

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

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA  
P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
FIRST DEPUTY  
CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER  
AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
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ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on  
WATER AND LAND  
and  
HIGHER EDUCATION

Tuesday, March 18, 2025  
3:15 p.m.

State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 309, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO FISHPONDS

House Bill 309, House Draft 1, proposes to establish a fishpond inventory working group with the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory of all state-owned fishponds. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill.**

The Department has a close working relationship with Hui Mālama Loko I'a, a collaborative network of practitioners, cultural leaders, educators, and communities dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and perpetuation of Hawaiian fishponds. The Department recognizes that loko i'a are an integral part of Hawaiian culture, history, and sustainability practices, and that they showcase the ecological knowledge of early Hawaiian communities. Loko i'a are invaluable cultural and ecological resources that contribute positively to coastal ecosystems and the well-being of their adjacent communities.

In conjunction with Hui members, the Department developed the Ho'āla Loko I'a program to streamline the permitting process for the restoration and maintenance of traditional Hawaiian fishpond systems. Approximately 20 community organizations have utilized the streamlined program since its inception in 2015.

The Department believes that developing an inventory of fishponds is an important next step in the restoration of additional loko i'a throughout the State

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

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DEAN M. MATSUKAWA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
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**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON WATER AND LAND AND HIGHER**  
**EDUCATION**

**MARCH 18, 2025**  
**3:15 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 229**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 309 HD1**  
**RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

Chair Inouye, Chair Kim, Vice Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 309 HD1. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land, conduct a literature review and appropriate funds. The Department supports this bill.

Documenting and mapping traditional Hawaiian fishponds will help preserve an important aspect of Hawaii's cultural food system heritage. The State's food security status would be positively impacted if viable fishponds were restored and traditional aquaculture practices were revived.

As such, the Department supports this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.





# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## ‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

### Legislative Testimony

### Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the  
Senate Committee on Water and Land  
Senate Committee on Higher Education  
Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at 3:15 p.m.

By

Darren T. Lerner, PhD

Director, University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program  
School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology

And

Michael Bruno, Provost

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

#### HB 309 HD1 – RELATING TO FISHPONDS

Chairs Inouye and Kim, Vice Chairs Elefante and Kidani, and Members of the Committees:

The University of Hawai'i (UH) supports the intent of this community initiative and provides the following comments on House Bill 309 HD1. This bill seeks to establish a fishpond inventory working group, led by Hawai'i Sea Grant, to create a comprehensive inventory of fishponds.

Hawai'i Sea Grant has long-standing collaborative working relationships with both the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and Hui Mālama Loko I'a, a network of practitioners, cultural leaders, educators, and communities dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and perpetuation of Hawaiian fishponds.

Hawai'i Sea Grant has supported the restoration of loko i'a and the perpetuation of loko i'a practice for decades as part of our mission to improve understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources. Loko i'a are invaluable cultural and ecological resources that support thriving coastal ecosystems, food security, and community resilience.

Hawai'i Sea Grant has partnered with Hui Mālama Loko I'a and DLNR on numerous projects. We look forward to continuing these partnerships and bringing the expertise of our program to support the important work of developing an inventory of fishponds.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments of this measure.



**STATE OF HAWAII  
HAWAII CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION & ADAPTATION  
COMMISSION  
POST OFFICE BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809**

**Co-Chairs:**  
Chair, DLNR  
Director, OPSD

**Commissioners:**  
Chair, Senate AEN  
Chair, Senate WTL  
Chair, House EEP  
Chair, House WAL  
Chairperson, HTA  
Chairperson, DOA  
CEO, OHA  
Chairperson, DHHL  
Director, DBEDT  
Director, DOT  
Director, DOH  
Chairperson, DOE  
Director, C+C DPP  
Director, Maui DP  
Director, Hawaii DP  
Director, Kauai DP  
The Adjutant General  
Manager, CZM

**Testimony of  
LEAH LARAMEE  
Climate Change Coordinator on behalf of  
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission Co-Chair Mary Alice Evans and  
Co-Chair Dawn N.S. Chang**

**Before the Senate Committees on  
WATER AND LAND  
&  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025  
3:15 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

**In consideration of  
HOUSE BILL 309, HOUSE DRAFT 1  
RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

House Bill 309 House Draft 1 establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review and appropriates funds. The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) **supports** this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request. The Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 different departments, committees and counties with the purpose of promoting ambitious, climate-neutral, culturally responsive strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation in a manner that is clean, equitable and resilient.

It is important for there to be a centralized system of mapping and tracking loko i'a (Hawaiian fishponds) as they are both impacted by, and play a role, in mitigating climate change. Loko i'a provide important ecosystem services (e.g. sediment retention, flood mitigation, wave attenuation, stormwater filtering), and function as important nature-based solutions. Climate change driven sea level rise (SLR) will negatively affect some loko i'a due to SLR-driven salinization causing impacts to food security and cultural practices in Hawai'i.

Currently, 63% of seafood consumed in Hawai'i is imported. By increasing aquaculture in Hawai'i, we can reduce our reliance on imported foods, provide jobs, and minimize the strain on our marine resources. By better understanding where fishponds historically and currently exist the state and partners can then better support the restoration of fishponds statewide, and result in valuable cultural and ecological services and climate resilience.

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



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 309 HD1  
RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

**LATE**

Senate Committee on Water and Land  
Hawai'i State Capitol

March 18, 2025

1:05 PM

Conference Room 229

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Dear Chairs Inouye and Mercado Kim, Vice Chairs Elefante and Kidani, and Members of the Senate Committees on Water and Land and Higher Education:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) submits testimony in SUPPORT of HB309 HD1. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the UH Sea Grant College Program and appropriates funds to support creation of inventory and mapping of all fishponds on state land.

Loko i'a (fishponds) are a valuable traditional and cultural resource that also hold the potential to help the State of Hawai'i meet its modern food security and sustainability goals. The ancient Hawaiian ahupua'a system famously supported a population of over 1 million people; more people than currently live on present day O'ahu. Loko i'a were central to the system and, if re-implemented today, would help to restore native ecosystems, reduce food insecurity, and support local community based collaborative resource stewardship.

A statewide inventory is a positive first step toward widespread loko i'a restoration. Loko i'a restoration both protects Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices and promotes the use of resources in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of the self-sufficiency of the State. For the reasons above, we respectfully urge this committee to pass HB309 HD1.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important matter for Hawai'i's sustainable future.

**RICHARD T. BISSEN, JR.**  
Mayor

**JOSIAH K. NISHITA**  
Managing Director



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**  
COUNTY OF MAUI  
200 SOUTH HIGH STREET  
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793  
[www.mauicounty.gov](http://www.mauicounty.gov)

TO: Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair  
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair  
Committee on Water and Land

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair  
Committee on Higher Education

FROM: Richard T. Bissen, Jr., Mayor  
Rogerene Arce, Director of Agriculture

DATE: March 17, 2025

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT OF HB309 HD1, RELATING TO FISHPONDS**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of this important measure. The act establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawaii Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review. Appropriates funds.

We **SUPPORT** this measure for the following reasons:

1. Loko i‘a are critical and vital public infrastructure that historically and traditionally are important to our culture, identity, and the overall well-being of our people here in Hawai‘i.
2. In this modern day our Loko i‘a address multiple situations and challenges that currently plague Hawai‘i. Secure and functional Loko i‘a enhances our environmental and ecological health, protects our cultural resources, and is one of the most sustainable and resilient agriculture systems in the World. The revitalization of our Loko i‘a is foundational to our communities moving forward and adapting to the age of climate change.

3. This Loko i'a inventory is an important first step to increasing our situational awareness on the state of our fishponds. From there, we can begin to plan on and move towards the implementation of the restoration of our Loko i'a.

Mahalo for your consideration.



Testimony Before The  
Senate Committee on Water and Land (WTL)  
Senate Committee on Higher Education (HRE)  
**IN SUPPORT OF HB309 HD1**  
March 18, 2025, 3:15 p.m., Room 229 via Videoconference

We are Olan Leimomi Fisher and Brenda Asuncion Lima, Kua'āina Advocate and Hui Mālama Loko I'a Coordinator, respectively, testifying on behalf of [Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo \(or KUA\)](#). "Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo" stands for "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and our acronym "KUA" means "backbone." **Our mission is to connect and empower communities to improve their quality of life through the collective care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage, serving as a "backbone organization" that supports creative and community-driven solutions to problems stemming from environmental degradation.** Hawai'i's biocultural resources continue to be negatively impacted by political, economic, and social changes, and the increasing dangers of climate change make fostering and empowering resilient communities acutely critical.

Currently KUA supports three major networks of: (1) over 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." **Our shared vision is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'ĀINA MOMONA – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.**

**KUA strongly supports HB309 HD1 as an incremental step toward 'āina momona.**

This measure would establish a working group in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant program, Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), and the Hui Mālama Loko I'a to develop an inventory of all fishponds on state land. HB309 HD1 would help kickstart a fishpond inventory and pave the way for DLNR to maintain the database going forward, in the process attracting more community group partners to be able to restore and manage their own fishponds. The benefits of healthy loko i'a are numerous – culturally, spiritually, environmentally, and economically, and with increasing threats to these wahi pana (special and sacred places), this bill comes at a critical time to dedicate more resources to fishpond protection and revitalization.

Prior to 1900, **Hawai'i had close to 500 flourishing loko i'a, sustaining communities in numerous ways including through sustainable local seafood, limu, shellfish, and fertilizer.** (See Generally, [Loko I'a Needs Assessment, 2021](#)). The U.S. Organic Act of 1900 (the Act) abandoned the support of most semblances of Native Hawaiian governance, especially in regard to biocultural resource management. The Act then transferred the aegis of

governance – or lack thereof – to a U.S. laissez faire market system, ended Konohiki Fishery Management, and condemned loko i'a – extinguishing most of the existing ownership and operations of these systems. For context, in 1901 the catch and sale data for commercial 'ama'ama (mullet) – believed to be mostly fishpond-raised – decreased from close to 800,000 pounds of fish to less than 3,000 pounds today, with an estimated 88% of all food consumed in Hawai'i now imported, and reports showing that about 60% of our seafood alone is imported.

**Rebuilding our robust and sustainable local food systems is critical to community resilience in the face of more frequent natural disasters and political changes**, such as the devastating Lahaina fires and 2018 floods, climate change, pandemics, and recent widespread federal funding losses.

After the successful passage of [Act 124, HB2626 HD1 SD2](#) last year to ensure that any state-owned fishpond lease management plan utilizes time-tested practices through native Hawaiian scientific knowledge best-adapted to Hawai'i's environment, KUA found from both internal and public discussions that no current or active inventory of state-owned fishponds exists or is maintained by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). However, the [Hō'ala Loko I'a Program](#) was implemented in 2015 for state-owned fishpond permit streamlining, with to-date over 20 fishpond permits approved on six of the main Hawaiian Islands (an average processing time reduced from many years to under one month). We are also aware of at least three state-owned ponds currently leased by community members, with two specifically for community-based restoration activities. Indeed, as shown from the increase in permitted projects and recent lease finalization for state-owned Kalauha'iha'i Pond on O'ahu, the momentum is growing for interest by communities to restore and steward their fishponds once again. **Community-based loko i'a restoration and stewardship serves as a resounding example of the endless benefits to be realized through collective sharing of responsibilities to care for our island home and resources.**

Establishing a working group to develop an inventory that could then be easily and actively maintained by DLNR would add to this momentum enabling more Native Hawaiian and local communities to restore and manage their fishponds, increasing more multi-sector partnerships where our "shared responsibility" to care for our island resources would benefit all of Hawai'i. As we build a better future for our keiki, we appreciate creative and collaborative approaches that build the capacity and skills of the next generation with intention, and in a way that benefits ongoing community efforts with loko i'a as a catalyst for ecosystem regeneration.

The communities we work with are committed to ensuring the long-term health of our biocultural resources that they have cared for and depended on for generations since time immemorial. **We believe our environment, the foundation of our very existence, is about long-term investment and a vision of 'āina momona.** To get there requires taking the steps necessary for greater self-sufficiency, development of new and more innovative career pathways, mindsets, relationships, and resources for mālama 'āina efforts that encourage and build upon the time-tested techniques of our ancestors in Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui loa for this opportunity to submit testimony. Please **PASS** HB309 HD1.

**Aloha 'Āina Momona no nā kau ā kau.**



# SIERRA CLUB OF HAWAI'I

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

March 18, 2025

3:15 PM

Conference Room 229

### In **SUPPORT** of **HB309 HD1**: RELATING TO FISHPONDS

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Aloha Chair Inouye, Chair Kim, Vice Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committees,

On behalf of our over 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i **SUPPORTS HB309 HD1**, which represents a critical step towards the restoration and rejuvenation of our loko i'a, and by extension, our food security, cultural integrity, estuary health, and social fabric.

Hawai'i's loko i'a, or fishponds, are as remarkable as they are special. The various types of loko i'a found in our islands were constructed using highly sophisticated engineering and design techniques found nowhere else in the Pacific. They played a vital role in our islands' traditional food systems, which sustainably supported an estimated population of upwards of one million residents prior to the arrival of Western explorers. Their construction and stewardship also served important social functions, and they invariably held and continue to hold deep cultural significance in mo'olelo and cultural practices unique to each fishpond.

By making an investment in inventorying the remaining loko i'a owned by the state, this measure will provide a critical first step towards their restoration and rejuvenation. This in turn will help us to rebuild a foundation of our islands' food security – an especially critical need as our climate continues to destabilize, and as our dependency on imported food becomes ever more fragile. Restored and actively maintained loko i'a will further protect our ocean ecosystems, including through the mitigation of runoff and the enhancement and preservation of estuarine habitat. Finally, the community-driven restoration and stewardship of loko i'a that may be facilitated by this measure will also uplift a long-established foundation of our social and cultural fabric, providing opportunities for practitioners, students, community groups, and the broader public to connect over culturally grounded and place-based science, practices, and values.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club of Hawai'i urges the Committees to **PASS** HB309 HD1. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.



# HISTORIC HAWAII FOUNDATION

680 Iwilei Road Suite 690, Honolulu HI 96817 • (808) 523-2900 • [preservation@historichawaii.org](mailto:preservation@historichawaii.org) • [www.historichawaii.org](http://www.historichawaii.org)

**TO:** Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair  
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair  
Committee on Water and Land (WTL)

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair  
Committee on Higher Education (HRE)

**FROM:** Kiersten Faulkner, Executive Director  
Historic Hawai'i Foundation

**Committee:** Tuesday, March 18, 2025  
3:15 p.m.  
Via Video Conference and Conference Room 229

**RE: HB 309 HD 1, Relating to Fishponds**

On behalf of Historic Hawai'i Foundation (HHF), I am writing in **support for HB 309 HD 1**. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review, and appropriates funds.

Hawaiian fishpond systems, loko i'a, are some of Hawai'i's most significant traditional cultural resources. They are tangible evidence of Hawaiian innovation in the areas of engineering, education, hydrology and aquaculture. Fishponds were a vital component of the agricultural, economic and natural resource management systems for native Hawaiian communities. Functioning fishponds are valuable cultural and ecological resources that can provide resilience for coastal ecosystems and their adjacent communities. They also contribute to sustainability, food sovereignty and natural resource management goals. Research shows that over 400 fishponds once functioned across the main Hawaiian Islands and provided a significant and sustainable food source to the Islands' pre-contact population, estimated at 1,000,000 people.

Over time, the traditional fishponds suffered from urbanization, changing socio-economic and agricultural systems, invasive species and damage from storms, flooding and tsunamis. However, there is renewed and growing interest in the repair, restoration, maintenance, and operation of traditional Hawaiian fishponds, for their cultural, economic and ecological value. An inventory of the remaining fishponds is a necessary element to stimulate traditional Hawaiian cultural activities and the restoration of fishpond systems. The community benefits will include supporting traditional Hawaiian cultural activities and the restoration of fishpond systems and their related food security and ecosystem services.

Therefore, Historic Hawai'i Foundation supports HB 309 HD 1.

# Hawai'i Ocean Legislative Task Force



March 18, 2025

Hawai'i State Legislature  
Senate Committee on Water & Land  
Senate Committee on Higher Education

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 309 HD1, Relating to Fishponds

Aloha Chairs Inouye & Mercado Kim, Vice Chairs Elefante & Kidani, and Members of the Committees,

The Ocean Legislative Task Force strongly supports HB309 HD1, relating to fishponds, which takes an important step toward restoring and sustaining Hawai'i's traditional fishponds. As a coalition of over 120 individuals from diverse organizations and communities, we recognize the critical role loko i'a play in strengthening food security, cultural heritage, and coastal resilience.

Establishing a working group to create and maintain a comprehensive fishpond inventory would provide a valuable foundation for streamlining restoration efforts. By ensuring that this inventory remains actively updated by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, there will be greater access to resources and support necessary to manage fishponds effectively. This initiative will also foster stronger partnerships, reinforcing the shared responsibility of caring for Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources.

Loko i'a are more than historical sites; they are living examples of sustainable aquaculture that can serve as a model for ecosystem regeneration. Investing in fishpond restoration not only revitalizes local food systems but also builds capacity for future generations to continue this stewardship. This measure represents an opportunity to merge traditional knowledge with modern restoration efforts, ensuring that communities have the tools and collaboration needed to sustain these efforts over time.

We deeply appreciate this committee's commitment to advancing solutions that empower communities while protecting Hawai'i's ocean resources. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the passage of this bill.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this important measure.

*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.*

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy  
Supporting HB309 HD1, Relating to Fishponds.  
Committee on Water and Land  
Committee on Higher Education  
March 18, 2025 at 3:15 pm  
Conference Room 229 and via Videoconference**

Dear Chairs Inouye and Kim, Vice Chairs Elefante and Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify today. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Hawai'i and Palmyra supports HB309 HD1, which establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review.

TNC is a member of Hui Mālama Loko I'a, a community network dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and perpetuation of Hawaiian fishponds that has worked collaboratively with the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant Program and the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) on multiple projects. This bill would establish a working group that would develop an inventory of all loko i'a on state land, which would enable DLNR to identify and care for these places through increased community partnerships and participation in the restoration and protection of loko i'a throughout Hawai'i. Additionally, TNC co-manages Loko I'a O Kīholo with partners Hui Aloha Kīholo and coordinates the Hawai'i Island network of fishpond and anchialine pond managers – Hui Loko.

Loko i'a hold countless benefits for our 'āina, community health and wellbeing, food sovereignty, and cultural integrity in Hawai'i. Loko i'a improve water quality by mitigating runoff and trapping sediment, enhance estuarine habitats by providing safe spaces for the cultivation of many native species of plants and wildlife, and protect shorelines from erosion by absorbing wave energy. Dedicating more resources for these sacred places is critical to their preservation for the benefit of future generations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB309 HD1.

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*Guided by science, TNC is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 nature preserves and have supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands.*

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*Founders:* Samuel A. Cooke Herbert C. Cornuelle



March 17, 2025

To: Chair Lorraine Inouye, Vice Chair Brandon Elefante and the Senate Committee on Water and Land; Chair Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Michelle Kidani and the Senate Committee on Higher Education

Subject: **HB309 HD1, Relating to Fishponds**

Aloha,

I am submitting this testimony **in support of HB309 HD1** to establish a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program, to create an inventory and map of all fishponds on state land and conduct a literature review of sources such as Hawaiian language newspapers to compile this data.

Loko i'a (fishpond) systems play an important cultural and ecological role as part of larger ahupua'a restoration. In addition to serving as important sites of food production, reactivated loko i'a provide opportunities for building community connection through collaborative stewardship efforts and serve as a component of a broader movement for 'āina-based education. Practitioners are also observing a connection between loko i'a restoration and the health of nearshore fisheries.

Hawai'i Sea Grant's emphasis on collaboration across the university and with the people of Hawai'i coupled with its focus on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture make it the ideal host for this much needed working group on mapping loko i'a, a natural extension to the program's ongoing partnerships with fishpond practitioners and organizations.

"I ka wā ma mua, i ka wā ma hope" – we look to the past as a guide to the future. In the face of food supply and climate vulnerabilities, this 'ōlelo no'eau reminds us of the value of compiling much needed data on the locations and conditions of loko i'a in order to support a more resilient future. By creating an inventory of fishponds on state land, this measure provides an important first step towards revitalizing loko i'a across Hawai'i. I urge you to support HB309 HD1.

Mahalo,

Jeanette Burdick & the Food+ Policy Team  
#fixourfoodsystem

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**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.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 12:26:03 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/18/2025 3:15:00 PM

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

Comments:

Hawai'i Reef and Ocean Coalition **SUPPORTS** this bill. Fishponds are important cultural and environmental resources that should be restored.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 6:24:02 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/18/2025 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenny Yagodich	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

SUPPORT for HB309 HD1 to establish a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review, and to appropriate funds.

Mahalo

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/13/2025 10:03:50 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/18/2025 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Daniel Amato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB309. Fishonds are an important part of Hawaii's history and Hawaiian culture. They need to be preserved and ideally revitalized. Please support HB309. Thanks-Daniel Amato

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/14/2025 10:44:55 AM

Testimony for WTL on 3/18/2025 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Marcia Kemble	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings Committe Chairs and Committee members,

Loko i‘a (fishpond) systems play an important cultural and ecological role as part of larger ahupua‘a restoration. In addition to serving as important sites of food production, reactivated loko i‘a provide opportunities for building community connection through collaborative stewardship efforts. Practitioners are also observing a connection between loko i‘a restoration and the health of nearshore fisheries.

By creating an inventory of all state-owned lokoi‘a, this measure provides an important first step towards identifying next steps to revitalize more loko i‘a across Hawai‘i. Please support HB309 HD1.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Marcia Kemble

Makiki

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 2:17:52 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/18/2025 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Carmela Resuma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure.

**HB-309-HD-1**

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 7:14:07 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/18/2025 3:15:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kathy Shimata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives,

My name is Kathy Shimata & I live in Honolulu.

I am writing in **support for HB 309 HD 1**. The bill establishes a fishpond inventory working group within the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program to create an inventory and map of all state-owned fishponds and conduct a literature review, and appropriates funds.

Native Hawaiian fishponds contribute to sustainability, food sovereignty and natural resource management goals. Research shows that over 400 fishponds once functioned across the main Hawaiian Islands and provided a significant and sustainable food source to the Islands' pre-contact population, estimated at 1,000,000 people.

I urge you to support HB309.

Mahalo,

Kathy Shimata

Honolulu. 96822