

JAN 23 2015

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

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

1 SECTION 1. Farmers are required to have an approved
2 conservation plan in order to access federal farm bill funds and
3 to be in compliance with local grading/grubbing ordinances.
4 However, the number of people qualified to write conservation
5 plans in Hawaii is not sufficient to meet the demand. This can
6 leave many Hawaii farmers, who may have relatively small
7 operations as compared to the mainland, waiting two to four
8 years to receive a conservation plan. Without an approved
9 conservation plan, farmers are technically out of compliance
10 with local regulations, leaving them subject to significant
11 penalties if those rules are enforced.

12 Data from the 2013-2014 fiscal year indicates that just one
13 hundred seventy new conservation plans were developed in Hawaii
14 (roughly 2.5 per cent of the seven thousand farms operating in
15 the state). Based on a five-year effective period, just 12.5
16 per cent of the State's farms have a current conservation plan.
17 Furthermore, larger landowners are more likely to have a



1 conservation plan; the 12.5 per cent of farms with conservation
2 plans control approximately 40 per cent of agricultural acres in
3 Hawaii.

4 The current conservation plan application system is
5 available only to United States Department of Agriculture
6 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees and
7 individuals working from local NRCS offices. The national NRCS
8 policy prioritizes applications from farms seeking federal farm
9 bill funding. A limited number of farmers (roughly one hundred
10 forty) actively seek federal funding in any given year,
11 resulting in 98 per cent of Hawaii farms with limited planning
12 support unable to obtain a conservation plan in a timely manner.

13 The development of an online interface for farmers and
14 other agricultural professionals to input much of the data for a
15 conservation plan will save time and money for all parties
16 involved. The State of Idaho developed a similar online program
17 for conservation plans called the Idaho One Plan.

18 The legislature finds that Hawaii could benefit from a
19 similar program, to be called the "Hawaii one program".

20 If such a program is implemented, the wait time to process
21 a conservation plan would be reduced substantially. A full and



1 comprehensive conservation plan currently requires approximately
2 fifty hours of staff time to analyze. A conservation plan can
3 be built modularly, thereby giving basic plans to those that
4 need it or more comprehensive plans to other farms that require
5 it. If Hawaii one program is successful in setting up and
6 rolling out the basic foundational pieces, focused primarily on
7 soil erosion measures, the amount of technical staff time needed
8 to process the application can be reduced to an estimated
9 fifteen hours. Furthermore, through the creation of a focused
10 and streamlined Hawaii one program conservation plan application
11 system, farmers should be more likely to participate in
12 obtaining a conservation plan. The Hawaii one program will help
13 the roughly 87.5 per cent of farmers, farming 60 per cent of
14 agricultural land, who do not have a conservation plan to obtain
15 one.

16 The Hawaii one program would be based on existing standards
17 and practices for soil conservation. The goal for the Hawaii
18 one program is to build the software modularly with the
19 potential to add topics like wildlife and pesticide management
20 in the future.



1 Previously, there was progress between the department of
2 agriculture and department of land and natural resources to
3 develop an online conservation application; however, sufficient
4 access to server space became an issue and the subsequent
5 recession of 2008 created funding cuts for both departments.
6 The department of agriculture now has capacity to house a host
7 server, if required. Other non-governmental organizations have
8 garnered financial and in-kind support from local partners.
9 These funds would be used to complete the fundraising needed to
10 develop and deliver the Hawaii one program.

11 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for the
12 implementation and operation of the Hawaii one program to
13 provide conservation plans online.

14 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$70,000 or so much
16 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the
17 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
18 2016-2017 for implementation and operation of the Hawaii one
19 program to provide conservation plans online.

20 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
21 of agriculture for the purposes of this Act.



S.B. NO. 512

1 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

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S.B. NO. 512

Report Title:

Department of Agriculture; Hawaii One Plan; Conservation Plan; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to develop and operate the Hawaii one program to provide conservation plans online.

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