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HB 3035 HD 1
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR A
BASELINE STUDY OF THE HANAIEI RIVER ESTUARY
AND OTHER NORTH SHORE RIVERS, KAUAI

Statement for
Senate Committee on
Planning and Environment
Public Hearing - March 16, 1988

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HB 3035 HD 1 would make an appropriation for a baseline study of the Hanalei River Estuary and other North Shore Rivers on Kauai.

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

We concur with the intent of HB 3035 HD 1 and the rationale presented in support of the need, value and application of the baseline studies that would be funded by this bill. It is our understanding that these studies are in response to recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Hanalei River/North Shore Kauai Management Plan.

Estuaries represent sensitive and significant, ecologically critical habitats. They provide nursery grounds for fish and wildlife including endangered and threatened species, assist in trapping sediments that would otherwise contribute to coastal pollution, function as a reservoir in the ecological food chain, and add substantially to the recreational value of coastal resources. Their calm, protected waters and salinity gradation from salt to fresh water provide environments for a diverse assemblage of marine, brackish, and fresh water organisms. In addition to their recognition in the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, we note that the importance and significance of estuaries has been recognized by major federal policy statements and programs directed at their preservation.

Population pressures adjacent to the shorelines have resulted in significant alterations of estuarine habitats either through direct contaminants from both point and non-point source pollutants; modifications of the "natural" character of the estuaries by man-made structural developments; or simply excessive use of sensitive, microscale habitats. The estuaries on Kauai, and particularly the Hanalei river estuary, represent habitats not yet significantly altered by these undesirable contributions of urbanization. Therefore, the value of the baseline data, whose collection would be funded by this bill, will be all the more important and have widely applicable utility both for management of other pristine areas as well as in the establishment of goals for environmental management elsewhere in the state. In essence, funds expended on the Hanalei river will provide multiple returns on their investment.

We note that the study period is for fiscal year 1988-1989, with a report of the findings prior to the convening of the 1990 legislature. Given the frequent time lag in availability of funds following project approval and the nature of the studies to be undertaken, we suggest that some provision for extension of the completion date of the final report on the project may be advisable. This would not preclude a progress report on findings and recommendations to the legislature by 1990.

We strongly concur with the need for baseline studies of the Hanalei River estuary and therefore support the intent of this bill. Furthermore, we urge that the bill be amended to include an appropriation consistent with the need and scope of work required to carry out the baseline studies proposed.