



TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
P.O. BOX 500586 SAIPAN, MP 96950

JOHN PAUL P. SABLAN
CHAIRMAN

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-50
DATE: March 11, 2026
RE: House Bill No. 24-92

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Ways and Means to which was referred:

House Bill No. 24-92: “To appropriate \$63,000.00 from Schedule A of Public Law 24-20 that was vetoed for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts; and for other purposes.”

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion, your Committee recommends that House Bill No. 24-92 be passed by the House in its current form.

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of this Act is to appropriate \$63,000.00 from Schedule A of Public Law 24-20 that was vetoed for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts; and for other purposes.

TO THE CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED BY *[Signature]*
DATE 3/13/2026 TIME 2:13 PM

B. Committee Findings:

Your Committee acknowledges that Public Law 24-20 (the Revised FY 2026 Appropriations Act) originally allocated \$63,000.00 to the CNMI Soil and Water Conservation Districts established by Public 4-44, which include District one, covering Saipan and the Northern Islands; District two, Tinian; and District three, Rota. Your Committee further finds that Governor Apatang vetoed this appropriation, citing a lack of clarifying intent and arguing that the program already exists within the three senatorial districts. He further stated that establishing a centralized office would be duplicative and administratively redundant.

However, your Committee clarifies that the \$63,000.00 was intended to support the existing operations of the three established districts, not to create a new centralized office. Given the pressing need for food security, sustainability, and climate change mitigation, your committee finds it imperative to fund these districts to ensure the continued protection and conservation of the Commonwealth's natural resources. The funds are appropriated as follows:

(a) \$25,000.00 to the Saipan Soil and Water Conservation District for operations under the expenditure authority of the Secretary of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) CNMI, in consultation with the Chairman of Saipan & Northern Islands Soil & Water Conservation District.

(b) \$19,000.00 to the Tinian Soil and Water Conservation District for operations under the expenditure authority of the Resident Department Head of DLNR, Tinian in consultation with Chairperson of the Tinian Soil and Water Conservation District.

(c) \$19,000.00 to the Rota Soil and Water Conservation District for operations under the expenditure authority of the Resident Department Head of DLNR, Rota in consultation with Chairperson of the Rota Soil and Water Conservation District.

Your Committee finds that the recipient of funds allocated under this Act shall be responsible to report all expenses to the Secretary of the Department of Finance by the end of the 2026 calendar year. Provided further that failure to provide all expenses, entities that were afforded funds under this Act shall not be able to avail to any future funds appropriated by the Legislature.

Therefore, after thorough consideration and discussion, your Committee recommends that House Bill No. 24-92, be passed by the House to appropriate already identified resources in the amount of \$63,000.00 to its intended recipient which is the CNMI Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

C. Public Comments/Public Hearing:

In a public meeting held on March 10, 2026, the Committee did not receive oral testimonies during public comments for House Bill No. 24-92.

D. Legislative History:

House Bill No. 24-92 was introduced by Representative Patrick H. San Nicolas on February 9, 2026 and was subsequently referred to the House Standing Committee on Ways and Means and the House Standing Committee on Natural Resources for disposition.

E. Cost Benefit:

The enactment of House Bill No. 24-92, will not impose additional costs on the CNMI Government. The Act primarily appropriates general fund funding, that has already been identified as available for appropriation, to Saipan Soil and Water Conservation District in the amount of \$25,000; to the Tinian Soil and Water Conservation District in the amount of \$19,000; and to the Rota Soil and Water Conservation District in the amount of \$19,000. Funds will be used for operations in each respective district.

III. CONCLUSION:

The committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Bill No. 24-92 and recommends its passage in its current form.

Respectfully submitted,



Rep. John Paul P. Sablan
Chairman



Rep. Roy A. Ada, Member

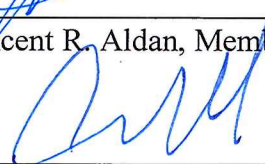
Rep. Roman C. Benavente, Member



Rep. Blas Jonathan "BJ" T. Attao
Vice Chairman



Rep. Vincent R. Aldan, Member



Rep. Angelo A. Camacho, Member

Rep. Joel C. Camacho, Member

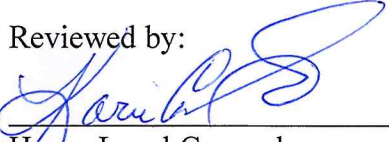
Rep. Marissa R. Flores, Member

Rep. Julie Marie A. Ogo, Member

Rep. Patrick H. San Nicolas, Member

Rep. Ralph N. Yumul, Member

Reviewed by:


House Legal Counsel

Date: 3-13-26

Rep. Joseph A. Flores, Member

Rep. Thomas John "TJ" DLC. Manglona, Member

Rep. Malcolm J. Omar, Member

Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai, Member

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 9, 2026

Third Regular Session, 2026

H. B. 24-92

A BILL FOR AN ACT

To appropriate \$63,000.00 from Schedule A of Public Law 24-20 that was vetoed for the Soil and Water Conservation Districts; and for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE 24TH NORTHERN MARIANAS
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1 **Section 1.** The Legislature finds that Schedule A of Public Law 24-20, the
2 Revised Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Act, attempted to appropriate \$63,000.00
3 to the CNMI Soil and Water Conservation Districts established by Public Law 4-
4 44, which included District one – composed of Saipan and the Northern Islands,
5 District two – Tinian, and District three - Rota. Governor David Apatang vetoed
6 the \$63,000.00 appropriation funding allocation for CNMI State Soil and Water
7 Conservation Districts included under the Independent Program heading in
8 Schedule A of Public Law 24-20 stating that there isn't any express provision
9 clarifying the intent behind its inclusion. Moreover, the Governor stated that the
10 program is already embedded within all three senatorial districts, and the creation
11 of a centralized office would be duplicative and administratively redundant.

12 The Legislature finds that the \$63,000.00 was intended to fund the CNMI

1 Soil and Water Conservations Districts which have been established pursuant to
2 Public Law 4-44 in all three senatorial districts, not create a duplicative centralized
3 office as stated by the Governor in his veto message. The Legislature further finds
4 that food security and sustainability initiative is a critical policy for the islands.
5 With the global climate change being an issue affecting the CNMI, environmental
6 protection and conservation programs and practices must be encouraged and
7 supported. It is imperative to provide funds to the three respective Soil and Water
8 Conservation Districts to assist the districts with their operations and mission in the
9 CNMI.

10 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate \$63,000.00 from
11 Schedule A of Public Law 24-20 that was vetoed for the Soil and Water
12 Conservation Districts of the CNMI under the Independent Program heading.

13 **Section 2. Appropriation.** Notwithstanding any provisions, statutes, laws
14 or regulations to the contrary, the amount of Sixty-Three Thousand Dollars
15 (63,000.00) under Schedule A of Public Law No. 24-20, specifically under the
16 Independent Programs heading is hereby appropriated as follows:

17 (a) \$25,000.00 to the Saipan Soil and Water Conservation District for
18 operations under the expenditure authority of the Secretary of the Department
19 of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) CNMI, in consultation with the
20 Chairman of Saipan & Northern Islands Soil & Water Conservation District.

1 (b) \$19,000.00 to the Tinian Soil and Water Conservation District for
2 operations under the expenditure authority of the Resident Department Head
3 of DLNR, Tinian in consultation with Chairperson of the Tinian Soil and
4 Water Conservation District.

5 (c) \$19,000.00 to the Rota Soil and Water Conservation District for
6 operations under the expenditure authority of the Resident Department Head
7 of DLNR, Rota in consultation with Chairperson of the Rota Soil and Water
8 Conservation District.

9 **Section 3. Fiscal Year Limitation and Reprogramming.** Notwithstanding
10 any laws, provisions or regulations to the contrary, the funds appropriated under
11 Section 2 of this Act shall not be reprogrammed for any other purpose and due to
12 the operational and project based nature of conservation activities all the funds shall
13 be available for expenditure without fiscal year limitations. The Department of
14 Lands and Natural Resources shall serve as fiscal agent for the funds appropriated
15 herein.

16 **Section 4. Reporting of Expenditures.** The recipient of the funds allocated
17 under Section 2 of this Act shall be responsible to report all expenses to the
18 Secretary of the Department of Finance by the end of the 2026 calendar year.
19 Provided further that failure to provide all expenses, entities that were afforded
20 funds under this Act shall not be able to avail to any future funds appropriated by
21 the Legislature.

1 **Section 5. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any
2 such provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of
3 competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions
4 to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be
5 affected thereby.

6 **Section 6. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall
7 not be construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired
8 under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the
9 statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted
10 under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect
11 of terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall
12 already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

13 **Section 7. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the
14 Governor or it becoming law without such approval.

Prefiled: 1/30/2026

Date: _____ Introduced by: /s/ Rep. Patrick H. San Nicolas

Reviewed for Legal Sufficiency by:
/s/ Karie Comstock
House Legal Counsel