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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO WILDFIRE PREVENTION.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the threat of  
2 wildfires in the State has significantly increased, posing a  
3 threat to public health and safety and the State's natural  
4 resources. The risk of wildfires in the State differs from the  
5 continental United States, as warm year-round conditions  
6 supported by vast, unbroken expanses of highly fire-prone,  
7 nonnative ecosystems with invasive grasses and other fire-  
8 adapted plants leave native ecosystems vulnerable to wildfire  
9 impacts. The results of wildfire destruction can be far-  
10 reaching, as reductions in native forests can lead to decreased  
11 water quality, increased erosion, and damage to coral reefs from  
12 sedimentation and nutrient loading. Hawaii is also home to a  
13 unique array of native plants and animals, with some species  
14 found nowhere else in the world. Protecting the State's forests  
15 from wildfires will protect the habitats for these native  
16 species.



1           While there is a growing concern over the risk of wildfire  
2 impacts in local communities statewide, there are limited  
3 resources available for pre-fire mitigation and wildfire  
4 response in the State. The State has historically spent less  
5 than other western states, such as California, Oregon, and  
6 Washington, on wildfire prevention. Additionally, the State's  
7 geographic isolation creates a lack of access to inter-agency  
8 support for fire management available on the continental United  
9 States, straining the State's limited resources. Establishing a  
10 wildfire prevention plan for areas prone to wildfires such as  
11 central Oahu will provide a valuable framework to ensure the  
12 safety of Hawaii's people, natural resources, and native  
13 species.

14           The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service  
15 Community Wildfire Defense grant program is a \$1,000,000,000,  
16 five-year competitive grant program designed to assist at-risk  
17 communities, including "units of local government" representing  
18 communities in areas at risk of wildfire. In 2023, \$800,000,000  
19 was available for the program, divided into \$200,000,000  
20 increments for rounds two through five. Individual grants can  
21 fund up to \$250,000 to create and update community wildfire



1 protection plans and up to \$10,000,000 for a project described  
2 within a community wildfire protection plan. Nonprofit  
3 organizations with wildfire mitigation and prevention  
4 programming such as the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization  
5 have applied for a Community Wildfire Defense grant for central  
6 Oahu. To ensure adequate protection of the communities  
7 statewide, matching funds are needed to secure federal funding.

8       Additionally, the legislature finds that requiring the  
9 university of Hawaii college of tropical agriculture and human  
10 resources to develop a central Oahu wildfire protection plan is  
11 a matter of statewide concern pursuant to article X, section 6,  
12 of the Hawaii State Constitution.

13       Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate  
14 funds to the university of Hawaii college of tropical  
15 agriculture and human resources to develop a central Oahu  
16 wildfire protection plan, in consultation with the department of  
17 land and natural resources, community stakeholders, and  
18 nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness  
19 and mitigation programming.

20       SECTION 2. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of  
21 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,



1 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the  
 2 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,  
 3 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure  
 4 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by  
 5 \$                    or                    per cent. This current declaration takes  
 6 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal  
 7 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act  
 8 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure  
 9 ceiling are that:

- 10            (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
- 11                                    serve the public interest; and
- 12            (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
- 13                                    addressed by this Act.

14            SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
 15 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
 16 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for  
 17 the development of a central Oahu wildfire protection plan by  
 18 the university of Hawaii college of tropical agriculture and  
 19 human resources, in consultation with the department of land and  
 20 natural resources, community stakeholders, and nonprofit  
 21 organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness and



1 mitigation programming; provided that no funds shall be made  
2 available under this Act unless the university of Hawaii college  
3 of tropical agriculture and human resources and nonprofit  
4 organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness and  
5 mitigation programming provide matching funds from United States  
6 Department of Agriculture Forestry Service Wildfire Defense  
7 grants for the purposes of this Act.

8       The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of  
9 Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

10       SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.



**Report Title:**

UH; CTAHR; DLNR; Central Oahu Wildfire Plan; Wildfire Prevention Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources to establish a Central Oahu Wildfire Protection Plan, in consultation with the Department of Land and Natural Resources, community stakeholders, and nonprofit organizations that specialize in wildfire preparedness and mitigation programming. Requires matching funds from United States Department of Agriculture Forestry Service Wildfire Defense grants. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. (SD1)

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