

Aloha e Chair and Members of the Board of Land & Natural Resources,

My name is U'ilani Naipo, and I strongly support the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan and associated rules moving forward to a public hearing as part of the administrative rule making process.

The community of Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o has demonstrated strong stewardship and deep commitment to the long-term health and sustainability of their marine resources. Their willingness to prioritize resource recovery over short-term use reflects the 'ike of our kūpuna and responsible community leadership.

Their ten-year sacrifice of closure and ongoing monitoring warrants recognition and deep respect. It reflects patience, discipline, and a steadfast commitment to mālama 'āina and the vision of 'āina momona — a place of abundance sustained through care and balance. Such long-term stewardship is neither easy nor inexpensive, and it demonstrates their true dedication to their 'āina kūpuna.

The community of Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o, through their community-based non-profit Hui Kahuwai, has thoughtfully engaged in a deliberate eight year planning process rooted in kilo, mo'okū'auhau of place, and kuleana to mālama 'āina and the kai. They have conducted over two years of robust outreach on the fisheries plan by consulting with 'ohana, fishers and other interested stakeholders, public scoping, online surveys, outreach events, and scientific conferences. They have engaged over 6000 people through outreach events, over 1700 students through educational programs, and over 600,000 interactions through social media.

Hui Kahuwai has worked collaboratively with the State to refine the proposed Fisheries Management Plan, so it reflects both lived fishing knowledge of the community and contemporary management needs. The plan has been revised four times in response to feedback received, strengthening its ability to be effectively enforced, while safeguarding the gains achieved during the 10-year "Try Wait" rest period. This work builds on decades of observation, monitoring, collaborative planning, and reflects a comprehensive co-management approach to ensure the gains of Try Wait are not lost. The community is ready to move forward with administrative rulemaking to ensure that sustainable, subsistence-based fishing can responsibly resume in the Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o.

I urge the Board to approve a public hearing for the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan and administrative rules.

  
U'ilani Naipo

February 23rd 2026

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources  
Re: Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan - Agenda Item F3 (2/27/26)  
From: Noelani Puniwai, PhD,

## **SUPPORT**

E aloha mai e Chair and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

My name is Noelani Puniwai and I SUPPORT the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan and associated fishing rules going to a public hearing as part of the administrative rule making process.

I have been intimate with the 'āina and kai of this wahi since my childhood, camping on the beach and learning the mo'olelo of these places. I have continued to bring my students, learn with colleagues, and share with my children these special places. As a professional marine resource management faculty at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Kamakākūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies I teach my haumāna about traditional resource management practices and the values that they instill in the practice of lawai'a. My son continues this practice and has grown up in these waters through the Try Wait period. Many skeptics thought it wouldn't allow our children to continue to build pilina, but this hasn't been true. My son, and many like him, are eager to help implement this next phase of management. They have learned from these communities, these kūpuna, these special places.

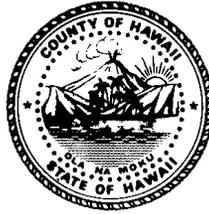
I trust the science that the community and my colleagues have thoughtfully implemented over the last 20 years, including their deep kilo, and group learning. Hui Kahuwai has deeply engaged within their own community alongside the Division of Aquatic Resources to draft a plan that is ready for the communities comment.

I urge the Board to approve a public hearing for the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan and administrative rules.

*Noelani Puniwai*

Noelani Puniwai, PhD

Waikahehake, Puna, Hawai'i Island



## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

County of Hawai'i  
West Hawai'i Civic Center, Bldg. A  
74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy.  
Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i 96740

February 23, 2026

Board of Land and Natural Resources - [blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov](mailto:blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov)

**RE: Support for BLNR Agenda item F3**  
**Hearing: February 27, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.**

Aloha Chair and Members of the Board,

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan and associated fishing rules going to a public hearing as part of the administrative rule making process.

The community of Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o, through their community-based non-profit Hui Kahuwai, has thoughtfully engaged in a deliberate eight-year planning process rooted in kilo, mo'okū'auhau of place, and kuleana to mālama 'āina and the kai. They have conducted over two years of robust outreach on the fisheries plan by consulting with 'ohana, fishers and other interested stakeholders, public scoping, online surveys, outreach events, and scientific conferences. They have engaged over 6000 people through outreach events, over 1700 students through educational programs, and over 600,000 interactions through social media.

Hui Kahuwai has worked collaboratively with the State to refine the proposed Fisheries Management Plan, so it reflects both lived fishing knowledge of the community and contemporary management needs. The plan has been revised four times in response to feedback received, strengthening its ability to be effectively enforced, while safeguarding the gains achieved during the 10-year "Try Wait" rest period. This work builds on decades of observation, monitoring, collaborative planning, and reflects a comprehensive co-management approach to ensure the gains of Try Wait are not lost. The community is ready to move forward with administrative rulemaking to ensure that sustainable, subsistence-based fishing can responsibly resume in the Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o.

We urge the Board to approve a public hearing for the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan and administrative rules.

Sincerely,

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HOLEKA GORO INABA, Ed.D.,  
Council Chair, District 8, North Kona



February 23, 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  
1151 Punchbowl St., Room 132  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813  
Submitted via Email at [blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov](mailto:blnr.testimony@hawaii.gov)

SUBJECT: **Strong Support for Agenda Item F3 Request for Approval to Hold Public Hearings on Proposed Rules for New Hawai'i Administrative Rules, Title 13, Chapter 13-60.12 "Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area, Hawai'i," and Associated Fishing Rule Amendments**

Board of Land & Natural Resources (BLNR) Meeting  
February 27, 2026, 9:00 a.m., Kalanimoku Building

Aloha pumehana kākou,

Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo (KUA) submits this testimony in **strong support** of the request to hold public hearings on the proposed rules for the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area (FMA) on Hawai'i Island, including amendments to other associated Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) rules. KUA likewise supported this hui of various leaders of Ka'ūpūlehu and Kūki'o and the Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Line Advisory Committee (now also through their newly established nonprofit Hui Kahuwai), with their efforts to establish the "Try Wait" Ka'ūpūlehu Marine Reserve nearly 10 years ago in 2016. Truly, this decades-long effort has always been guided and led by the the kupa'āina (native or long term residents of a place) that have worked since time immemorial to mālama their sacred 'āina (that which feeds). They are here again before you all today in the next step toward once again achieving and ensuring 'āina momona for Ka'ūpūlehu through these proposed rules for their fishery. Please **approve** this request.

[Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo](#) means "grassroots growing through shared responsibility," and we serve as a facilitator, consultant, trainer, liaison, and tool-builder for grassroots community stewardship networks and place-based efforts. We work to increase our communities' resiliency, adaptation, and transformation through community-based biocultural resource management, currently supporting three major networks of: (1) over 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 60 loko i'a (fishpond aquaculture systems unique to Hawai'i) and wai 'ōpae (anchialine pool systems) sites in varying stages of restoration and development, with numerous 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 communities' resilience and well-being.**



We believe that there is a change in the wind, a sign of the times, and urge you to support it. Communities have begun to speak together for all of Hawai'i through the mālama and aloha their 'āina, both mauka and makai. Through caring for the 'āina they are most intimately connected to, kupa'āina are exercising a shared vision of 'āina momona – a destiny for Hawai'i and our ability to perpetuate what makes us unique and has for centuries upheld food and ecological systems that fed the generations before us.

Indeed translations of reflections in the newspapers from generations ago captured the same concerns and questions our communities still have today, yet still unanswered.

*"It was different not long ago, actually in our own lifetimes, for your writer recalls that when he was a child, he saw an immeasurable abundance of fish. There were many fishermen and much fish. In those days, only Hawaiians were fishermen and fish was eaten in great numbers. In that time too, there was not much meat being imported into Hawai'i, although we had cattle, sheep and goats.*

*This is going to be an important question for several generations, understanding how there was so much fish in the days of our ancestors while there is so little in our time, so that much meat and fish must be imported to supply people with food. This question is being pondered by the Hawaiians and perhaps it will trouble them for some time to come." Ka Nupepa Kuokoa, March 8, 1923 (translation)*

This observation is over 100 years old. We believe a core change that our community seeks will be through praxis, the exercise of culture, theory, and action on the 'āina itself. We believe the necessary environment for this comes about only by working together and building community, as Hui Kahuwai has proven through their steadfast leadership on developing these proposed FMA rules with DAR staff based on the years of data they have been collecting since their Try Wait rest period started.

Hui Kahuwai has been intentionally engaging in this planning process for the reopening of their fishery over the past eight years, including over two years of extensive community outreach on their proposed rules with lineal descendant 'ohana, lawai'a (fishers), and other stakeholders. They are estimated to have engaged over 6,000 people at outreach events, 1,700 students through educational programming, and over 600,000 interactions via social media. Their Fisheries Management Plan has been a labor of love and collaboration between the community and state, reflecting both lived lawai'a knowledge and practical management needs. We understand that the draft plan is now in its fourth version after extensive feedback up to this point. This community and their draft plan are now *more than* ready to move forward and go to public hearings. Please **approve** their request, and mahalo for considering our testimony.

Me ka mahalo a me ka 'oia'i'o nō,

Kevin K.J. Chang  
Executive Director

Olan Leimomi Fisher  
Kua'āina Advocate



**Department of Land and Natural Resources  
Hawaii State Aha Moku  
State of Hawaii  
Post Office Box 621  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809**

Hawaii Island Aha Moku Testimony  
To the Board of Land and Natural Resources  
Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Agenda Item F-3: Request for approval to hold public hearings on the adoption of the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area.

Aloha Chair and members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources.

My name is Charles Young, I reside in Kealia, S. Kona on Hawaii Island. On behalf of the Hawaii Island Aha Moku I am in strong support for the approval of Item F-3 to hold public hearings on the adoption of the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Area.

At the request of the community the area that now constitutes the KFMA was closed for fishing for a period of 10 years by the BLNR. The purpose was to allow fish stocks to replenish themselves, monitor changes, measure the effects of the closure and create a fisheries management plan for the area upon reopening. The area has seen a remarkable recovery in biomass.

The community in collaboration with the Department of Aquatic Resources have proposed a management plan that 1) the community feels is sustainable, 2) reopens public access for fishing, and 3) creates meaningful rules for managing the resources that takes into account the traditional and customary practices.

The management plan includes traditional knowledge and practices coupled with contemporary science. The concerns from the community, practitioners, conservationist, other users and the general public were scoped during public outreach. The Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan was well vetted by many sectors and proposes a best practice approach for resource management that will benefit future community resource management endeavors.

The Hawaii Island Aha Moku strongly supports the approval to move the Ka'ūpūlehu Fisheries Management Plan to Chapter 91 public hearings.

Respectively  
Charles Young  
Po'o, Hawaii Island Aha Moku

*Moku O Keawe (Hawaii Island), Moku O Piilani (Maui), Moku O Kanaloa (Kahoolawe), Nana 'i Kaula (Lanai)  
Molokai Pule Oo (Molokai), Moku O Kakuhihewa (Oahu), Manokalanipo (Kauai), Ka Aina O Kawelonakala (Niihau)  
Kalanimoku Bldg., DLNR, 1151 Punchbowl Street, Room 130, Honolulu, HI 96813*