



**SIERRA
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COMMITTEE ON FINANCE Rep. Marcus R. Oshiro, Chair, Rep. Marilyn B. Lee, Chair
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PALM OIL DESTROYS THE WORLD'S RAINFORESTS !

News recently of a proposed \$61 million Bio Diesel refinery on Maui rippled thru the Islands. Blue earth Biofuels is seeking \$59 million from the Hawaii state legislature by way of special purpose revenue bonds to build the project. Blue earth plans to produce bio diesel from imported Palm Oil and will import at least 40 million gallons per year. Importing oil? How does this create a sustainable local renewable energy economy? I thought we were trying to get away from this paradigm?

I did some research into palm Oil and was awestruck by the devastation Palm Oil plantations are causing to the worlds great tropical rain forests. Palm oil production is driving deforestation and cultural destruction in Africa, the Amazon, Central America, Indonesia, New Guinea, Malaysia, Borneo, SE Asia, and Islands in other Asia Pacific regions. 60 million acres is planned for Palm Oil plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia alone because Palm oil is in such demand.

The main culprit of deforestation is China's burgeoning economy consuming huge tracts of tropical forest. In fact Palm Oil plantations using slash, burn, wetland draining methods are the third largest CO2 producer in the world contributing 8% of all global CO2 emissions. In April 2006, China purchased 28.2 million cubic feet of Indonesian old growth hardwoods to build sports facilities for the 2008 Olympic summer games at cost of one billion dollars. Huge swaths of tropical forest have been illegally logged by the Indonesian military and sold to China. After the land is logged it is converted to Palm Oil plantations. Palm oil is used for cooking and consumer products by companies like Proctor and Gamble. In fact Pam oil is now found in one out of three food products, with the price of petroleum rising it's now become an alternative fuel Palm oil/bio-diesel.

The Borneo rain forest is considered the lungs of SE Asia and since 1996 ½ of the Borneo forest has disappeared for Palm Oil plantations. This ecosystem is home to 7,000 species with a Bio-diversity unlike anything on earth. It is home to elephants, miniature rhinoceros, the sun bear, orangutans, tree dwelling gibbons, deer, incredible bird life, nearly extinct wild forest leopards, cats and botanical specimens both discovered and undiscovered with untold medicinal value.

At one field station in Borneo's Kayan Mentarang National Park, dozens of new species of trees, mosses and herbs, butterflies, frogs, fresh water prawns, snakes, and entirely new species of mammals were found since 1991. "This field station alone has more frogs and snake species than in all of Europe" said research station director Stephan Wulffraat, a conservation biologist with World Wildlife Fund.

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The unsustainable destruction of the worlds tropical rainforests will prove disastrous to valuable ecosystems required by plant communities, animals and people who depend upon the viability and economic benefits of intact watersheds, fisheries and sustainable resource harvesting. To put it bluntly, this idea that somehow sustainable Palm Oil can be produced is an erroneous one. All of the worlds Palm oil can or could be consumed by China. If you somehow find and take away the small amount of "sustainable oil" the unsustainably produced oil will just fill the void and cancel out the benefits.

The solution, Why does Hawaii need unknown mainland companies (Blue Earth and now Imperium)) with no track records for projects of this size, with undisclosed or secret financial backers, subsidized by the State to produce quantities of Bio Diesel which are unsustainable thru local production and which will always be dependent upon foreign oil imports? I believe it far better to invest in our local Hawaii Pacific Bio diesel company and with Hawaii farmers who have proven accountability. We should invest this \$59 million into putting our own Ag lands into bio fuel oil seed crops. Invest in research and in identifying the best sustainable oil seed crops for local harvest and production. Invest in the local community and keep the wealth for our Island and State by not sending monies off shore perpetuating environmentally destructive palm oil production. For example, 600 workers were lost and unemployed on Oahu when Del Monte closed down. This was a lost opportunity when 600 experienced and trained agriculture workers could have been put to work producing sustainable organically produced agricultural products. Our problem is that there is little or no current ongoing Hawaii based bio fuel research and crop studies underway in the field of Bio fuel seed crop production.

The time has come for Hawaii to control it's destiny and not be at the mercy of foreign oil imports and mainland corporations who come to Maui/Hawaii with their hands out looking for us to give them the money. Let us invest in ourselves.

For more info;

www.Biodiesel.org

www.rainforestweb.org

www.WWF.org

www.mongabay.com

www.discovery.com

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