
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VEGETATION MANAGEMENT.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that wildfires can have
2 devastating impacts on our communities, native ecosystems,
3 infrastructure, natural resources, cultural resources, and
4 economies. The legislature also finds that wildfires have
5 become a significant and growing hazard across the State, due to
6 vast areas of unmanaged land created by the demise of sugarcane
7 and pineapple plantations, and climate change increasing the
8 frequency of fire weather conditions that spread wildfire
9 hazards.

10 The legislature further finds that flammable vegetation,
11 also referred to as hazardous vegetation, including dried grass,
12 leaf litter, shrubs, and trees with dead branches, ignite easily
13 and serve as fuel for wildfires. The legislature therefore
14 finds that vegetation management, including clearing out
15 firebreaks and removing buildups of flammable vegetation, is
16 essential for mitigating wildfire hazards. Vegetation
17 management also promotes safer conditions for firefighters,



1 serves as a key climate adaptation strategy for the communities,
2 economies, and environment, and costs less than wildfire
3 suppression and recovery after wildfires have burned lands,
4 homes, and infrastructure.

5 According to the 2018-19 Rapid Mapping Assessment of
6 Vegetation Management conducted by the Hawaii Wildfire
7 Management Organization, vegetation management is currently
8 being performed on approximately 1,100,000 acres of land and
9 forty-three thousand miles of roads statewide, funded by private
10 businesses, individuals, and government funds and grants. The
11 assessment proposed that an additional four hundred thousand
12 acres of land and three hundred fifty miles of roads statewide
13 as areas need landscape alteration to reduce high wildfire
14 risks, including creating firebreaks by removing fire-prone
15 vegetation, trimming down vegetation to create fuel breaks, and
16 replacing vegetation with crops or other plants that are not
17 high fire risks.

18 The legislature finds that at the state level, the
19 department of land and natural resources is responsible for
20 taking measures to prevent wildfires within lands managed by its
21 division of forestry and wildlife and to cooperate with county



1 and federal agencies in developing plans and programs for
2 prevention assistance of wildfires on lands not managed by the
3 division. Additionally, the department of transportation has
4 multiple projects aimed at reducing wildfire risks through
5 vegetation management, including building firebreaks and
6 clearing areas of concern identified by county fire departments.
7 Despite these efforts, the legislature finds that reducing the
8 risk of wildfire through vegetation management remains a huge
9 challenge, due to scarcity of funding and personnel, need for
10 long-term management, and cooperation among different landowners
11 and other stakeholders.

12 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
13 funds to state agencies for the purpose of promoting vegetation
14 management to reduce the risks of wildfires across the State.

15 SECTION 2. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
16 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,
17 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the
18 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,
19 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
20 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
21 \$ or per cent. This current declaration takes



1 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
2 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
3 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
4 ceiling are that:

5 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
6 serve the public interest; and

7 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
8 addressed by this Act.

9 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for
12 vegetation management projects to reduce the risks of wildfires
13 across the State.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
15 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
17 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for
19 vegetation management projects to reduce the risks of wildfires
20 across the State.

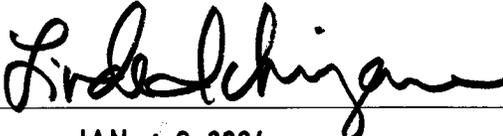


1 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
2 transportation for the purposes of this Act.

3 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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INTRODUCED BY:



JAN 12 2024



H.B. NO. 1548

Report Title:

DLNR; DOT; Wildfires; Prevention and Mitigation; Vegetation Management Programs; Appropriations

Description:

Makes appropriations to the Department of Land and Natural Resources and Department of Transportation for vegetation management projects to reduce the risks of wildfires across the State.

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