



April 20, 2022

State of Hawai'i  
Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR)

RE: Testimony in Support of Agenda Item C1 / April 22, 2022 BLNR Meeting

Aloha Chairperson Suzanne Case and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

Hawaiian Islands Land Trust d/b/a Hawai'i Land Trust (HILT) submits this testimony in strong support of Division of Forestry and Wildlife's (DOFAW) request to enter into a subgrant agreement with HILT to ensure the awarded U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Recovery Land Acquisition (RLA) funds are properly allocated to the Mahukona, Kohala, Hawai'i island conservation transaction effort, to permanently protect 642 acres along the Kohala coastline.

Incorporated as a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust, HILT's mission is to protect and steward the lands that sustain Hawai'i and to perpetuate Hawaiian values by connecting people to the land. HILT holds 41 conservation easements restricting private lands, owns and stewards 7 preserves, and has protected over 21,000 acres throughout Hawai'i. HILT is nationally accredited by the Land Trust Alliance, demonstrating that HILT successfully follows and implements standards and best practices in the field.

HILT understands and strongly supports the Kohala community's longstanding vision and efforts toward a protected Kohala coastline. HILT understood plans for high density resort development at Mahukona and threats to its hundreds of cultural sites, its unique dryland and coastal strand ecosystems, fishery, and lifeways of Kohala families. In 2019, HILT was able to make inroads with the landowner of Mahukona and began applying for public funding support for its purchase in 2020. As part of these efforts, HILT set forth to secure federal funding support through the USFWS RLA funds set aside for conservation projects nationwide that protect habitat for threatened and endangered species.

This federal funding program funnels its acquisition funds through each State's respective department. HILT is a humbled partner with DLNR DOFAW and is proud to have been awarded the largest USFWS RLA award a conservation project in the State of Hawai'i has ever received for this nationally ranked funding program. We conducted three days of biological surveys with three generations present of Kohala families, western trained scientists, and cultural practitioners. We also worked with community volunteers to review dozens of environmental reports for any information to support a solid USFWS application.

HILT has also successfully secured matching funds from the County Public Access, Open Space, and Natural Resource funding support in the amount of \$8M (securing number 1 ranking in 2020) and is in the process of securing \$3M in State Legacy Land Conservation Program (LLCP)



## HAWAI'I LAND TRUST

funds which the LLCP Commission ranked Mahukona number one for FY22. We look forward to this once in a lifetime opportunity to protect and ensure generational stewardship of such a special place—a huge win for all.

Mālama pono,

Shae Kamakaala  
Director of 'Āina Protection and General Counsel  
Hawai'i Land Trust