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SB 2416
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR A STUDY
TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF CLEANING THE ALA WAI CANAL

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources
February 9, 1990

By
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SB 2416 would provide \$800,000 for a study to determine the feasibility of cleaning the Ala Wai Canal and in particular to improve its water quality to standards acceptable for water-based recreational activities.

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

It seems appropriate to offer some background information as to the basis for our particular interest and concurrence with the intent of this bill. As a researcher in the Oceanography Department and later with the Environmental Center of the University of Hawaii, I spent several years carrying out baseline ecological studies on the Ala Wai Canal beginning in 1969. In the early 1970's, the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC), in response to a specific request by then Governor George Ariyoshi, came to the Environmental Center and requested that we undertake a study of ways to improve the Ala Wai Canal. In response to that request and with modest support from OEQC, we assembled a team of researchers who looked at various alternatives for improving the water quality of the Ala Wai Canal. The final report on that study was provided to OEQC in December 1976.

Since that study there have been a few other highly specific studies on various aspects of the Canal but no comprehensive, in depth technical analysis of the feasibility of permanently improving the water quality of the Ala Wai Canal.

In reviewing these tasks based on my experience with the 1976 study, I believe the initial evaluation of alternative methods and planning will require a minimum of \$200,000. The Ala Wai Clean Up Technical Committee recommended a figure of \$400,000 to \$500,000 for the actual engineering design and to prepare necessary drawings to implement the method selected in the planning stage. A figure of \$100,000 was estimated for the required Environmental Impact Statement, assuming that all three tasks were undertaken together. In our discussions, it was apparent that significant savings in money and time would be realized if the three tasks were undertaken concurrently. This will allow the technical engineers to have full consultative access to the environmental planners and facilitate coordination and sharing of data and minimize costs. Such cooperative efforts well permit engineering designs compatible with environmental requirements and minimize or eliminate the need for subsequent modifications to mitigate environmental problems.

We would offer one suggestion, to delete the word "adverse" from page 2 line 12. Environmental impacts must be evaluated whether adverse or positive. HRS 343, the Environmental Impact Statement statute, specifically applies to all potential impacts of a project, not just "adverse" impacts.

It has been our belief that a clean, aesthetically pleasing Ala Wai Canal would provide an exceptionally attractive focus for recreational activities on the mauka side of Waikiki. With proper landscaping and a possible boardwalk extension of the existing sidewalk, walking, fishing, boating and canoeing activities would surely be enhanced. SB 2416 would provide the means by which the technical, economic, and environmental feasibility of this clean-up could be determined.