SB 1893
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL FEES

Senate Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection
Public Hearing - February 8, 1995
1:00 P.M., Room 305 SOT

By
John T. Harrison, Environmental Center
Alyssa Miller, Urban and Regional Planning
James Moncur, Economics
Peter Rappa, Sea Grant
James Roumasset, Economics

SB 1893 would create special funds for air and waste management and for water quality management and would authorize the department of health (DOH) to charge fees on certain environmental programs.

Our statement on this measure does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Differing opinions were voiced by commenters on this measure. On the one hand, it was felt that air and wastewater public policy implementation presently is extremely inefficient, and there is no excuse for increasing bureaucracy and hence raising the cost of doing business in Hawaii. Other reviewers felt that the proposed fees and funds would appropriately embody the principle that the polluter should pay for environmental management expenses, and they expressed strong support for these proposals.

Clearly, the state has demonstrated an inability to allocate adequate funds for environmental management from general funding sources. Realization of internal savings through efficiency increases should take precedence in funding these programs, but to the degree that those savings are accomplished, it seems evident that some other mechanism is needed. Whether fee programs, marketable pollution rights, or some other scheme is instituted, the time for enhanced support for environmental management is long overdue. Prevention of environmental despoilment always is less costly than clean-up.

Two other points should be noted. First, no alternative funding mechanism will be productive if the state personnel system precludes hiring of adequate numbers of qualified individuals. Second, given the history of abuse of special funds, some provision for reviewing or auditing special fund programs needs to be included.