SB 2422
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Agriculture
Public Hearing - February 6, 1990

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SB 2422 calls attention to the need for preservation and conservation of Hawaii's environment and natural resources. The bill adds a new chapter to the Hawaii Revised Statutes that would establish a Hawaii Environment and Natural Resources Commission in the Department of Land and Natural Resources. The duties of the commission would include various administrative functions associated with the establishment of, and expenditures of monies from, a Hawaii environment and natural resources trust fund.

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

The bill calls attention to the low priority given by the state to the preservation and conservation of Hawaii's environment and natural resources and this is apparently the problem that SB 2422 seeks to resolve. However, no specific purpose is set forth in the bill. The purpose of the 15 member commission that would be established is also not entirely clear except in the context of the administration and expenditure of funds as stated in page 4, paragraph b. It appears that the funds would be used for carrying out tasks presently under the responsibility of various units of DLNR. How a new 15 member commission would improve DLNR's ability to expend funds wisely for environment and natural resource management is not readily apparent. With respect to the commission, the bill offers no guidance as to the structure or competency requirements of the commissioners.
It is not clear what state funded capital improvements would fall under the trust fund contribution requirements since state buildings would be specifically excluded. Would, for example, the trust fund monies be derived from highway or airport construction?

The purposes for which the funds are to be expended are very broad and the costs associated with the administration of the funds are likely to be correspondingly high. It is not clear why a separate commission would be more effective in administration of the funds than additional staff for DLNR.