



University of Hawaii at Manoa

Environmental Center
Crawford 317 • 2550 Campus Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
Telephone (808) 948-7361

Office of the Director

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HB 2710-78
RELATING TO A SHORELINE POLLUTION STUDY

Statement for the
House Committee on Ocean and Marine Resources
House Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection
House Committee on Water, Land Use Development, and Hawaiian Homes

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By
Doak C. Cox, Environmental Center
Raymond Tabata, Sea Grant
John McMahon, Marine Opitions
Jacquelin N. Miller, Environmental Center
Reginald H. F. Young, Water Resources Research Center

HB 2710 proposes to make an appropriation for a study of coastal water pollution in the region from Black Point to the Kapahulu Groin, Oahu. This statement on the bill does not reflect an institutional position of the University.

Appropriate concerns with the coastal water environment of Hawaii are identified in the statement of purpose in HB 2710. The bill singles out for special study only one coastal water area. This is referred to as lying along the shore from Black Point, at the east, to the Kapahulu Groin in Waikiki at the west, and as included in the area of the proposed "Kapuku Plan." As finally implemented, however, the "Kapuku Plan" area in this vicinity may be restricted to the western half of the area of concern.

The statement of purpose recognizes that "any impairment to the coastal ecosystem constitutes a threat to the State." The bill then implicitly presumes, first, that there is significant impairment to the coastal ecosystem in the area of interest; and, second, that the most significant impairment in that area is the result of water pollution. The extent of alteration of the natural ecosystem in the area of concern, and in particular in the part of the area around Diamond Head, has yet to be demonstrated. If there has been significant change, it is quite possible, if not probable, that fishing pressure is as important a cause as water pollution.

Section 3 of the bill indicates that the proposed study should include monitoring of nutrient and sediment concentration, algal growth, etc., in order to determine the effects of chemicals used in swimming pool maintenance. The implied assumption that the swimming pool chemicals provide the most significant contribution to coastal water ecological changes has no basis in fact of which we are aware, and indeed seems unlikely. Important nutrient and sediment concentrations cannot result from swimming pool discharges, and these concentrations may already be monitored in the area by the DOH.

Section 2 indicates that the study is to be accomplished in one year. Section 3 indicates the year is to start with the date of approval of the appropriation act. Since it is doubtful that the funds would be released on the date of approval, the study would have to be performed in less than a year. At least a full year would be necessary to determine the natural seasonal changes in the ecosystem, even a general way. Hence, even these could not be determined within the stated time limits, yet until they were determined, there would not be even a current baseline from which to measure long-term changes.

Determination of long-term changes would require either: a) comparison of present conditions with conditions some time in the past or with conditions some time in the future; or b) studies comparing conditions in the area with conditions in areas with very similar ecologies. There have been a few ecological studies of limited scope carried out in the area in question. Comparison of these results with those of a current study would assist in evaluating long-term ecological changes.

Section 2 indicates that the study is to be conducted by DLNR, but Section 3 would call for the expenditure of funds by DOH in conjunction with DLNR. The appropriation should be made to the agency which takes the lead in coordinating the study.

Some sort of base line ecological study may be warranted in conjunction with the Kapuku Plan, but such a study should probably have a specific focus. If there are specific concerns with fish populations in the area, a specific study to determine whether these have actually been declining may be warranted, and if so what the probable causes are, (but not a study based on a pre-supposition as to cause). Fishing pressures should be included, as well as water pollution effects. The effects of changes in drainage generally should be considered and not merely swimming pool discharge (although around Diamond Head itself drainage changes have been negligible). The study should not be restricted in either scope or time as indicated in HB 2710.

A simple paper analysis would probably suffice to settle the question of the importance of the swimming pool discharge.