

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

POST OFFICE BOX 621
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**Testimony of
CARTY S. CHANG
Interim Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND**

**Friday, February 13, 2015
10:00 A.M.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 822
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO
THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

House Bill 822 proposes to appropriate \$350,000 of general revenues in Fiscal Year 2015-2016 and Fiscal Year 2016-2017 for operating expenses and staffing costs of the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts (HACD). **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this bill provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in our Executive Budget request.**

The purpose of the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Program is to educate, construct, maintain, and assist in the development of conservation plans to protect soil and water resources. Each SWCD is operated by a five-member volunteer board. HACD is an umbrella organization formed by the 16 SWCDs under Chapters 180 and 180C, Hawaii Revised Statutes, and administratively attached to the Department. In FY 2014-2015, HACD and the SWCDs will receive a total of \$68,400 in general funds and \$210,000 in interdepartmental transfer funds from the Department of Agriculture for their operations through the LNR 141 Program. Other required funds for their operation, staffing and implementation of projects must be sought in the form of grants from other agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

CARTY S. CHANG.
INTERIM CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

DANIEL S. QUINN
INTERIM FIRST DEPUTY

W. ROY HARDY
ACTING 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

cullen4-Rachele

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2015 9:11 AM
To: waltestimony
Cc: ahmai@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB822 on Feb 13, 2015 10:00AM*

HB822

Submitted on: 2/12/2015

Testimony for WAL on Feb 13, 2015 10:00AM in Conference Room 325

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Karen Ah Mai	Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts	Support	Yes

Comments:

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Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc.

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
Friday February 13, 2015 10:00 a.m. Room 325

HB 822

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Appropriates moneys for the Hawaii association of conservation districts to assist
with its staffing and operating costs.

Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Cullen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Alan Gottlieb, and I am a rancher and the Government Affairs Chairperson for the Hawaii Cattlemen's Council. The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council, Inc. (HCC) is the Statewide umbrella organization comprised of the five county level Cattlemen's Associations. Our 130+ member ranchers represent over 60,000 head of beef cows; more than 75% of all the beef cows in the State. Ranchers are the stewards of approximately 25% of the State's total land mass.

The Hawaii Cattlemen's Council strongly supports HB 822

The Preamble of HB 822 very accurately states the vital role the 16 Soil & Water Conservation Districts play in Hawaii, in protecting the environment. While the Districts are a quasi-governmental board under the Department of Land & Natural Resources with community volunteer District Directors, the Districts are ridiculously underfunded by the State and receive little assistance to do their vitally important work for the people of Hawaii.

Please support this bill and the funding the Districts desperately need, which they will leverage to do much more than the bill provides.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on this important matter.



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February 13, 2015

HEARING BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

TESTIMONY ON HB 822
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION
DISTRICTS

Room 325
10:00 AM

Aloha Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Cullen, and Members of the Committee:

I am Christopher Manfredi, President of the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFBF is comprised of 1,932 farm family members statewide, and serves as Hawaii's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

HFB strongly supports HB 822, which seeks an appropriation for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts to assist with its staffing and operating costs.

The Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) are mandated by HRS §180. The SWCD is comprised of volunteer directors that are closely tied to Island communities. Many of these SWCD directors are also farmers, ranchers and members of HFB. They understand the issues related to land use, stewardship, resource management and agriculture.

The 16 SWCDs assist the agricultural communities throughout the entire State. They help farmers and ranchers develop and process conservation plans and address issues relating to erosion, water quality, agricultural water, and grading and grubbing plan reviews.

State of Hawaii Department of Health (DOH) has historically funded districts \$207,000 annually, for the staffing of Conservation Specialists. Effective December 31, 2013, DOH totally eliminated these funds and has not provided any replacement funding. Thus there is a backlog of conservation plans throughout parts of the State (particularly Oahu).

Under these tough economic times, the SWCDs funding continues to get squeezed at the State, County and Federal levels. The requested funds, while nominal, are vitally important for farmers, ranchers, agricultural landowners, livestock, wildlife, the environment and the present and future citizens of the State of Hawaii.

Since all SWCD Directors are unpaid volunteers, SWCDs take pressure off county planning departments and help alleviate backlogs. In working through public-private partnerships, SWCDs provide free engineering services and technical assistance for low-impact projects. These cost savings are reflected in lower food and foliage production costs that are ultimately saved by consumers and make Hawaii's producers more competitive in the marketplace.

HFB considers the SWCDs a vital partner in Hawaii's agricultural Industry and our Island communities.

Please pass HB 822.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure of critical importance.

**LARRY JEFTS FARMS, LLC
PO BOX 27
KUNIA, HAWAII 96759
(808) 688-2892**

HB 822, Making An Appropriation to The Hawaii Association of
Conservation Districts
House WAL Committee
Friday, February 13, 2015
10:00 am
Conference Room 325

Testimony by: Larry Jeffs
Position: Support

Chair Yamane, and Members of the House WAL Committee:

I am Larry Jeffs, owner and operator of Larry Jeffs Farms, LLC, which is part of our family-run business of farms on Oahu and Molokai, under the administrative umbrella of Sugarland Growers, Inc. We have more than 35 years of Hawaii farm experience on Molokai and Oahu. I am a volunteer director for the West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

The SWCD framework and authority were created through HRS 180. It helps farmers and ranchers with conservation plan development as well as assist respective County governments' with grading permit and plan reviews. Throughout the State, 80 volunteer directors in 16 SWCD work with local area partners to accomplish its work that includes conservation and environmental education outreach.

Your support of this funding request will go far toward strengthening environmental stewardship of agriculture soil and water use, particularly as Hawaii welcomes many new farmers and ranchers. It will also facilitate eligibility of farmers and ranchers for federal and state programs that require conservation plans and its implementation at the farm or ranch level.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony

cullen4-Rachele

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 11:28 PM
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Cc: ashman.janet@gmail.com
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HB822

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
J. Ashman	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

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LATE

cullen2-Sheila Marie

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Garret Hew	Individual	Support	No

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cullen2-Sheila Marie

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
james Kimo Falconer	Individual	Support	No

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kanoë Malani	Individual	Support	No

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Submitted on: 2/12/2015

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Maggie Kramp	Individual	Support	No

Comments: State voluntary boards cannot adequately provide enough time to initiate, implement, and support its entire program. Please pass HB822 for the SWCDs to better serve the farmers, ranchers, land users, civic groups, schools and government agencies on state and federal programs relating to water quality and conservation of our natural resources.

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LATE

Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts

Testimony in Strong Support of HB 822
Making an Appropriation to the
Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts

Good morning Chair Yamane, Vice Chair Cullen, and Committee Members

I am Karen Ah Mai, chair of the South Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District and representing the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts, made up of 16 districts across the state.

I would like to provide a context on why funding for the Hawaii Association of Conservation Districts is so important.

First, agriculture is growing in importance in Hawaii. From US Department of Agriculture statistics, the economic value of agricultural products has grown between 2007 and 2012.

From the US Department of Agriculture statistics, the market value of agricultural products has grown 29% in the period 2007 to 2012:

<u>County</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>Growth</u>
Hawaii	\$202 million	\$247 million	22%
Kauai	45 million	64 million	43%
Maui	139 million	188 million	35%
Oahu	126 million	161 million	28%
STATE	512 million	660 million	29%

The state total market value for agricultural products in 2012, the latest available data, was \$660 million, a 29% increase in 5 years. The trend is toward increasing growth. The number of farms is increasing on Oahu, due to the transition from plantations to smaller plots. On the Neighbor Islands, the number of farms is down, but the average acreage is larger. On all islands, the majority of the farms are less than 10 acres, indicating an increase in smaller operations.

Second, there is increased concern over food self-sufficiency and sustainability in case of disaster, along with increased demand for local products and concerns on food safety.

Our concerns with growing agricultural sector is that many of the farmers are new to the industry. On Oahu, the transition from pineapple and sugar to smaller scale agriculture has encouraged a proliferation of first generation and immigrant farmers.

Farm types and assistance needed:

- Large farms: already pretty well versed in techniques, food safety, and

environmental protection

- Federal Farm Bill clients: stable land tenure, equipped with conservation plans on how to farm responsibly with respect to US agricultural standards
- Small farmers: farmers with needs, known or unknown, to responsibly handle the crops and land to keep the ag lands productive and sustainable
 - we are speaking about county rules and regulations regarding grading, grubbing, and stockpiling
 - irrigation such that neighboring parcels are not victims of inadvertant or irresponsible irrigation practices
 - responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides
 - techniques of crop management: rotation, cover crops

Role of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts

- work with county engineers, who are more oriented toward construction than agriculture to provide the technical input on standards for grading and grubbing permits
- work with the spectrum of farmers on best practices to preserve the fertility of agricultural lands
- whereas federal programs direct their resources to those who can meet their standards of stable land tenure and national priorities, there are many who do not qualify, who do not want to be in a government program, or who just need some help in doing things the right way
- using the facilities of our partner, the NRCS, we have conservation specialists who go out and provide conservation technical assistance to those who do not qualify for or who do not want the complexities involved in governmental assistance
- this is a relatively low-cost way to mitigate inadvertant damage to our ag lands

We are asking for your help in being able to maintain this program.

- it had been funded by a barrel tax allocation but that ceased in 2012. HDOA has temporarily funded one conservation specialist per county to assist.
- the demand is such that we cannot keep up with the requests for service
 - Conservation Technical Assistance, directly to the farmers
 - outreach events
 - counties have provided some funding, but briefly, it is proportionate to the importance of ag in the island economies; the biggest growth is on Oahu but the support from City and County of Honolulu is low compared to the risk of food sustainability in the event of a disaster

While we would enjoy having a full complement of staff to be able to service the needs, we are asking only to maintain the current level of state support until we are able to develop a more stable income source to cover the costs of delivering the services

Summary

- the economic value of the agricultural sector is growing: from \$512m in 2007 to \$161m in 2012, a 29% increase statewide
- state support for technical assistance services has decreased from about \$330,000

to 0

- until a stable funding model can be developed, the SWCDs need the state government to assist in the delivery of technical assistance services to those farmers who are critical in the movement toward food sustainability and economic viability in the state

We strongly support this bill and ask for your support in making it possible for the growing agricultural sector to prosper sustainably, and contribute to the economic well-being of the population in Hawaii. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.