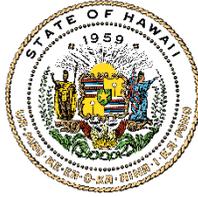


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

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
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BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND

Thursday, February 6, 2025
9:00 AM

State Capitol, Conference Room 411 and Via Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1278
RELATING TO HAZARDOUS TREE REMOVAL

House Bill 1278 proposes appropriating funding for the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (Division) to assess and remove hazardous trees on state lands across Hawai'i. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget request.**

Each year the Division prunes or removes trees on the boundaries of Division-managed lands that pose safety risks to abutting or adjacent properties and roads. As a good neighbor, the Division seeks to remove these trees promptly, sometimes using its staff or hiring trained arborists to address the situation promptly. The costs associated with hazardous tree removal are unpredictable and considerable. The work is ongoing and costly, with hazardous trees requiring case-by-case assessment and management.

The Department fully supports establishing a reliable appropriation specifically addressing hazardous tree management, which will predictably sustain the work. The appropriation would remove uncertainty from the budgeting process and alleviate the need to prioritize scarce resources in emergencies. Given the increase in unpredictable weather events, establishing this allocation will allow prompt attention to hazardous trees and protect human life and property.

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

To the Committee,

This bill is critical to pass. If it does not pass and trees requiring removal are not taken care of, it will lead to catastrophic results. A fallen tree from state property almost killed us.

Our family lives at 3545 Kahawalu Dr, Honolulu, HI 96817. We purchased this home in 2020. We live next to the state forest. Many of the trees are in bad shape. One of them fell and almost killed us on Dec 2, 2024.

The 140 foot pine tree came crashing down and was so large it reached across our entire property and reached our neighbors property. You can see in the photos how massive this tree is. You can see how we were fortunate it did not fall on the house. If anyone was in the backyard they would have been killed.

Who's responsible?

The trees are part of the state forest. They have state tags on them from inspections years, perhaps decades ago. No one has inspected the trees in the past 5 years we have been living here. My neighbors who have lived here for decades also say no one has maintained the trees.

Independently, I paid thousands of dollars to have concerning trees inspected this summer/fall by a certified arborist after getting no response from the DLNR (see attached email). The inspection report (see attached) recommended immediate removal of two trees. When we talked to DLNR again with this report in hand, they said they could not remove the tree because of budgetary constraints and waiting for more funding in summer 2025 would be fine. Of course, the tree fell and almost killed us.

I have excellent documentation that trees owned by the state have not been properly addressed. At this time, I do not seek any damages or to recoup the thousands I spent on arborist, but **I am formally requesting the state manage their trees that abut our property and others as well.**

Consequences of inaction?

Someone can die. Someone dying from an improperly managed state tree is a real possibility. A tree that could have killed someone already fell near our home onto our property.

Someone dying is by far the worst outcome. From the state's perspective, I have detailed documentation of the state's inadequate management of trees. Spending the funds to manage and remove trees is much more cost effective than the millions of dollars in damages if someone dies.

My wife and I are both physicians and own our respective medical practices. We contribute to our community through our work, children's schools, and pay hundreds of thousands in taxes between our businesses and personal income taxes. Our neighbors are also productive citizens who pay their

taxes and have owned their properties for decades. We are hoping the state does the right thing.





Daniel Choi <dchoi09@gmail.com>

3545 Kahawalu

Daniel Choi <dchoi09@gmail.com>

Sun, Aug 11, 2024 at 7:21 PM

To: ryan.k.peralta@hawaii.gov

Hi Ryan

We live next door to the Vuillemot family at 3545 Kahawalu Drive.

We noted that a few pines on the state property are not looking healthy. They are close to our home

We're concerned for the same fungal issue that weakened the trees near our neighbors.

We're concerned the trees might collapse.

Can you send a team to investigate and handle the trees?

We recently had to pay for removal of a banyan off our property for the same reason after many limbs fell.



3 pines appearing sparse and brown



October 4, 2024

Daniel Choi
3545 Kahawalu Drive
Advanced Assessment Report of Five Trees

The following tree assessment report was requested by Daniel Choi regarding the health and structure of select Cook pine trees adjacent to his house at 3545 Kahawalu Drive in Nuuanu. The trees are on State of Hawaii property managed by the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). Mr. Choi has been in communication with DLNR regarding these trees, and contacted us to provide an arborist report for DLNR. Tree Solutions Hawaii Arborist David Golden conducted an assessment of the trees on September 24, 2024.

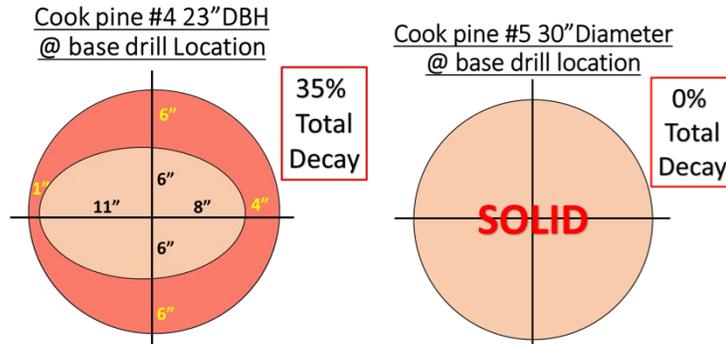
3545 Kahawalu Drive Home with Cook pines Nearby



Background: Cook pine (*Araucaria columnaris*) trees in Hawaii are susceptible to Formosan subterranean termite (ground termite) infestations resulting in tree failures at the trunk base. To identify this infestation an advanced procedure to assess the internal structure of the trees is required. Our experiences over the last 10 years have shown that termite infestations occur rapidly and can compromise a tree's structural condition within 18 months. While healthy and structurally sound cook pines rarely fail, trees with structural issues may be at an increased risk of failure.

Methods: I conducted a visual assessment of the Cook pines along the border of the 3545 Kahawalu Drive property, looking for trees with any visual defect or signs of poor health. I selected five Cook pines for advanced assessments and collected information on each tree including diameter standard height (DSH) and tree height. A sounding mallet and 4-foot-long probe were used to assess the structural condition of each tree. The sounding mallet is used around all reachable areas of the trunk listening for an audible indication of hollow sounding areas inside the trunk of the tree. The 4-foot-long probe was used to measure the depth of observed defects like visual cavities or weak wood. I concluded with advanced

Cook Pine Resistograph Renderings



An additional Cook pine at the entrance to the driveway was observed with a major basal wound. In this species, wounds can be an entry point for termites and other pests or fungal diseases. This tree was not selected for advanced assessment this year but should be considered for an assessment within the next 2 years.

Conclusion & Recommendations: After conducting an advanced assessment on the five Cook pine trees our group of Certified Arborists have concluded that Cook pines #1,3,5 are in acceptable health and good structural condition. Cook pine #4 has structural decay at the base and is in poor health. Cook pine #2 is also in poor health, but I did not detect decay at the base. Cook pines #2 and #4 have a higher likelihood of the top of the tree breaking as the tree crown dies from the top down. I recommend removing Cook pine #4 as soon as possible. Cook pine #2 is recommended to be removed within the next 3 months.

To detect infestations of ground termites, bait stations should be installed along the perimeter of the property by the Cook pine forest. The pest control company will provide spacing recommendations for the bait stations. The trees and/or additional trees should be reassessed (specifically the tree with the trunk wound at the entrance to the driveway) by a Certified Arborist that is Tree Risk Assessment Qualified in one year. If termite bait stations are installed next to the Cook pines, reassessment can be pushed back to every two years. Reassessment with a Resistograph is essential to detect changes in the internal structural condition of the Cook pines.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at 808-734-5963.

Respectfully,

David Golden
Arborist, Tree Diagnostics Technician
ISA Certified Arborist # WE- 12582
ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified

HB-1278

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 6:12:36 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
gunner schull	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I live across the street from state land containing giant Cook Pine trees. These trees have been left un maintained and now many appear to be infected with disease and are dying. One recently fell in my neighbors property and luckily no one was killed. There are numerous trees which would land on my house when they fall and the result could be catastrophic. I urge the State to take appropriate action and hereby put the State on notice of a very dangerous situation requiring immediate attention. My address is 3455 Kaohinani Dr and I would be happy to assess the situation with the appropriate parties. Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

HB-1278

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 7:56:15 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sheryl Vuillemot	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, we are the house at the bottom of the row of norfolk pine trees that go up Dowsett Highlands. We are on Kaohinani Drive and the trees go to the top of the mountain.

We initiated the removal of the first tree to be removed around 1995.

About 12-15 years ago, the boy scouts counted and tagged all the trees. Out of all these trees, it was deemed 13 needed to be removed. Out of those 3 were in our back yard.

The state at that time did have them cut down.

Then last summer, my husband notified the state forestry office on another tree that was leaning close to our house that was sickly.

We were fortunate enough to have that tree removed. We initiated the conversation with the Forestry department. We were fortunate to have the timing right when the 2024 fiscal year began, which allowed it's removal .

We have had a total of 5 trees removed over a 25 year period. These trees need to be monitored and removed as needed for the safety of our community. Many people who hike in the judd trail , as well as us homeowners are at risk of these trees which I believe are getting quite old. Perhaps the boy scouts could do another assessment in conjunction with the state forestry department.

Please fund this endeavor.

HB-1278

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 9:08:14 AM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Duquette	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Chair Members,

My name is Julia Duquette, and I am writing in support of Bill HB1278 – Relating to Hazardous Tree Removal. As a current resident of Pacific Heights with deep roots in Hawai'i – I was born and raised in Alewa Heights, and my family hails from Waimanalo, Manoa, and Maui – I have a strong personal connection to the islands.

I urge you to support Bill HB1278 because it is crucial that we take proactive measures to protect both our residents and our precious historical landmarks. The recent wildfire in Lahaina and the subsequent fires in Los Angeles underscore the urgent need for action. These events tragically demonstrate that such catastrophes are likely to recur, posing a continued threat to life and property.

My own experience living in Santa Monica and witnessing the devastation experienced by families in the Pacific Palisades further highlights the importance of preventative measures. Cutting back hazardous trees and vegetation near residential areas and historical landmarks is a vital step the state can take to mitigate the spread of fires and protect our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mahalo,

Julia Duquette

HB-1278

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 1:56:22 PM

Testimony for WAL on 2/6/2025 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Forrest Shoemaker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill and urge our Representatives to vote yes on it. As a citizen living very close to enormous trees on State land it becomes very dangerous when these trees are not timely monitored and removed when necessary.