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Environmental Center

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HB 1187

RELATING TO THE NATURAL AREA PARTNERSHIP AND FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS

House Committee on
Energy and Environmental Protection

Public Hearing - February 10, 1993
8:00 A.M., Room 1310 SOT

By

John T. Harrison, Environmental Center
Charles Lamoureux, Lyon Arboretum
Cliff Smith, Cooperative Parks Unit

HB 1187 would provide a stable source of funding for the Natural Area Reserves System and the Forest Stewardship Program through dedication of revenues derived from the conveyance tax to these programs.

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

Last year, an administration-sponsored measure that would have provided dedicated funding to these programs passed the legislature, but in an amended form which did not categorically rule out dedicated funding, but which considered it inappropriate at that time. Clearly, the state's fiscal constraints are no less confining now than they were last year. Hence, we have no doubt that persuasive arguments for yet another postponement of dedicated funding for these broadly acclaimed programs will be forthcoming this year.

Last year's testimony from the conservation community explicitly laid out the consequences of neglect in meeting ongoing maintenance needs of these critical habitat areas. Fences installed to exclude feral pigs would be breached, and the pigs entering the protected areas could undo years of protection. Loss of forest canopy would seriously compromise the quantity and quality of water upon which human communities depend. Erosion of soil could transform clear coastal reef communities to mud flats, just as has occurred along the south shore of Molokai. And countless additional native species could be added to the list of

extinctions which herald the hallmark of human priorities.

The laws of nature have no conscience. Extinction is forever, and entropy is inevitable. But entropy is reversible, through dedication of energy. Individual priorities may vary, but dedication of less than one thousandth of the state's annual budget to preservation of the forests and natural areas which sustain our lives and livelihoods hardly seems unaffordable.