

JAN 21 2022

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the Mauna Kea  
2 conservation district is home to a number of rare, threatened,  
3 or endangered plants, animals, and arthropods found nowhere else  
4 on the planet. Among the species impacted are the remaining  
5 population of finch-billed Hawaiian honeycreepers, or palila.

6           The legislature further finds that palila are a critically  
7 endangered species. Over ninety-six per cent of the entire  
8 palila population lives within the palila critical habitat,  
9 which is located on the southwestern slope of Mauna Kea at  
10 elevations between six thousand and ten thousand feet. The  
11 palila critical habitat also encompasses a wide, intact section  
12 of mamane forest, which serves as both a habitat and source of  
13 food.

14           Despite its critically endangered status, palila were once  
15 threatened by the emergence of sheep and goats in the palila  
16 critical habitat. In 1979, allegations against the department  
17 of land and natural resources surfaced, alleging that the



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1 department "took" palila to maintain sheep and goat populations.  
2 The presence of sheep and goat populations threatened mamane  
3 forests, endangering both the palila and its food source.  
4 Between 1979 and 1986, federal courts ordered the eradication of  
5 sheep and goats within the palila critical habitat, resulting in  
6 millions of dollars spent on fencing and the eradication of  
7 invasive species. While twenty-two thousand sheep have been  
8 eradicated, thousands of sheep remained in the palila critical  
9 habitat.

10 Following the eradication of sheep and goats in the palila  
11 critical habitat, the palila population continues to decline.  
12 Despite a full recovery of mamane forests, there are only one  
13 thousand mature adult palila left on Mauna Kea. Additionally,  
14 in 2021, Hawaii island suffered historic wildfires that  
15 encompassed over forty thousand acres, threatening the  
16 population of palila on Mauna Kea. The eradication of sheep on  
17 Mauna Kea has resulted in the build-up of grass and weed fire  
18 fuel, further endangering palila and its habitat, the fully  
19 recovered mamane forests.

20 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to require the  
21 department of land and natural resources to update key



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1 information, including facts and statistics, and investigate the  
2 causes relating to palila decline.

3 SECTION 2. The department of land and natural resources  
4 shall update and make publicly available facts and statistics  
5 related to palila decline on Mauna Kea. Utilizing the data, the  
6 department of land and natural resources shall also conduct  
7 further investigation into palila decline. The investigation  
8 shall examine the results of the federal court mandate to  
9 eradicate sheep on Mauna Kea to protect palila populations.

10 SECTION 3. The department of land and natural resources  
11 shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations,  
12 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later  
13 than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session  
14 of 2023.

15 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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INTRODUCED BY:



# S.B. NO. 2994

**Report Title:**

Palila; Mauna Kea; Department of Land and Natural Resources;  
Report

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to update facts and statistics on palila population decline on Mauna Kea and to investigate the results of the federal court mandate to eradicate sheep on Mauna Kea to protect palila populations. Requires a report to the Legislature.

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