



Date: 10/08/2025

To: Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority

Re: Concerns Regarding Jeep Rental Promotions and Overtourism on Mauna Kea

Date: October 9, 2025

Aloha Chair and Members of the Maunakea Stewardship and Oversight Authority,

My name is Emiko “Emmy” Okawa, and I am a licensed tour operator with Taikobo Hawaii Inc. / Mauna Kea Sunset Tour on Hawai‘i Island.

I am writing to express my deep concern about the increasing number of private Jeep rental vehicles traveling to the Mauna Kea summit.

During recent guided tours, I personally observed severe overcrowding caused by rental Jeeps, which filled nearly every available space at the summit and lined the entire access road to the Visitor Information Station after sunset. Rangers spent much of their time checking with individual drivers, many of whom were unfamiliar with altitude, weather, and safety conditions, making it extremely difficult to ensure both visitor safety and environmental protection.

This is not simply a traffic issue; it represents a serious risk to visitor safety, environmental stewardship, and the cultural integrity of Mauna Kea. Jeep rental companies continue to promote summit access through misleading advertisements claiming their vehicles are “Mauna Kea summit approved.” This commercial promotion directly undermines the long-standing efforts of licensed tour operators who follow regulations, prioritize safety, and educate guests about the sacredness of the mountain.

I respectfully request that the Authority and CMS review this situation and consider establishing:

1. Clear regulations and enforcement regarding private rental vehicle access to the summit.
2. Guidelines for commercial advertising that discourage misleading claims.
3. A collaborative framework involving licensed tour operators to support responsible visitor management.



We all share the same goal to protect Mauna Kea as a sacred and living place for future generations. I deeply appreciate the work and commitment of the rangers and CMS staff who do their best every day under challenging conditions. With stronger policies and community cooperation, I believe we can restore balance and pono to the mountain.

Mahalo nui loa for your time, attention, and dedication to Mauna Kea.

Respectfully submitted,

Emiko "Emmy" Okawa
Licensed Tour Operator
Taikobo Hawaii Inc. / Mauna Kea Sunset Tour
Hawai'i Island



Photo Attachment

Additional Photo Link: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/DvPrjmHjquCRHUsc8>

