

Chairperson and Members
Board of Land and Natural Resources
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i

October 26, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BLNR AGENDA ITEM C-3:

- A) APPROVE ACQUISITION OF PRIVATE LAND AT MAKOLELAU, KONA DISTRICT, MOLOKA'I, TAX MAP KEY (2) 5-5-001:015 (MAKOLELAU 5TH PARCEL)

- B) UPON CLOSING, APPROVE THE ISSUANCE OF A MANAGEMENT RIGHT-OF-ENTRY PERMIT TO THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE AT MAKOLELAU, KONA DISTRICT, MOLOKA'I, TAX MAP KEY (2) 5-5-001:015 (MAKOLELAU 5TH PARCEL)

- C) AUTHORIZE THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE ISLAND OF MOLOKAI FOR A PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE MOLOKAI FOREST RESERVE AT MAKOLELAU, KONA DISTRICT, MOLOKA'I, TAX MAP KEY (2) 5-5-001:015 (MAKOLELAU 5TH PARCEL)

Friday, October 27, 2023

This testimony is in strong support of The Department's acquisition of the 515.75-acre Makolelau property and upon closing, its addition to the Moloka'i Forest Reserve. This 'āina is part of a species-rich, biocultural landscape that extends through a significant portion of the ahupua'a and encompasses some of the last remaining native dry and mesic forests and shrublands on the island. These ecosystems are home to native Hawaiian plant species found nowhere else in the world. As is the case across the Pae 'Āina, healthy mauka resources reduce impacts to human and natural infrastructure downslope, including fishponds, residences, roads, and the nearshore reef, which provides food security for Moloka'i's entire population.

Despite Makolelau's cultural and environmental importance, it has been vulnerable to development for decades, and access for critical 'āina management has been limited, which has furthered the degradation of its natural resources. The Department's and The Nature Conservancy's partnership to purchase these lands for their protection and management by and for the Moloka'i community is critical for the health of these Hawaiian ecosystems and the community that depends on them.

Mālama,
Steph Dunbar-Co, PhD

Kainalu Ranch, Moloka'i, owner
Hulili Consulting, Founder and CEO

Testimony of The Nature Conservancy

In Support of Agenda Item C-3, “A) Request Approval of the Acquisition of Private Lands and the Issuance of a Management Right-of-Entry to the Division of Forestry and Wildlife at Mākoalelau, Kona District, Moloka‘i, Tax Map Key: (2) 5-5-001:015; B) Upon Closing, Approve the Issuance of a Management Right-of-Entry Permit to the Division of Forestry and Wildlife at Mākoalelau, District of Kona, Island of Moloka‘i Tax Map Key: (2) 5-5-001:015 (Mākoalelau 5th parcel); and C) Authorize the Division of Forestry and Wildlife to Conduct a Public Hearing on the Island of Moloka‘i for a Proposed Addition to the Moloka‘i Forest Reserve at Mākoalelau, District of Kona, Island of Moloka‘i , Tax Map Key: (2) 5-5-001:015 (Mākoalelau 5th parcel).”

Hawai'i Board of Land and Natural Resources

October 27, 2023, 9:15 AM

**Kalanimoku Building, 1151 Punchbowl St., Room 132 and
Online via Zoom, Livestream via YouTube**

Aloha Chair Chang and Board Members:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) of Hawai'i and Palmyra strongly **supports** the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources' (DLNR) Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) acquisition of private lands at Mākoalelau on Moloka‘i. **We ask the Board to approve of the acquisition of private lands, the issuance of a management right-of-entry to DOFAW at Mākoalelau, Kona District, Moloka‘i, and authorizing DOFAW to conduct a public hearing for the proposed addition of Mākoalelau to the Moloka‘i Forest Reserve.**

The Mākoalelau property contains one of the best, last examples of native Hawaiian mesic and dry forest and shrubland on Moloka‘i. This endemic forest type is highly threatened statewide. A number of rare native plant species occur on the property. Of particular note is the dryland violet or pamakani (*Viola tracheliifolia*) and the Kamalo Gulch schiedea (*Schiedea lydgatei*), both of which are federally listed as endangered and known only from this area of Moloka‘i. Also present are the critically endangered woodland ma‘oloa (*Neraudia sericea*) and Hawai'i pricklyash (*Zanthoxylum hawaiiense*).

The parcel is adjacent to four other parcels acquired by the State and connects the over 8,200-acre Kawela ahupua‘a, which houses TNC's flagship preserve at Kamakou, to the 5,200-acre Kamalō and Kapualei managed area. Together these properties will create an over 13,500-acre managed corridor that would complete a series of protected areas encompassing the south shore of the island. This south shore area has been managed by TNC and partners through the East Moloka‘i Watershed Partnership since the early 2000s.

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This acquisition would open up access to over 1,000 acres and almost an entire ahupua'a for public enjoyment, including hiking and potentially permitted hunting opportunities. DOFAW acquisition would link State lands and provide improved and more efficient management. Acquisition of this parcel would also improve protection of watershed forests and rare and listed species, and facilitate improved protection of nearby coastal and marine areas and cultural/historic resources. This acquisition would also promote community co-management opportunities. TNC supports the Board's recent approval of the Legacy Land Conservation Commission's recommendations that DLNR engage in a community outreach and dialogue process to develop a management plan for the Mākoalelau 5th Parcel to be completed within 24 months of closing on the land acquisition deal. Authorizing DOFAW to hold a public hearing on the addition of Mākoalelau to the Moloka'i Forest Reserve will be an important step in community engagement.

TNC is proud to have assisted DOFAW in the acquisition of this land to ensure its protection. The acquisition of Mākoalelau presents many key opportunities for DOFAW and the people and resources of Moloka'i. TNC believes the State is best suited for the long-term conservation and management of the land, and Mākoalelau will strengthen the East Moloka'i Watershed Partnership. **We ask that the Board support and approve the DOFAW acquisition of Mākoalelau.**

Mahalo for your support and stewardship of Hawai'i's natural resources.

The Nature Conservancy of Hawai'i and Palmyra is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the lands and waters upon which all life depends. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 200,000 acres of natural lands in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll and has supported over 50 coastal communities to help protect and restore the nearshore reefs and fisheries of the main Hawaiian Islands. We manage 40,000 acres in 13 nature preserves in Hawai'i and Palmyra Atoll. We forge partnerships with government, private parties, and communities to protect forests and coral reefs for their ecological values and for the many benefits they provide to people.
