

**Testimony of The Nature Conservancy
In Support of Agenda Item C-2, "Authorization of funding for The Nature Conservancy for
\$1,251,925 during FY 25-30 for continued enrollment in the Natural Area Partnership
Program and acceptance and approval of the Kamakou Preserve Long Range Management
Plan, landowner Molokai Properties Limited, Tax Map Key (2) 5-4-003:026, Moloka'i"**

**Hawai'i Board of Land and Natural Resources
May 24, 2024, 9:00 AM
Kalanimoku Building, 1151 Punchbowl St., Room 132**

Aloha Chair Chang and Board Members:

As Program Manager of The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Molokai Island Forest Program, I am writing in support of Agenda Item C-2, the proposed Kamakou Preserve Natural Area Partnership Program FY25 to FY30 Long Range Management Plan submitted to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). Continued funding of TNC's active management of Kamakou Preserve is critical to maintaining the health and resilience of these and neighboring watersheds. **We ask the Board to approve the proposal.**

The State's Natural Area Partnership Program (NAPP) is an innovative program that aids private landowners in the management of their native ecosystems. The Kamakou Preserve NAPP was established in 1982 and TNC is seeking reauthorization of NAPP funding for the next six-year period for the programs described within the proposed Kamakou Preserve FY2025–FY2030 Long-Range Management Plan. This plan continues the programs implemented under the previous plans. Less than 15% of Molokai's original native ecosystems remain, and the Kamakou Preserve is one of the few areas on Molokai where they continue to exist. Funding through this program helps provide "anchor" funding for the Conservancy allowing it to leverage outside conservation funds many times over.

Our forest conservation priorities at Kamakou Preserve are to:

- 1) protect her remaining native forests and shrublands ensure they are managed as functioning watersheds and habitat for native species that are resilient to climate change and call it home;
- 2) address the threats that invasive species pose to their health, our economy and way of life;
- 3) develop, pilot, and/or standardize innovative tools and technologies to make conservation work more efficient.

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Activities covered under this long-range plan will focus on: reducing ungulates across the Preserve, particularly in fenced unit; maintaining fenced units; invasive plant mapping and control; threat and resource monitoring; support for partner surveys and monitoring; improvements and utilization of innovation for management; and infrastructure maintenance, and help to support community outreach programs such as interpretive hikes, partner meetings, and the annual Earth Day event.

Over the last five years of our NAPP partnership, we have made substantial progress. Fencing of the good quality native montane mesic forest and shrubland in the Preserve is nearly complete. Invasive animals and weeds are being controlled with over 1,000 acres being swept in the last 6 years.

Continued support of this project will benefit the populations of native flora and fauna that depend on healthy montane wet 'ōhi'a to mesic forests and shrublands in the Preserve. These forested areas near the top of the island help buffer climate for those who live below and reduces erosion and sedimentation to the south shore fringing reef, which is the longest in the United States and a source of food for residents. The Kamakou Preserve also benefits almost all residents of Molokai, as her forested lands help provide well over 2.3 million gallons of fresh water each day to residents of Molokai by recharging the island's sole source aquifer (State Department of Health, 2014).

To support these efforts, we ask that the Board support and approve the Long-Range Management Plan and funding recommended by DLNR. Mahalo for your support and stewardship of Hawai'i's natural resources.

Sincerely,



Russell Kallstrom
Molokai Program Manager, The Nature Conservancy
P.O. Box 220
Kualapu'u, HI 96757
(808) 954-6589
rkallstrom@tnc.org