SB 1634

RELATING TO THE TRANSFER OF AQUACULTURE PROGRAMS
FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Senate Committee on Agriculture

Public Hearing - February 11, 1993
1:00 P.M., Room 405 SOT

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SB 1634 would amend the Hawaii revised Statutes to transfer all aquaculture programs from the department of land and natural resources to the department of agriculture.

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

While there seems no compelling reason to undertake the transfer proposed by this measure, other than to achieve consistency with federal policy which, in itself, is functionally insignificant, we can envision a number of reasons to leave oversight responsibilities as they presently stand. Historically, the major issues associated with aquaculture operations in Hawaii have been economic and environmental. The economic issues largely have revolved around viability, scale, and markets. The environmental issues almost uniformly are related to aquaculture effluents and their effects on receiving waters. While we have no doubt that agricultural economics may be an appropriate area of management of the DOA, stream and coastal water aquatic resources are within purview of the DLNR. Hence, management of aquaculture, particularly with regard to effluent issues, which have been problematic both in Hawaii and nationwide, ought to be a concern of DLNR.

Another consideration is that aquaculture operations both in land based ponds and in coastal fishponds rely heavily on fresh water resources, and DLNR acts as the host organization for the Commission on Water Resources Management. Hence, as water
allocation issues become increasingly complex, particularly on Oahu, close coordination with the CWRM will be essential, and retention of the aquaculture program within DLNR will help facilitate that coordination.

Finally, it seems apparent that wholesale transfer of programs, along with the logistic, personnel, and facility components that comprise those programs, requires significant fiscal resources, and at a time when such resources are constrained, other government needs ought to have higher priority.