



# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

## Legislative Testimony

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Testimony Presented Before the  
House Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources, and Hawaiian Affairs  
Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 9:00 a.m.

By  
Robert Bley-Vroman, Chancellor  
and  
Darren T. Lerner, Director  
Dolan Eversole, Extension Agent  
Sea Grant College Program  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

SB 2972 SD1 – RELATING TO BEACH MANAGEMENT FOR THE NORTH SHORE OF  
OAHU

Chair Ing, Vice Chair Lowen, and Members of the Committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports the intent of SB 2972 SD1 provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents approved executive biennium budget. The bill appropriates funds to Hawai'i Sea Grant to create a beach management plan for the north shore of Oahu stretching from the Kawaihoa to Waiale'e ahupua'a. This legislation endeavors to improve the scientific understanding and sustainable management of beach resources along North Shore of O'ahu from Kawaihoa to Waiale'e ahupua'a, roughly Laniakea beach to Sunset Beach. This heavily used coastal stretch is world renown for its beautiful beaches, world-class surf breaks, and marine resources and warrants a dedicated regional beach and dune management plan to conserve and sustainably manage this unique area. **Hawai'i Sea Grant supports this important effort but respectfully requests consideration for the establishment of a new fund rather than utilizing the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Beach Restoration Special Fund as currently specified in SB 2972 SD1. A dedicated appropriation, separate from the aforementioned DLNR Fund would allow for a focused effort by Hawai'i Sea Grant to create a beach management plan for the North Shore, would maintain DLNR's current efforts that support the development of other planned beach conservation efforts and would allow for synergistic efforts between these two organizations on all of these activities including the North Shore Beach Management Plan.**

The North Shore community has consistently expressed strong interest and support for a beach management plan. The development of a regional beach management plan requires the support and participation of the community in order to ensure successful implementation of priority management strategies. In this respect, Hawai'i Sea Grant supports and encourages continued community engagement and discussion on the topic to assist in the development and review the objectives of the plan and allow an opportunity

for the community to share their comments, ideas and concerns for the management of this community resource.

Hawai'i's beaches have become increasingly threatened by coastal erosion. According to the United States Geological Service (USGS) National Assessment of Shoreline Change for the Hawaiian Islands, 70% of Hawai'i's beaches are eroding and 13 miles of beach have been lost over the last century. Beach erosion effects shoreline access, recreation and cultural activities, coastal ecosystems and environments, and our economy. Beaches are the backbone of Hawai'i's \$15 Billion tourism industry and are central to Hawai'i's unique culture and lifestyle. With sea-level rise and chronic coastal erosion, the state is challenged to find effective and efficient ways to preserve and maintain our naturally occurring sand beaches. We believe the proposed legislation will support sustainable management plans that attempt to address this issue.

There is an increasingly strong scientific consensus that sea-level rise will accelerate in the coming decades. The impacts of this are just beginning to be felt here in Hawai'i with accelerated rates of coastal erosion and increasing frequency of coastal inundation. Hawai'i Sea Grant has been involved with providing scientific and technical support for climate change impacts including sea-level rise to a wide range of stakeholders including communities and state and local agencies statewide. Establishing a beach management plan that recognizes and assesses the impacts of sea-level rise in high risk areas will provide accommodation and mitigation opportunities and offer more policy and regulatory options for future generations of residents and coastal managers dealing with coastal conservation and protection.

This type of environmental policy is consistent with President Obama's 2015 Executive Order 11988 regarding the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. In recognition of the threat of sea level rise, the U.S. Congress in their FY2016 omnibus package made it a law that federal agencies plan for rising seas in all projects. Executive Order 11988 requires that all projects using federal funding must meet a federal flood risk standard that either:

- 1) Use data and methods "informed by best-available, actionable climate science";
- 2) Build 2 ft. above the 100-year flood elevation for standard projects, and 3 ft. above for critical buildings (hospitals and evacuation centers); or
- 3) Build to the 500-year flood elevation.

SB2972 SD1 provides support for the development of a coastal processes study and creates a science-based north shore beach management plan, with substantial community and stakeholder input, over a two-year period. The University of Hawai'i is well positioned to carry this out and has successfully developed similar beach and dune management plans in Hawai'i including the [Kailua Beach and Dune Management Plan](#) and the [Beach Management Plan for Maui](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

<http://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/kailua-beach-and-dune-management-plan>

<http://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/sites/default/files/publications/MauiBeachManagementPlan2008.pdf>