
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO RURAL DISTRICTS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that due to the shortage
2 of housing in Hawaii, the counties should be permitted to
3 increase population density in state-designated rural districts.
4 Under existing law, only one dwelling house is generally
5 permitted on one-half acre (21,780 square feet) of land in a
6 rural district. The legislature further finds that authorizing
7 counties to adopt ordinances to allow a dwelling house on each
8 quarter-acre of rural land would increase housing opportunities
9 where appropriate.

10 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

11 (1) Authorize the counties to determine the propriety of
12 allowing a dwelling house on each quarter-acre, rather
13 than each half-acre, of land in rural districts;
14 provided that the corresponding ordinances are
15 consistent with the county general plan and community
16 development plan;



- 1 (2) Require the office of planning and sustainable
- 2 development to conduct a study to refine rural
- 3 district policies and make recommendations to
- 4 facilitate the reclassification of lands from the
- 5 agricultural district to the rural district; and
- 6 (3) Appropriate funds for the office of planning and
- 7 sustainable development to conduct the study.

8 SECTION 2. Section 205-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
9 amended as follows:

10 1. By amending subsection (a) to read:

11 "(a) There shall be four major land use districts in which
12 all lands in the State shall be placed: urban, rural,
13 agricultural, and conservation. The land use commission shall
14 group contiguous land areas suitable for inclusion in one of
15 these four major districts. The commission shall set standards
16 for determining the boundaries of each district, provided that:

- 17 (1) In the establishment of boundaries of urban districts,
18 those lands that are now in urban use and a sufficient
19 reserve area for foreseeable urban growth shall be
20 included;



1 (2) In the establishment of boundaries for rural
2 districts, areas of land composed primarily of small
3 farms mixed with very low density residential lots,
4 which may be shown by a minimum density of not more
5 than one house per [~~one-half~~] one-quarter acre and a
6 minimum lot size of not less than one-half acre shall
7 be included, except as herein provided;

8 (3) In the establishment of the boundaries of agricultural
9 districts, the greatest possible protection shall be
10 given to those lands with a high capacity for
11 intensive cultivation; and

12 (4) In the establishment of the boundaries of conservation
13 districts, the "forest and water reserve zones"
14 provided in Act 234, section 2, Session Laws of Hawaii
15 1957, are renamed "conservation districts" and,
16 effective as of July 11, 1961, the boundaries of the
17 forest and water reserve zones theretofore established
18 pursuant to Act 234, section 2, Session Laws of Hawaii
19 1957, shall constitute the boundaries of the
20 conservation districts; provided that thereafter the



1 power to determine the boundaries of the conservation
2 districts shall be in the commission.

3 In establishing the boundaries of the districts in each county,
4 the commission shall give consideration to the master plan or
5 general plan of the county."

6 2. By amending subsection (c) to read:

7 "(c) Rural districts shall include activities or uses as
8 characterized by low density residential lots of not more than
9 one dwelling house per [~~one-half~~] one-quarter acre, except as
10 provided by county ordinance pursuant to section 46-4(c) [~~7~~] and
11 provided that each dwelling house shall be consistent with the
12 county general plan and community development plans, in areas
13 where "city-like" concentration of people, structures, streets,
14 and urban level of services are absent, and where small farms
15 are intermixed with low density residential lots except that
16 within a subdivision, as defined in section 484-1, the
17 commission for good cause may allow one lot of less than
18 one-half acre, but not less than [~~eighteen thousand five hundred~~
19 ~~square feet,~~] one-quarter acre, or an equivalent residential
20 density, within a rural subdivision and permit the construction
21 of one dwelling on [~~such~~] the lot; provided that all other



1 dwellings in the subdivision shall have a minimum lot size of
 2 one-half acre or 21,780 square feet. [~~Such~~] The petition for
 3 variance may be processed under the special permit procedure.
 4 These districts may include contiguous areas [~~which~~] that are
 5 not suited to low density residential lots or small farms by
 6 reason of topography, soils, and other related characteristics.
 7 Rural districts shall also include golf courses, golf driving
 8 ranges, and golf-related facilities.

9 In addition to the uses listed in this subsection, rural
 10 districts shall include geothermal resources exploration and
 11 geothermal resources development, as defined under section
 12 182-1, and construction and operation of wireless communication
 13 antenna, as defined under section 205-4.5(a)(18), as permissible
 14 uses."

15 SECTION 3. Section 205-5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
 16 amended by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

17 "(c) Unless authorized by special permit issued pursuant
 18 to this chapter, only the following uses shall be permitted
 19 within rural districts:

- 20 (1) Low density residential uses;
- 21 (2) Agricultural uses;



- 1 (3) Golf courses, golf driving ranges, and golf-related
- 2 facilities;
- 3 (4) Public, quasi-public, and public utility facilities;
- 4 and
- 5 (5) Geothermal resources exploration and geothermal
- 6 resources development, as defined under section 182-1.

7 In addition, the minimum lot size for any low density
 8 residential use shall be one-half acre and there shall be but
 9 one dwelling house per [~~one-half~~] one-quarter acre[~~7~~]; provided
 10 that each dwelling house shall be consistent with the county
 11 general plan and community development plan, except as provided
 12 for in section 205-2."

13 SECTION 4. The office of planning and sustainable
 14 development shall conduct a study to assess the rural district
 15 framework within the land use law and make recommendations for
 16 revisions to rural district policies and permissible uses within
 17 the rural district. The study shall include:

- 18 (1) A legal analysis of regulatory issues and safeguards
- 19 that must be addressed to facilitate the
- 20 reclassification of lands from the agricultural
- 21 district to the rural district; and



1 (2) Recommendations for legislation necessary to address
2 the issues and safeguards identified in paragraph (1).

3 SECTION 5. In conducting the study required by this Act,
4 the office of planning and sustainable development shall
5 coordinate its efforts with the land use commission, department
6 of agriculture, and county planning departments. The office of
7 planning and sustainable development shall engage community
8 stakeholders, including farming interests and interested members
9 of the general public, in the development of study
10 recommendations.

11 SECTION 6. The office of planning and sustainable
12 development shall submit:

13 (1) An interim report of its findings and recommendations,
14 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature
15 no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
16 the regular session of 2023; and

17 (2) A final report of its findings and recommendations,
18 including any proposed legislation, to the legislature
19 no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
20 the regular session of 2024.



1 SECTION 7. There is appropriated out of the general
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so much
3 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the
4 office of planning and sustainable development to conduct the
5 study and complete all required reports pursuant to this Act.

6 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
7 business, economic development, and tourism for the purposes of
8 this Act.

9 SECTION 8. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
10 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

11 SECTION 9. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.



Report Title:

Rural Districts; Dwellings; County Ordinances; Office of Planning and Sustainable Development; Land Use; Study; Appropriation

Description:

Authorizes the counties to adopt ordinances that allow up to one house per quarter-acre in rural districts. Requires the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to conduct a study to refine rural district policies and make recommendations to facilitate the reclassification of lands from the agricultural district to the rural district. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates moneys. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD2)

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