
[EXTERNAL] Zoom/Written Testimony 2.27.26 Agenda E.1

From Wainiha Country Market <wcmkauai@gmail.com>
Date Wed 2/25/2026 8:46 AM
To DLNR.BLNR.Testimony <blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov>

My name is Joëll Edwards, a resident and small business owner in Wainiha, and I strongly support authorizing the acquisition of Hā'ena Beach Park and Maninihola Dry Cave from the County to the State by dedication;

The collaborative management led by Hui Maka'āinana o Makana and the Hanalei Initiative is working. It protects sensitive resources, creates informed and respectful visitation, and increases meaningful local employment rooted in stewardship. Employment opportunities in rural Kaua'i are already limited, so these place-based jobs matter deeply to families on this side of the island.

As a business owner, I am also seeing residents come into my store who had not ventured to this side of the island in years because overcrowding made it feel inaccessible. Now families from across Kaua'i are returning and enjoying Hā'ena in a balanced and sustainable way.

This transfer ensures that this successful, community-driven model continues to benefit both our 'āina and our people.

Mahalo for your consideration



February 24, 2026

ATTN: Ms. Dawn Chang, Chairperson
Mr. Ryan Kanaka'ole, First Deputy (Acting Chair)
Board of Land and Natural Resources
Department of Land and Natural Resources
Submitted via Email to blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov

SUBJECT: Strong Support for Agenda Item E1 Authorizing the Acquisition of Fee Simple of Real Property and Improvements at Hā'ena Beach Park and Maninihola Dry Cave in Kaua'i, Hawai'i, from County of Kaua'i, to be set aside for DLNR and added to the Hā'ena State Park

Board of Land and Natural Resources Meeting
February 27, 2026, 9:00 a.m., Kalanimoku Building, Room 132

Aloha pumehana kākou:

[Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo](#) (KUA) **strongly supports** Agenda Item E1 regarding acquiring Hā'ena County Beach Park and Maninihola Dry Cave from the County of Kaua'i to be added to the Hā'ena State Park under the co-management care of the Hui Maka'āinana o Makana.

KUA was founded in part by leaders from Hā'ena and the Hui Maka'āinana o Makana (the Hui) to empower communities to care for their biocultural (natural and cultural) heritage. We work to increase resilience, adaptation, and transformation through community-based biocultural resource management, currently supporting three major networks of: (1) almost 40 mālama 'āina (caring for our 'āina or "that which feeds") community groups collectively referred to as E Alu Pū (moving forward together); (2) over 40 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) in varying stages of restoration and development, with caretakers, stakeholders, and volunteers known as the Hui Mālama Loko I'a ("caretakers of fishponds"); and (3) the Limu Hui made up of over 50 loea (traditional experts) and practitioners in all things "limu" or locally-grown "seaweed." Our shared nu'ukia (vision) is to once again experience what our kūpuna (ancestors) referred to as 'āina momona – abundant and healthy ecological systems that sustain our community resilience and well-being.

A primary function of KUA includes development of the 'auwai, a stream of resources, tools, bridges, relationships, and networks that help to cultivate and take our communities' environmental management work to greater levels. This includes advocacy for, and the development of, the kind of collaborative efforts that support community abilities to better manage visitor impacts and cultivate the resources and capacity they need to engage in the mālama'āina they envision for their place.

We understand that although the County of Kaua'i has managed the Hā'ena County Beach Park for the past 100 years, the extreme increase in visitors in recent years has changed what was once a beloved local community park into an overrun tourist hot spot. Especially since the implementation of parking restrictions in 2019 along the highway, and daily limits on visitors to the surrounding Hā'ena State Park, the County acknowledges that they no longer have the capacity to actively manage the park the way it needs to be. Kaua'i Mayor Derek Kawakami has



taken this bold step to essentially gift DLNR these parcels with the understanding that the Hui will be able to lead the development of a management plan with other Kaua'i residents. Division of State Parks (DSP) has stated publicly at community meetings that once transfer is complete, they will work to incorporate the Beach Park into the Hā'ena State Park and allow for the Hui to lead the planning process and future co-management strategies. DSP also has the necessary funds and resources to start this planning process immediately.

The Hui's place-based mission to perpetuate the knowledge and practices of their kūpuna through interpretation, restoration, care, and protection of Hā'ena State Park's biocultural resources make it the best organization to help lead the planning process for the Beach Park. Since their creation in 1999 through a curatorship agreement with DSP, the Hui removed (at no cost to the State) much of the invasive forest that covered most of the park and restored the ancient lo'i system. Over the past 24 years the Hui has firmly rooted themselves as a dependable community partner, working closely and effectively with DSP to create a formal co-management agreement to care for Hā'ena. The Hui also led the historic effort to establish the first permanent Community Based Subsistence Fishing Area (CBSFA) at Hā'ena in 2015, and they continue to collaborate with the DAR as well for this ongoing management.

Before policymakers identified the extreme need to better manage visitor impacts on the environment and people living here in Hawai'i, our communities led the way. Building back a government and economy that allows for abundance goes hand-in-hand with the need for more sustainable and community-based practices for managing tourism. The Hui is not only a shining example of this, but a trailblazer, with their mālama of Hā'ena now widely recognized as a local, national, and international model for successful community-based biocultural management. They inspire Hawai'i and the world, and we mahalo them for further expanding our shared movement to reestablish 'āina momona in Hawai'i. We urge you to **approve** Item E1 and continue to allow DSP to work closely with the Hui to best manage their 'āina in Hā'ena, Kaua'i.

Me ka mahalo a me ka 'oia'i'o nō,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Chang".

Kevin K.J. Chang
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olan Leimomi Fisher".

Olan Leimomi Fisher
Kua'āina Advocate