

JAN 23 2026

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that providing explicit
2 authority to the department of land and natural resources to
3 enter into community co-management agreements with community-
4 based organizations honors the traditional Native Hawaiian
5 concepts of land management, promoting more effective
6 stewardship of public trust resources for present and future
7 generations. The legislature further finds that the State alone
8 cannot sustainably manage the State's public trust resources and
9 that place-based Native Hawaiian and local communities provide
10 essential stewardship, capacity, and local knowledge. Article
11 XI, section 1, and article XII, section 7, of the Hawaii State
12 Constitution support co-management agreements as a means of
13 restoring and protecting biocultural public trust resources for
14 future generations, including for subsistence, cultural, and
15 religious purposes.

16 The legislature further finds that grassroots communities
17 across the State have spent decades collaborating with



1 government agencies to care for lands significant to Native
2 Hawaiians and the surrounding resources. For example, the Hui
3 Makaaainana o Makana has worked since 1998 to steward Haena state
4 park and perpetuate ancestral wisdom. Community-based
5 collaboration has also been successful in fisheries through the
6 community-based subsistence fishing area framework, including in
7 Haena, Milolii, and Kipahulu, and additional communities are
8 organizing. The legislature believes all of these efforts would
9 be more effective and sustainable if supported by long-term
10 community co-management agreements.

11 Although partnerships between the community and the
12 government exist through curatorships, revocable permits, and
13 concession agreements, the legislature finds that the lack of
14 statutory authority and a formalized process limits the
15 effectiveness of these partnerships. Accordingly, the purpose
16 of this Act is to:

- 17 (1) Authorize the department of land and natural resources
18 and community-based organizations to enter into
19 community co-management agreements;



(2) Establish qualifications for community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements; and

(3) Authorize the disposition of public lands by a community co-management agreement.

SECTION 2. Chapter 171, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"PART . COMMUNITY CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

§171-A Findings and purpose. The legislature finds that providing specific authority to the department of land and natural resources to enter into community co-management agreements with community-based organizations honors traditional, Native Hawaiian concepts and place-based practices for natural and cultural resource management, and promotes more effective protection of the State's public trust resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

§171-B Definitions. As used in this part:

"Community-based organization" means a state nonprofit organization that has a mission of, capacity for, and commitment to care for natural and cultural resources and that engages in



1 community-driven planning, management, and projects that benefit
2 public trust resources."

3 "Community co-management agreement" means the collaboration
4 under a written agreement between the department and a
5 community-based organization that allocates the sharing of
6 management functions, responsibilities, and the rights of entry
7 and use for a community co-management unit under the
8 jurisdiction of the department.

9 "Community co-management unit" means the location and
10 boundaries of the land specified under the community-co-
11 management agreement.

12 "Land" includes all interests therein and natural resources
13 including water, streams, shorelines out to a mile or to the
14 fringing reef, ocean minerals, and all such things connected
15 with land, unless otherwise expressly provided.

16 "Place-based education" means learning pathways that are
17 guided and grounded in geographic place and Native Hawaiian
18 values, language, culture, and history.

19 **§171-C Community co-management agreements.** (a) The
20 department may enter into community co-management agreements



1 with community-based organizations, qualified pursuant section
2 171-D, to carry out the purposes of this part.

3 (b) Community co-management agreements shall be used
4 exclusively for one or more of the following purposes:

5 (1) Preservation and practice of all rights customarily
6 and traditionally exercised by Native Hawaiians for
7 subsistence, and for cultural and religious purposes;

8 (2) Preservation, protection, and restoration of
9 archaeological historical, and environmental
10 resources;

11 (3) Rehabilitation, revegetation, restoration, and
12 preservation of native species and habitats;

13 (4) Management of parking and visitor activities; and

14 (5) Place-based education;

15 provided that the term of a community co-management agreement
16 shall not exceed sixty-five years.

17 (c) The community co-management agreement may be
18 terminated by either party via written notice, subject to its
19 terms.

20 (d) The department may adopt rules pursuant to chapter 91.
21 to carry out the purposes of this part.



1 **§171-D Community-based organizations; qualifications.** A

2 community-based organization may become qualified to enter into
3 a community co-management agreement after review by the board of
4 a formal request in writing that includes:

5 (1) The nonprofit status and mission of the community-
6 based organization;

7 (2) A list of board members and staff of the community-
8 based organization and their qualifications;

9 (3) A summary of past and current projects within the
10 proposed community co-management unit, including those
11 in partnership with community groups and government
12 entities;

13 (4) A description of the community co-management unit;

14 (5) Justification for the proposed community co-management
15 agreement;

16 (6) Any other information deemed necessary for
17 consideration; and

18 (7) A plan for the community co-management unit that
19 describes the:

20 (A) Specific place-based and community-based

21 activities to be conducted in the community co-



S.B. NO. 2979

- 1 management unit that sustain community, natural,
2 and cultural resources;
- 3 (B) Demonstrated commitment to the knowledge and use
4 of traditional Native Hawaiian practices,
5 understandings, and values;
- 6 (C) Use of adaptive management practices;
- 7 (D) Defined management functions, roles, and
8 responsibilities;
- 9 (E) Performance and accountability standards for
10 monitoring, evaluation, and revenue generation,
11 if any;
- 12 (F) Reporting processes and requirements;
- 13 (G) Parameters for equitable data collection,
14 sharing, and rights;
- 15 (H) Dispute resolution pathways; and
- 16 (I) Methods of funding and enforcement."

17 SECTION 3. Section 171-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
18 amended by adding a new definition to be appropriately inserted
19 and to read as follows:

20 "Community co-management agreement" has the same meaning
21 as defined in section 171-B."



SECTION 4. Section 171-13, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§171-13 Disposition of public lands. Except as otherwise provided by law and subject to other provisions of this chapter, the board may:

(1) Dispose of public land in fee simple, by lease, lease with option to purchase, license, community co-management agreement, or permit; and

(2) Grant easement by direct negotiation or otherwise for particular purposes in perpetuity on [~~such~~] terms as may be set by the board, subject to reverter to the State upon termination or abandonment of the specific purpose for which it was granted[~~7~~]; provided that the sale price of [~~such~~] the easement shall be determined pursuant to section 171-17(b).

No person shall be eligible to purchase or lease public lands, or to be granted a license, community co-management agreement, permit, or easement covering public lands, who has had during the five years preceding the date of disposition a previous sale, lease, license, community co-management agreement, permit,



1 or easement covering public lands canceled for failure to
2 satisfy the terms and conditions thereof."

3 SECTION 5. In codifying the new sections added by section
4 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute
5 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating
6 the new sections in this Act.

7 SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
8 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

9 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.
10

INTRODUCED BY: _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. A.', written over a horizontal line.

S.B. NO. 2979

Report Title:

DLNR; Community Co-Management Agreements; Community-Based Organizations; Disposal of State Lands

Description:

Authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources and community-based organizations to enter into community co-management agreements concerning state lands. Authorizes the Department of Land and Natural Resources to dispose state land through community co-management agreements. Establishes qualifications for community-based organizations that may enter into community co-management agreements.

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

