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HAWAII NEWS

# Surf equity bill for contests at North Shore parks advances

By [Mindy Pennybacker](#) • March 5, 2021

A measure requiring gender equity for certain sports activities needing a park use permit from the city Department of Parks and Recreation was recommended for passage with amendments by the Parks and Community Services Committee of the Honolulu City Council in its Thursday meeting.

Bill 93, also known as the surf equity bill, will now be considered by the full Council.

Citing a historical dearth of surfing competitions for women in Hawaii compared with men, the bill references Resolution 20-12, which urges DPR and the state Department of Land and Natural Resources to adopt new rules ensuring gender equity in surfing contests permitted for city and state parks on Oahu’s North Shore.

The bill was amended to give DPR one year from the effective date of the ordinance to adopt administrative rules, and inserts a reference to professional athletic contests and tournaments as well as professional surfing contests as sports activities it covers.

“We are in support of the bill, thank you for the amendments,” DPR Director Laura Thielen told the committee, noting the department’s permit rule-making process requires public outreach and “the bill would give us a year to do that.”

Thielen added that North Shore surf meet applications submitted by the Feb. 26 deadline for the triennial permits covering fall 2021 through spring 2024 would be governed by existing rules, which do “ask us to look at gender equity but (do) not give as much weight to gender equity as (to) other issues.”

Councilwoman Heidi Tsuneyoshi, who introduced both the bill and resolution, said in a phone interview after the meeting she thought it unfortunate that the new gender equity rules would not take effect until the subsequent triennial calendar.

“But the good news,” she said, “is they’re looking to set up an equity committee, and Director Thielen has been working to make sure its diverse committee with members interested in gender equity as well as other issues — are really looking comprehensively at how these issues are weighted.”

As representative for District 2, which includes the North Shore, Tsuneyoshi said resolution and bill were prompted by women “having such difficulty participating in surf contests that would let them progress to the next level in their careers.”

It was important, added the mother of two surfing daughters, that Hawaii women have access to such opportunities locally.

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