HR 110 HCR 90
REQUESTING AN INVENTORY OF EXISTING WATERSHEDS

Statement for
House Committee on
Water and Land Use
Public Hearing - April 4, 1989

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HR 110/HCR90 requests the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to conduct an inventory and compile a report of all existing watersheds.

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

The conservation of watersheds in Hawaii is rapidly becoming a matter of critical concern. If we are to continue to support both agriculture and population growth, it is essential that ongoing efforts towards the responsible and informed management of the state's watersheds be augmented.

We concur with the intent of this resolution, however, we do have several suggestions pertinent to its implementation.

The terms "hydrographic area" and "watershed" are not defined. We suggest that the term "hydrographic area" be replaced by the more comprehensive but closely related and statutorily defined term "hydrologic unit". "Watershed" as used in the context of this resolution might be best defined as: An infiltration area that serves to recharge surface and groundwater.

The resolution calls for the DLNR with assistance from the University of Hawaii Water Resources Research Center and the Boards of Water Supply of the four counties to conduct an inventory and compile a report of all existing watersheds. The resolution goes on to direct that the report include a
number of specific topics related to identifying those watersheds needing protection, those useful for purposes other than as watershed, those in need of reforestation, and the tree species suitable for planting at various elevations and terrain.

It is our understanding that the Hawaii Water Plan currently being developed by the DLNR under the directive of the Water Commission may include much of the information requested in this resolution. However, there does not appear to be direct reference in HRS 174C-31 to an inventory of watersheds. Therefore, the specific clarification that would be offered by this resolution seems desirable.

In our previous statement on a related resolution, SR 35, we called attention to the need to encourage or direct that other University, state, and federal offices with expertise in watershed management be consulted in developing the requested inventory and report. We are pleased to note that HR 110/HCR90 does include the UH Water Resources Research Center. However, there are a number of other University departments, State and Federal agencies as well as private organizations with special expertise in watershed management issues that may be able to provide substantive input to the inventory and report. We urge that the resolution be amended to encourage DLNR to consult with these other sources for information. Specifically, we suggest that representation from such offices as the Soil Conservation Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state Department of Health, the Division of Forestry and Wildlife, as well as the Division of Water and Land Development under DLNR, Natural Area Reserves System Commission, the U.H. Botany Department, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources and the Nature Conservancy be included.

We further suggest that the requested report identify statutes that appear to be inconsistent or contrary to maintenance or reestablishment of Hawaii's watersheds.

The Environmental Center of the University of Hawaii would be pleased to work with or assist the DLNR in coordinating this project.