

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CONSERVATION.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii's beaches are
2 essential habitats for native marine wildlife, including
3 Hawaiian green sea turtles and Hawaiian monk seals, which
4 routinely bask, rest, recover, and give birth on the State's
5 shores. The former lay their eggs in, and the latter give birth
6 and nurse their pups on, the sandy beaches. The legislature
7 believes that responsible wildlife viewing practices must
8 protect these animals, support public safety, and remain
9 consistent with the cultural and environmental values of the
10 State.

11 However, the legislature recognizes that, despite clear
12 viewing guidance that has been made available to the public,
13 incidents continue to occur in which individuals approach,
14 crowd, touch, or otherwise disturb resting wildlife. This
15 disruptive behavior has been amplified by social media and has,
16 at times, drawn large crowds to popular viewing areas. The
17 legislature is aware that these incidents can create conflicts



1 between members of the public who are attempting to protect
2 wildlife and others who insist on interacting with the wildlife
3 for photographs and online content, including sensationalized
4 conduct for pecuniary gain.

5 The legislature is also aware that federal protections and
6 federal viewing guidance exist for certain marine species.

7 However, effective deterrence depends on a timely, on-scene
8 response and reliable reporting. Investigations and enforcement
9 may be hindered when incidents are not directly witnessed or
10 promptly reported and instead surface only after the recordings
11 are posted online. The legislature therefore finds that
12 implementing clear and enforceable State rules that compliment
13 federal protections will improve compliance, provide
14 accountability, raise public awareness, and reduce conflicts
15 among members of the public.

16 The legislature concludes that it is essential for the
17 State to enable state and county enforcement personnel to take
18 appropriate actions and to provide greater protections for
19 Hawaii's native marine wildlife.



1 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

2 (1) Require the board of land and natural resources to
3 adopt rules implementing wildlife viewing guidelines
4 that substantially conform to the wildlife viewing
5 guidelines issued by the National Oceanic and
6 Atmospheric Administration; and
7 (2) Specify that violations of the rules will be subject
8 to the penalties imposed under section 195D-9, Hawaii
9 Revised Statutes.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 195D, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
11 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
12 and to read as follows:

13 "§195D- Viewing guidelines; wildlife; rules. (a) The
14 board shall adopt rules, pursuant to chapter 91, to implement
15 wildlife viewing guidelines that substantially conform to the
16 wildlife viewing guidelines issued by the National Oceanic and
17 Atmospheric Administration.

18 (b) Any violations of rules adopted by the board pursuant
19 to this section shall be subject to the penalties imposed by
20 section 195D-9."



1 SECTION 3. The board of land and natural resources shall
2 submit annual reports to the legislature, no later than twenty
3 days prior to each regular session, beginning with the regular
4 session of 2027, on the status of the adoption of the rules
5 required by section 1 of this Act, until the rules are adopted.
6 The final annual report shall include an accurate copy of the
7 adopted rules.

8 SECTION 4. This Act does not affect rights and duties that
9 matured, penalties that were incurred, and proceedings that were
10 begun before its effective date.

11 SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

13

INTRODUCED BY: 



S.B. NO. 244

Report Title:

BLNR; Conservation; Environment; Wildlife; Viewing; Rules;
Legislature; Reports

Description:

Requires the Board of Land and Natural Resources to adopt rules that implement wildlife viewing guidelines that substantially conform to the wildlife viewing guidelines issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Requires annual reports to the Legislature until rules are adopted.

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

