

JAN 21 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FIRE PREVENTION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the frequency and
2 severity of wildfires has increased drastically in the State in
3 recent years. The land area burned annually by wildfires has
4 increased three-fold in the last twenty years. Climate change
5 is a significant contributing factor to rising wildfire risks.
6 Longer, more intense droughts create dry conditions in which
7 vegetation, especially invasive plants, dries out and more
8 easily ignites.

9 The proliferation of non-native plants in the State also
10 contributes to the rising impact of wildfires. Invasive grass
11 species such as guinea grass and buffelgrass grow pervasively on
12 abandoned agricultural lands, constituting hazardous fuel loads
13 and high fire risk. Invasive species are often highly fire
14 adaptive, quicker spreading, and more fire-prone than native
15 plants. Due to these conditions, wildfires in native ecosystems
16 lead to a dangerous cycle of long-term conversion to more fire-



1 prone landscapes as native vegetation burns and is replaced by
2 its invasive competitors.

3 The legislature further finds that most wildfires are
4 caused by human activity and therefore preventable. According
5 to the Hawaii wildfire management organization, ninety-nine per
6 cent of wildfires in the State are caused by people. Human
7 ignition sources include downed power lines, heat from vehicle
8 exhaust systems, and errant sparks from machinery or campfires.

9 The 2023 Maui wildfires highlighted these acute dangers,
10 igniting due to human error in areas experiencing moderate to
11 severe droughts and fueled by an overgrowth of invasive
12 vegetation. A post-fire analysis found that abandoned sugar and
13 pineapple plantations had been overgrown by vast fields of non-
14 native guinea grass. This brush became fuel for the wildfires,
15 supporting their destructive expansion. Responsible, proactive
16 land management would have effectively limited the scale of the
17 wildfires.

18 The legislature therefore recognizes that land management
19 is a critical component of wildfire risk mitigation. Land
20 management is key to community safety because proactive efforts
21 are essential to protecting lives, property, and natural



1 resources from catastrophic wildfires. The State's wildfire
2 prevention and preparedness plans include various land
3 management efforts, such as removing invasive species,
4 maintaining defensible spaces, and supporting fuel reduction
5 programs. Private and public property owners are obligated to
6 participate in these programs by their legal duty to care.
7 However, significant buildups of flammable vegetation in certain
8 areas, including seasonal brush, signal lapses in
9 implementation.

10 The legislature therefore believes that land management
11 efforts must expand to combat the rising threat wildfires pose
12 to local communities due to climate change, the proliferation of
13 invasive vegetation, and human activity.

14 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 15 (1) Require each state agency to create and regularly
16 update a wildfire hazard map;
- 17 (2) Specify that the community fuels reduction project
18 shall require the clearing of flammable vegetation
19 present on state lands for more than sixty days;



- 1 (3) Require the department of land and natural resources
- 2 to clear certain flammable vegetation from high- and
- 3 medium-risk wildfire areas; and
- 4 (4) Require reports.

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 132, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
6 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
7 and to read as follows:

8 "S132- Wildfire hazard maps; vegetation management;
9 reports. (a) Each state agency shall create a wildfire hazard
10 map to support vegetation management for fire prevention that
11 identifies high-risk, medium-risk, and low-risk wildfire areas
12 on all state lands under the agency's control and management.
13 Each state agency shall designate risk levels pursuant to the
14 rules adopted by the department of land and natural resources.

15 (b) Each state agency shall update its wildfire hazard map
16 at least once every two years.

17 (c) The department of land and natural resources shall
18 adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91 to effectuate the purposes of
19 this section, including to establish parameters for designating
20 wildfire area risk levels according to the amount of flammable



1 vegetation and combustible growth on the land, including
2 seasonal brush, and pursuant to current fire safety standards.

3 (d) Each state agency shall submit a report of its initial
4 wildfire hazard map created pursuant to subsection (a) to the
5 legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of
6 the regular session of 2027.

7 (e) Each state agency shall submit a report of its
8 wildfire hazard map following each update, to the legislature no
9 later than twenty days prior to the convening of the legislative
10 session immediately following the completion of each update
11 pursuant to subsection (b)."

12 SECTION 3. Act 303, Session Laws of Hawaii 2025, section
13 4, is amended by amending subsection (a) to read as follows:

14 "(a) The department of land and natural resources shall
15 establish and implement a community fuels reduction project to
16 reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on state lands, particularly on
17 lands adjacent to communities. Where feasible, the community
18 fuels reduction project shall:

19 (1) Reduce hazardous wildfire fuels on the landscape,
20 including flammable vegetation and combustible growth
21 that has been present for more than sixty days, that



- 1 threaten watersheds, communities, and critical public
2 infrastructure such as powerlines and communication
3 facilities;
- 4 (2) Create and maintain effective firebreaks along
5 undeveloped state properties that border a developed
6 parcel, including but not limited to schools and
7 residential and commercial properties, by removing and
8 clearing flammable vegetation and combustible growth
9 that has been present for more than sixty days from
10 areas within thirty feet of the developed parcel;
- 11 (3) Reduce flammable grasses on the landscape through
12 projects like managed grazing; [and]
- 13 (4) Remove and clear flammable vegetation and combustible
14 growth, including seasonal brush, that has been
15 present for more than sixty days on high- and medium-
16 risk wildfire areas identified pursuant to section
17 132- ; and
- 18 [+4] (5) Provide water infrastructure for grazing and fire
19 suppression."
- 20 SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
21 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

INTRODUCED BY: Stacy



S.B. NO. 2237

Report Title:

DLNR; State Agencies; Vegetation Management; Wildfire Hazard Maps; Community Fuels Reduction Project; Reports

Description:

Requires each state agency to create and regularly update a wildfire hazard map. Requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to adopt rules. Specifies that the Department of Land and Natural Resources shall clear brush present on state lands for more than sixty days through the Community Fuels Reduction Project. Requires the Department of Land and Natural Resources to remove certain brush from high- and medium-risk wildfire areas on state lands. Requires reports to the Legislature.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

