

State of Hawai'i  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
Division of Forestry and Wildlife  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

July 12, 2013

Chairperson and Members  
Board of Land and Natural Resources  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Land Board Members:

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON "*HAHAI NO KA UA I KA ULULĀ`AU* - THE RAIN FOLLOWS THE FOREST - A PLAN TO REPLENISH HAWAII'S SOURCE OF WATER"

The Department has prioritized protection of Hawaii's water supplies in response to increasing threats from hotter and drier conditions from climate change, as well as loss of watershed forests. "*Hahai no ka ua i ka ululā`au* - The Rain Follows the Forest" is the Department's plan to ensure mauka watersheds are fully functioning so fresh water resources can be utilized and enjoyed by the people of Hawai'i in perpetuity. Safeguarding our water supplies is one of the central natural resource goals of the Abercrombie Administration's *A New Day in Hawaii* plan.

The Watershed Plan was announced by Governor Abercrombie in November 2011. This initiative has resulted in significant landscape-level protection statewide for Hawaii's priority watershed forests.

In 2012, Legislative appropriations for the initiative included \$2,500,000 in special funds and \$2,500,000 in general obligation bonds. This FY 13 funding is estimated to create approximately 61 direct local jobs. Funding is estimated to result in over 15,000 acres protected and an additional 145,000 acres in process to be protected or maintained. In sum, this funding is estimated to affect over 160,000 acres of priority watershed forests and buffering areas.

In 2013, the Legislature appropriated \$3.5 million in general funds and \$5 million in general obligation bonds for the initiative for FY 14. Additionally, the Legislature included \$2.5 million in general obligation bonds for FY 15. The general funds will be expended in a competitive process, with evaluation criteria based on the priority actions of the watershed plan.

Additionally, 13 new positions were established to work on watershed projects. The budget bill also includes funding for the Hawaii Invasive Species Council at \$750,000 in

FY 14 and FY 15 that will also benefit watershed forest protection. A \$3.5 million project that protects the largest contiguous dryland forest in Hawaii island at Manuka Natural Area Reserve also received funding.

The majority of funding is provided for invasive species control and reforestation. The Department and partners are employing new cost-saving technologies to make management more efficient. For example, funding has supplied a Forward Looking InfraRed (FLIR) camera that enables staff to find locations of hooved animals that may be hiding in dense undergrowth and otherwise remain undetected. The University of Hawaii is developing innovative technologies for weed control and environmentally friendly materials. Additional projects receiving watershed funding include wildland fire prevention and control, monitoring and database management, developing techniques for integrated pest management, and conducting public outreach to educate communities about why this work is so critical to Hawaii's future.

Protecting *mauka* forest areas is the most cost effective and efficient way to absorb rainwater and replenish groundwater. As over half of Hawaii's watershed forests have already been lost, the need to invest in protection is increasingly urgent. The Department's goal is to double the acreage protected by 2021. This goal requires approximately \$11 million per year dedicated to the watershed initiative. The Department looks forward to implementing and expanding this initiative with the support and leadership provided by the Legislature and Governor Abercrombie to protect Hawaii's critical water supply for current and future generations.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Board:           Accept the staff update on *Hahai no ka ua i ka ululā`au* - The Rain Follows the Forest - A Plan to Replenish Hawaii's Source of Water.

Respectfully submitted,



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ROGER H. IMOTO, Administrator  
Division of Forestry and Wildlife

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL:



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WILLIAM J. AILA, JR., Chairperson