

ACT 99

H.B. NO. 506

A Bill for an Act Relating to Conservation Enforcement.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that coral reefs are extremely valuable to the people of Hawaii and provide benefits such as coastal protection from erosion due to rising sea levels and larger ocean swells as the ocean warms; sand production that replenishes beaches; and fisheries, recreation, tourism, and spiritual connection. The legislature further finds that many reefs around the island of Oahu are widely known to be among the most degraded in the State, due to historically poor land use practices that buried corals with silt run-off and smothered corals with seaweeds fertilized by leaching sewage and fertilizer run-off. The legislature also finds that warmer ocean temperatures are now causing more frequent and severe coral bleaching events that kill corals and are predicted to be annual events by about 2040. Ocean acidification and other pollutants also adversely affect corals.

The legislature additionally finds that one of the most effective ways to help corals withstand and recover from present and future threats is to ensure the existence of many herbivorous fishes on Hawaii's reefs, especially parrotfishes (uhu), surgeonfishes (kala and others), and chubs (nenu). These fishes are known to crop seaweeds that would otherwise smother corals, providing space on the reefs for new corals to grow, especially after coral bleaching events. The population of herbivorous fishes around Oahu is by far the lowest in Hawaii.

The legislature finds that the board of land and natural resources adopted statewide herbivore fishing rules in December 2023 to protect herbivorous fish populations in the State. However, enforcement of these rules, which is the responsibility of the division of conservation and resources enforcement of the department of land and natural resources, has been particularly difficult around Oahu because:

- (1) Fishing intensity is much greater on Oahu than on the other islands;
- (2) Division of conservation and resources enforcement officers have been diverted to law enforcement duties on land due to recent increases in violent crime; and

- (3) Most poaching of herbivorous fish occurs at night, which poses an extreme challenge to the several division of conservation and resources enforcement officers available for marine night patrols, especially given the lack of needed equipment.

Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for equipment for the Oahu branch of the division of conservation and resources enforcement of the department of land and natural resources.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$4,974,040 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 for equipment for the Oahu branch of the division of conservation and resources enforcement of the department of land and natural resources, to be allocated as follows:

- (1) \$800,000 for two maritime enforcement patrol vessels, complete with audible/visual emergency equipment;
- (2) \$50,000 for two patrol watercrafts, complete with audible/visual emergency equipment;
- (3) \$50,000 for shipment costs for the items in paragraphs (1) and (2);
- (4) \$3,040,000 for thirty-two police marked patrol vehicles, complete with audible/visual emergency equipment;
- (5) \$206,000 for two towing vehicles for patrol vessels, complete with audible/visual emergency equipment;
- (6) \$10,000 for extended warranties for the two vehicles in paragraph (5);
- (7) \$14,000 for one floating drive-on dock;
- (8) \$1,800 for six personal flotation devices;
- (9) \$36,000 for six sets of SCUBA gear, including full equipment and training and certifications;
- (10) \$224,000 for thirty-two portable radios;
- (11) \$5,000 for one base station/repeater;
- (12) \$128,000 for thirty-two night-vision devices;
- (13) \$128,000 for thirty-two drones;
- (14) \$5,600 for thirty-two remote pilot certificates for the drones in paragraph (13);
- (15) \$215,640 per year for six mobile surveillance trailers;
- (16) \$48,000 for six quick-deploy license plate recognition camera systems; and
- (17) \$12,000 for installation costs for the items in paragraph (16).

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Approved May 27, 2025.)