



# University of Hawaii at Manoa

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## Notice of Informational Briefing Environmental Organizations

Senate Committee on  
Planning and Environment  
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By  
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The purpose of this informational briefing is to allow environmental organizations and individuals to present their concerns to your committee on Planning and the Environment. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments and look forward to participation in hearings wherein some of the concerns expressed today will likely be addressed. These comments do not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the purpose and functions of the University of Hawaii Environmental Center, a few words on our organization and how it is involved with the legislature, seem appropriate.

The Environmental Center was established by the University of Hawaii in 1970 in response to the State Environmental Quality Act (Hawaii Revised Statutes, Chapter 341). The designated functions of the Center are "to stimulate, expand, and coordinate education, research, and service efforts of the University" in environmental matters with regard to needs of the State. The environmental education function includes our coordination and advising of students in the Environmental Studies Major and Certificate programs under the Liberal Studies Program. The Research functions of the Center include the identification, organization and coordination of multidisciplinary environmental research. The service functions of the Center concentrate on providing and facilitating the transfer of environmentally relevant, objective information from the University community to state, federal, and county agencies and, most importantly for the purposes of this meeting, to the legislature, for use in planning, research, or legislative actions.

To address the specific purpose of this briefing, ie. environmental concerns for consideration by the Senate Committee on Planning and Environment, we wish to offer the following as examples of possible areas

*A Unit of Water Resources Research Center*

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of attention by your committee, recognizing however, that these are not the only areas of our interest or concern.

In response to a directive from the 1987 State Legislature (House Concurrent Resolution 267), we have been working with the Environmental Council and the Office of Environmental Quality Control to review the existing applicability categories delineated in the Environmental Impact Statement Chapter 343-5 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) and if necessary to make recommendations for amendments. These categories define actions which initiate the environmental assessment process under HRS Chapter 343. A report on our collective efforts is forthcoming from the Environmental Council and a copy of the report will be provided to your committee.

Last year, House Bill 380 was passed by the legislature but then vetoed by the Governor. This bill would have permitted appeals to the Environmental Council of agency determinations as to whether an environmental impact statement is or is not required. The rationale for the provisions that would have been afforded by this bill are a matter of record and its passage by the legislature reflected the consensus as to the merits of the rationale. Because the bill did not become law, litigative action that most likely could have been avoided if the provisions of HB 380 were in place is now apparently inevitable. Non productive costs and project delays are the consequence. Reconsideration of the provisions of HB 380 is needed.

In past legislative sessions the benefits and detriments of the attachment of the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC) and the Environmental Council (EC) to the Department of Health have been debated. We suggest that if the topic of Departmental attachment of OEQC and EC is to be addressed this session, that the relative merits of their attachment to the Office of State Planning be considered.

Again we appreciate the opportunity to offer our comments at this briefing and look forward to working with your committee on issues of mutual interest and concern.

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