

MAR 07 2025

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THE AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION TO ASSUME
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF
THE KOHALA DITCH.

1 WHEREAS, the Kohala Ditch is a twenty-six mile long
2 irrigation ditch originally built on the island of Hawaii in
3 1906 to supply water to sugarcane plantations in North Kohala;
4 and

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6 WHEREAS, the Kohala Ditch has since become a vital source
7 of water for farmers and ranchers in North Kohala, supplying
8 over five million gallons of water a day; and

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10 WHEREAS, the agricultural production of these farmers is
11 critical to the State's economy, food resiliency goals, and the
12 cultures and sustenance of many local communities; and

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14 WHEREAS, however, a 2021 rockslide damaged a critical flume
15 of the irrigation system and stopped the flow of water; and

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17 WHEREAS, without water from the Kohala Ditch, most farmers
18 have been compelled to pay for county water, which costs
19 approximately ten times more per month; and

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21 WHEREAS, the resulting increase in operating costs and
22 limited access to water has forced many farmers to scale back
23 production and driven others entirely out of business; and

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25 WHEREAS, the restoration of the Kohala Ditch will require
26 time, money, and a well-qualified coordinating authority with
27 knowledge of local infrastructure and the agricultural industry,
28 as the repairs will require significant cooperation between the
29 patchwork of private and public land owners that the irrigation
30 system bisects; and

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1 WHEREAS, Act 164, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023 (Act 164),
2 allocated \$10 million to be expended by the Department of
3 Agriculture for the design and construction for repairs to
4 restore and reactivate the Kohala Ditch System to increase the
5 availability of water for agricultural and aquacultural
6 purposes, as a capital improvement project grant pursuant to
7 chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
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9 WHEREAS, the funds allocated in Act 164 have not been
10 released to the Kohala Ditch Co-Op, Incorporated, the intended
11 grantee, that was formed in 2019 to manage the Kohala Ditch, due
12 to issues relating to compliance with statutory requirements for
13 grants under chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
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15 WHEREAS, given the critical role the Kohala Ditch plays in
16 the State's agricultural production, its routine maintenance and
17 repair must be provided for by the State to resolve the current
18 damage and avoid future years-long disruptions to the water
19 supply; and
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21 WHEREAS, the Agribusiness Development Corporation was
22 established by the Legislature in 1994, with statutory mandates
23 to coordinate and administer programs to assist agricultural
24 enterprises to facilitate the transition of agricultural
25 infrastructure from plantation operations into other
26 agricultural enterprises, increase local production of
27 agricultural products for local consumption, reduce the State's
28 reliance on imported agricultural products, and increase access
29 to farmland and related infrastructure for small local farmers
30 and cooperatives; and
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32 WHEREAS, the repair and routine maintenance of the Kohala
33 Ditch will further the Agribusiness Development Corporation in
34 fulfilling its statutory mandates; now, therefore,
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36 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
37 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2025, the
38 House of Representatives concurring, that the Agribusiness
39 Development Corporation is requested to assume responsibility
40 for the routine maintenance and repair of the Kohala Ditch; and
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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Agribusiness Development
2 Corporation is urged to develop and implement a comprehensive
3 plan for the routine maintenance of the Kohala Ditch, that:

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5 (1) Includes a schedule for regular inspections, necessary
6 repairs, and upgrades to follow best practices and
7 standards for safety and efficiency; and
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9 (2) Is developed in collaboration with the surrounding
10 community and relevant agencies and stakeholders,
11 including farmers, ranchers, businesses, and other
12 users of the Kohala Ditch; and
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14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Agribusiness Development
15 Corporation is requested to submit a report of its findings and
16 recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the
17 Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
18 each Regular Session; provided that the report is asked to:

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20 (1) Detail any maintenance and repairs to the Kohala
21 Ditch, including any related expenditures;
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23 (2) Include an assessment of the current condition of the
24 Kohala Ditch;
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26 (3) Include a summary of completed maintenance activities;
27 and
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29 (4) Make recommendations for any further improvements; and
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31 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
32 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the
33 Board of Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation,
34 Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture, and President of Kohala
35 Ditch Co-Op, Incorporated.
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OFFERED BY: 

