



June 9, 2026

Board of Land and Natural Resources
State of Hawai'i
Kalanimoku Building
1151 Punchbowl Street, Room 130
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**Strong support for Item C-1: Preliminary Approval of the Acquisition of Private Lands at Maunawili
TMK Nos. (1) 4-2-006:010, (1) 4-2-008:044, (1) 4-2-009:002, and (1) 4-2-008:043**

Aloha Chair Chang and Members of the Board,

My name is Dane Kealoha, and I am the Director of 'Āina Transactions for the Hawai'i Land Trust (HILT). HILT stands in strong support of the Division of Forestry and Wildlife's (DOFAW) request for preliminary approval to acquire 912 acres of private forest and watershed lands in Maunawili Valley.

HILT has been deeply committed to safeguarding the biocultural landscape of Maunawili. Land conservation in this valley cannot happen effectively in fragments; true protection requires a landscape-level, mauka-to-makai approach that bridges public and community stewardship.

This 912 acre acquisition by DOFAW is the vital upper-valley anchor of a broader, highly coordinated effort. As part of this overarching transaction structure, HILT has worked for years alongside community partners on long-term protection planning for the area. Concurrently, the adjacent agricultural lands known as Pālāwai and Makali'i are slated for transfer to local, community-based nonprofit organizations.

Because those agricultural tracts are inextricably linked to the forested parcels under your consideration today, DOFAW's acquisition is absolutely critical to securing a continuous, uninterrupted conservation corridor extending from the Ko'olau Mountains to Kawainui Marsh.

Beyond its immense ecological importance, this land holds a profound wealth of cultural and historical value. Frequented and favored by our ali'i for its abundance and natural beauty, Maunawili traditionally served as a critical food system and a renowned agricultural breadbasket for O'ahu. Securing these parcels—which directly buffer and protect these storied agricultural lands—ensures that Maunawili's

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ancestral legacy is preserved to benefit our community today and for generations to come through cultural practitioner access, historic site protection, and community-based stewardship.

By approving this acquisition, the Board will help:

- **Protect Key Watersheds:** Permanently secure nearly five miles of freshwater streams that feed directly into the ecologically vital Kawainui Marsh.
- **Preserve Wahi Kupuna:** Safeguard a vast complex of historic, archaeological, and cultural sites throughout Maunawili Forest, Queen's Retreat, and Keko'owai.
- **Enable Landscape-Scale Co-Stewardship:** Forge a powerful partnership between State forest management and community-led agricultural and cultural restoration next door.

This acquisition represents a historic opportunity to permanently protect Maunawili's heritage forever. HILT respectfully urges the Board to approve this acquisition.

Mahalo nui,



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