

JAN 23 2015

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO NATURAL RESOURCES.

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

PART I

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that forest conservation and access are essential for Hawaii's economy, the quality of life of Hawaii residents, and the health of Hawaii's environment. Tourism, the cornerstone of Hawaii's economy, is largely generated by Hawaii's natural resources. Conserving forests and making them accessible are important for tourism and for Hawaii residents who access forests and trails for their own well-being and enjoyment. Forest conservation also protects natural resources essential to Hawaii's economy, such as beaches, coral reefs, and fisheries, by preventing erosion.

The legislature further finds that forest conservation provides Hawaii with a level of protection against environmental threats, including those posed by climate change. Forests store carbon, reducing Hawaii's carbon emissions. The environmental virtues produced by healthy forests have moved the Hawaii greenhouse gas emissions reduction task force to strongly



1 recommend reforestation projects to meet targets of the Hawaii
2 clean energy initiative. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate
3 Change has also identified forest protection as the greatest
4 step that can be taken to impact carbon stock in the short term.

5 Forests help increase resilience to drought conditions and
6 natural disasters. The islands have experienced decades of
7 reduced rainfall, changes in trade wind patterns, and higher
8 temperatures. All of these changes have taxed the water supply,
9 and, as the legislature recognized through Act 152, Session Laws
10 of Hawaii 2000, the quality, quantity, and sustainability of
11 Hawaii's water supply depends upon healthy forested watersheds.

12 The purpose of this Act is to provide funding for forest
13 conservation and access.

14 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$4,000,000 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 projects undertaken in accordance with watershed
19 management plans.

20 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
21 of land and natural resources for the purposes of this part.



PART II

SECTION 3. The legislature finds that additional resources are necessary for emergency response and preparedness for natural disasters. Events such as flooding, hurricanes, and wildfires are expected to increase in frequency and severity as climate change accelerates.

As invasive species spread, our islands also become increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters. Hurricane Iselle demonstrated the damaging qualities of invasive species such as albizia trees, which toppled during high winds. Wildfires have been intensified by fire-prone invasive species, such as fountain grass and other plants that increase fuel loads. Erosion caused by flooding has also greatly increased as native forests are replaced by shallow-rooted invasive plants or become barren areas.

The department of land and natural resources, division of forestry and wildlife is responsible for wildfire preparedness and response as well as assisting federal, state, and county agencies in emergencies and natural disaster. Hawaii's responders need access to new technologies developed to increase efficiency and effectiveness of detection and response to these



1 types of natural disasters that affect natural environments as
2 well as public safety.

3 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
4 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,500,000 or so much
5 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the
6 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
7 2016-2017 for fire, natural disaster, and emergency response
8 equipment.

9 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
10 of land and natural resources for the purposes of this part.

11 **PART III**

12 SECTION 5. The legislature finds that Hawaii's residents
13 and visitors need to enjoy and connect with the natural
14 environment. Visiting natural areas cultivates respect and
15 appreciation for Hawaii's natural and cultural heritage. First-
16 hand experiences in nature teach youth and adults the importance
17 of these natural resources so they can be appreciated and
18 protected.

19 Hiking, gathering, hunting, and other outdoor recreation
20 are also beneficial for mental and physical health. Being in



1 the natural environment provides exercise, reduces stress and
2 depression, and improves focus, immunity, and longevity.

3 Outdoor recreation, including use of trails and beaches, is
4 central to Hawaii's visitor industry, and valuable to Hawaii's
5 residents. Statewide improvements are needed to address
6 deteriorating conditions on trails, particularly high-use trails
7 frequented by visitors. Development, particularly in rural
8 areas, can restrict access to public lands for hiking,
9 gathering, and hunting. Infrastructure improvements are
10 necessary to improve access to allow people to connect with
11 Hawaii's natural environment.

12 SECTION 6. There is appropriated out of the general
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much
14 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2015-2016 and the
15 same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year
16 2016-2017 for forest and outdoor recreation improvements.

17 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
18 of land and natural resources for the purposes of this part.

19 **PART IV**
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1 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2015.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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S.B. NO. 545

Report Title:

Forest Conservation; Access; Emergency Response; Outdoor Recreation; Department of Land and Natural Resources; Climate Change; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds to the department of land and natural resources for watershed management projects; fire, natural disaster, and emergency response equipment; and forest and outdoor recreation improvements.

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