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SB 2211

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Environmental Protection

Public Hearing - February 11, 1992
1:00 P.M., Rm. 305 SOT

By

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Ed Murabayashi, Water Resources Research Center
Steven J. Dollar, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology

SB 2211 would appropriate funds to the department of health for establishment of a program to develop, test, and implement new technologies for monitoring of coastal water quality.

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

The need for innovative, aggressive approaches to information procurement and analysis to enhance management of coastal waters is unequivocal. Consequently, we strongly support the intent of this bill. We anticipate that the DOH may find ongoing programs and research expertise in this area resident within the university to be an invaluable resource. We note that a number of demonstration projects, specifically those carried out on the Kona and Kohala coasts by Dr. Steven Dollar and studies in Kaneohe Bay during the seventies led by Dr. Stephen Smith are available for guidance on this topic.

Rational coastal management is fundamentally reliant on long-term, consistent, and believable monitoring data which lead to accurate distinction between seasonal or event-related fluctuations and long-term trends in water quality. While evolution of new methodologies is necessary for developing insights into the interplay between land-based human activities and both acute and chronic impacts to coastal and nearshore ecosystems, the need for baseline data developed by conventional monitoring techniques cannot be emphasized strongly enough.

As we have noted previously, any long-term effort requires secure and consistent funding commensurate with research needs. Reliance on annual fiscal renewals, always subject to the prevailing political winds, presents

Investigations (MHIMRI) program spearheaded by DLNR. We also question the advisability of item (6). While the EPA has encouraged such programs on the mainland, quality assurance in the collection of seawater for analysis of trace micronutrient concentrations such as exist in Hawaiian waters remains a significant problem even within agency programs. From a management standpoint, unreliable or contaminated water quality samples are worse than no data at all, and the collection of samples for rational management of Hawaii's coastal resources should be left to trained personnel.

Finally, we note that, while a six-year program is established, funding is provided only for the first year. Long-term monitoring research requires reasonable funding security. The University's commitment to a six-year research effort should not be held hostage annually to the uncertainties of fiscal politics.