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Protecting Hawai'i's precious natural heritage

January 10, 2023

TO: BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

RE: Item #C-4 from the AGENDA for the Jan. 13, 2023 Meeting of the Board regarding temporary rule changes for 3 forest reserves in Puna regarding Game Mammal Hunting

Aloha Board Members,

Please give consideration to this testimony in support of this proposed temporary rule change. I am both the Executive Director of Malama O Puna, an environmental advocacy nonprofit 501c3 organization serving Puna for over 20 years, and the President of Hawaiian Shores Community Assn. (HSCA) which represents 1293 agriculturally zoned properties sharing a two-mile long border with the Nanawale Forest Reserve. In April 2022, at an annual membership meeting for HSCA, the destruction of people's yards, gardens and orchards in our community was the top item of concern. The problem isn't just in our community but throughout Puna, Hamakua, Waimea, and Kona.

We assembled an ad hoc task force composed of community members, agriculturalists, commercial piggery owners, Cooperative Extension, DLNR representatives, the County Agricultural Specialist, USDA representatives, and our State Senate & House representatives, as well as the County Game Commissioners representing Puna. Expanding the bag limit, hours of entry, and providing ease of access to the forest reserves was added to the list of potential actions needed to develop a sustainable management plan to address the ever increasing problem of feral pigs on the Big Island. While we have concentrated mostly on the feral pig issue, the Big Island is also dealing with excessive populations of feral goats, sheep, and chickens to name a few of the other wildlife issues here.

Through Malama O Puna's advocacy and nonprofit status we have applied for grant funds to address this problem with a long term solution. Our proposal resulted in funding from a state source through the Puna Strong Grant program and we continue to work with the County Research and Development to acquire additional funding. We hope to deploy more hunting and trapping options, develop website and social media sites to connect hunters with sightings of feral pigs, and also to connect households wanting to butcher and

cook feral pigs with this valuable food source. Looking to the future, we will consider pursuing a Mobile Slaughter Unit to be used for both feral and commercial animals following USDA requirements for intermediary sanitation. The development of the feral pig and other feral animals as a local food source increases food security for our state and could spawn small businesses developing products for our tourism market. Our goal is to turn this situation into an economic driver for our Big Island communities and a way to combat the inherent food insecurity experienced in our island state of Hawaii.

In summary, the group described above and the communities of Puna would be well served by this rule change. Please implement this change ASAP.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eileen O'Hara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eileen O'Hara, Ph.D.
Executive Director Malama O Puna
President, Hawaiian Shores Community Assn.