SB 1333
RELATING TO THE HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY

Senate Committee on Labor and Environment
Senate Committee on Economic Development

Joint Public Hearing - February 18, 1999
4:00 p.m., Room 225, State Capitol

By John Harrison, Environmental Center

SB 1333 would amend Section 201B-3, HRS, to allow the Hawaii Tourism Authority to fund and support activities that promote responsible management of Hawaii's natural resources. Our comments on this measure do not constitute an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

This measure highlights the irony wherein more Hawaii tax dollars are spent outside the state marketing our visitor industry than are spent maintaining and managing the very resources upon which that industry depends for survival. Noting the willingness of visitors to protect Hawaii's environment, it seems appropriate that funds from the Hawaii Tourism Authority, which largely arise from taxes on tourists, should appropriately be allocated partly towards natural resource management. We note that last years' statistics indicated that tourism volume grew on all of the outer islands, yet shrank on Oahu. It seems that the experiences our visitors seek are embodied in expansive open spaces, clear waters, and the awe-inspiring natural landscapes of our islands, in preference to concrete and congestion. Protecting those land and seascapes and the quality of life of our people should be a funding priority, but sadly, Hawaii ranks among the lowest states in the country in proportional expenditures for natural resource management.