
A BILL FOR AN ACT

Relating to taro preservation and cultivation; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE POHNPEI LEGISLATURE:

1 Section 1. Findings. The Pohnpei Legislature finds that there is a
2 compelling interest in the promotion of taro crop through the recognition and
3 classification of lands that have in the past and will in the future be suitable for
4 the cultivation of taro. The Legislature also finds that along with its cultural
5 significance and traditional values, taro is a stable and nutritious crop which
6 plays a critical role in food security within the communities of our small island
7 state. It should be noted that taro is a crop that has been in the past and is
8 currently being cultivated on both the high island of Pohnpei and on the atolls
9 of this state. Moreover, different varieties of the taro species can and have
10 been grown in a wide range of soils within this state from well drained upland
11 soils to saturated soils that are in the wetlands, or "*lehpwel*" of Pohnpei Island
12 and the taro swamps of the state's atolls. Protecting this resource and
13 maximizing its potentials on public trust lands as well as on private lands
14 throughout all regions of the state is in strong alignment with Pohnpei State's
15 goals of honoring our cultural heritage while at the same time planning for
16 food security and development of commercial agriculture.

17 Section 2. Designation of public trust lands for cultivation.

18 (1) The Director of the Pohnpei Department of Land is hereby
19 instructed to create an inventory of unencumbered public trust lands which the
20 Department of Land recognizes and historically significant taro cultivation and
21 as classifies as especially suitable for current day taro cultivation.

22 (2) The Director shall then prepare and compile a report
23 thereon for submission to the Governor and the Pohnpei Legislature and for
24 distribution to the general public.

25 (3) Within one year following the effective date of this act, the

1 Director shall, with the assistance of the Attorney General's Office, prepare
2 legislation for presentation to the Pohnpei Legislature, through the Office of
3 the Governor, for delineation of the specially designated public trust lands in
4 their natural states, either:

5 (a) To be reserved in the Pohnpei Public Lands Trust as
6 taro cultivation historic sites; or

7 (b) To be made available for leasing to farmers for taro
8 cultivation modern day projects.

9 Section 3. Identification of private lands for cultivation.

10 (1) In addition to the designation of public lands as especially
11 suitable for taro cultivation, the Director of the Pohnpei Department of Land
12 shall also create an inventory of private lands which the Department of Land
13 finds to be especially suitable for taro cultivation.

14 (2) The Director shall attach to the report compiled pursuant to
15 Section 2 of this act an addendum so identifying private lands which the
16 Department of Land finds to be especially suitable for taro cultivation which
17 identifications shall be made available to the affected private land holders for
18 their perusal.

19 Section 4. Registry of Taro Lands. The Director of the Department of
20 Land shall establish and maintain the Pohnpei State Registry of Taro Lands
21 which shall include both the designation of public lands and the identification
22 of private lands which the Department of Land has found to be historically
23 significant and/or especially suitable for taro cultivation today. The registry
24 shall provide written descriptions of the taro lands and appropriate
25 geographical maps and aerial photographs of the designated and identified taro

1 lands.

2 Section 5. Pohnpei State Taro Cultivation Project. Following the initial
3 compilation of the Registry of Taro Lands, the Director of Pohnpei Department
4 of Land, with the assistance of the Director of the Pohnpei Department of
5 Resources and Development and the Office of the Attorney General of Pohnpei
6 State, shall develop and submit to the Pohnpei Legislature, through the Office
7 of the Governor, draft legislation to establish the Pohnpei State Taro
8 Cultivation Project which legislation shall include:

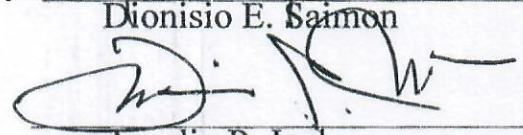
- 9 (1) Preservation measures and limitations of encroachment
10 onto designated public trust lands;
- 11 (2) Opportunities for leasing the designated public trust lands
12 for taro cultivation;
- 13 (3) Assistance for private land owners to dedicate and utilize
14 their identified lands for taro cultivation;
- 15 (4) Protection strategies to preserve the low lying taro lands
16 from the threats of rising seas and other climate change challenges; and
- 17 (5) Grants, loans and other public incentives for the
18 establishment and development of taro plots and plantations on both public
19 trust and private lands.

20 Section 6. Effective date. This act shall take effect upon its approval by
21 the Governor, or upon its becoming law without such approval.

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23 Date: 7/18/2024

Introduced by:


Dionisio E. Saimon


Aurelio P. Joab