RB 3303
RELATING TO OIL SPILLS

House Committees on
Energy and Environmental Protection and
Ocean Recreation and Marine Resources

Joint Public Hearing - February 7, 1996
8:30 A.M., Room 312, State Capitol

By
John Harrison, Environmental Center
Sheila Conant, Zoology
Charles Lamoureux, Lyon Arboretum

HB 3303 would amend Chapter 185 HRS to provide that a permit shall be required for all prescribed burning of forest, brush, or pasture lands, and to prohibit uncontrolled burning on all lands without a permit.

Our comments on this measure are compiled from voluntarily submitted opinions of the listed academic sources, and as such, do not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Although it would appear reasonable to institute regulatory control of prescribed burning, we take strong issue with the implied tenet that such burning is an acceptable management practice in Hawaii. Much of the present state of floral and faunal distribution is traceable to uncontrolled, or poorly managed burning, starting with clearance of vast areas of coastal lowland vegetation by colonizing Polynesians, and continuing through present ecological disasters such as the wildfires which have ravaged Makua Valley. The bottom line is that natural areas and ecosystems are severely disturbed by fire, which creates extensive tracts of open land, providing ample colonization areas for alien or weed species which displace the native flora. As an alternative to this measure, we would prefer a statute which provides that burning is an undesirable vegetative management practice under any circumstances.