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On October 18, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing at the Hawaiian State Capitol in Honolulu. The hearing addressed current water resource scarcity issues facing the state and recent water legislation.

Hawaii's freshwater supplies are drawn almost entirely from groundwater aquifers. Decreases in annual rainfall and increases in widespread wildfires have lead to steadily declining groundwater levels in key areas.

Typically, funding for the U.S. Forest Service's preventative management programs is used to support freshwater resources in Hawaii. However, for the past 20 years, funding from this program has been allocated to help pay for emergency wildfire suppression relief, which now accounts for more than 50 percent of the Forest Service's fiscal year 2016 budget.

Now, Hawaii is now taking steps to protect its freshwater resources. Hawaii's Governor David Y. Ige, an active supporter of responsible water management, recently pledged to protect 30 percent of Hawaii's priority watershed forests by 2030 through the prevention of wildfires, planting of native trees, and other forest management activities. He also signed Hawaii's Water Security Act 172 (Act 172) into law, which establishes a water security advisory group to protect Hawaii's groundwater resources by facilitating public-private partnerships to match state funds for groundwater recharge and water efficiency projects and programs.

Sources: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Congress.gov, Governor of the State of Hawaii, State of Hawaii
