

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Regards: Executive Director for the  
Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority

To whom it may concern;

I am writing this letter to express my support for [John De Fries](#) as a candidate for Executive Director for the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority.

This position, with the many diverse interests in Mauna Kea Stewardship, will need a person who can be very empathetic and understanding to all groups who will have very diverse interests

The importance of this position to the community, state and world is very critical and will need a person who can listen and process the needs of all the groups who will have very diverse interests in how the board manages these valuable resources!

I could not think of a better person to work on this process with the Mauna Kea Stewardship! His valuable background working with the community, tourism and development community will give him a unique perspective that very few people have and will be indispensable for the future use of these very valuable Mauna Kea lands!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions!

Sincerely,

Gregory G, Ogin  
Principal and Managing Director  
GO Commercial LLC  
75-5722 Kuakini Highway, Suite 214  
Kailua Kona, HI., 96740  
Phone 808-987-6446  
Email: [gogin@svn.com](mailto:gogin@svn.com)

JOHN WAIHEE  
345 Queen Street, Suite 909  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
808-387-5646  
[jwaihee@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:jwaihee@hawaii.rr.com)

February 25, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship &  
Oversight Authority (MKSOA)  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

To Whom It Concern:

I am writing to support Mr. John De Fries' selection as the first MKSOA Executive Director.

Without a doubt Mr. De Fries is well qualified as an administrator. He led Hawaii County's Department of Research and Economic Development, the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association, and the Hawaii Tourism Authority. He is an experienced business executive having served as President/CEO of Hokulia Development and as President of Native Sun Business Group. Most importantly, in these capacities, he often acted as a bridge between disparate groups in our local communities. Google his name and you will be convinced he is well qualified to be MKSOA Executive Director.

My support for Mr. De Fries, however, is more personal than his obvious qualifications. I was born and raised in the shadow of majestic Mauna Kea. I grew up visiting and working on the Mauna. Furthermore, as Governor, I helped start the astronomy industry in Hawaii. It seemed appropriate that we should explore the heavens from whence we originated (see the Kumulipo) while simultaneously pursuing our star guided Hokulea voyages here on earth. Strict rules within which observatories were required to operate were formulated to protect the Mauna's ecology and heritage. Imagine my disgust when years after I left office, I learned that the rules were ignored or not enforced. Today, astronomy, which Kalakaua himself envisioned as appropriate for Mauna Kea, was dividing his people instead of uniting them.

Unfortunately, Mauna Kea is used by many to “symbolize a rigid dichotomy between culture and science.” In my opinion this is a false dichotomy, used to imply that one is more important than the other. The current controversy is really about science/culture vs science/culture.

Scientific knowledge is essentially based on observation, testing, replication, and recordation. The basic difference between “western science” and “Hawaiian science” was that knowledge was accumulated and passed on in the first instance by writing and the second orally (chants, oli, etc.). Furthermore, after a thousand years of observation, testing and accumulating place-based knowledge, it is contemporarily acknowledged that Native Hawaiian “scientists” have much to contribute to our understanding of our natural island world. Fortunately, today both sources of knowledge can be found in writing.

Likewise, “science” in both cases is colored by our cultural perceptions. Island-based cultural perceptions are aware of the finiteness of resources. If an island’s aquifer is destroyed, that would be the end of island life. Alternatively, continental cultural perceptions tend to see resources as infinite. In that case, for example, water is a commodity, and if restricted in one place, there will always be more available somewhere else. Of course, as the planet’s population keeps growing and global warming becomes more and more a reality, perceptions are changing.

I am confident that Mr. De Fries understands what I am saying because he has consistently demonstrated a respect for both “western science” and Hawaiian knowledge and values. He was a leader in getting astronomers to give new heavenly discoveries Hawaiian names based on the Kumulipo. Moreover, he was instrumental in turning this State’s most important industry-tourism-from being primarily based on “sun, sand and surf” to an industry that appreciates who we are as a people and place.

The MKSOA needs an Executive that appreciates and respects all perspectives involved regarding Mauna Kea. Mr. De Fries has shown over the course of a lifetime a love for his island roots and heritage while envisioning a future wherein knowledge is accumulated by all for another thousand years. I congratulate MKSOA for selecting such an Executive Director.

Kūhiō Lewis  
CEO  
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement  
February 20, 2024

Aloha e ka Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority Board of Directors,

I am writing to offer my whole-hearted endorsement for John De Fries for the position of Executive Director for the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority (MKSOA). I have had the pleasure of working closely with John over the past several years, and I can attest to his exceptional leadership skills, deep commitment to Hawai'i and Hawaiian cultural preservation, and innovative approach to problem-solving.

John's prior leadership of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) is a prime example of his capacity to lead in the face of deep public scrutiny. His willingness to step into a role that has garnered significant scrutiny, while leading the HTA through a time of deep change to better reflect community desires for a more regenerative tourism model are the same qualities we expect in the first Executive Director for the MKSOA.

As someone deeply familiar with the complex dynamics surrounding Mauna Kea, I believe John's background and expertise make him uniquely suited to lead the MKSOA in fulfilling its crucial mandate. His profound understanding of the cultural and genealogical significance of Mauna Kea, particularly to Native Hawaiians, aligns perfectly with the core principles outlined in Act 255.

One of John's most admirable qualities is his ability to bridge seemingly disparate perspectives and foster collaboration among stakeholders. In a landscape often marked by polarization between culture and science, I believe John will demonstrate a steadfast commitment to finding common ground and promoting a harmonious coexistence of interests atop our sacred mauna. His inclusive leadership style and dedication to aloha 'āina embody the spirit of mutual stewardship advocated by the legislature.

Moreover, John's track record of innovative thinking and strategic planning will be invaluable as the MKSOA navigates the complexities of managing Mauna Kea. John innately understands the need to contemplate scientific exploration through the lens of environmental preservation and cultural integrity.

Furthermore, John's deep respect for Hawai'i underscores his commitment to honoring Native Hawaiian traditional and customary practices embedded in the landscape of the mauna. His willingness to engage with and learn from the local community exemplifies his dedication to

ensuring that Mauna Kea remains a source of cultural pride and heritage for generations to come.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'K' followed by a wavy line and a vertical stroke.

Kūhiō Lewis  
CEO  
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement

February 23, 2024

# MAUNA KEA STEWARDSHIP & OVERSITE AUTHORITY

Board of Directors

19 E. Kawili Street

HILO, HAWAII 96720

Aloha Board of Directors,

It is with great confidence and excitement for our future of Hawaii, that I write this Letter of Recommendation for John De Fries, for Executive Director of the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority. I have known John for almost 30 years, and he is a very special leader and scholar of our Hawaii culture and community of today. We served for years on the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association (NaHHA) Board, an organization created by two of John's mentors; George Kanahale and Sen. Kenny Brown. When the recession on 2008 hit, the Hawaii Tourism Authority had to adjust the NaHHA contract. NaHHA revenue went from \$500k to almost zero, John De Fries took the leadership role and immediately volunteered to become the Executive Director. Working tirelessly for no compensation over 30 hours a week for 5 years, he personally led a NaHHA rebuild. Today NaHHA continues to be the leader in Regenerative Tourism and a fiscally healthy Non Profit.

None of this would have happened without John De Fries, he balances the three Cs we all live in as modern day Hawaiian. The three Cs are Culture, Commerce and Community. It is with this masterful expertise in creating success time and time again within the Three Cs- that makes John a leader that is so unique and rare.

Mauna Kea is in need, of a special leader that can pull our community together and create a path forward that is accepted by the masses. John De Fries unique resume, and willingness to take on tough issues in our community, will be a major asset to your Board and the Mauna.

Thank you for choosing the right person, at the right time, for the right job.

Mahalo Nui.

John Aeto

The Kalaimoku Group

# FRIENDS OF THE FUTURE

P.O. Box 2655, Kamuela, Hawai'i 96743  
(808) 885-8336 phone ❖ (808) 885-4998 fax  
future@fofhawaii.org

February 25, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, HI 96720

E welina

*“Throughout the history of Hawai‘i, we have had people ~ leaders who guided us ~ with a special quality that came from deep, soulful thought. As they shared their words with the community, we often reflected that their words seemed not to come from themselves or their positions, but from a connection to a source of wisdom and knowledge that is so pure and illustrative of our world today. If we might look deeply to the source of their inspiration, we will find its origins to be a deep reverence for the understanding of the word mālama.”* These words by Pono Shim were written in reference to Kenneth Brown, the Founder of Friends of the Future, and one of John DeFries’ most significant mentors...they also apply to John.

Friends of the Future (FOF), a 501c3 nonprofit, emerged from a series of conversations at the Eva Parker Woods Cottage on the grounds of the Maunalani on Hawai‘i Island. FOF’s vision is: ***Informed by the Hawaiian culture, the diverse people of the world, living together in mutual respect, discover unexpected, creative solutions to our most pressing issues.*** FOF’s role is to facilitate a sense of lokahi (harmony and balance) among the diverse people of Hawai‘i, encouraging each person to contribute their deepest values to create shared visions and to continuously improve our communities. FOF’s guiding principles are: 1) honor and learn from the Hawaiian culture; 2) exemplify the spirit of giving and aloha; 3) communicate face-to-face and heart-to-heart; 4) celebrate diversity and create trust among all; 5) bring out the best in everyone; 6) bring lokahi – balance and peace and 7) follow up and act on commitments.

John has been part of Friends of the Future’s journey from the beginning, leaning into every challenge with an unwavering commitment to the vision, mission and guiding principles. Since its founding, FOF has housed more than 110 community-based programs, and has a current annual operating budget of \$5 million.

I first met John in 1996 shortly after I joined FOF as its Executive Team Leader. At that time, FOF was serving as a facilitator in discussions between Waipio Taro Farmers Association and Bishop Museum about long term lease negotiations for the Museum’s Valley lands. In December 2020 at request of farmers and Valley residents, John was instrumental in establishing the Waipio Community Circle and guiding it through the first two (2) years setting protocols in place for Valley residents to discuss wide ranging topics related to the Valley’s future.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kenneth F. Brown  
*Founder*

---

John A.L. DeFries  
*President*

Mark McGuffie  
*Vice President*

Georgine Busch  
*Treasurer*

Sharon L. Sakai  
*Secretary*

Susan Maddox  
*Executive Team Leader*



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John later moved on to become CEO of Hokulia development in South Kona, then to the Hawaii Tourism Authority CEO position.

While most people would shy away from any one of the situations above, John leaned into each one, seeking to understand, sharing his mana'o, and creating an environment where new paths emerged, based on mālama, lokahi and today's realities.

John has also served on countless work groups, advisory groups and meeting panels. Each time his ability to bring forth lessons learned from his family and career bring a clarity and path forward not previously seen.

There is no one better suited for the position of Executive Director for the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority, no one who will bring more dedication to the process, and no one with the "deep, soulful thought" required to succeed than John DeFries.

If there is additional information that would be helpful, please feel free to contact me.

Best,



Susan Maddox  
Executive Team Leader  
Friends of the Future

cc: John DeFries



## **KUALOA RANCH, INC.**

February 22, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority

Board of Directors

19 E. Kawili Street

Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Dear Directors,

I am writing this letter in strong support of John De Fries as the person to lead the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority (MKSOA).

I have known John for almost 30 years. I know, in my heart and mind, that he is the right person for the job, the right person for the mountain, and the right person for what Hawaii needs now.

I first met John in 1995 when he stood in for Kenny Brown and gave a talk on the Big Island about Hawaiian values, especially as they related to Waipio Valley with its rich cultural heritage and complicated dynamics between the Bishop Museum and many of the local residents.

John was eloquent about honoring everyone's kuleana (point of view and responsibility) and deftly navigated the conversations to a point where people from all different perspectives developed a respect and understanding for each other, and a feeling of pono (what is right and good).

John has repeatedly used this skill through the various roles he has played throughout the years, from stepping in as the head of the troubled Hokulia development and culminating more recently as the CEO of the Hawaii Tourism Authority. John is creative and provides keen insight, rooted in Hawaiian history and culture, can keep an open mind and broker compromise and understanding towards creating a common vision for the future.

Mauna Kea has proven to be a rallying point, a nexus, and a magnet for so many people with diverse backgrounds, points of view and goals. Mauna Kea is also an opportunity to bring people together, to create win-win scenarios, to begin to heal what for many are wounds that have origins long before most of us were born.



## **KUALOA RANCH, INC.**

John has been on my own board of directors at Kualoa Ranch for 15 years and has continually provided wisdom, insight and advice that is refreshing and helpful. He is also unafraid to face uncomfortable issues without becoming emotionally involved.

Again, I offer my staunch support for John De Fries to lead the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority and I would be happy to provide additional information if it is requested. I can be reached by phone at (808) 391-0373 or by email at [johnmorgan@kualoa.com](mailto:johnmorgan@kualoa.com).

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Morgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

John Morgan

President and CEO

Kualoa Ranch, Inc.

**Received Testimony Re: MKSOA Special Meeting 2/29/2024 Agenda Item II. A. as of 2/26/2024**

**Received 2/24/24, 11:22 am**

I am blindsided and disappointed by the proposed appointment of De Fries to lead MKSOA. The protection and stewardship of Mauna Kea is already polarizing enough.

De Fries is known for marketing the identity of Hawaii and Hawaiians as welcoming mats for the entitled. Instead of measuring impacts like how many of us have been displaced by the wholesale marketing of Hawaii, visitors and visitor money continued to be his only metrics of focus.

During COVID, Hawaii had a chance to lead a transformation of the tourism industry and it was wasted by De Fries. His uninspired attempt known as "regenerative tourism" is just a way of letting visitors shed additional guilt as they continue to gentrify us.

The campaign to market Hawaii without regards to impacts: this alone should disqualify De Fries. In this, he has either deliberately decoupled impacts from the focused marketing of Hawaii, or he simply doesn't understand the two are correlated.

As a participant in the Destination Management Action Plan, I can report that for Molokai, the public process was chaotic and contentious from the start, leading myself and others to abandon participation.

I'm sorry but this sounds like a slow motion train wreck. Mauna Kea and all she stands for deserves inspired leadership who can bring people together. To me, De Fries represents "a living scheme" and is the last thing we need in the fight to protect Mauna Kea.

Please do not select De Fries as director. Based on his history polarizing leadership, and missteps managing HTA, it is clear the success of MKSOA will rely on the board finding a leader known for bringing people together. Otherwise, De Fries will become a distraction against the mission and goals of MKSOA.

Sincerely, Todd Yamashita

4th generation resident Molokai

Please post and share my letter publicly thank you

**Received 2/24/24, 7:13 pm**

I was floored to see a former Tourism Agency guy as director. Kanaka Maoli are working to preserve this spiritual Mauna. I don't think this man will have our best interests, instead it will be about the \$ astronomy brings to Hilo. I lived there for 17 years, raised my kids there. It is a town I love. I graduated with honors and Honored as the top Psychology Student the semester I graduated. That was in 1998. I went on to have a great career. I worked in the library system, the prosecutors office, Kulani Prison, Child and Family Services, and Catholic Charities. I know the community and the astronomes community does not consider Kanaka Maoli needs. They are all about their science, the money they bring to the community and university. They live in big houses and do not have much to do with people outside their circle. I therefore am against this guy or anyone who has worked in tourism. That is not the direction we should be headed. This is more about taking, colonization and illegal occupation. This is another inconsiderate and unconscionable decision by haole that do not understand Kanaka or the culture we are trying to hold onto.

Tamra Hayden

**Received 2/26/24, 4:05 am**

Aloha

I oppose the hiring of John De Fries. His previous work show he will not provide "stewardship" on the critical issues he will need to deal with.

Jean Jewell

96725

**Received 2/26/24, 5:22 am**

Aloha!

We oppose the hire of John De Fries as MKSOA Executive Director. Please consider this as a testimony for his opposition.

Mahalo!

Jimi and Shenell Caldeira

**Received Monday 2/26/24, 5:58 am**

I oppose this obvious ineffective solution.

The suggested nominee seems credible to administration, to institutions, to authority; however, he lacks credibility with the community. This is not a moment to incur more civil unrest, this is an opportunity to correct the course.

Old dogs, old tricks, time to try transparency.

Please excuse alliteration. M. Kalani Souza

**Received 2/26/24, 7:46 am**

Aloha,

I oppose strongly appointing Mr. DeFries as ED of MIKSOA.

--

Thank you,

*Motter Anne Snell, Holualoa*

**Received 2/26/24, 7:59 am**

Aloha,

Mauna Kea requires leadership steeped in cultural and academic knowledge and not someone who happens to have lineal ties.

A person with vested interests in tourism and real estate development is a dangerous and possibly corruptible option. Real estate developers should be automatically excluded from selection as they have proven that their interests align with those that are detrimental to Hawaii and the State.

The conservation of Mauna Kea must be guided by those that have a vested interests is such, not those driven by money.

Aloha,

Bob Douglas

**Received 2/26/24, 9:31**

Aloha,

I am writing to express my extreme opposition to the approval of John De Fries as the MKSOA executive director. As the former president/CEO of tourism authority and former CEO of Hokulia, he is not suited to thoroughly consider the perspectives of all Mauna Kea stakeholders, including those in opposition to projects such as TMT.

I humbly ask you not to approve John De Fries for this position.

Mahalo nui,

--

Hannah R. Hartmann

Pāpaʻīkou, 96781

**Received 2/26/24, 1:26 pm**

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority (MKSOA): DO NOT HIRE John De Fries as executive director. WHY?

1. NO RECONCILIATION WITH THE TMT. In a 2019 interview, De Fries was asked: “How are you looking at Mauna Kea and where we are at today?” He responded: “I believe Mauna Kea has the power to convene exactly what is happening on the mauna right now. And in fact embraces that activity. I also believe Mauna Kea embraces modern astronomy and the construction of TMT.” De Fries takes a dangerous position, which imagines Kānaka Maoli organizing against the TMT can be reconciled with TMT construction. The latter negates the first. This position does not reconcile the positions, but sides with domination by the State.

2. MANUFACTURING KANAKA MAOLI CONSENT? Many, locally and internationally, perceive the MKSOA as the State administration’s instrument for addressing community opposition to the TMT. In this way, the Authority is the latest in a series of attempts by the State and TMT proponents to show that community opposition is in the past. One example was Envision Maunakea, an initiative developed by UH Institute of Astronomy Director Doug Simons and managed and led by Friends of the Future, a nonprofit on whose Board De Fries serves. Friends of the Future received TMT community benefit monies in at least 2010 and 2015.

3. DE FRIES WAS AT THE HELM OF HOKULIA (aka 1250 Oceanside Partners). Between 2001 and 2018, De Fries was at the helm of Hokulia while it was in litigation against community groups over iwi

kupuna desecration (at least seven burial sites, including 70 sets of remains) and pollution of the marine waters, north of Kealahou Bay. That project tore our communities apart. People lost their jobs, houses, family relationships, while De Fries acted merely in the financial interests of the developer.

If the MKSOA is sincere in its aim to usher in a new day for Mauna Kea, it shouldn't select leadership with a track record of sacrificing cultural resources for profit. After decades of mismanagement and irreversible harm to our sacred mountain, the hiring of DeFries will not bring about the changes sorely needed to protect Mauna Kea.

**Sylvia Dolena**





*Hawai'i Green Growth UN Local2030 Hub is a sustainability hub committed to advancing economic, social, and environmental goals and accelerating local solutions to global challenges.*

**Advisory Board**

*Celeste Connors*  
Hawaii Green Growth Local2030 Hub  
1601 East-West Road  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96848

*Athline Clark*  
Chaminade University

*Juliette Sheehan*  
February 25, 2024  
Hanalei Land  
Company  
Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19E. Kawili Street Hilo  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

*Kā'eo Duarte*  
Kamehameha Schools

*Kazumi Ogawa*  
UN-Habitat  
Aloha Chair Komeiji,

*Mike Hamnett*  
Hawai'i Energy Policy  
Forum  
I am writing to express my unwavering support for John De Fries' candidacy to serve as the first Executive Director of Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA). As CEO of Hawaii Green Growth Local2030 Hub, I have witnessed John's leadership and unique vision for the future of our state. As Hawaii strives to achieve its 2030 sustainability goals, I am confident John possesses the skills needed to navigate a future for Mauna Kea that balances the diverse interests of the community, culture, economy and our natural environment.

*Pauline Sheldon*  
UH School of Travel  
Industry Management

*Randy Moore*  
University of Hawai'i  
By way of background, Hawaii Green Growth Local2030 Hub (HGG) is a public private partnership committed to achieving Hawaii's statewide 2030 goals and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). HGG was formally recognised in 2019 by the United Nations as a sustainability center of excellence grounded in indigenous knowledge and systems thinking.

*Todd Nacapuy*  
Accuity LLP

*Ulalia Woodside*  
The Nature  
Conservancy  
Throughout his career in business and public service at both the county and state level, John has demonstrated a deep understanding of the significance of Mauna Kea for both culture and science, and the opportunity to develop new ways to collectively steward Mauna Kea grounded in reciprocal relationships. He has experience in environmental management, economic development and community engagement that uniquely positions him to lead MKSOA in implementing sustainable stewardship practices that respect the sacredness of Mauna Kea, while also addressing the diverse stakeholders interests and fostering respect and shared responsibility.

*Vassilis Syrmos*  
University of Hawai'i

John's inclusive leadership style, coupled with his investment in meaningful relationships across diverse sectors, is essential in building constructive dialogue and finding innovative solutions to the complex issues related to Mauna Kea's management and oversight. Further, John's deep-rooted connections to the Native Hawaiian community, and his unwavering dedication to cultural and environmental stewardship, make him an ideal candidate to lead MKSOA at this critical juncture. John's leadership will be instrumental in advancing the Authority's mission of protecting and preserving Mauna Kea for future generations.

As Hawaii confronts the urgent challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss, and cultural erosion, it is imperative that we have leaders like John who are committed to finding innovative solutions to building community resilience. His leadership will not only benefit Mauna Kea but will also inspire meaningful action across the state, driving us closer towards achieving our shared vision of a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient Hawaii and Island Earth.

Mahalo for considering John's candidacy. I am confident that his appointment as the Executive Director of MKSOA will be a significant step forward in our collective efforts to build a better future for Hawaii and its people.

Mahalo nui,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Celeste Connors', written in a cursive style.

Celeste Connors

CEO

Hawai'i Green Growth UN Local2030 Hub

**Received Testimony Re: MKSOA Special Meeting 2/29/2024 Agenda Item II. A. as of 2/26/2024**

**Received 2/26/24, 4:27 pm**

no !!!!!

Thomas Reppuhn

**Received 2/26/24, 4:56 pm**

Aloha mai kākou, e Mr. Komeiji and fellow directors of the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority (MKS&OA):

This is a letter of support for the appointment of Mr. John Defries as the first Executive Director of the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority.

John Alexander Liholiho Defries is a direct descendant of Kamehameha the Great and a keiki (child) whose roots are deeply embedded in Moku o Keawe (the honorific name for King Keawekekahiali'iokamoku of Hawai'i Island). John's familial ties to Hawai'i island are well known in the Hawaiian community and this appointment, in my opinion, is a good decision.

I have known John personally since 1998. Our first joint project was the protection of the burial site of the grandmother of our beloved Queen Lili'uokalani, High Chiefess Kama'eokalani, 'ohana (family) to me. Under John's leadership, the burial site of Pu'u 'Ōhau, was protected and became known as the dividing line between north and south Kona.

John's connection to well known persons is also notable. Father of the voyaging canoe, Hōkūle'a, Herb Kawainui Kāne, was a long-time mentor and advisor to John on matters of great import such as Hawaiian leadership, education, and visions of our future. There were frequent meetings with Mr. Kāne, his educational colleagues from Hawai'i, and eminent scholars from New Zealand discussing the most current findings in voyaging, astronomy, archaeology, linguistics, geology and geography. I was privileged to be a part of these

discussions. The ultimate goal of these gatherings was to share information with the learners within our own areas of work.

I and others in our educational group have appreciated John's foresight, his vision and enthusiasm in wanting to advance the knowledge of our Hawaiian forebears to this time of our lives.

Through this appointment, all of us will benefit from the administrative skills of a Native Hawaiian with the breadth and depth of John's calibre to maintain the balance of ancestral knowledge and experience with a contemporary look at Mauna Kea. The challenge of this position requires the Hawaiian value of Aloha, chief among the other values, something that John has demonstrated over his lifetime.

Mauna Kea, to me, represents strength and solidarity in defining who we are as Hawaiians. Mauna Kea is also an opportunity for us as k̄naka (humankind), as Hawaiian practitioners, as scientists, as educators, and those who simply love our 'āina (land) to unify for the benefit of future generations and requires the best management skills of Mauna Kea. Once again, your selection of John DeFries to lead the charge is the right one.

I thank you for this opportunity to support this appointment.

Me ka 'oia 'i'o,

Emma Emalia Keohokalole

MA, Second Language Studies

Hawaiian Language Lecturer (Ret.)

**Received 2/27/24, 4:05 am**

Aloha,

I live part-time at [redacted for testifier's privacy] Mamalahoa Hwy, Holualoa.

I know people on both sides of the Mauna Kea Telescope debate.

Appointing John DeFries is what they call in baseball an "unforced error".

Don't do this.

Mahalo,

Deirdre Roney

Duane K. Kurisu



February 21, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

RE: Letter of Support for John DeFries

Gentlemen:

I am honored to submit this Letter of Support for John DeFries as the first Executive Director for the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority.

My love for Mauna Kea started during my grade school days as I felt her embrace every day while walking to school from Hakalau to Wailea. Mauna Kea gave me comfort and made me feel safe when I could see her standing so majestically during clear days and even when I could not see her during rainy days. She was then, as she is now, is my North Star.

Just as Mauna Kea is the pillar of strength for Hawaii and the rest of the world, John DeFries has the fortitude and bears the moral, cultural and spiritual compass to help guide the people of Hawaii with its stewardship and its relationship with the Mauna. He is the right person that embodies the soul of Mauna Kea and recognizes her connection with the cosmos, in balance with the aspirations of astronomy and science.

John and many of us in Hawaii work diligently on the Rediscovering Hawaii's Soul initiative that is committed to building a future where Hawaii that flourishes spiritually, culturally and economically and one that is good for everybody, for generations to come.

John Defries is e opu alii and will bring that leadership style as the first Executive Director for the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority.

Mahalo for the opportunity to express my support for John.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duane K. Kurisu'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'D'.

Duane K Kurisu

February 27, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
c/o Board Chair, John Komeiji  
Email Address: john.komeiji@hawaii.gov

**Re: In support of the MKSOA Board's Selection of John De Fries as Executive Director**

Aloha e MKSOA Board:

I am writing to you in support of your selection of John DeFries as MKSOA Executive Director.

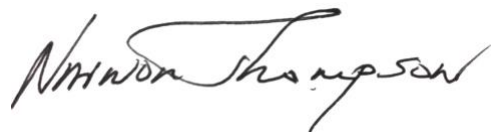
I have known John for more than 55 years and while I consider him a friend, our paths have also often crossed professionally and in our respective interests and endeavors.

I know John as someone who is deeply rooted in his Hawaiian family and the cultural values on which he was raised. He has a deep love for Hawai'i, which guides his inherent sense of responsibility to care for our special home and his respect for our communities.

John may not be a sailor nor voyager, but he is a navigator who I have watched lead with integrity through calm seas and storms alike. Therefore; John has my complete confidence and full support in this new role.

Mahalo for your time.

Aloha pau'ole,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nainoa Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nainoa" being more prominent than the last name "Thompson".

Nainoa Thompson  
Navigator

George K. Yamada Jr.  
95-1082 Loea Street  
Mililani, Hawaii 96789

February 23, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Aloha MKSOA Board of Directors,

I am taking the opportunity to write in support of your selection of candidate John De Fries as the Executive Director for the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority. In full disclosure, I am the brother-in-law of Mr. De Fries, but I hope my sentiments expressed below are viewed and received based on Mr. De Fries' qualifications as opposed to being based exclusively on our relationship.

At a time when there is much conflict and divide between concerned parties, the need for an individual who is respected and trusted in a position such as this is at a critical juncture. In Mr. De Fries, you have an individual with a long-standing history and impeccable track record of community service which not only satisfies, but easily exceeds most if not all qualification requirements. Furthermore, Mr. De Fries has and continues to be a trusted and sought after point of contact from varying parties, Public and Private alike, on an array of subject matter because of his in-depth knowledge of Hawaiian Culture, our State's History, as well as his well-rounded perspectives that deliver balanced outcomes.

I believe Mr. De Fries can and will bring all parties together and unite them for the betterment of our community and most importantly, for future generations to come. At stake is the majestic presence of Mauna Kea which exudes an aura and symbolism that has become deeply personal for many. With this in mind, I believe our community urgently needs to have someone in this position with the ability to move all parties beyond their important and respected differences to ultimately achieve the true aim which is the proper stewardship of such an important cultural and scientific symbol in our community.

I realize my voice is small and that I do not speak for others, but I humbly ask for your consideration on the sentiments expressed above and thank you for the opportunity to share my mana`o with you.

Mahalo,

George K. Yamada Jr.

cc: John De Fries



February 28, 2024



**Testimony of KAHEA: THE HAWAIIAN-ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE to the MAUNA KEA STEWARDSHIP AND OVERSIGHT AUTHORITY on Agenda Item 2: Hiring of John De Fries as MKSOA Executive Director**

Aloha Chair and Members,

Thank you for considering testimony from KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance (KAHEA), a Hawai'i nonprofit established in 2000 and which has been working to protect Mauna Kea for almost as long. Our testimony concerns the Authority's proposed employment of John De Fries as its executive director. This proposal raises serious concerns.

*In the wake of the 2019 stand-off, De Fries stated "Mauna Kea embraces modern astronomy and the construction of TMT."*

In a 2019 interview, De Fries was asked: "How are you looking at Mauna Kea and where we are at today?" He responded: "I believe Mauna Kea has the power to convene exactly what is happening on the mauna right now. And in fact embraces that activity. **I also believe Mauna Kea embraces modern astronomy and the construction of TMT.**"<sup>i</sup> De Fries takes a dangerous position, which imagines Kānaka Maoli organizing *against the TMT* can be *reconciled with* TMT construction. The latter negates the first. This position does not reconcile the issues, but sides with domination by the State.

DeFries has problematically suggested a genealogical relationship with industrial astronomy development, stating: "Over past 50 years, Tutu Maunakea has hanai'd 13 moopuna haole - 13 telescopes."<sup>ii</sup>

DeFries' problematic approaches to Mauna Kea demonstrates his failure to understand the issues raised and sustained by Kū Kia'i Mauna. De Fries would thus be challenged to "[d]evelop[] and maintain relations with stakeholders, government agencies, and other groups; deals with consultants, Hawaiian and other community leaders, legislators, government officials, and other parties[.]" MKSOA position description, Part III.A.4.

*Hiring De Fries will further demonstrate MKSOA as an instrument of manufacturing Kānaka Maoli consent to the TMT.*

Many, locally and internationally, perceive the MKSOA as the State administration's instrument for addressing community opposition to the TMT. In this way, the Authority is the latest in a series of attempts by the State and TMT proponents to show community opposition to be in the past.

One such attempt was Envision Maunakea, described as an "initiative to gather a range of perspectives on the future of Maunakea." Envision

PROTECTING

NATIVE HAWAIIAN

CUSTOMARY &

TRADITIONAL RIGHTS AND

OUR FRAGILE

ENVIRONMENT

Mailing Address  
P.O. Box 37368  
Honolulu, HI 96837

toll-free phone/fax  
877.585.2432

www.KAHEA.org  
kahea-alliance@hawaii.rr.com

KAHEA: the Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance is a non-profit 501(c)3 working to protect the unique natural and cultural resources of the Hawaiian islands. KAHEA translates to English as "the call."

Maunakea was developed by the University of Hawai'i Institute of Astronomy Director Doug Simons and managed and led by Friends of the Future, a nonprofit on whose Board De Fries serves. Friends of the Future has also received TMT community benefit monies in at least 2010 and 2015.<sup>iii</sup>

As recently as January 5, 2024, the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan stated: “in Hawai'i, we began a dialogue with volunteers for mediation, called ho‘oponopono” which “laid the foundation for the current dialog being conducted by [MKSOA]” and they counted amongst “visible improvements in the TMT situation” that “MKSOA, which includes indigenous people, is steadily building its organizational structure[.]”<sup>iv</sup>

Kānaka Maoli consent is key also to the Canadian Astronomical Association (CASCA), who wrote in 2020: “Unless the TMT project has consent from the Native Hawaiians, Canada’s astronomical community cannot support its construction on Maunakea.”<sup>v</sup>

The political architects of the MKSOA designed it to facilitate the TMT. We do not question the sincere efforts of some members to use MKSOA to protect Mauna Kea from threats. However, MKSOA has done nothing to dispel the (incorrect) perception that its existence is evidence of Kānaka Maoli “reconciliation” with the TMT. Hiring De Fries only adds to this misperception.

*De Fries’ poor record on iwi kupuna and water quality protection.*

“The summit region of Mauna Kea is a spiritual and special place of significance that is home to cultural landscapes, fragile habitats, and historical and archeological artifacts.” MKSOA position description, at 1. Mauna Kea is famously a temple, but also a burial ground and harbors thousands of cultural sites. Protection of its aquifer resources is a critical issue for many Kānaka Maoli cultural practitioners on Mauna Kea. Hui Wai Ola, through its representative Laulani Teale, petitioned to intervene in the TMT pollutant discharge permit to protect their “gathering and use of waters from sources that begin as mist or rain on the Northern Plateau of the Mauna Kea summit.”

According to his resume, De Fries was variously a consultant, CEO, and President of Hokulia (aka 1250 Oceanside Partners) between 2000 and 2018. De Fries was at the helm of Hokulia while it was in litigation against community groups over iwi kupuna desecration (at least seven burial sites, including 70 sets of remains) and pollution of the marine waters, north of Kealahou Bay.<sup>vi</sup>

KAHEA’s supporters include plaintiffs in the Hokulia cases who had to negotiate against De Fries, who was representing Hokulia, to obtain protections for water resources and iwi kupuna, and to ensure those protections are enforced. Far from demonstrating any affirmative efforts to steward natural resources, De Fries acted merely in the financial interests of a developer. De Fries’ poor record on historic properties and water resources protection is problematic, at minimum, for his proposed role in managing Mauna Kea’s fragile ecosystems.

If the MKSOA is sincere in its aim to usher in a new day for Mauna Kea, it shouldn’t select leadership with a track record of sacrificing cultural resources for profit. After decades of mismanagement and irreversible harm to our sacred mountain, the hiring of DeFries will not bring about the changes sorely needed to protect Mauna Kea.

Me ke aloha,

2024 Board and Staff of KAHEA: The Hawaiian Environmental Alliance

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<sup>i</sup> Catherine Cruz, “The Conversation: Native Voices on Mauna Kea” (Aug. 20, 2019)

<https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/show/the-conversation/2019-08-20/the-conversation-native-voices-on-mauna-kea>

<sup>ii</sup> John DeFires, “My Turn: Maunakea can be beacon for us, other counties,” *West Hawai‘i Today* (Aug. 12, 2019)

<http://www.westhawaiiitoday.com/category/opinion/your-voice/>

<sup>iii</sup> See TMT Educational Initiatives & Outreach [www.tmt.org/system/media\\_files/binaries/144/original/TMT-Educational\\_Outreach.pdf?1508805042](http://www.tmt.org/system/media_files/binaries/144/original/TMT-Educational_Outreach.pdf?1508805042)

<sup>iv</sup> NAOJ “A new-year’s message from the Director General (Jan. 5, 2024) [www.nao.ac.jp/en/news/topics/2024/20240105-new-years-message.html](http://www.nao.ac.jp/en/news/topics/2024/20240105-new-years-message.html)

<sup>v</sup> CASCA: “Discovery at the Cosmic Frontier: Canadian Astronomy Long Range Plan 2020-2030” [casca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/LRP2020\\_final\\_EN.pdf](http://casca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/LRP2020_final_EN.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> <https://archives.starbulletin.com/2000/10/31/news/story12.html>; Bret Yager “Protestors: Hokulia must keep its promises” *West Hawai‘i Today* (June 18, 2015)

[www.westhawaiiitoday.com/2015/06/18/hawaii-news/protesters-hokulia-must-keep-promises/](http://www.westhawaiiitoday.com/2015/06/18/hawaii-news/protesters-hokulia-must-keep-promises/)



95-216 Auina Pl.  
Miliani, HI 96789

February 27, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

To whom it may concern:

It gives me great pleasure and honor to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of John DeFries concerning his candidacy for Board Chair of the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA). I have known John for nearly 20 years as a personal friend and colleague in the areas of Native Hawaiian community affairs, business commerce, tourism, and climate change and sustainability. Since 2019 until present, our paths crossed with the statewide challenges occurred on Mauna Kea and John's leadership was critical in stabilizing the Hawaiian community and leaders as well as the government, educational, and business sectors as an advocate for protection and preservation of the mauna as a sacred space as well as opportunities to advance ancestral, indigenous knowledge through astronomy.

John is an exceptional, charismatic, decisive, and confident leader. He has an uncanny ability that straddles the ancient oracles of Hawaiian cultural and spirituality with the science of the celestial cosmos. Thus, such qualities including his oration skills makes him an ideal candidate for the role and responsibilities as the Board Chair for the MKSOA. He is a warm, empathic, intelligible, insightful, bold, courageous and exudes a character of integrity that reflects a tremendous respect for the dignity and welfare of others. He welcomes others to participate in a process of constructive change and is adept at facilitating tough conversations. He is enthusiastic about elevating Hawai'i that serves a unique role not only in the Pacific but throughout the world. His professional conduct and demeanor with a range of dignitaries and political leaders to grass roots community advocates, he maintains an evenly tempered personality that emanates a gracious humility and determination for self-improvement.

On a personal level, I have come to know John as a well-mannered, dedicated, and conscientious individual who continues to strive for excellence in the pursuit of leading the Hawaiian community through difficult challenges. Moreover, he is cognizant of the broader context of Hawai'i, its `āina, and people as a whole and making informed decisions based on the values of pono (ethical, upright, just), mālama (to care for, responsible stewardship), and in perpetuity for future generations. I hold John in exceedingly high regard as a Native Hawaiian leader that is independent, exhibits great humility, and a passion to advance Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i forward. Without reservation I highly recommend John DeFries and support his candidacy for Board Chair of the MKSOA

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kamana'opono M. Crabbe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Kamana'opono M. Crabbe, Ph.D.  
CEO/President Pouhana Consultation Service

# *Hualalai Realty*

February 26, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
Attention: John Komeiji, Board Chairperson  
Emailed to: john.komeiji@hawaii.gov

**Subject: Advocating for MKSOA's Selection of John De Fries as Executive Director**

Aloha Honorable Members of the MKSOA Board,

My hope is that you had a strong pool of candidates to choose from but, in the end, you had to have been hard-pressed to find a more capable candidate than John De Fries; whom I have known for the past twenty-four years.

In 2001, John and I were both executives at 1250 Oceanside Partners where in June of that year, John was appointed acting president; seven months after a substantial lawsuit was filed against the firm. While it took five and a half years to settle the lawsuit, I remain convinced today that the suit could have been avoided if John were retained to lead the company, two years earlier. He has the capacity to see things from multiple perspectives and is among the most empathetic people I have ever met. Therefore, he and the (soon-to-be) plaintiffs would have found common ground in relationships that would have been far more constructive and collaborative than the adversarial court experience is geared to provide.

In 2012, John was introduced to a former resident here at Hualalai Resort and two years later she drafted him on to the board of directors of the Global Institute of Sustainability (GIOS) at Arizona State University, which this former resident co-founded. Under John's guidance, GIOS became an important partner with Hawaii County at the Public Utilities Commission in the proposed merger-acquisition by NextEra Energy of Hawaiian Electric Industries, for the purpose of advocating for the interests of Hawaii Island electrical utility rate payers. Today, ASU and its sustainability entities are among the major partners with the Polynesian Voyaging Society on its current voyage: Moananuiākea. The seeds for these partnerships were planted and continue to be nurtured by John.

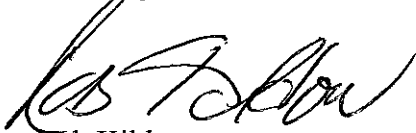
*P.O. Box 819, Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96745  
(808) 325-8500 (800) 983-3880 Fax (808) 325-8501  
Courier: 100 Ka'ūpūlehu Drive Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740*

In the fall of 2020 when John became president and CEO of the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA), Hawaii's economy was in total collapse and the major travel consumer markets were completely shut down due to the global pandemic. What many don't know is years before John assumed the role the CEO of the HTA we had a number of conversations regarding the types of tourism Hawaii needed, and once he assumed the role the new mantra at HTA immediately became Mālama Ku'u Home or "caring for our beloved home" – because for John, the pursuit of HTA's leadership role "was not about tourism" – it was about his home and her people being injured by the economic demise and tourism was valued by John as an instrument for economic relief and recovery. Twenty years from now, people will look back at the three years John served at HTA and gain a better grasp and appreciation for the seeds he has planted there and throughout the visitor industry and communities around the state.

My seven years on the Hawaii Island Leadership Council for the Hawaii Community Foundation (HCF) has given me valuable insights into the needs of our people and island. I can't think of anyone more qualified than John DeFries to act as the Executive Director of this most important part of our history and future.

MKSOA – John is the right person to lead us all through the complexities that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Kildow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Rob Kildow  
Principal Broker

**Received Testimony Re: MKSOA Special Meeting 2/29/2024 Agenda Item II. A. as of 2/28/2024**

**Received 9/27/24, 9:22 am**

With aloha, We submit this testimony in regards to the appointment of John Defries as executive director.

We understand that the Authority needs to have an executive director and is currently working under challenging circumstances, not of their own making, to complete their kuleana on this board. We believe that those who were charged with finding a candidate did so with due diligence.

Our concerns/questions are as follows:

What were the **criteria** for this position? Looking just at his resume, it would seem that Mr. DeFries does not remain in a position long term. While the positions of leadership listed seem to be strong in the hospitality area and real estate/business, these are unimportant components ensuring the pono stewardship of Mauna Kea and in fact, have contributed negatively to date. His experience with cultural and burial sites, though we are not clear what that might be, may be of assistance but his involvement in Hokulia would give us pause. **The question would be how would he use those professional experiences to guide, plan and help the Authority, members and the community to steward?** We see nothing in his resume that would give me confidence that he would be a positive choice.

In reading more about Mr. DeFries, We believe an example of concern would be his connection to Envision Maunakea, an initiative developed by UH Institute of Astronomy Director Doug Simons and managed and led by Friends of the Future, a nonprofit on whose Board De Fries serves. Friends of the Future received TMT community benefit monies in at least 2010 and 2015. (cr.Kahea). It is our belief that Mr. DeFries thinks that in the position of Executive Director that he can mitigate, mediate or somehow find paths for large tools of astronomy to begin construction on Mauna Kea. **The question to him would be what do you understand as the meanings of the words stewardship and oversight?**

This seems to be another case of same face, different place movement of people into positions without genuinely looking at the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority and the paths it should be taking as understood and presented to the community. Yes, this Authority needs more personnel, time and ability to do its work but hiring someone who is not the best person is unacceptable. If he is the "best" person that we can find, then perhaps it is not just the position that is the issue?

In closing this testimony, our hale works daily for the protection of Mauna Kea and all sacred places as do many on the MKSOA. We would like to reiterate "If the MKSOA is sincere in its aim to usher in a new day for Mauna Kea, it shouldn't select leadership with a track record of sacrificing cultural resources for profit. After decades of mismanagement and irreversible harm to our sacred mountain, the hiring of DeFries will not bring about the changes sorely needed to protect Mauna Kea." (cr.Kahea)

Mahalo,

D. Green

C. Burghardt

Kou, O`ahu

**Received 2/27/24, 10:56 am**

testimony on agenda item II A : John DeFries for MKSOA Executive Director  
for Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority Board [mka.testimony@hawaii.gov](mailto:mka.testimony@hawaii.gov)

9 AM Thursday, February 9, 2024, 19 E Kawili St, Hilo

from Cory Harden, Hilo

Thank you for your service on the board.

Please vote "no" on this nomination.

Maunakea is a sacred site to many people. It is a cultural site and a source of inspiration for many more. It has been renowned throughout Polynesia for centuries. It is home to endangered and endemic species. And it is the world's best astronomy site, putting it at the center of the struggle between conflicting visions for Hawai'i.

Mr. DeFries' background relates to none of this. He has built hotels and resorts, developed residential projects with resort-level perks, operated tour companies and resorts, and marketed hotels and television sports. He is missing the background that a director of this board should have—in cultural concerns, natural resources, science, and history.



Mr. DeFries was “the public face of one of West Hawai‘i’s most litigated developments”, according to West Hawai‘i Today, referring to DeFries’ 11 years as CEO of 1250 Oceanside Partners. They were shut down by a judge for building a high-end residential subdivision on agricultural land. DeFries excused this by saying the County and State allowed this in other locations.

The community was also appalled at the desecration of burials and damage to historic trails.

Also, not once, but twice, large amounts of soil ran off the site into the ocean, into class AA waters, impacting corals. DeFries says erosion control measures were used, but community members say not all of the promised measures were implemented.

DeFries’ company also wrote up its version of 1250 Oceanside mediation proceedings and publicized it, a break with standard practice.

DeFries supports the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) despite the irreversible cultural and environmental damage it would inflict, and the tremendous community opposition. TMT bankrolled Friends of the Future, where DeFries was a board member, and which managed the Envision Maunakea initiative.

I attended one session, which appeared to be slanted against protection for Maunakea.

Mr. DeFries will not protect Maunakea. I urge you to vote “no”. Mahalo.

[Cory Harden]

**Received 2/27/24, 11:36 am**

Aloha,

I strongly oppose the appointment of John Defries as executive director of the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority.

DeFries was in charge at Oceanside Partners on Hawai‘i Island when the community (myself included) fought tooth and nail to protect that ag land from gentrified development. DeFries’ status in that case was seen of allowing himself to be used as a used token Hawaiian for his own and their profit — a situation which created even more community division. More recently, his statements regarding the use of Mauna Kea also seem to lack the necessary understanding or empathy of communities and, in particular, kanaka maoli who have deep spiritual ties to the Mauna. His ties to Friends of the Future also

create a conflict of interest since many kanaka maoli see that entity as voice for the State and TMT with less regard for cultural connections and entitlements,

If the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority is to do a better job in bringing parties together than other entities have done in the past, then John DeFries is not the person to be at the helm.

Mahalo and sincerely,

Janice Palma-glennie

Kailua-kona

**Received 2/27/24, 8:34 pm**

To whom it may concern,

I oppose the appointment of John De Fries as the MKSOA executive director.

According to KAHEA, Mr. De Fries has made prior statements in favor of building the TMT on MaunaKea. He also was at the helm of Hokulia Project for many years. As a resident of South Kona where the Hokulia project was built, this project was devastating to the local community. It was extremely divisive and showed little interest in protecting the rights of Kanaka Maoli, except as forced to by the Courts.

Although I have no doubt that Mr. De Fries has much experience in leadership, Mauna Kea needs and deserves a leader which will protect these conservation lands.

Sincerely,

Jodi Mercier

**Received 2/27/24, 10:06 pm**

To those with the power to make decisions:

Mr. DeFries is he wrong person for this job. Period.

Patricia Ravarra

Honoka'a

February 26, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors c/o Board Chair, John Komeiji  
Submitted Via E-mail: john.komeiji@hawaii.gov

Subject: Support for the Selection of John De Fries as E.D. MKSOA

Dear Board Members:

In recent years John's public profile has been linked to the Hawaii Tourism Authority as its President and CEO. He stepped into that role in the late summer of 2020, at a time when Hawaii's economy had completely collapsed and visitor arrivals had come to a halt due to the covid-19 global pandemic.

Those of us who know him in Kona were not surprised because there is a part of John's character that thrives on pressure-packed situations. We had witnessed something similar in the summer of 2001 when he became the interim president of the master planned community development of Hokuli'a; approximately seven months after a landmark lawsuit was filed against the project. Between 2005 - 2012, I served on John's senior management team at Hokuli'a and gained a first-hand view of his capabilities and experienced the positive impact he had on our entire staff and across the Hawaii Island community.

Throughout the 5.5 year lawsuit (2000-2006), John was intent on treating the opposing plaintiffs with respect and under his leadership much was accomplished: 1) elevated standards in the protection of cultural and burial sites; 2) first phase completion of a 2.5 mile section of the Mamalahoa Highway Bypass; 3) heightened communications with 100+ lot owners who were adversely impacted by the lawsuit; 4) enhanced shoreline access for local residents; 5) strengthened the micro-enterprise system; due to the disposable income that was generated by substantial employment opportunities and contracted work; 6) initiated the once-a-month community play golf program that has since raised millions of dollars for Hawaii Island charities and non-profit organizations; 7) sustained high employee morale through some tough times.

John has been a member of the Astronaut Ellison Onizuka Memorial Committee for the past 17 years and he was instrumental in launching our initial golf benefit fundraiser at Hokuli'a which is now a major annual event.

I feel that John is the right leader, at the right time for MKSOA

Mahalo Nui,



Claude Onizuka  
Chairman

**Received 2/28/24, 7:34 am**

February 26, 2024

To: mka.testimony@hawaii.gov

Aloha, Members of MKSOA,

Re: OPPOSITION to Employment of John DeFries as Executive Director of MKSOA.

My name is Deborah J. Ward, and I have been involved as a citizen with the management of Mauna Kea for fifty years. I have served on the Office of Mauna Kea Management's Environment Committee for over 24 years. During this time, I have also been a litigant on behalf of the sacred and wilderness values associated with the summit and plateau region, and have taken part in many efforts to harvest seed, plant out native and rare plants, identify invasive threats, and recommend improved management techniques. I am a Mauna protector and take this kuleana seriously.

For this reason, I voice my strong concern regarding the vetting and selection of John DeFries as executive director of MKSOA. Mr DeFries has stated in public his position that "Mauna Kea embraces astronomy and the construction of the TMT". The decision to place a person with a strong bias toward overcoming demonstrated community opposition in a position of director of a supposedly community-based group would further confirm the suspicion that the "authority" is simply a state tool to further industrial development of a sacred wahi pana and fragile wilderness environment vulnerable to a host of demonstrated cumulative impacts to natural and cultural treasures.

Mr DeFries has been intimately involved (in several leadership roles) in the Hokulia (Oceanside 1250 project) for over 18 years. During this time, it has been observed that **Hökūli'a provided favors to state agents and arguably corrupted SHPD, the agency charged with enforcing the rights of cultural and lineal descendants.**

Judge Ronald Ibarra further noted that **Oceanside 1250 Partners "deliberately collaborated" to circumvent state land-use laws.** The Department of Health found that **Oceanside's erosion control measures failed, in part because Oceanside did not complete all of its BMPs or the erosion control measures that it specified in its NOI. The storm caused flooding throughout the Property and runoff into the surrounding Class AA waters.**

Is MKSOA selection committee that endorsed his nomination aware of these serious issues?

Given the history of multiple examples where the failure of the company led by Mr DeFries to follow the law led to desecration of burials, destruction of sections of historic trails, permanent damage to coral reef and near shore waters, how does the committee expect Mr DeFries to conduct future decision-making and lawful governance?

Does the selection committee believe that flouting state and county laws is inconsequential?

Does that indicate that we could expect more of the same behavior if or when it comes to addressing further industrial development proposals in a treasured and vulnerable landscape?

Given that the company that Mr DeFries led has filed for bankruptcy, how has the selection committee considered the fiduciary responsibilities of the MKSOA and the utilization of state funds authorized by the legislature?

Does the selection committee believe that massive community opposition to the TMT project can be greenwashed through a manufactured mirage of “consent”?

What relationship does Mr DeFries have to Mr Gordon Moore, benefactor of the TMT project? Why does Mr DeFries think that he and Gordon Moore are “kupuna titans of innovation”?

What relationship does the nominee have to the University of Hawaii’s collaboration with the Navy and Air Force to use the non-allocated time on the telescopes for enhancing lethality of weapons of warfare?

These questions should be answered in a public forum, and until they are, I request that the selection be reconsidered and deferred at this time.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Deborah J Ward

[cordylinicolor@gmail.com](mailto:cordylinicolor@gmail.com) 808-769-2403

### References

From Contested Land Development in Hawai‘i: Regime Change in a Tourism Economy, by Jennifer Rene Darrah, May 2010: “Court documents demonstrated a **“pattern of conduct”** between Oceanside Partners and DLNR/SHPD that led to failures in the agency’s “overseeing that the constitution and laws [were] being followed on this [the Hōkūli‘a] project” (Circuit Court 2002c: 15). **Hōkūli‘a provided favors to state agents and arguably corrupted SHPD, the agency charged with enforcing the rights of cultural and lineal descendants.**<sup>73</sup> Developers targeted potential sources of cultural power, but their efforts were not enough to pre-empt future opposition. “

OHA’s newsletter, Ka Wai Ola, in October 2003 noted that under DeFries management “Hawai‘i island Circuit Judge Ronald Ibarra has ordered a halt to almost all construction at the luxury Hōkūli‘a golf subdivision in Kealahou, and directed the developer to obtain land reclassification from the state Land Use Commission (LUC) in order to proceed. . .The Sept. 9, 2003 ruling, which came after three years of litigation, challenges developers’ longstanding practice of using agricultural lands to build “gentleman-farmer” estates that in reality involve little or no farming. Determining that the County of Hawai‘i and **Oceanside 1250 Partners “deliberately collaborated” to circumvent state land-use laws,** Ibarra observed that “the County appeared to be accommodating Oceanside’s desire to avoid LUC involvement by privately assuring Oceanside that LUC involvement was not needed, in dereliction of the County’s explicit duty to enforce” state land use laws. “

From the lawsuit Kelly Vs Oceanside 1250 partners: On September 8 and 9, 2000, heavy rainstorms hit Kona. Oceanside's **erosion control measures failed, in part because Oceanside did not complete all of its BMPs or the erosion control measures that it specified in its NOI. The storm caused flooding throughout the Property and runoff into the surrounding Class AA waters.**

DrFries met with **TMT major donor Gordon Moore** in 2015 (see Remembering the Future Ted Talk by DeFries) and used this photo in his presentation.

# Kupuna Titans of Innovation

**Medtronic**

Earl Bakken



Gordon Moore

Play (k)

February 26, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili St.  
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

Aloha Board Members,

I write to you today in support of your choice of John DeFries as the First Executive Director of the Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority.

I have known John for many years and through a variety of touchpoints. First, socially as a friend of a friend, next as a collaborator and partner when he was the Executive Director of the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association and finally as a contractor to the Hawaii Tourism Authority when he was at the head of that organization. Through our associations I did not always agree with John, and at times we were at odds, but I respected his positions and his fervent, principled belief in the same.

Today, it is clear the indecision over the steps that need to be taken to resolve the Mauna Kea controversy are long overdue for resolution. To accomplish this goal, it is important that we have leadership that can unite our communities to find a resolution for all. In this regard, in August of 2019, John wrote in speaking of the nations represented with telescopes on Mauna Kea, "While some Native Hawaiian leaders are intent on eradicating all modern astronomy and telescopes from Maunakea, I now call upon other leaders to imagine and examine alternative scenarios to innovate the future. Imagine a Native Hawaiian nation-state as the host-convener of this international assembly, that as an institutional body, would be educated in Hawaiian cultural protocol, cross-cultural protocols, and ethical research. The assembly would be comprised of all 14 nations, each with representatives from the fields of indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, place-based education, comparative religion, the humanities and the arts, astronomy, physics, and policymaking. Properly designed and implemented, this united assembly of nations could provide a transformative forum at global scale for a unified Native Hawaiian leadership collective, as well as a platform to resume the international diplomacy once practiced by the Kingdom of Hawaii."

As we of the communities of Hawaii Island and of the State of Hawaii collectively seek to find a balance between the diverse interests of community, culture, commerce, and our environment we will need this type of foresight and vision that can find a correct path for the benefit of all.



Sincerely,

John Monahan



To: John Komeiji, Chair, Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority  
Members, Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority

From: Maunakea Observatories

RE: **John De Fries as Executive Director of the MKSOA - In Support**

Aloha Chair Komeiji and members of the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority,

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of John De Fries's selection as the first Executive Director of the Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKSOA).

We, the undersigned Maunakea Observatories, understand that it is essential for the MKSOA's success as a newly established governance body to have a strong leader with experience in the public and private sectors. We are well aware of Mr. De Fries's credentials and expertise, and we know him to be a thoughtful and reasonable executive. We encourage the MKSOA to vote in favor of his appointment to the Executive Director role.

We stand ready to address any questions you may have, and we thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support.

With aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Baranec".

Christoph Baranec, Acting Director, University of Hawai'i 2.2-meter Telescope

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Cuby".

Jean-Gabriel Cuby, Director, Canada-France-Hawai'i Telescope

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Ho".

Paul Ho, Director, East Asian Observatory (James Clerk Maxwell Telescope)

Satoshi Miyazaki

Satoshi Miyazaki, Director, Subaru Telescope, National Astronomical Observatory of Japan



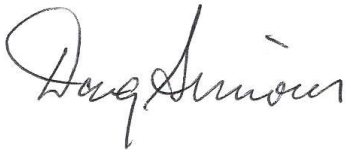
Timothy J. Norton, Director, Submillimeter Array



John O'Meara, Chief Scientist, W. M. Keck Observatory



John Rayner, Director, NASA Infrared Telescope Facility



Doug Simons, Director, University of Hawai'i, Institute for Astronomy



**Vanessa Ott**

P.O. Box 825, Na'alehu, HI 96772  
FreeSpeech4us.com

808 · 854 · 1018  
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February 26, 2024

To: **MAUNAKEA STEWARDSHIP OVERSIGHT AUTHORITY (MKSOA)**  
mka.testinmoy@hawaii.gov

Testimony re: February 29, 2024 meeting Agenda Item II. A. VOTE: Approve the hire of John De Fries as MKSOA Executive Director


Aloha MKSOA Members,

Looking at Mr. De Fries's resume, one can see he has a lot of experience in tourism. I would prefer that a steward of Maunakea have more experience in land conservation and ecology and clean up of polluted sites because Mauna Kea is polluted with telescopes. What is vision for Mauna Kea? How does he propose to carry that out? In all the lawsuits he settled, what were his values and what side was he on?

I completely object to the MKSOA process for hiring an MKSOA Executive Director. The public is permitted to testify, but the MKSOA has given the public very little information, and appears to have already made its decision since only one candidate is in the running. If this is accurate, then this meeting is a perfunctory charade intended to satisfy the legal requirement of giving the public an opportunity to testify, but not giving the public a choice of who they would prefer out a list of the top three candidates.

**I would prefer that MKSOA vote NO on approving this hire at this time, and reschedule a public meeting in which three candidates are offered**, and addition to a resume, each candidate submits their vision plan for Maunakea, and a values statement to describe more about this person's guiding principles. Right now, this MKSOA process seems like a bunch of cronies deciding what will be without offering the public a real and honest way to have input.

Mahalo for your consideration,



Vanessa Ott

**Late Received Testimony Re: MKSOA Special Meeting 2/29/2024 Agenda Item II. A. as of Close of Business 2/28/2024**

**Received 2/28/24, 10:15am**

John DeFries is NOT a good choice for Executive Director

Regina Gregory

**Received 2/28/24, 1:14pm**

It was sickening to read “cultural sites and burial sites protection” on his resume, which is presumably a reference to his time with the luxury development Hokulia that disturbed over 70 sets of iwi kupuna. He helped to construct a six-foot wall around a pu‘u to “protect” it while a 1500 acre development and golf course went up around it. It is tone deaf and naive to consider this a win. Our burials and wahi kupuna, like Mauna Kea, deserve to exist without the threat of encroachment looming over them.

When I started to look more into Mr. De Fries‘ history and experience I found a person who is willing to sit at the head of controversial projects that divide our communities and will pay apologetic lip service, but plows forward anyway. And I don’t mean that as a compliment. Someone who doesn’t respect a community’s “no” should not be at the helm of decisions for Mauna Kea, a sacred mountain, who is loved so deeply by so many. The leader of this organization shouldn’t be someone practiced at taking the karmic hit of splitting communities and even families in the service of business as usual. His hiring itself re-creates this well-worn fissure.

I don’t believe it is too much for our community to hope for a leader who will not compromise on the safety and protection of Mauna Kea – Mr. De Fries, on the other hand, is on record in a [2019 HPR interview](#), saying he believes “Mauna Kea embraces modern astronomy and the construction of TMT.”

Uncompromising and uncompromised, this is what we should strive for. This is my hope for a leader of this authority. Please reconsider the hiring of Mr. De Fries.

Thank you,

Shelley Muneoka

**Late Received Testimony Re: MKSOA Special Meeting 2/29/2024 Agenda Item II. A. as of 2/29/24**

**Received 2/28/24, 4:07pm**

Testimony submitted by Lanny Sinkin re selection of John De Fries  
as Executive Director of Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority

There is no question that the controversy surrounding the historical mismanagement of Maunakea is one of the most divisive issues facing our community. The most recent manifestation of that mismanagement is the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope.

The most recent legislative response to this Mauna issue led to the creation of the Mauna Kea Stewardship and Oversight Authority (MKOSA). See Act 255.

One of the first MKOSA acts was to select and confirm an Executive Director.

That selection should have been guided by criteria that acknowledged the seriousness of the controversy. The process of selection should have been transparent. Public participation in the selection process should have been encouraged and facilitated. The Executive Director selected should have been someone whose objectivity and neutrality was unquestionable. The Executive Director should have been of the highest integrity.

Unfortunately, these basic requirements to ensure the selection of an Executive Director with broad public support did not guide the selection of John De Fries to be the Executive Director.

The most contentious issue is the Thirty Meter Telescope. Mr. De Fries is a supporter of constructing this newest telescope. For the MKOSA to choose an advocate for this telescope as Executive Director is clear evidence of a predetermined bias on the part of MKOSA. That choice is a slap in the face to the thousands of people who gathered to defend the Mauna from desecration.

The absence of even the pretense of objectivity is confirmed by the selection process. The names of possible candidates were never released. Most discussion of the selection took place behind closed doors in executive session. Minimal advanced notice of the choice left little time for the public to research Mr. De Fries.

Mr. De Fries relevant professional history raises other red flags that should have been disqualifying. He was President of 1250 Oceanside Partners, a failed development that polluted Kealakekua Bay and ended in bankruptcy. A judge found that 1250 Oceanside Partners circumvented state land use laws.

The choice of Mr. De Fries means that the MKOSA is a captured agency prepared to make decisions that promote private interests rather than the public good.

The MKOSA should engage in a true search for the most qualified candidate that involves the public, with a particular focus on meeting the expectations of the Hawaiian community.

Lanny Sinkin

**Received 2/29/24, 8:38 am**

He Mele komo a he mele aloha no na kupuna o ke au i hala Aloha mai kakou.

Aloha,

My name is Cindy Freitas and I'm a Native Hawaiian descended of the native inhabitants of Hawai'i prior to 1778 and born and raised in Hawai'i.

I am also a who still practice the cultural traditional customary practices that was instill in me by my grandparents at a young age from mauka (MOUNTAIN TO SEA) to makai in many areas.

I'm in opposition of [John De Fries](#) as MKSOA Executive Director, due to the fact that 1250 project or Hokulea he were in charge of desecration lwi Kupuna and bury some of the CAVES that has historical properties in it. (CANOE, STECLETONS, ect.)

SHAME ON HIM for doing that to the cultural community.

Mahalo,

\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_

Cindy Freitas

**Received 2/29/24, 10:55 am**

Ano'ai me ke aloha Chair Komeiji and member of the Authority,

My name is Healani Sonoda-Pale. I am a Kanaka Maoli citizen of Ka Lahui Hawai'i who has stood in protection of Mauna Kea for many years. I have genealogical ties to West and East Hawai'i.

John De Fries has made clear his position regarding his support of the building of the Thirty Meter Telescope. Mauna Kea has been galvanizing for those who stand in protection of what is sacred. The movement to protect Mauna Kea has been important in bringing together those who want a new future for Hawai'i rather than the old

paradigms and frameworks that are unsustainable. The building of any future telescopes on Mauna Kea is unsustainable and John De Fries because of his support of astronomy and TMT on sacred Mauna Kea is not the best choice for Executive Director to lead the Authority's work. Let O'ahu be the Canary in the coal mine when it comes to making decisions that protect our future. Mauna Kea sits atop 5 aquifer systems that provide water throughout Hawai'i island. To date there has been no comprehensive hydrological study of the summits. It is important to put a water protector and an advocate in the Executive Director position.

Please have an open and transparent process to pick the next Executive Director. There are so many qualified Kanaka Maoli whose position is more aligned with the protection of Mauna Kea. Who were the other candidates for this position?

Tens of thousands of the Lahui has stood in support of Mauna Kea and 40,000 have marched on Waikiki. This was an act of self-determination - a choice by our people as to the future of Mauna Kea. We can do better in our choices for who will carry the heavy kuleana of caring for Mauna Kea forward.

I also want to bring up concerns that the Authority's attempt to suspend sunshine law. I would like to share a quote from the Common Cause website:

"The Sunshine Law allows for the public to know what our government is doing, when it is meeting, and what it is discussing."

The Sunshine law is a cornerstone of democracy. When the government is allowed to operate in the dark corruption can run rampant. The sunshine law protects not only the public but public officials like yourselves. We are all only human. Please do not go down the route into darkness by continuing to pursue the suspension of sunshine law.

Sincerely,

Healani Sonoda-Pale

**Received 2/29/24, 12:21 pm**

MKA Testimony



February 29, 2024

Aloha Mauna Kea Stewardship Authority

For the record I am stating from the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which adopted on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Pg. 12 states... **“Article XI. Protection against genocide** Indigenous peoples have the right not to be the object of any form of genocide or attempts to exterminate them.”

Aloha kakou,

My name is Clare Loprinzi, I am an Indigenous Cultural Practitioner practicing hanau customary cultural and traditional practices for over fifty years. I am honored to share testimony and show support for Mauna Wakea and all gods and goddesses that protect us there, a wahipana for me in the work I do.

I have and do work with lineal descendants with hanau the last 20 plus years here in the island and many other indigenous customary practices. I have helped lineal descendants from Nawawa, there at Hokulea 20 years ago. Barbara Navas' tutu was raised there, and she talked to me about all na iwi kupuna whose na iwi were now in Matson containers. As we celebrated birth, we mourned the desecration of this strong Hawaiians' ohana iwi kupuna.

My question is how could John De Fries could even be in position to be an Executive Director? A past like that is never forgotten. Does TMT or other Big Business powers have a choosing in the nominations? Our past shows who we are, what our actions have done...one walks their talk.

This is sad knowing the deep history of Hokulea and the pain na ohana have which creates more generational trauma to see John De Fries name for Executive Director. Mahalos for the opportunity to speak.

**I'm in strong opposition of John De Fries as MKSOA Executive Director.**

Me ka haahaa,

Clare Loprinzi

Received 2/29/24. 1:33 pm

Aloha!

I hope you'll accept my testimony for Item A/Vote: Re/John De Fries - & NOT consider it late as I tried for over an hour to testify via Zoom.

Also, the phone-in link did not work and the YouTube link given to watch live was also the wrong link. Very disappointed.

I'm opposed to Mr. De Fries being on the board to oversee Mauna Kea.

I'm a 40 year resident of Hawai'i Island and followed the machinations of the Hokulia project fairly closely. It was impossible to ignore, as it seemed there were new shenanigans from the company almost daily in the local paper.

Lawsuits, iwi desecration, and many county & state rules & laws were broken, missing permits, Class AAA waters were contaminated under Mr. De Fries leadership at Hokulia.

I'm also not impressed with his time at the helm of the HTA.

I don't trust Mr. De Fries to head the MKSOA due to his long past history. I do not think he is the man for this job.

I've watched the Mauna Kea issue for 40 years - I don't know anyone who has changed their mind on what's happening on Mauna Kea & believe if the TMT is attempted to be shoved down our throats - we will have the same standoff as before, only much, much larger, due to social media.

Vote No - on Mr. De Fries.

Mahalo,  
Shannon Rudolph - Holualoa

February 29, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship Oversight Authority (Authority),  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, HI 96720

**Re: Agenda Item II.A. - Opposition**

Aloha Chair Komeiji and members of the Authority,

This testimony reflects my personal opinion and experience related to Mr. John DeFries.

Mr. DeFries listed the 2006 settlement of *Kelly v. 1250 Oceanside Partners* in his curriculum vitae to this Authority. As such, I am compelled to testify on this agenda item with this testimony being in opposition to approval of Mr. DeFries as Executive Director.

In 2000, I and three other residents of Hawai'i island, later joined by a Native Hawaiian Organization, filed *Kelly v. 1250 Oceanside Partners*. It was in relation to this litigation and circumstance that I first met and subsequently know Mr. DeFries.

It is inappropriate for Mr. DeFries to list the settlement in his curriculum vitae because Mr. DeFries' role and participation in the three years of negotiations was actually less than many other individuals and organizations. He certainly was not responsible for it, nor did he direct or facilitate the discussions. As such, the Authority should not assume Mr. DeFries' participation in the 1250 Oceanside Partners (1250) settlement negotiations in any way qualifies him to be Executive Director of the Authority. Mr. DeFries is not the person to hire and assist this Authority through the complex legal and political waters that lie ahead as it moves forward with its legislative mandate.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the 2006 settlement agreement had numerous provisions designed to mitigate the impacts on environmental and cultural resources. However, when Mr. DeFries left his position with 1250 six years later, he also left numerous critical provisions incomplete. Among these were the completion of the court-ordered actions to protect known and inadvertent discoveries of iwi kupuna and to reinter numerous iwi kupuna that had already been unearthed. Subsequent to Mr. DeFries departure, I was taken on a tour of the 1250 project to assess progress on protection of cultural resources. At one location, we were taken to a battered plastic tarp laying on the ground next to a lava blister. When I asked what was under the tarp, I was told it was iwi kupuna and was shocked to learn that this was only the most recent of many tarps covering the iwi kupuna because they had been laying there for years. The State Historic Preservation Division spent several years demanding 1250 complete the court-order actions and its burial treatment plan, orders and plans that 1250 did not complete under Mr. DeFries leadership.

Given Mr. DeFries' experience and reputation is restricted to the real estate development and tourism industries, does the Authority not realize this will cause the public to reasonably attribute the Authority as having the same attributes and bias? Mr. DeFries appears to realize this because his curriculum vitae (CV) lists the purpose of his company, Native Sun Business Group, Inc., as "project management and consulting". However, the state DCCA Business Registration Division website states the purpose of the company to be "real estate development and consultation".

This Authority will be stewarding and overseeing amongst the most, if not the most sacred wahi pana in a very fraught and controversial situation, one that now has global attention. Hiring Mr. DeFries would result in additional controversy and mistrust.

Please vote in opposition to the hire of Mr. DeFries as Executive Director of the Authority.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

  
Charles Flaherty



# Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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**Executive Officer**  
Miles Yoshioka

**2023-2024  
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Keith Marrack

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Geoli Ng  
Lisa Shiroma  
Jim Staub  
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Kurt Williams  
Ashley Yamamoto  
Irene Yamanaka  
Tracie Yoshimoto

**Ex-Officio Board Member**

Mary Begier

February 27, 2024

Mauna Kea Stewardship & Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kawili Street  
Hilo, HI 96720

To Board Chair Komeiji and members of the MKSOA Board

The formation of the MaunaKea Stewardship & Oversight Authority is a new model for stewardship on Mauna Kea that provides an opportunity for more balanced decision-making regarding the future of Maunakea.

Its leader must be able to manage opposing perspectives and discussions, complex lease management process and system, as well as deep cultural connections and kuleana associated with Mauna Kea.

It is imperative that we get this right.

John De Fries has the experience, the fortitude, the understanding of the various perspectives that intersect with the work and decision making of the MKSOA.

We have worked with John and have witnessed his special gift of communication, discernment, and wisdom that comes with years of working in complex and controversial situations.

John is uniquely qualified to be the first Executive Director for the MKSOA.

Respectfully submitted:

Randy Kurohara  
President  
Hawaii Island Chamber of Commerce



# Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce

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Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority  
Board of Directors  
19 E. Kāwili Street  
Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720

Aloha to the Board of Directors of MKSOA,

I am Pualani Kanahela from Hilo, Hawai‘i. I am a retired professor of Hawai‘i Community College. I am also a retired Kumu Hula of Hālau o Kekuhi.

My tradition informational background is from my family Hula Tradition. We were raised on Hula ‘Olapa which is associated with mele oli or chants. History and stories of Hawai‘i were edited or changed with each following generation. Old mele oli are about the natural environment and were not edited, they were literal and composed to be understood. My information concerning the natural environmental elements were researched and gathered from mele oli.

Below is a shorten form of a mele oli concerning Maunakea, its formal name is Mauna a Wākea or the Mountain of Wākea. It is also my sincere enplanation of Mauna a Wākea’s importance to kanaka Hawai‘i.

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. ‘O hānau ka mauna a Wākea          | <i>The mountain of Wākea is created</i>   |
| 2. ‘O pu ‘u a ‘e ka mauna a Wākea     | <i>Wākea’s mountain pushes up and out</i>   |
| 3. ‘O Wākea ke kāne                   | <i>Wākea is the male,</i>   |
| 4. ‘O Papa o Walinu ‘u ka wahine      | <i>Papa the powerful, supple entity is female</i>   |
| 5. Hānau Ho ‘ohoku he wahine          | <i>Born is the moon which calculates seasonal changes</i>   |
| 6. Hānau Hāloa he ali ‘i              | <i>Born is Hāloa a chief,</i>   |
| 7. ‘O ka lili o Wākea o ha ‘i ka hala | <i>For aeons the vibration of Wākea set the mauna in place</i>                                    |
| 8. ‘O ke kūkū a ka manene             | <i>Standing with quaking sensations</i>   |
| 9. I ho ‘ouka ‘ai i loko o kahiki-kū  | <i>It is in the uplands, towering beyond the diverse strata of space from the eastern horizon</i> |
| 10. He ‘e Wākea, ka lewa kona ‘ohua   | <i>Wākea slips down through the atmospheric levels with his offsprings</i>                        |
| 11. Kuamū ia e Kāne, kuawa ia e Kāne  | <i>Land dug into by Kāne’s rain and shaped into valleys and inlets for planting</i>               |

The mountain is the offspring of Wākea and Papa. Wākea is the male entity of the greater atmosphere and Papa is the female. Wākea and Papa are ancestors of all regenerative lives. Line 5, Ho ‘ohoku, is a reference to the 15th moon phase of the month which is Hoku, a full moon which energizes root plants. Line 6, Hāloa, is the taro plant given the status of “chief” as the main emblem of our food source. The emphasis which follows reveal the stamina of the mountain to build itself. The mountain is carved out by water forming valleys and inlets.

Maunakea is our “Hiapo” or oldest sibling, our geneology begins with Wākea and Papa. The mountain is afforded dignity and a sense of family. When considered a namesake and hiapo, the mauna takes on that persona and responsibility. Maunakea sits in the ahupua‘a or land section of Ka‘ohe. Ka‘ohe ahupua‘a moves from Hāmākua to the top of Maunakea and stretches to the top of Maunaloa. Ka‘ohe translated is “bamboo”, a vegetable manifestation of the akua Kāne. Bamboo was used to carry water and sometimes rainwater was found trapped in the upright green bamboo. This water was considered sacred used only for ceremonial offerings. One of the



reasons for the name Ka'ōhe is to note the fact that like the 'ōhe there are water basins or aquifers between Maunakea and Maunaloa.

Reasons for the protection of Maunakea:

1. Maunakea is our older sibling which means any protection we, kanaka, can give it we will. Which accounts for our protest.
2. Maunakea is the OLDEST, a million plus years old, land we have, therefore it does not deserve to be dugged into, old land removed, Astronomy buildings put on it for the sake of gathering information from the atmosphere. It is not important enough to top off this venerable, spiritual, oldest land that is Maunakea.
3. Maunakea possess 'ume wai characteristics that is it attracts water (clouds) and stores water (aquifers).
4. Maunakea is a reminder that Hawai'i is connected to the stars, beginning with Huihui iō Makali'i (Pleiades) on Kealanuipolohiwaakāne (summer solstice alignment).
5. Maunakea's height stops rain clouds from passing and the constancy of rain will eventually form deep valleys with waterways for growing food both on land and reef areas of the ocean.
6. Maunakea's presence encourages native instinctual reaction of reciprocation, "give and take", this is the "aloha" methodology for living life, the position of Maunakea, when carefully analyzed does indeed present this life style.
7. Maunakea is Akua for all of the above reasons and many others not mentioned.

These above noted comments of Maunakea and many others are some of the reasons we, kanaka Hawai'i, are adamant about Maunakea's treatment.

I am 100% in agreement with John DeFries as Executive Director for the Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority Board of Directors. I have known John for forty years of my life, therefore his background and experience for this position excels above and beyond any other candidate you have on file. 1) John DeFries is a kanaka Hawai'i and understands the reasons listed above and the need to protect Maunakea. 2). John D. understands the political structure of our State government because he just retired from a political position. 3). John D. probably knows all other Directors of MKSOA Board of Directors therefore the getting acquainted time period will be limited. 4) John D. has worked and understands the population of Hawai'i and the needs of the Hawaiians, locals, new comers, tourist and politicians. 5. John D. is easy to work with, he is intelligent, understanding and willing to talk through problems until it is solved.

I have enjoyed working with John D. and know that he is willing to listen and solve the problems for Maunakea. My recommendation for John D. as Executive Director for MKSOA is with full enthusiasm and confidence in his abilities.

Ke Aloha Nō  
Dr. Pualani Kanahela Kanaka'ole