



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hale o nā Luna Maka'āinana

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

04/30/2024

State of Hawai'i
Board of Land and Natural Resources

RE: Letter of Support for Phase I State Acquisition of East Maui Lands

Aloha Chair Chang and Board Members:

As a member of the House of Representatives representing East Maui, I strongly support the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife proposed acquisition and protection of two parcels of land in East Maui totaling approximately 89+ acres known as the East Maui Coastal Rainforest Phase I project. I understand that the Phase I project is part of a landscape level project that proposes the acquisition and protection of over 20 strategic parcels connected to the state's existing Ko'olau Forest Reserve and other state-protected lands along the coastline of East Maui, including the Ha'ikū, Nāhiku, and Hāna regions. I look forward to receiving more information prior to considering my support for the consecutive phases.

The Phase I project and the potential successive phases intend to connect habitat from the mountains to the sea by protecting unique coastal rainforest located along the Hāna Highway on Maui's rural northeast coast and allow managed public access for recreational, subsistence, and cultural uses. The project area includes critical habitat for five threatened or endangered plant species, as well as habitat for the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus semotus*) and seabirds. The project also includes perennial streams that are a 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*).

I strongly support Phase I of the East Maui Coastal Rainforest project for the benefits of enhanced public access and protection and connectivity of unique coastal forest and stream habitat for native plants and animals, including listed endangered species. I urge DOFAW to meet with the East Maui community to provide project information, to hear and address potential concerns, and to prioritize traditional knowledge and place-based, community stewardship for this 'āina.

Mahalo,

Representative Mahina Poepoe
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