

## Hui Maka'āinana O Makana



*The Hui Maka'āinana o Makana is a non-profit organization dedicated to perpetuating and teaching the skills, knowledge, and practices of our kūpuna (ancestors) through the interpretation, restoration, care, and protection of natural and cultural resources in within the Hā'ena State Park.*

25 Feb 2026

Aloha Acting Chair Kanakaole and members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources:

I am testifying today in strong support of Agenda item E-1 to Authorize the Acquisition in Fee Simple of Real Property and Improvements at Hā'ena Beach Park, Kaua'i, Hawai'i, Tax Map Key: (4) 5-9-005-019-0000, and Maniniholo Dry Cave, Kaua'i, Hawai'i, Tax Map Key: (4) 5-9-005-017-0000, from County of Kaua'i to State by Way of Dedication.

I am one of the five community leaders who incorporated the Hui Maka'āinana o Makana in 1998. I have served on either their Board of Directors or on our Ohana Council over the past 28 years. I currently serve as the Vice-President of the Hui's Board. I spent over 20 years of my life working with other community leaders and State Parks planners and two different sets of consultants to develop the Master Plan for Hā'ena State Park which was adopted in 2018. I am the 5<sup>th</sup> generation in our ohana to live in Hā'ena and have spent the past 50 years focused on making Hā'ena a model of effective community-based conservation.

This agenda item E-1 is an important step towards allowing our community to work with State Parks to address the long-term care of what is now Hā'ena County Park. For the past 100 years the County has managed this area primarily as a recreational resource for our community. When I was growing up 65 years ago this was a beloved Park that was well used by our Hā'ena & Wainiha community members and by families from around the island. It was a central point from which our local fishermen launched their boats to surround akule every summer and a favorite place for our keike to learn to swim and surf just as I did when I was growing up.

Unfortunately, those days are gone and the ever-increasing number of visitors to Kaua'i has changed the use of the Beach Park into a place dominated by visitors day in and day out. Things got even worse starting in 2019 with the implementation of parking restrictions along Kuhio Highway and daily-limits on the number of visitors that can go into Hā'ena State Park. Hā'ena County Park has become a major visitor hot-spot and the County has no ability to actively manage the visitors.

Mayor Kawakami has taken a bold step in offering to transfer this unique property to the State of Hawaii and our community supports this concept. I am testifying today as both a resident of Hā'ena and as the Vice President of the Hui in strong support of this transfer. Our Hui is very encouraged by statements made by Alan Carpenter, Acting Administrator for Division of State Parks, at both of the two community meetings held in October and November of 2025 in which he assured the audience of community members that if the transfer is completed that State Parks

will work with the BLNR to incorporate the Beach Park into Hā'ena State Park and allow the Hui to help lead a planning process that will determine its future management strategy. Alan furthermore stated that State Parks has adequate funds to begin a planning process immediately.

The issues surrounding the future management of Hā'ena County Park are immense but I am confident that a community-led planning process will result in management strategies that will garner community support and allow the Beach Park to once again be a place that is not over-run by visitors but is instead managed in a pono way so that both visitors and local families can enjoy it and use it at a sustainable level.

In closing, I urge you to approve the submittal provided by State Parks for Agenda item for E-1. I will be participating via zoom and am happy to answer any questions you might have at that time. I can assure you that the Hui Maka'āinana o Makana stands ready to assist State Parks in the future co-management of Hā'ena Beach Park.

Me ka ha'a ha'a,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chipper Wichman", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Chipper Wichman, Vice President  
Hui Maka'āinana o Makana

# Written Testimony

Board of Land and Natural Resources — February 27, 2026

Submitted via: [blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov](mailto:blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov)

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

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## Agenda Item C-1

*Division of Forestry & Wildlife — 'Ōla'a Forest Reserve Extension, Hawai'i Island*

### On behalf of Pōhaku Pelemaka:

#### Submitted by: Pōhaku Pelemaka

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

E kūkū ana i ka pono o ka 'āina — we speak in the interest of the land. Pōhaku Pelemaka is a Native Hawaiian nonprofit based along the coast of Puna, Hawai'i Island. We write in strong support of the Board's authorization to hold public hearings on the proposed extension of the 'Ōla'a Forest Reserve. The lowland rainforests of Puna — including 'Ōla'a 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 'ohana 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 'āina-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, Hawai'i 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 'Ōla'a 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 Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. I have witnessed firsthand the critical ecological value of Puna's lowland rainforests and the growing threats from Rapid 'Ōhi'a 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.

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## 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, Hawai'i Island*

Pōhaku Pelemaka writes in support of the proposed agreement between DLNR and the University of Hawai'i 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 Ho'omakua 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.

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**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.

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**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 Maninihola 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.