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Testimony to the ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY COMMITTEE (ESRC)
Public Meeting of Friday, April 19, 2024 at 9 am

Subject: Agenda Item 4: Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take License for Kenai Industrial Park Project, Kalaeloa, O'ahu, TMK: (1)9-1-074:023.

Aloha Committee Members:

Mahalo for the opportunity to both provide some testimony *and* climb the steep learning curve associated with DOFAW's *kuleana* as your committee, subdivision of DOFAW/DLNR looks to preserve, protect and see to the propagation of endangered plant species and wildlife in these islands. Your charge – our island community's charge – is a daunting one as we struggle to mitigate our collective impact on 'aina in modern times. That task is made all the more critical and difficult as we face a heavily-impacted global environment, sea-level rise and other aspects of climate change.

I am writing to respectfully urge this committee (the ESRC) to adopt a recommendation to DOFAW and, in turn, to the Board of Land & Natural Resources that is very different from what appears to be the current recommendation (April 16th communication to ESRC Committee Members authored by Administrator David Smith) - a statement asserting satisfactory completion of AKC's obligations with respect to "compliance with its Habitat Conservation Plan and Incidental Take License" relating to protective measures taken for the Round-Leafed Chaff Flower in question. My request is made with the utmost respect-for DOFAW and this ESRC Committee's work.

I am no expert in botany; rather, I am a lifelong supporter for environmental stewardship and community-engaged planning that can move us all forward more effectively. It would seem that the effort undertaken by AKC over the past decade has, in fact, resulted in a considerable gain for DOFAW's purposes with respect to knowledge about both the planning/licensing process (this HCP, started in 2014 was a "first" such undertakings?) *and* understanding about how endangered plants like this variety of Chaff can more effectively be protected. The April 16, 2024 communication before your committee states calls attention to the following:

"The goal of the mitigation measures implemented as part of the HCP is to create new populations of round- leaved chaff flower plants on the Kalaeloa Unit of the Pearl Harbor National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) from the genetic stock (seeds and cuttings) of the individuals at the KIP project"

That there is now a thriving population in the protective custody of the NWR is an important accomplishment – one to build on, to celebrate. That AKC's work (and continuing commitment

to provide support, with both environmental interest and volunteered financial assistance) speaks volumes to the success of DOFAW's mission and positive civic engagement. AKC has done its level best to help in turning back a tide of environmental degradation that it did not bring on. The area where a very small surviving population was discovered was not threatened by this company; the real origin to the threat was and is our collective, societal footprint underwritten - one might argue - by decisions made our government (State, County, both) as we pressed forward to "up"zone critical & fragile habitats like this for what "progress" argued would be the "highest & best use" for the area - industrial expansion to support our rapidly changing western world.

I have known the proprietors involved - Elizabeth Wilson and her family - for over 50 years and have the utmost respect for their `ohana's passion for Hawaii's language, culture and the environment. From high-school days forward I came to value both their family's business moxie and, closer to my heart, their obvious passion for the Hawaii we all strive to restore where at all practicable.

I would suggest that it is absolutely "ok" to acknowledge the successes and challenges experienced with this early example of an HCP and ITL and, in subsequent such planning and licensing efforts, seek out a more collaborative approach, engaging those who have now experienced the process and, likely, would have some positive suggestions for future such agreements going forward. It is "ok" to get out of the weeds, call this complete; honor the spirit of AKC's effort...and invite their continued support for the good work that DOFAW and DLNR strive to achieve.

Mahalo,

John L. Reppun, Lifetime Ko'olaupoko/Community Advocate
And friend to both parties here today