SB 1674
RELATING TO GOLF COURSES

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Planning, Land and Water Use Management
Public Hearing - February 26, 1991

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SB 1674 would establish a new chapter titled "Golf Course Development and Management Guidelines" with the purpose of statutorily establishing specific environmental review, design, operation and maintenance standards for proposed new golf courses in the state.

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

As recognized in Section 1 of SB 1674, growing concern relative to the impacts of golf course developments on the environment is of critical interest to the public and the need for greater statutory authority to more carefully monitor and control golf course developments may be necessary. Hence we can concur with the intent of the bill.

However, as presently drafted, the level of specificity in SB 1674, particularly with regard to the environmental analysis and design standards would appear to be more appropriately covered by county planning ordinances or regulations rather than interposed into state law. The surface water monitoring program should be included as a Department of Health (DOH) function. The integrated pest management program is likely a responsibility of the Departments of Agriculture and Health, and the groundwater quality issue is clearly the responsibility of the Department of Land and Natural Resources with coordination of the various county water authorities and DOH. Groundwater quality issues are under the jurisdiction of the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the DOH.
The bill does not specify a lead agency yet cites the need for coordination among multiple agencies. Without a lead agency it is unclear who is to determine if the coordination has been satisfactorily implemented. Furthermore, what agency or department will be responsible for developing rules or guidelines under which the provisions of the bill will be met. For example, in the case of the environmental analyses to be required in part II, page 4, line 4, item 8. How is "significant plant and animal habitat" to be defined?

In conclusion, we remain concerned with environmental degradation attributable to inappropriate sitings of golf course development. However, it is not clear to us how the passage of this bill will result in any better land use decisions with respect to the environment than what is already provided by state and county statutes and regulations.