

TESTIMONY

December 9, 2025

via E-Mail to blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

To: Board of Land and Natural Resources
Attn: Dawn Chang, Chair

From: Grant Nakama, Student, William S. Richardson School of Law

RE: Agenda Item C-2: Approval of a Memorandum of Understanding, Right-of-Entry, and Release of Liability Agreements, between the Division of Forestry and Wildlife and the Hawai'i Wildlife Fund, a Hawai'i nonprofit corporation, for Ecosystem Protection and Management in the Ka'ū Forest Reserve (Kamilo Section), Hawai'i, Tax Map Key: (3) 9-5-006:010.

Dear Chair Chang and Members of the Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support** of the subject recommendation from the Division of Forestry and Wildlife ("DOFAW"). I believe DOFAW's recommendations reflect a collaborative approach to protecting native forest ecosystems through directed public-private partnerships.

The Ka'ū Forest Reserve ("Reserve") was established in 1906 to protect forest areas in the southeastern portion of Hawai'i island. Since then, the Reserve has served as a resource for domestic and agricultural water supplies, cultural practitioners, hunters, and native species. The importance of protecting the Reserve is evident, but the challenges of managing 61,000 acres alone – even for an agency as qualified as DOFAW – are equally apparent.

To its credit, DOFAW is choosing to address these challenges collaboratively by proposing to enter into a non-exclusive Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with Hawai'i Wildlife Fund ("HWF"). DOFAW believes that HWF is a capable partner, and

under the proposed MOU, HWF would greatly assist DOFAW with management activities in the Reserve. Additionally, DOFAW suggests that this MOU may be the first of many, stating that “other community organizations are also interested in implementing management plans for this large area in a complementary way.” Proceeding with the proposed MOU while also remaining open to other partnerships makes practical sense, especially given the willingness of other community organizations, the scale of work across 61,000 acres, and the remote location of the Reserve.

Due to these considerations, DOFAW’s recommendation appears to be a prudent and collaborative path forward. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Grant Nakama