SB 2505 would statutorily establish an environmental management framework for the Ala Wai Canal Watershed.

Our statement is compiled from voluntarily submitted opinions of the listed academic reviewers and does not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

Proposals in this measure have been thoroughly discussed, and there exists an overriding consensus of many, many people and of agencies that these are valid, reasonable, and in the long term, cost-effective plans. There is a major federal initiative now underway to recognize the value of watersheds and their function in coastal zone management, stream pollution, land pollution, and other environmental management areas of concern. The time is ripe for some broad, effective legislation to finally recognize that our watersheds need protection if we are to continue to have clean water, flood control, protected coastal resources, safe recreational waters, fishing, and protected endangered species. Hence, we fully support the intent of this measure and its accompanying appropriation measure, SB 3110.

This bill would require that any state agency undertaking an action or "permitting an action" within the Ala Wai Canal Watershed must prepare a statement of the anticipated impact of the action. While the overall intent of the bill is good, and has many supportable environmental benefits, this particular may be unnecessary. First, pursuant to Chapter 343, HRS, if a state or county agency is proposing an action within the watershed, it is highly probable that an EIA is already required. This bill would presumably apply to applicant actions too, since it mentions "or permitting an action...". Although we fully support the intent of such management measures, we would prefer that they be triggered from within Chapter 343 itself. A measure to accomplish this has been introduced this session in the form of SB 2731.
The proposed Ala Wai Canal Watershed Management Board offers an innovative approach to watershed management that may be usefully extended to other watersheds on Oahu and on neighbor islands.

The stream flow and water quality easement section was discussed at major length in the Ala Wai meetings. It is critical since ownership and liability issues have been a major problem in maintenance, at least according to the appropriate agencies involved.

Exception of the storm drains of the City seems inappropriate. Since storm drains are the conduit for most of the runoff that gets into the canal, including waters contaminated with heavy metals, especially lead, cadmium, chromium, and zinc, it would seem that some recognition of that problem is needed. It’s difficult to conceptualize effective management of a watershed which excludes the storm drains.