

MAR 07 2025

SENATE 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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32 WHEREAS, Act 164, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023 (Act 164),
33 allocated \$10 million to be expended by the Department of
34 Agriculture for the design and construction for repairs to
35 restore and reactivate the Kohala Ditch System to increase the



1 availability of water for agricultural and aquacultural
2 purposes, as a capital improvement project grant pursuant to
3 chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
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5 WHEREAS, the funds allocated in Act 164 have not been
6 released to the Kohala Ditch Co-Op, Incorporated, the intended
7 grantee, that was formed in 2019 to manage the Kohala Ditch, due
8 to issues relating to compliance with statutory requirements for
9 grants under chapter 42F, Hawaii Revised Statutes; and
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11 WHEREAS, given the critical role the Kohala Ditch plays in
12 the State's agricultural production, its routine maintenance and
13 repair must be provided for by the State to resolve the current
14 damage and avoid future years-long disruptions to the water
15 supply; and
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17 WHEREAS, the Agribusiness Development Corporation was
18 established by the Legislature in 1994, with statutory mandates
19 to coordinate and administer programs to assist agricultural
20 enterprises to facilitate the transition of agricultural
21 infrastructure from plantation operations into other
22 agricultural enterprises, increase local production of
23 agricultural products for local consumption, reduce the State's
24 reliance on imported agricultural products, and increase access
25 to farmland and related infrastructure for small local farmers
26 and cooperatives; and
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28 WHEREAS, the repair and routine maintenance of the Kohala
29 Ditch will further the Agribusiness Development Corporation in
30 fulfilling its statutory mandates; now, therefore,
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32 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-third
33 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2025,
34 that the Agribusiness Development Corporation is requested to
35 assume responsibility for the routine maintenance and repair of
36 the Kohala Ditch; and
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38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Agribusiness Development
39 Corporation is urged to develop and implement a comprehensive
40 plan for the routine maintenance of the Kohala Ditch, that:
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S.R. NO. 73

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

- 15
- 16 (1) Detail any maintenance and repairs to the Kohala
17 Ditch, including any related expenditures;
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 - 19 (2) Include an assessment of the current condition of the
20 Kohala Ditch;
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 - 22 (3) Include a summary of completed maintenance activities;
23 and
 - 24
 - 25 (4) Make recommendations for any further improvements; and
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27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
28 Resolution be transmitted to the Chairperson of the Board of
29 Directors of the Agribusiness Development Corporation,
30 Chairperson of the Board of Agriculture, and President of Kohala
31 Ditch Co-Op, Incorporated.
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OFFERED BY:

