



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Water & Land
Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

By

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HB 2229 – RELATING TO COASTAL EROSION

Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Branco, and members of the committee:

The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant) supports the general intent of HB 2229 with recommendations for amendments below and provided that its passage does not replace the priorities as indicated in the University's Board of Regents approved budget.

This legislation appropriates money for a two-year program at the University of Hawai'i to study the impact of sandbag walls, or "sand burritos," on sand movement patterns and coastal erosion at 'Ehukai Beach Park. Hawai'i Sea Grant offers the following comments and suggestions to strengthen this Bill.

1. The bill identifies 'Ehukai Beach park as the proposed study area. In addition to this shoreline reach, an additional area of demonstrated need for such an assessment is at Rocky Point and "Kammies" near Sunset Beach on the North Shore of O'ahu, where recent beach erosion is currently immanently threatening dwellings as it has repeatedly in the last several years and has triggered emergency erosion control by private landowners.
2. While the intent to study the impacts of the sandbag structures is well-intentioned, the science is clear and well-established, shoreline protection structures can cause permanent damage to the adjacent beach under chronically and episodically eroding conditions. This is especially pronounced in the context of accelerated erosion due to sea-level rise.
3. In light of the recognized impacts of shoreline protection structures, it may be more effective and a better use of limited state funding to develop a solution-oriented coastal adaptation plan that includes a hazard risk and vulnerability assessment of the area, an evaluation of adaptation measures pathways and action triggers that includes strategic retreat of shoreline infrastructure.

4. A complimentary effort to develop a beach and dune management plan for these important stretches of beaches would also serve an important role in identifying potential sediment management techniques and coastal dune restoration and management strategies.
5. Any study of the impact of sandbag walls or other shoreline protection structures should also include a summary and assessment of potential policy and rule amendments and alternatives to emergency shoreline protection.
6. Data on historical and seasonal shoreline change exists for most of the state and is regularly updated by the University of Hawai'i researchers, this data compliments the intent to develop an assessment of an evaluation geotextile "burritos."
7. Long term beach conservation planning, maintenance and management should be part of larger comprehensive and cooperative planning efforts among a range of state and county agencies and communities. Coastal community adaptation measures including strategic or phased relocation of coastal development and infrastructure should be included in coastal management plans and will improve community resilience to coastal hazards and sea level rise while conserving and restoring beaches environments.

Hawai'i Sea Grant's mission is to provide integrated research, extension, and education activities that increase understanding and use of ocean and coastal resources of the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands and support the informed personal, policy, and management decisions that are integral to realizing this vision. Hawai'i Sea Grant is part of a national network of 34 university-based programs associated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that promote better understanding, conservation, and use of coastal resources.

Hawai'i Sea Grant supports the intent of HB 2229 and recommends consideration of the above mentioned amendments. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.