i Department of Health, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the US Coast Guard.

DAR is currently dealing with major outbreaks of an invasive soft coral in Pearl Harbor and an invasive anemone in Kāne'ōhe Bay that threaten to severely alter the landscape of Hawai'i's coral reef ecosystem. Investing in the prevention and management of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is critical to ensure the integrity and resilience of our coral reefs. This bill would establish a new Aquatic Biologist position to serve as the lead biologist for DAR's AIS team to manage and prevent non-native species introduction via ship ballast water, vessel hull fouling, and other sources.

Fishing is a way of life for so many in Hawai'i. Ensuring fishing access and quality fishing opportunities for residents and visitors alike is a high priority for DAR. Due to staff retirement and internal reorganization, DAR currently lacks a position dedicated to supporting noncommercial fishing, which encompasses subsistence, cultural, and recreational fishing and gathering activities. This bill would establish a new Noncommercial Fisheries Aquatic Biologist position to focus on overseeing noncommercial fisheries projects, developing and implementing recreational and subsistence fishing opportunities, liaising with the fishing community, and improving noncommercial fisheries catch and effort surveys.

DAR currently has no civil service staff on Molokai, despite the growing needs of the community. Establishing two (2) Aquatic Biologist positions and two (2) Fishery Technician positions on Molokai will enable DAR to better serve the Molokai community through aquatic resource monitoring, collaborative research, issuance of licenses and permits, and education and outreach.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure.

SB-19

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:58:23 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline Leinau	Testifying for Malama Pupukea Waimea	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mālama Pūpūkea Waimea Supports SB1084 which appropriates funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources. Mahalo.

SB-19

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 9:35:52 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ted Bohlen	Testifying for Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hawaii Reef and Ocean Coalition **SUPPORTS** funding for additional positions at the DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources to manage, conserve, and restore our ocean resources and ecosystems for present and future generations.



February 5, 2025

Senate Water & Land Committee

RE: Comments on SB 19 and SB1084; Appropriates funds to the DLNR-Division of Aquatic Resources

Dear Chair Inouye and Committee Members,

For the Fishes, a Maui-based not for profit organization dedicated to the protection of coral reef wildlife, has consistently supported additional funding for DAR over many years, and especially, funding for additional staff to expedite necessary permit requests, such as Special Activity Permits (SAP), that are issued for non-commercial activities such as research, education, public display and ornamental aquaculture efforts.

However, we are concerned that the first 2 positions noted for funding, Aquatic Biologist IV and V, state that these staff positions are to conduct “permitting **and environmental review**.” While DLNR -DAR is mandated to prioritize the (natural) resource, and public access to that resource, decisions are often based on commercial stakeholder pressure on DAR, driven by profit-based interests.

This has been demonstrated in a number of cases where the Board of Land & Natural Resources unanimously rejected environmental impact statements on marine activities which DAR staff supported. As with all other state agencies and divisions, DAR should not have the ultimate authority nor responsibility to determine if an act or action satisfies environmental analysis, which is governed by our state Hawaii Environmental Policy Act.

Should the Committee pass this bill we recommend the Committee Report state that DAR “environmental review” is not meant to replace the formal Environmental Review process which occurs under Chapter 343, the Hawaii Environmental Policy Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



February 5, 2025

Senate Committee on Water & Land
Hawai'i State Legislature

Re: SUPPORT for Senate Bill 19, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources; and
SUPPORT for Senate Bill 1084, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the committee,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force supports SB 19 and SB 1084, relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources. These bills appropriate funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force represents more than 100 individuals and organizations who are committed to advancing the protection and restoration of Hawai'i marine resources. This work is not possible without the qualified and hardworking DLNR public servants who are responsible on a day-to-day basis for ensuring environmental regulations are implemented and enforced.

We deeply appreciate this committee's commitment to advancing solutions that empower communities while protecting Hawai'i's ocean resources. Funding for needed staffing at DLNR is vital to a healthy marine ecosystem. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the passage of these bills.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of these important measures.

The Ocean Legislative Task Force advocates for measures that promote funding for natural resource protection and restoration, ocean resources, coral reefs, subsistence fishing, and coastal resilience, and other priorities.



**HAWAI'I
FOOD+
POLICY**

Honolulu, HI 96813
food@purplemaia.org

LATE

February 4, 2025

To: Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante and the Senate Committee on Water and Land

Subject: **SB19**, Relating to the Department of Land and Natural Resources

Aloha,

Please pass SB19, which appropriates funds to establish positions within the Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources. We at Hawai'i Food+Policy are concerned for future generations and their access to Hawai'i's natural landscapes and resources. There are continual threats to local fishing and gathering which can be addressed by passing this bill. We are in favor of SB19 which aims to further manage, conserve, and restore the State's unique aquatic resources and ecosystems for present and future generations.

We strongly urge the committee to pass **SB19**. By supporting the important work of the Division of Aquatic Resources through funding various positions within the division, we believe that will have a positive impact on our environment and our community. We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo,
Jeanette Burdick & the Food+ Policy Team
#fixourfoodsystem

The Food+ Policy internship develops student advocates who learn work skills while increasing civic engagement to become emerging leaders. We focus on good food systems policy because we see the importance and potential of the food system in combating climate change and increasing the health, equity, and resiliency of Hawai'i communities.

In 2025, the cohort of interns are undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals working in the food system. They are a mix of traditional and nontraditional students, including parents and veterans, who have backgrounds in education, farming, public health, nutrition, and Hawaiian culture.

SB-19

Submitted on: 2/1/2025 4:44:19 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ron Tubbs	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We greatly need to support DAR with funding to manage fisheries sustainably. Please use this opportunity to effectively gather information to assess stocks and determine Maximum Sustainable Yields for fisheries to fight global warming with sustainable low carbon footprint highly renewable fisheries.

Sustainability is Key to Hawaii's future. As the most isolated island in the world, Hawaii is too dependent on tourism, the military, and other non-sustainable, [unreliable economic sources](#).

Marine fish are Hawaii's most renewable resource. Opah Moon Fish produces [300 million eggs a year per pair](#). Tuna produce 5 million to 15 million fry per female per spawn. Reef fish produce tens of thousands to millions of fry per spawn per female. Fish can renew and sustain current fishing practices if appropriately managed. We must support a managed sustainable fishery to create a more sustainable society, especially in isolated Hawaii.

Since the introduction of the first men to Hawaii in 400 A.D., land-based species have resulted in over 100 endemic plant species, 30 bird species, 74 insect species, and 41 tree snails [becoming endangered or extinct](#). Insects, Birds, snails, and many others are listed as Hawaii IUCN red species of concern. In 2023 8 more birds were removed from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants due to their confirmed extinction.

Marine Fish are more immune to global warming impacts, and No Pacific marine fish species have become extinct over the past historical period. Looking at the marine species extinctions of the past five global extinction-level events, marine fish are more immune to global impacts and will out-survive land-based species. It should be noted, however, that marine mammals and their low, long reproductive cycles make them more vulnerable than broadcast-spawning highly reproductive marine fish species.

Marine fish's vast geographical distribution, due to broadcast breeding and larval distribution over as much as five thousand miles and even other oceans like the Atlantic and Indian Ocean from and to Hawaii, makes them much *less vulnerable* to fishing and environmental impacts. Marine fish are more resistant to global warming temperature changes, pH changes, salinity changes, and other ecological changes than land-based species. Ocean Depth habitat range, the latitude of the Hawaiian Islands chain from 19 degrees to 28 degrees latitude, and 1500 miles of 132 atolls, reefs, and shoals create a vast, unique habitat range protecting Hawaii's ocean

biodiversity. Seventy percent of the earth is ocean, making marine fish in Hawaii less vulnerable to point-source pollution and global warming. Thanks, Ron Tubbs B.S. N.D. UHM

SB-19

Submitted on: 2/3/2025 2:52:10 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/5/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uilani Naipo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support and urge you to pass this measure.