HB 1583
RELATING TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

Statement for
House Committee on
Planning, Energy and Environmental Protection
Transportation
Public Hearing - March 5, 1987

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HB 1583 would amend HRS 343 by adding a provision to require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the construction of a new or expansion of an existing helipad or heliport within the State.

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

The intent of this bill is to require private owners of lands to evaluate the environmental effects of the construction or expansion of existing helipads or heliports on their lands. While we would concur that environmental issues may be an important consideration in the construction of such airport facilities, we do not concur that the amendment of HRS 343 as proposed would be the best way to address this concern.

Under the present laws, an Environmental Assessment would be required if a proposed helipad or heliport would use state or county monies or if it is to take place in certain specified areas. The proposed amendment would only serve to bring under the provisions of HRS 343, those helipads or heliports developed with private funds and on privately owned lands.

The present provisions of HRS 343-5 set forth certain specific, geographically focused, areas wherein actions proposed will require environmental assessment. HB 1583 would alter this focus and procedure by requiring an EIS for a specific action, regardless of geographic area. Furthermore the environmental assessment procedure, whereby environmental significance of the activity is determined, would be omitted and an EIS would be required even if the impacts were clearly non-significant.

Two alternative approaches to the problem might be considered:
The first would add to the statutes involving airports, HRS 261- , a requirement for environmental assessment of construction or expansion of airports in accordance with HRS 343.

While this approach might solve the environmental assessment problem of airport-heliport construction it would complicate the EIS administration, review and coordination procedures of the OEQC by triggering Environmental Assessments outside of the "normal" channels, i.e. outside of Chapter 343.

The second alternative would be to add an additional paragraph to HRS 343-5 that would require environmental assessment for actions that proposed the construction of airports.

This approach has the negative affect of deviating from the land use focus of 343-5 to a specific action focus. However, the potential environmental impacts associated with private airport construction, not just heliports, would suggest that this approach might be the most reasonable.