Written Testimony

Board of Land and Natural Resources — February 27, 2026

Submitted via: blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

Submitters: Pōhaku Pelemaka and Toni "Makani" Gregg (individually)

Agenda Item C-1

Division of Forestry & Wildlife — ʻŌlaʻa Forest Reserve Extension, Hawaiʻi Island

On behalf of Pōhaku Pelemaka:

Submitted by: Pōhaku Pelemaka

Affiliation: Pōhaku Pelemaka, 501(c)(3) Native Hawaiian Nonprofit, Puna, Hawaiʻi Island

E kūkū ana i ka pono o ka ʻāina — we speak in the interest of the land. Pōhaku Pelemaka is a Native Hawaiian nonprofit based along the coast of Puna, Hawaiʻi Island. We write in strong support of the Board's authorization to hold public hearings on the proposed extension of the ʻŌlaʻa Forest Reserve. The lowland rainforests of Puna — including ʻŌlaʻa and the adjacent Wao Kele o Puna — are irreplaceable wahi pana and critically important watersheds, seed banks, and native species refugia. Our programs engage Puna ʻohana directly in the stewardship, monitoring, and restoration of these landscapes. We urge the Board to ensure the public hearing process is robust, accessible to Puna communities, and inclusive of Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners and ʻāina-based organizations. We look forward to participating in the upcoming hearings. Mahalo.

Individually:

Submitted by: Toni "Makani" Gregg

Affiliation: Program Coordinator, Pōhaku Pelemaka; Resident of Puna, Hawaiʻi Island

My name is Makani Gregg and I am a lifelong resident of Puna and Program Coordinator for Pōhaku Pelemaka. I write in support of public hearings on the ʻŌlaʻa Forest Reserve extension. I have spent over a decade working in the native forests of Puna — conducting botanical field work, vegetation monitoring, seed banking, and invasive species management with PCSU and the National Park Service at Hawaiʻi Volcanoes National Park. I have witnessed firsthand the critical ecological value of Puna's lowland rainforests and the growing threats from Rapid ʻŌhiʻa Death and invasive species. Extending formal protection to these parcels is a meaningful and necessary step. I urge the Board to move forward with public hearings and to center Native Hawaiian voices and community-based land stewards throughout this process. Mahalo.

Agenda Item F-1

Division of Aquatic Resources — FY26 Coral Nursery & Restoration, UH Agreement

On behalf of Pōhaku Pelemaka:

Submitted by: Pōhaku Pelemaka

Affiliation: Pōhaku Pelemaka, 501(c)(3) Native Hawaiian Nonprofit, Puna, Hawaiʻi Island

Pōhaku Pelemaka writes in support of the proposed agreement between DLNR and the University of Hawaiʻi for statewide coral nursery and restoration support. The coral reefs of Puna's coastline are deeply woven into the cultural identity, subsistence practices, and spiritual life of our community. Our Hoʻomakua i Ke Kai a Pele program engages Puna families in marine monitoring and coastal stewardship along one of the most dynamic shorelines in the archipelago. We are encouraged by DAR's investment in coral restoration and hope that as this work expands, it will meaningfully include Puna's coastline — an area profoundly transformed by the 2018 Kīlauea eruption. We welcome

opportunities to collaborate with UH and DAR to document baseline conditions, support community monitoring, and integrate Native Hawaiian traditional ecological knowledge into restoration planning. Mahalo.

Individually:

Submitted by: Toni "Makani" Gregg

Affiliation: Program Coordinator, Pōhaku Pelemaka; Resident of Puna, Hawai‘i Island

My name is Makani Gregg. I hold an MS in Tropical Conservation Biology and a BA in Marine Science from UH Hilo, and my graduate research focused on coral disease and water quality on Hawai‘i Island. I am also a Scientific Diver. I write in support of the coral nursery and restoration agreement with UH. The reefs off Puna's coast are understudied and underrepresented in statewide marine conservation programs, yet they support traditional fishing, gathering, and cultural practices our community depends on. The 2018 eruption fundamentally altered the Puna coastline and created new questions about reef recovery and succession that urgently need scientific attention. I encourage DAR and UH to prioritize Puna in the scope of this statewide effort. Mahalo.

Agenda Item F-3

Division of Aquatic Resources — Ka‘ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area, Public Hearings

On behalf of Pōhaku Pelemaka:

Submitted by: Pōhaku Pelemaka

Affiliation: Pōhaku Pelemaka, 501(c)(3) Native Hawaiian Nonprofit, Puna, Hawai‘i Island

Pōhaku Pelemaka writes in strong support of the Board's authorization to hold public hearings on the proposed Ka‘ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area rules. We are heartened to see the integration of traditional fishing practices, ‘opihi rotational rest zones, and the recognition of Wai a Kāne as a cultural and ecological site. This approach — honoring both Western fisheries science and Native Hawaiian traditional resource management — is exactly the model that coastal communities across Hawai‘i Island need. Our Ho‘omakua i Ke Kai a Pele program is developing community-based marine monitoring along Puna's coast, and we look to the Ka‘ūpūlehu process as an important precedent. We encourage DAR to ensure the public hearing process is culturally appropriate and that Native Hawaiian practitioners and fishing families meaningfully shape the final rules. Mahalo.

Individually:

Submitted by: Toni "Makani" Gregg

Affiliation: Program Coordinator, Pōhaku Pelemaka; Resident of Puna, Hawai‘i Island

My name is Makani Gregg. As a Puna resident, marine scientist, and community educator, I write in support of authorization to hold public hearings on the Ka‘ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area. The proposed rules represent a meaningful effort to weave Native Hawaiian traditional resource management — including ‘opihi rotational harvesting and protection of Wai a Kāne — into formal administrative rules. This is what community-based fisheries management should look like. I am particularly encouraged by the Kai Malu Management Area aligning with traditional fishing practices of Kahuwai Bay. I urge the Board to widely publicize hearing dates to fishing families and Native Hawaiian communities across Hawai‘i. Mahalo.

Agenda Item E-1

State Parks — Hā‘ena Beach Park Acquisition & Set Aside, Kaua‘i

On behalf of Pōhaku Pelemaka:

Submitted by: Pōhaku Pelemaka

Affiliation: Pōhaku Pelemaka, 501(c)(3) Native Hawaiian Nonprofit, Puna, Hawai‘i Island

Pōhaku Pelemaka writes in support of the acquisition and set aside of Hā‘ena Beach Park and Maniniholo Dry Cave as State Park lands. As a Native Hawaiian nonprofit engaged in coastal stewardship and community advocacy on Hawai‘i Island, we recognize the profound importance of protecting sacred coastal places for public access, cultural practice, and ecological integrity. The Hā‘ena community's long journey to protect their shoreline — through years of advocacy and community organizing — is an inspiration to coastal communities across the pae‘āina. We are currently supporting our own Puna community in navigating a similar struggle for coastal access at Kaimū. The Board's action today affirms what we believe: that our shores belong to the people, and that the government has a kuleana to protect them. Mahalo.

Individually:

Submitted by: Toni "Makani" Gregg

Affiliation: Program Coordinator, Pōhaku Pelemaka; Resident of Puna, Hawai‘i Island

My name is Makani Gregg, a resident of Puna and Program Coordinator for Pōhaku Pelemaka. I write in support of the Hā‘ena Beach Park acquisition and State Park set aside. Sacred coastal places must be protected for future generations — for the families who fish there, gather there, pray there, and pass those practices on to their keiki. As someone whose own community is actively fighting for coastal access rights at Kaimū in Puna, this action by the Board gives me hope. Public protection of our shorelines is not just a land use decision — it is an affirmation of Native Hawaiian rights and the promise of aloha ‘āina. I urge the Board to approve. Mahalo.

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