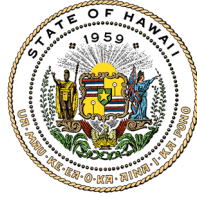


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA
P.O. BOX 621
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
and
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Friday, March 20, 2026
1:03 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1553, HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANS

House Bill 1553, House Draft 1, mandates that any existing habitat conservation plan not including an agreement for emergency medical and rehabilitation services for affected native wildlife be amended to incorporate such services. The bill becomes effective on 7/1/3000. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources supports this measure.**

Wildlife rehabilitation centers provide an essential service for native wildlife in Hawai'i and should be fairly compensated for their efforts. This bill requires current incidental take license holders with habitat conservation plans to update their plans and agree to enter annual service contracts with wildlife rehabilitation centers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to support this measure.



Save Our Shearwaters

Testimony of MOLLY BACHE
Program Director; Save Our Shearwaters

Before the Committee on WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS
Before the Committee on AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Friday, March 20th, 2026, 1:03 PM - State Capitol, Conf. Room 224 & Videoconference
In consideration of HB 1553 HD1; RELATING TO HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANS

Aloha Chair Lee, Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Richards, and Members of the Committees:

I am submitting testimony on behalf of Save Our Shearwaters, in support of HB 1553 HD1.

Save Our Shearwaters (SOS) provides emergency response and rehabilitation for Kaua'i's native birds and bats. The wildlife we treat are commonly admitted due to a wide range of anthropogenic impacts.

SOS supports the position that existing Habitat Conservation Plans without an agreement for emergency medical and rehabilitation services for affected native wildlife should be amended to include such services in their agreements. These agreements help establish response pathways, clarify roles and responsibilities, and reduce confusion during time-sensitive situations involving injured wildlife. If Habitat Conservation Plan participants rely on the availability of emergency medical and rehabilitation services, having an agreement in place ensures that such services are supported and able to be provided when they are needed. This work requires trained staff, veterinary resources, permitted facilities, and constant readiness. HB 1553 HD1 also helps ensure that wildlife care providers are not expected to shoulder the full cost of injuries associated with permitted activities.

HB 1553 HD1 would strengthen the presence of proven support pathways for the protection and care of native wildlife statewide.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Molly Bache
Program Director
Save Our Shearwaters
www.saveourshearwaters.org

Testimony Before the Senate Committees on
Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Agriculture and Environment

By Beth Amaro
Member Services and
Communications Manager
Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative
4463 Pahe'e Street, Suite 1, Lihu'e, Hawai'i, 96766-2000

Friday, March 20, 2026; 1:03 pm
Conference Room #224 & Videoconference

House Bill No. 1553, HD 1 – RELATING TO HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANS

To the Honorable Chairs Chris Lee and Mike Gabbard, Vice Chairs Lorraine R. Inouye and Herbert M. "Tim" Richards, III, and Members of the Committees:

Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) is a not-for-profit utility providing electrical service to more than 34,000 commercial and residential members.

KIUC has concerns about this measure.

For more than two decades, KIUC has worked closely with federal and state agencies to address the potential impact of utility structures and lights on Kaua'i's protected seabirds listed under the Federal and State of Hawai'i Endangered Species Acts. KIUC has implemented numerous measures reducing these potential impacts and improving seabird survival and recovery. In 2011, KIUC was granted a federal permit for its short-term Habitat Conservation Plan that accounted for impacts to seabirds and formalized measures to reduce those impacts from utility structures and to protect seabirds and seabird habitat.

A second draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for a 50-year term and the HCP's draft Environmental Impact Statement was published in August 2025 for public and Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC) review and comment through the State of Hawai'i Office of Planning and Sustainable Development's Environmental Review Program publication, The Environmental Notice. At the same time, a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the HCP and the draft HCP was published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Federal Register. The 50-year term draft HCP covers three species of seabirds, five species of waterbirds and the green sea turtle.

After all comments from the public and the Endangered Species Recovery Committee are received, a final EIS and HCP that considers and incorporates these comments will be completed. The final EIS and HCP are expected to provide the basis for KIUC's application for a federal incidental take permit and state incidental take license.

The current draft HCP includes KIUC's present and future base funding for the Save our Shearwaters (SOS) program, ensuring that the program is open and operational to serve the avian wildlife rehabilitation needs on While, KIUC recognizes the importance of funding agreements with SOS by HCPs utilizing SOS for wildlife rehabilitation services, we are concerned about the potential overlap and conflicts with other HCPs. As the number of HCPs increases across the state, it becomes increasingly important that requirements for funding agreements with SOS do not result in conflicts with permitted HCPs.

KIUC takes its HCP responsibilities seriously and has spent more than \$66 million since 2020 on HCP related efforts. Much of that spending includes minimization and mitigation projects in partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Kaua'i Endangered Seabird Recovery Project, Save Our Shearwaters Program, seabird experts, and other governmental, non-profit and community groups. KIUC's minimization efforts have resulted in an estimated 66% decrease in seabird powerline strikes, and KIUC's mitigation efforts have resulted in stable and increasing seabird populations and improved habitat in managed areas. KIUC's funding of SOS has ensured that an avian rehabilitation facility remains open and operational on Kauai and contributes to the successful rehabilitation and high rate of release of threatened and endangered seabird and waterbird species on Kauai.

We respectfully request the following amendment to address potential conflicts with existing HCPs that could develop as a result of annual service contracts for native wildlife rehabilitation:

(G) Include an agreement to enter into and maintain an annual service contract with a stand-by and response facility available to provide emergency medical and rehabilitation services to native wildlife affected by activities undertaken within the plan area; Annual service contracts shall not conflict with existing Habitat Conservation Plans;

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1553-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 5:36:52 PM

Testimony for WLA on 3/20/2026 1:03:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rae Okawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is an important measure to ensure that native wildlife impacted by human activities are able to get the treatment and care needed to maximize the odds of a successful return to the wild. Mahalo for considering this issue.

HB-1553-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/19/2026 12:33:06 PM

Testimony for WLA on 3/20/2026 1:03:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nancy Rustad	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, Chair Gabbard, Vice Chair Richards and committee members:

As a resident of the Big Island, I appreciate the need to care for and to protect the present and the future of our native birds and bats in Hawaii. I was thankful that the committees understand that need and agreed to hear HB1553.

HB1553 allows us as a state to be prepared to take action, to be proactive rather reactive, by funding support for resources and services when they are required. This also ensures that those services are administered by established, professionally qualified and credentialed care providers.

Please support HB1553.

Sincerely,
Nancy Rustad
Kamuela, HI