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December 9, 2020
Sent via email
State of Hawai‘i
Board of Land and Natural Resources
blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BLNR AGENDA ITEM C(3)

BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES MEETING
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020, 9:00AM

Aloha mai e Chair Case and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

Hawaiian Islands Land Trust (HILT) is Hawai‘i’s islands-wide land trust that is both a Hawai‘i 501(c)3 nonprofit, and a nationally accredited land trust. Our mission is to protect and steward the lands that sustain Hawai‘i, and to perpetuate Hawaiian values by connecting people to ‘āina.

HILT shares its strong support for the approval of the federal funds subgrant to Moloka‘i Land Trust for the fee acquisition of 1,819 acres of land, more or less, at Kona, Moloka‘i, Hawai‘i, Tax Map Key numbers (2) 5-7-005:002 and :027, for the Mapulehu conservation transaction.

The above approval will allow project partners to leverage federal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Lands Acquisition (USFWS-RLA) funding awarded for the conservation purchase and permanent protection of a large portion of the ahupua‘a of Mapulehu. This project will ensure Mapulehu’s resources are protected in perpetuity while providing opportunities for community stewardship of native forest and endangered species habitat, cultural sites and trails, and many other conservation values attributed to this property. HILT supports continued efforts by project partners, Moloka‘i Land Trust, The Trust for Public Land, HILT, Maui County, the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DLNR-DOFAW), and USFWS-RLA to leverage public and private funding to support the conservation purchase and permanent protection of Mapulehu.

Mahalo nui loa for your service and the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to working collaboratively to protect our most special places in Hawai‘i.

Mālama pono,

Shaelene Kamakaala
Director of ‘Āina Protection
Hawaiian Islands Land Trust
shaec@hilt.org, 808-940-0639
December 9, 2020

Sent via email
State of Hawai‘i
Board of Land and Natural Resources
blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

Re: Testimony in Support of BLNR Agenda Item C(3)
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF FEDERAL FUNDS SUBGRANT TO MOLOKA‘I LAND TRUST FOR THE FEE ACQUISITION OF 1,819 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS, AT KONA, MOLOKA‘I, HAWAI‘I, TAX MAP KEY NUMBERS (2) 5-7-005:002 AND :027

Chair Case and Members of the Board of Land Natural Resources, aloha kākou.

My name is Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor and I am a professor of Ethnic Studies and Director of the Center for Oral History at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I live in Kaiwi’ula, Kapālama O‘ahu and in Hoʻolehua, Moloka‘i, from where I have been working online since mid-March.

I serve as member of the Moloka‘i Land Trust and our mission is to protect and restore the land, natural, and cultural resources of Moloka‘i, and to promote, educate, and perpetuate the unique Native Hawaiian traditions and character of the island for the benefit of the future generations of all Moloka‘i, particularly Native Hawaiians.

I am testifying in support of the approval of a federal funds subgrant to Moloka‘i Land Trust for the fee acquisition of 1,819 acres of land, more or less, in the ahupua‘a of Mapulehu.

The property to be acquired encompasses the major part of the Mapulehu ahupua‘a, as it extends from agricultural lands along Kamehamehe V Hwy, slopes up a ridge to a bog at the 3,488 foot summit and also reaches into the recesses of valleys along intermittent streams on both sides of the ridge. As with any ahupua‘a, there are diverse features and resources.
The Mapulehu lands are wahi kapu (sacred). Importantly, the ‘Ili‘ili‘opae Heiau, the largest heiau on Moloka‘i (and second largest in Hawai‘i) is located on these lands, as well as significant archaeological and cultural sites. We hope to work with Molokai archaeologists and families with ancestral ties to Mapulehu to clear the heiau, using appropriate protocols.

The Mapulehu lands are momona - fertile and fruitful. Portions of lower Mapulehu were historically used for ranching, a dairy, apiaries, commercial sisal and fruit orchards. With the guidance and involvement of the community, we hope to reintroduce agriculture on the flat portions of Mapulehu, approximately 60 acres, that border Kamehameha V Highway. This can result in sustainable food production to increase food sovereignty and possibly generate some revenue.

In addition, neighboring families engage in subsistence hunting of pigs and deer on these lands and MLT will guarantee continued access for that purpose. Subsistence hunting is a critical and essential part of our Molokai economy.

Importantly, with regard to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service subgrant funds, these lands are also a habitat for endangered wildlife (‘ope‘ape‘a, nēnē), forest birds, such as the ‘i‘iwi, ‘oloma‘o and ‘Akohekohe and native plants, including endangered species, such as the Hawaiian gardenia, ha‘iwale and alani. Conserving the Mapulehu lands may, with the support of the community, involve partnering with the East Molokai Watershed Partnership to extend the Paku‘i fence in Mapulehu and have the potential to create future jobs for such a project.

There are as many as 25 kuleana that may be landlocked within the parcels and our goal as a land trust is to keep those families connected and/or reconnect families with their ancestral lands.

In the meanwhile, we have confirmation of funding $1.2 million from the Maui Open Space Fund which is currently proceeding through the Maui County process for disbursement. The Legacy Lands Conservation Program will provide $900,000 in matching funds. I urge each of you, as members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources, to please vote in support of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service subgrant to the Molokai Land Trust to acquire the cherished, abundant and valuable Mapulehu lands.

I can be reached at davianna.mcgregor@gmail.com if there are any questions, or to provide additional information.

Mahalo and Aloha,

Davianna Pōmaikaʻi McGregor
Mapulehu: Valley to Summit
ISLAND OF MOLOKAI, HAWAI'I

This map is for planning purposes only. The Trust for Public Land and other parties are not responsible for the accuracy or completeness of the information contained therein. The Trust for Public Land does not guarantee or assume any liability for the content or accuracy of the information contained herein.

(2)5-7-005:027
~1,222 acres

(2)5-7-005:002
~685 acres

Reserve
Photos in 1931

Dairy in 1931
December 9, 2020

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FEE ACQUISITION OF 1,819 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS, AT KONA, MOLOKA‘I, HAWAI‘I, TAX
MAP KEY NUMBERS (2) 5-7-005:002 AND :027.

Aloha Chair Case and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

The Trust for Public Land is a non-profit land conservation organization and our mission is to protect
land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. For over 41 years we’ve
worked to protect over 56,000 acres and 43 special places throughout Hawai‘i. Our Aloha ‘Āina Program
protects lands that are culturally and historically important to Native Hawaiian communities and returns
these lands to Native Hawaiian organizations for community and cultural stewardship. Our Sustainable
Hawai‘i Program conserves lands that support local food production, our forests and their native
species, and clean water sources with the goal of improving Hawai‘i’s self-sufficiency.

The Trust for Public Land worked in partnership with Department of Land and Natural Resources
Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DLNR-DOFAW), and Moloka‘i Land Trust (MLT) to apply for $1.8 million
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Lands Acquisition funds (USFWS-RLA) to purchase and protect
Mapulehu. In April 2020, The U.S. Department of the Interior awarded the grant to DLNR-DOFAW. Now
DLNR-DOFAW is requesting authority to sub-grant USFWS-RLA funds to MLT.

The project also has matching funds. MLT was awarded $900,000 in Legacy Land Conservation Program
funding. Maui County’s approved budget includes $1.2 million in funding for Mapulehu from Maui’s
Open Space Fund. TPL and MLT are working on getting a County Resolution passed to approve a grant
agreement and authorize the acquisition of a conservation easement over the property.

Mapulehu in southeast Moloka‘i extends from Kamehameha V Highway, about 200 hundred yards from
the ocean, to over 3,488 feet at the summit of East Moloka‘i. Protecting Mapulehu would preserve an
exquisite cultural and natural landscape: its native forested watershed and streams, habitat for native
birds, bats, and plants, ‘Ili‘i‘iōpae Heiau, important agricultural lands, and access to the Wailau Trail.

Mapulehu Stream and six intermittent streams wind from the 3,488 foot summit through native habitat
and mixed forest to the lower valley, ancient fishponds, and the sea. Offshore there is a 35-mile long
fringing coral reef – the longest in Hawai‘i. The upper forest recharges the East Moloka‘i aquifer and
provides habitat for endangered birds and plants. Moloka‘i Land Trust plans to control invasive species
to enhance the watershed, prevent erosion and runoff, and coordinate landscape level management
with other protected lands across East Moloka‘i.
Protecting Mapulehu will preserve a sacred cultural and archaeological landscape. Mapulehu is the site of ‘Iliʻiʻōpae Heiau, the largest heiau on Molokaʻi, and second largest in Hawaiʻi. It is a luakini heiau, a sacrificial heiau, and training ground for kahuna (priests). ‘Iliʻiʻōpae is on the National Register as part of the Hōkūkano-Ualapuʻe complex, which includes six heiau and two loko iʻa (fishponds). The Kulahaloa Bell Stone, which when struck sends out a resonant bell-like tone, is also located on the property.

Protecting Mapulehu will also preserve community subsistence, cultural, and recreational access to the ancient Wailau Trail which connects East Molokaʻi to Wailau on the northern coast.

Mapulehu was historically used for kalo cultivation and later as a dairy and orchard. Its protection will preserve these important agricultural lands for the community’s benefit, with the goal of reviving sustainable local food production by and for the community.

Molokaʻi Land Trust will be the future owner and steward of the property. MLT had scheduled the start of a series of community visioning meetings back in March, but unfortunately due to the pandemic, the meeting was cancelled. Since then, MLT has been gathering community input remotely and virtually. MLT has also formed a Mapulehu Stewardship Hui to support long term community based management and stewardship of these lands.

The BLNR has an exciting opportunity to protect and conserve Mapulehu’s precious natural, cultural, and agricultural resources to be stowed by the Molokaʻi Land Trust in partnership with the surrounding community. Moreover, the protection of these lands will help diversify Hawaiʻi’s economy, supporting employment in conservation and agriculture and enhancing our local food system, making Hawaiʻi more resilient in the face of economic recession.

Please approve DOFAW’s request to subgrant USFWS-RLA funds to Molokaʻi Land Trust for the Fee Acquisition of the Mapulehu lands. Thank you for your support.

Mahalo nui loa,

[Signature]

Reyna Ramolete Hayashi
Aloha ʻĀina Project Manager
The Trust for Public Land