

Council Chair
Alice L. Lee

Vice-Chair
Yuki Lei K. Sugimura

Presiding Officer Pro Tempore
Tasha Kama

Councilmembers
Tom Cook
Gabe Johnson
Tamara Paltin
Keani N.W. Rawlins-Fernandez
Shane M. Sinenci
Nohelani U'u-Hodgins



Director of Council Services
David M. Raatz, Jr., Esq.

Deputy Director of Council Services
Richelle K. Kawasaki, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY OF MAUI
200 S. HIGH STREET
WAILUKU, MAUI, HAWAII 96793
www.MauiCounty.us

May 3, 2024

Board of Land and Natural Resources
P.O. Box 621,
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96809
blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

Re: May 10, 2025 Meeting Agenda item C - 3

Aloha Chair Chang, and Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I am writing in support of the East Maui Coastal Rainforest Project and the acquisition of the two parcels listed on the agenda ((2) 2-9-011:012 & (2) 2-9-013:009). As the Maui County Councilmember representing East Maui, I support the ongoing efforts of the Division of Forestry and Wildlife to acquire these lands for protection and to increase mauka to makai connectivity.

This specific project area contains high quality coastal habitat for native species, as well as habitat for the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus semotus*) and seabirds. The project also includes perennial streams that provide riparian habitat for native stream fauna including the Hawaiian freshwater goby and the Hawaiian stream shrimp. The coastal waters offshore are designated critical habitat for the endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal (*Monachus schauinslandi*). The project area is highly strategic, as parcels acquired will be added to the state managed Koolau Forest Reserve, which is part of a contiguous network of 108,000 acres of protected lands.

This purchase is also part of a larger effort to provide mauka to makai and lateral connectivity which assists with land management and public access. The environmental effects of mauka to makai ahupua'a land management are extremely beneficial, including erosion and sediment control, providing habitat protections, and helps to strengthen our entire eco system and helping with stream connectivity. Creating lateral access by tying conservation lands together

May 3, 2024
Page 2

helps create legacy impacts, habitat preservation and provides land conservation opportunities. It also provides easier access to local hunters and to areas used by cultural practitioners when practicing traditional and customary rights. Having these lands in the state forest reserve can help increase overall ecosystem health by providing more access to invasive species control, allows for reforestation and erosion mitigation which prevents sediment from entering the ocean and harming our coral reefs. Maintaining ecological balance is critical to the quality of life for local residents.

To close, this action is inline with the public trust doctrine provided in our state constitution. Article XI (11) Section 1 specifically states that:

“For the benefit of present and future generations, the State shall conserve and protect Hawaii’s natural beauty and all natural resources, including land, water, air, minerals and energy sources, and shall promote the development and utilization of these resources in a manner consistent with their conservation and in furtherance of the self-sufficiency of the State. All public natural resources are held in trust by the state for the benefit of the people.”

The proposed acquisition of these parcels helps to fulfil our obligation to uphold the public trust doctrine. I support DoFAW’s request and ask that you support it as well.

Mahalo,

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

SHANE M. SINENCI
Councilmember
East Maui District