A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO TRAILS.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the division of forestry and wildlife of the department of land and natural resources has a current statewide inventory of one hundred twenty-eight trail-and-road features spanning approximately eight hundred fifty-five miles. Trails include parking areas, comfort stations, pavilions, picnic areas, and other facilities that are regularly used by the public.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, fifty-nine per cent of Hawaii residents participate in outdoor recreation each year. Outdoor recreation, which includes hiking, contributes to a high quality of life and attracts and sustains employers and families. Outdoor recreation in Hawaii generates $7,800,000,000 in consumer spending annually, sixty-eight thousand direct jobs, $2,400,000,000 in wages and salaries, and $604,000,000 in state and local tax revenue. Investing in outdoor infrastructure, such as hiking trails, attracts
employers and active workforces, thereby ensuring communities in Hawaii thrive economically and socially.

However, keeping up with the rising demand for trail use remains a constant challenge for the department of land and natural resources in Hawaii. Heavy use and limited operational capacity have curbed the level of maintenance on trail features. For example, Manoa falls trail on Oahu requires frequent staff visits to maintain dated facilities, which diverts staff and maintenance resources away from other trails located statewide. Furthermore, remote trail locations raise the cost of maintaining facilities and stretch operation capacities, while vandalism and irresponsible trail use also draw from the limited pool of available resources. Thus, additional funds to manage these trails should be expended to keep pace with the growing demand for trail use and ensure public safety.

Furthermore, along with the popularity of wilderness hiking has come a growing number of mountain rescues occurring each year. Various internet adventure websites have promoted wrong or misleading information that places hikers in danger, leading to uninformed hikers getting injured while on the trails, or hiking on trails that are unmaintained or prohibited. The
The number of Honolulu fire department rescues in mountainous areas on Oahu has nearly tripled between 2006 and 2016. The Honolulu fire department has reported that crews have responded to fifty-one mountain rescues during the first three months of 2017 after making two hundred sixty rescues in 2016 and one hundred eighty-seven rescues in 2015. According to the department of land and natural resources, if this trend continues, the number of annual mountain rescues will double by 2024. Hiker safety education can promote this popular recreational activity while decreasing the number of mountain rescues, which have a search and rescue operational price tag of $1,500 per hour, including helicopter rescue.

Lastly, the popularity of hiking has also resulted in the need for hiker etiquette education and outreach. For example, some trails that are located in residential neighborhoods have gained immense popularity and have resulted in a dramatic increase in complaints regarding naive or disrespectful trail users. Complaints include loud noises and talking during late hours of the night or in the early morning hours, blatant littering, tracking of mud on neighborhood residents' lawns, and illegal parking. As a result, some frustrated neighborhood
residents have proposed the closure of some trail heads to
prevent the nuisance that disrespectful hikers have caused.
Thus, the exercise of appropriate hiker etiquette will help to
promote hiker safety and the continued use of the hiking trails.
Therefore, the legislature further finds that maintaining
trails and facilities requires reliable capital investment for
routine repairs and reasonable operational support for regular
maintenance. Furthermore, a pervasive public awareness campaign
to educate hikers regarding hiker safety as well as hiker
etiquette will assist in reducing future hiking incidents.

The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the
department of land and natural resources to improve nā ala hele,
the Hawaii statewide trail program, by improving access to and
maintaining state controlled recreational trails statewide and
promoting hiker safety and hiker etiquette education and
outreach.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $1,800,000 or so much
thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2018-2019 to improve
nā ala hele, the Hawaii statewide trail and access program, by:
(1) Improving access to and maintaining state controlled
recreational trails statewide; and

(2) Developing and implementing a public awareness
campaign that promotes hiker safety and hiker
etiquette education and outreach;

provided that any funds appropriated pursuant to this section
shall be in addition to and shall not supplant any portion of
the base budget of the department of land and natural resources.

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

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.
Report Title:
Nā Ala Hele; Hawaii Statewide Trail and Access System; Trail Maintenance and Improvement; Hiker Safety and Etiquette Education and Outreach; Department of Land and Natural Resources; Appropriation

Description:
Makes an appropriation to improve nā ala hele, the Hawaii statewide trail and access program, by improving access to and maintaining state controlled recreational trails statewide and promoting hiker safety and hiker etiquette education and outreach. (SD1)

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