THE SENATE
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026
STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 2885

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO BIOSECURITY.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) is one of the State's fastest growing invasive threats, capable of causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to palms, agriculture, and culturally important landscapes. Although adult CRB visibly damage palm crowns, eighty to ninety per cent of the CRB life cycle occurs hidden inside mulch and green waste piles, where larvae develop undetected for four to six months before emerging as new adults. These piles, not the palms, are the true drivers of population growth.

Increasing CRB populations bring significant economic and budgetary risks for the State. CRB-related economic losses are estimated to reach $500 million to $1 billion over the next decade, with agricultural impacts alone projected at $169 million annually by 2040 if spread reaches additional islands and agricultural regions. However, these figures do not capture indirect cultural, environmental, or tourism-related impacts

associated with the loss of mature palms and native species, but illustrate that CRB management is not only an ecological issue, but also a significant fiscal consideration.

The legislature also finds that beyond financial costs, CRB threatens coastal resilience, traditional practices, community aesthetics, and the State's tourism economy. Despite these risks, Hawaii currently lacks consistent, statewide standards for how mulch and green waste are stored, treated, processed, or moved, leaving large breeding sites unmanaged in both residential areas and high-volume commercial operations. Existing movement rules reduce the spread between districts but do nothing to reduce CRB populations where they are already established.

The legislature further finds that while coconut palms are the primary host, other culturally and agriculturally important affected plants include date palms, hala, banana, sugarcane, and kalo. Because CRB spend most of their lives (four to six months) inside decomposing plant material, breeding sites are the foundation of local population growth. Adult activity in palm crowns represents only a small fraction of the total life cycle.

Current CRB management tools generally include some combination of palm protection, breeding-site reduction, and movement controls. Palm-focused treatment include trunk and root injections of systemic insecticides that can protect palms for several months, and crown sprays and fungicide treatments via drone application help maintain palm vigor and reduce secondary decline. These approaches protect individual trees but do not address the source of new CRB. Breeding-site management of mulch and green waste includes heat-based or mechanical "kill treatments" such as thermophilic composting, pile turning or processing that reliably generates lethal core temperatures, steam treatments, or other high-heat methods; and other strategies that can be effective, low-cost management option for smaller piles. Because larvae require several months to develop, treating green waste at least every four months interrupts the life cycle before adult emergence.

The legislature also finds that certain existing regulations in the State do restrict the movement of certain high-risk plant materials. However, these regulations apply only to specific species or pathways and do not comprehensively regulate the movement of untreated green waste or mulch. As a

result, current movement controls operate as a loose, patchwork system, which reduces some pest-spread risk but leave significant gaps that allow untreated mulch and green waste to move between infested and non-infested areas, including inter-island transport.

The legislature also finds that because more than ninety per cent of the CRB life cycle occurs inside undisturbed mulch and green waste piles, establishing consistent, enforceable, science-based standards for residential and commercial mulch and green waste handling provides an opportunity to reduce CRB populations significantly and effectively at their source.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish mandatory, enforceable standards for the handling, storage, treatment, and movement of mulch and green waste materials in coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zones, both residential and commercial, to ensure early intervention at CRB breeding sites, reduce CRB reinfestation risk, and support statewide biosecurity resilience.

SECTION 2. Chapter 150A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§150A- **Residential and commercial mulch and green waste materials; coconut rhinoceros beetle; mandatory handling and treatment standards.** (a) All contractors, commercial operators, counties, and facilities that generate, store, transport, sell, or distribute mulch or green waste shall be required to neutralize coconut rhinoceros beetle breeding material using one of the following two methods:

(1) Mechanical turning and spreading;

(A) Piles shall be fully turned, aerated, and broken down not less than once every sixty calendar days; and

(B) Material shall be spread or reworked in a manner that prevents long-term cool core development; or

(2) Verified heat treatment with documented treatment readings and dates to be retained for inspection;

(A) Material shall be subjected to thermophilic composting, steam treatment; or

(B) Any equivalent heat-based kill treatment capable of achieving:

(i) A minimum internal temperature of one hundred thirty-one degrees Fahrenheit or

fifty-five degrees Celsius for not less than three consecutive days; or

(ii) A scientifically validated equivalent lethal exposure approved by the department.

(b) No residential property owner or occupant shall create, maintain, store, or accumulate a mulch pile, green waste pile, or compost pile larger than one cubic yard, or any other coconut rhinoceros beetle host material capable of supporting larval development. All green waste generated at a residence shall be placed into county-issued green waste bins for scheduled collection or transported to an approved commercial processor, county facility, or transfer station. Prohibited materials include:

(1) Loose mulch;

(2) Green waste;

(3) Palm debris;

(4) Coconut husk material;

(5) Uncontained or unprocessed vegetative waste; or

(6) Any decomposing organic matter than meets the definition of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material.

(c) No untreated green waste, mulch, compost, palm debris, or other coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall be sold, distributed, transferred, or commercially exchanged within or from a coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zone unless:

(1) The material has undergone documented mechanical turning or certified heat treatment pursuant to subsection (a); and

(2) There is documented proof of treatment that accompanies the material at the point of sale, transfer, or distribution. Any sale, transfer, or distribution of untreated material shall constitute an immediate violation subject to enforcement action.

(d) All coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall be treated before any:

(1) Transfer between property;

(2) Commercial sale or resale;

(3) Distribution by county or private facilities; or

(4) Off-site hauling for disposal and composting; provided that redundant treatment upon receipt may be required when transporting material between separate operators.

(e) Any untreated coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall not be stored for more than sixty days in any coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zone under any circumstances. After sixty days, the coconut rhinoceros beetle host material shall be treated immediately or removed for approved treatment or disposal pursuant to this section.

(f) The following shall be exempt from this section:

(1) Any island of the State without a confirmed coconut rhinoceros beetle population; and

(2) Small-scale residential composting contained in sealed or pest-proof bins not more than one cubic yard.

(g) The department shall enforce and administer the provisions of this section. Any commercial operator or residential property owner violating any provisions of this section shall:

(1) Receive a written warning and be required to take corrective action within seven days;

(2) Be subject to a civil fine of $500 and be required to take corrective action within seven days if:

(A) Corrective action was not taken after receiving a written warning; or

(B) A second violation occurs; and

(3) Be subject to a civil fine of $1,000 for any subsequent offense; provided that each day of continued violation under this section shall constitute a distinct and separate offense.

The chairperson of the board may institute a civil action in any court of competent jurisdiction for injunctive or other relief to correct or abate violations of this section or any rule adopted pursuant to this section, to collect administrative penalties, or to obtain other relief. Collected civil fines shall be retained by the department as additional funding to support ongoing coconut rhinoceros beetle management efforts, including implementation, enforcement, technical assistance, and outreach, and community grants and cost-share programs for equipment to support compliance.

(h) There is established within the department a statewide coconut rhinoceros beetle compliance hotline and reporting system to allow residents, landscapers, contractors, and agricultural workers to report suspected untreated piles, illegal sales, and long-term storage violations. The hotline and reporting system shall include an email and phone number.

(i) For the purposes of this section:

"Coconut rhinoceros beetle host material" means green waste, mulch, compost, palm debris, coconut husk, decomposing plant matter, or any organic material capable of supporting the development of coconut rhinoceros beetle larvae.

"Coconut rhinoceros beetle infested zone" means any geographic area designated by the department as having confirmed coconut rhinoceros beetle presence or elevated risk of establishment.

"Documentation" means written or electronic records of treatment methods, temperatures achieved, dates of processing, and verification logs required under this section.

"Green waste" means leaves, branches, fronds, grass clippings, chipped vegetation, palm residues, and other plant material generated through landscaping, trimming, or land-clearing activities.

"Mulch" means mechanically processed or unprocessed plant material used or stored for landscaping, soil amendment, or compost feedstock.

"Operator" means any individual, business, contractor, county, green waste processor, composting facility, or landowner

responsible for generating, storing, moving, or processing coconut rhinoceros beetle host material.

"Operator of record" means the individual or entity designated as responsible for compliance with the requirements of this section on a given property or site where coconut rhinoceros beetle host material is stored or processed.

"Pile" means any accumulation of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material exceeding one cubic yard, whether loose, compacted, or contained.

"Processing" means any activity that breaks apart, mixes, turns, aerates, or mechanically alters coconut rhinoceros beetle host material.

"Redundant treatment" means treatment applied upon receipt of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material that has already been treated before transfer, as required by the department.

"Storage" means the accumulation or placement of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material on a property for more than seventy-two hours.

"Thermophilic composting" means a heat-based composting process that achieves sustained elevated temperatures sufficient to kill coconut rhinoceros beetle larvae and pupae.

"Transfer" means the sale, exchange, distribution, gifting, or physical relocation of coconut rhinoceros beetle host material from one property or operator to another.

"Treatment" means mechanical turning or heat-based processing that meets the standards established in this section, including required temperatures, durations, and documentation.

"Untreated material" means coconut rhinoceros beetle host material that has not undergone treatment meeting the temperature, duration, and documentation requirements established under this section."

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on January 1, 2027.

INTRODUCED BY: Mike Gabbard

S.B. NO. 2885

Report Title:
Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Management; Invasive Species; Green Waste; Agriculture; Biosecurity

Description:
Beginning 1/1/2027, establishes mandatory handling and storage rules for commercial and residential coconut rhinoceros beetle host material to reduce the spread of CRB within infested zones and to prevent spread into non-infested zones.

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