



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Thursday, March 29, 2018 at 10:50 a.m.

By

Ruth Gates, Director
Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology

And

Michael Bruno
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Vice Chancellor for Research
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HB 2613 HD1 SD1 – MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE HE'ĒIA NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE (NERR)

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Keith-Agaran, and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2613 HD1 SD1 making an appropriation for the He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our BOR Approved Supplemental Budget. HIMB strongly supports this measure but would like to offer some clarifications and suggested changes to the bill as described below.

We are highly supportive of the effort to maintain the He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve (HeNERR) and are pleased to see continuing support of the site through HB 2613 HD1 SD1 with its inclusion of the needed personnel resources for the HeNERR. However, our understanding is that 3 of the 4 requested positions (Reserve Manager, Research Coordinator & Education Coordinator) were already permanently allocated to the university (at 2.64 FTE) by the legislature during the 2017 session, thus only the missing 0.36 FTE need be included in this current bill to fully fund these three required positions. The same three positions are required at every designated NERR site in the nation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, thus their permanent appropriation last year provided State match for the designation and allocation of federal funding that enabled the site partners to begin to implement the HeNERR management plan. However, a fourth position for a Cultural Resource Coordinator, while initially included in last year's bill, ultimately was not funded in 2017. Although this position is not required by the NERRS program, HIMB and the HeNERR site partners believe the Cultural Resource position is critical to the long-term success of the mission.

The establishment of He'eia as one of the 29 Research reserves across the nation has enabled the Site Partners, which includes the Ko'olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club,

Ko'olaupoko Foundation, Paepae O He'eia, Kāko'o 'Ōiwi, and UH's Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB), to work with the State management agencies with jurisdiction for the lands (Division of Land and Natural Resources, Hawai'i Community Development Authority) to undertake a historic effort to restore He'eia to a functioning ahupua'a, and conduct research and monitoring needed to document the utility and value of this management strategy for coastal communities elsewhere. As outlined in the detailed management plan, this effort involves the removal of alien invasives and replacement with native and naturalized species throughout the area, restoration of the lo'i kalo, the loko kuapā and He'eia stream that runs through the site and links mauka to makai. Given that the ultimate goal of this management plan is to restore a functioning ahupua'a, it is critical to have a Cultural Coordinator intimately involved in this effort.

HeNERR is unlike any other in the system - it is a coalescence of community, culture and research to combine modern science with traditional methods and cultural practices in the hope of restoring a more productive watershed and learning from the past to better inform a more bountiful and sustainable future in the face of a changing climate and increased human population. Unlike other federal NERRs, this designation effort has been community led from the beginning and was first proposed in the Kāne'ohē Bay Master plan. The designation of HeNERR is the culmination of decades of effort by community of He'eia, and it is essential that Native Hawaiian culture and traditional practices be given equal prominence in this effort as the federally mandated science and education. Such prominence can best be realized through state investment in a position for the Cultural Resources Coordinator, and we are fully supportive of the communities' request for this position. If successful, the effort to compare resource management under the ahupua'a system to current practices in He'eia will serve as an example for others who seek to restore impacted watersheds and increase the productivity of nearshore fisheries throughout the Hawaiian Islands and to the broader Pacific beyond.

The Resource Manager, Research & Education Coordinators are permanent positions, housed within the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) as the lead State Partner on this effort. We would recommend that the same mechanisms used to create the 2.64FTE for these positions last year be explored to supplement these to full-time, and create a fourth permanent position (1.36 total FTE) to ensure we can meet the required State match of 30% of the total operating budget of the site and avoid a reduction in the allocation of available Federal funds. Additionally, a Cultural Coordinator would ensure a Hawaiian perspective be integrated into the restoration and management of He'eia now and in perpetuity, in accordance with the management plan, and provide expertise that will ensure the long-term stability of this position and success of the individual recruited in achieving the vision of restoring a functioning ahupua'a for the HeNERR.

In closing, we would like to reiterate our enthusiastic support for the intent of HB 2613 HD1 SD1 and thank your committee for the opportunity to offer this testimony.