
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the division of
2 conservation and resources enforcement of the department of land
3 and natural resources has vast responsibility for enforcing
4 state laws related to natural and cultural resources on over one
5 million acres of state land and three million acres of state
6 ocean waters. Many of the lands and waters under the
7 responsibility of the division are in remote, off road, or
8 inaccessible areas, creating obstacles to timely and effective
9 investigation, evidence gathering, and prosecution for natural
10 and cultural resource violations. Violators often are highly
11 aware of, and exploit, the access limitations of the division
12 and focus their illegal activities in areas or at times when the
13 division cannot observe or investigate alleged violations in a
14 timely manner.

15 The legislature further finds that unmanned aircraft
16 systems, commonly known as drones, provide a unique and powerful
17 tool for monitoring potentially illegal activity on public lands



1 and can aid effective enforcement. The legislature recognizes
2 that this kind of modern enforcement tool can provide an
3 efficient, cost-effective, and valuable method of obtaining
4 admissible evidence for enforcement proceedings, as well as
5 deter illegal conduct on public lands. A number of other
6 states, such as California and Texas, have developed programs
7 that authorize unmanned aircraft systems for natural resources
8 monitoring, enforcement, and investigation. In Hawaii, the
9 Honolulu police department has a policy that authorizes
10 deployment of unmanned aircraft systems for specific operations
11 and sets forth procedures regarding the use of the recordings as
12 evidence. The Honolulu police department policy recognizes that
13 unmanned aircraft systems provide efficient enforcement tools
14 that enhance police effectiveness and public safety.

15 The legislature also finds that providing the department of
16 land and natural resources specific authority to establish and
17 operate an unmanned aircraft systems program under the division
18 of conservation and resources enforcement is essential to
19 enhancing compliance with state natural and cultural resource
20 laws.

21 The purpose of this Act is to:



- 1 (1) Require the department of land and natural resources
2 to establish an unmanned aircraft systems program that
3 is compliant with federal and state laws;
- 4 (2) Authorize the use of unmanned aircraft systems to
5 monitor, investigate, and obtain admissible evidence
6 of natural and cultural resource violations;
- 7 (3) Require the department of land and natural resources
8 to maintain detailed records of unmanned aircraft
9 systems usage and the effectiveness of the program;
10 and
- 11 (4) Beginning January 1, 2026, require an annual report to
12 the legislature on the unmanned aircraft systems
13 program.

14 SECTION 2. Chapter 199, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
15 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
16 and to read as follows:

17 "§199- Unmanned aircraft system program. (a) No later
18 than June 30, 2024, the department of land and natural resources
19 shall establish an unmanned aircraft systems program, which
20 shall be compliant with all applicable federal and state laws,



1 to assist the conservation and resources enforcement program in
2 carrying out its duties under this chapter.

3 (b) Conservation and resources enforcement officers may
4 use unmanned aircraft systems to monitor, investigate, and
5 obtain evidence of natural and cultural resource violations to
6 carry out the purposes of this chapter.

7 (c) The department of land and natural resources shall:

8 (1) Maintain detailed records of the use of unmanned
9 aircraft systems and the effectiveness of the unmanned
10 aircraft systems program; and

11 (2) Submit information required by paragraph (1) and any
12 proposed legislation to the legislature no later than
13 January 1, 2026, and each year thereafter.

14 (d) The department of land and natural resources shall
15 adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to carry out the purposes of
16 this section."

17 SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

18 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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H.B. NO. 1200

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INTRODUCED BY:

David Ramos
JAN 24 2023



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Report Title:

DLNR; Conservation and Resources Enforcement; Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Description:

Requires the department of land and natural resources to establish an unmanned aircraft systems program. Authorizes conservation and resources enforcement officers to use unmanned aircraft systems. Requires the department of land and natural resources to submit an annual report of the effectiveness of the unmanned aircraft systems program to the legislature.

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