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BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
DAWN N.S. CHANG
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND**

**Monday, March 25, 2024
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**In consideration of
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 176/SENATE RESOLUTION 152
URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND BOARD OF
LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO ADOPT CERTAIN PROCEDURES RELATING
TO THE DAM AND APPURTENANCE IMPROVEMENT OR REMOVAL GRANT
PROGRAM TO ASSIST APPLICANTS IN OBTAINING GRANTS.**

Senate Concurrent Resolution 176/Senate Resolution 152 urges the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to adopt certain procedures relating to the Dam and Appurtenance Improvement or Removal Grant Program to assist applicants in obtaining grants. **The Department offers the following comments.**

The Department is currently in the process of establishing the procedures and criteria that will be used in evaluating, ranking, and recommending grant awards pursuant to the provisions of Act 134, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023. These procedures and criteria which will be the basis for awarding grants will need to be approved by the Board of Land and Natural Resources (Board). Subsequently, all recommendations for grant awards to dam owners will also have to be approved by the Board.

The Department believes the grant program will be established and implemented in a transparent, public process, that will ensure objectivity, fairness and due process for dam owners.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on these measures.



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March 25, 2024

HEARING BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND

TESTIMONY ON SCR 176 and SR 152

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND BOARD
OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO ADOPT CERTAIN PROCEDURES
RELATING TO THE DAM AND APPURTENANCE IMPROVEMENT OR REMOVAL
GRANT PROGRAM TO ASSIST APPLICANTS IN OBTAINING GRANTS

Conference Room 229 & Videoconference
1:00 PM

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice-Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

I am Brian Miyamoto, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Farm Bureau (HFB). Organized since 1948, the HFB is comprised of 1,800 farm family members statewide and serves as Hawai'i's voice of agriculture to protect, advocate and advance the social, economic, and educational interests of our diverse agricultural community.

The Hawai'i Farm Bureau supports SCR 176 and SR 152, which urges the Department of Land and Natural Resources and Board of Land and Natural Resources to adopt certain procedures relating to the dam and appurtenance improvement or removal grant program to assist applicants in obtaining grants.

While dam and reservoir safety rules represent an important public safety initiative, the rules codified in HRS chapter 179D are having an adverse effect by reducing water storage capacity across the state. At a time when changing weather patterns have demonstrated alternating periods of drought punctuated by significant storm events, coupled with the noble goal of achieving food security for our island state, water storage is more critical than ever. The new rules will discourage new dam and reservoir construction and, in many cases, cause dam and reservoir owners to minimize the capacity or decommission existing storage capability.

Many of the reservoirs – built in an era of plantation agriculture—no longer generate enough revenue to be economically sustainable. But they are needed in ways few people have yet imagined. The issue of how to pay for the upgrading and maintenance of this critical infrastructure is now gaining more attention as the state's budget comes into focus.

Dams and reservoirs are the keys not just to a future sustainable agricultural system in Hawai'i but to the entire water and environmental health of the State. In addition to the conventional benefits of storing and delivering reliable water for agriculture in dry times, wildlife habitats, flood control during large storms, erosion control, and the reduction of sediment loading on our nearshore ocean reefs, reservoirs also ensure a supply of potable drinking water (after treatment) and provide water to help battle wildfires.

Reservoirs also help recharge our groundwater aquifers by capturing stormwater (for later release) that would otherwise rush to the ocean. There is growing evidence that there will be a pattern of fewer but larger storms separated by longer intervals of drought. If the large rainfall flows are not captured, overall groundwater recharge may be significantly reduced. Groundwater is our primary source of drinking water, and demand is relentlessly rising. We already face declining groundwater recharge every time we place hard, impermeable surfaces (e.g., concrete) over previously open ground (agriculture).

Recent Dam and Reservoir Safety rules levy additional burdens on reservoir owners and Hawai'i farmers. Fuel, labor, equipment, transportation, and other expenses are already higher in Hawai'i than on the mainland, placing locally grown products at a competitive disadvantage. Inevitably, increased costs will be passed on to consumers and are counterproductive to efforts to grow more food in Hawai'i. Some landowners will simply decommission their dams, abandon their reservoir systems, and decide what to do with their now-fallow lands when agriculture is no longer viable.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter of great importance to the agricultural community.

SCR-176

Submitted on: 3/22/2024 11:17:19 AM

Testimony for WTL on 3/25/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacqueline S. Ambrose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

Yes to; URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO ADOPT CERTAIN PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE DAM AND APPURTENANCE IMPROVEMENT OR REMOVAL GRANT PROGRAM TO ASSIST APPLICANTS IN OBTAINING GRANTS.

Ensuring the safety of Hawaii's dams is one of the important functions of the Department of Land and Natural Resources