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2009 JUN -9 AM 9:43

STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
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HONOLULU, HAWAI'I 96813

HRD09/4448

June 3, 2009

Ken C. Kawahara, Deputy Director
Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621
Honolulu, HI 96809

RE: Request for comments on Lester Nakama's, and Nolan and Merle Ideoka's Surface Water Use Permit Application – Existing Use, Nā Wai 'Ehā Surface Water Management Areas, Maui; TMKs: 3-2-007:018, 3-2-014:001; SWIM ID: 2318.

Aloha e Ken C. Kawahara,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is in receipt of the above-mentioned letter dated May 20, 2009. OHA has reviewed the project and offers the following comments.

OHA is the "principal public agency in this State responsible for the performance, development, and coordination of programs and activities relating to native Hawaiians and Hawaiians." Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) § 10-3(3). As such, we take an active interest in reviewing the seminal designation of this important area as a surface water management area by the Commission on Water Resource Management (CWRM).

It is our duty to "[a]ssess[] the policies and practices of other agencies impacting on native Hawaiians and Hawaiians, and conduct[] advocacy efforts for native Hawaiians and Hawaiians." HRS § 10-3(4). OHA points out that Nā Wai 'Ehā, the "Four Waters" of West Maui – Waikapū, 'Īao and Waiehu Streams and Waihe'e River – have a long history of Native Hawaiian use. These streams, which once supported extensive kalo cultivation, have been drained almost dry for more than a century by ditches that diverted the water to irrigate sugar plantations. OHA has committed significant resources over the last five years in working with the community on our shared goals to bring back native stream life and restore traditional and customary practices, such as kalo cultivation, that depend on flowing water.

FILE ID: SWUP.2318.6
DOC ID: 4206

Additionally, OHA sees that this applicant is a kalo grower. Native Hawaiians hold kalo, or taro, to be deeply sacred. Hāloanakalaukapalili was the first kalo plant, and he is the elder sibling of the Native Hawaiian people, according to the ancient story of Papahānaumoku and Wākea. Poi, which is made from the corm of kalo, serves as the staple food of the traditional Hawaiian diet. For hundreds of years, Native Hawaiians have grown kalo in paddies (lo'i) fed by the abundant waters flowing through Hawai'i's streams. Today, kalo farming represents one the most cherished traditions of the state's multi-cultural heritage. In recognition of its importance, kalo was recently named the official plant of the State of Hawai'i by the Hawai'i State Legislature.

OHA appreciates that the applicant uses this water to grow kalo, which perpetuates the Native Hawaiian culture and provides a nutritious and culturally significant food source to the local community. This activity should also be considered by the CWRM as being consistent with the public interest and as being a reasonable and beneficial use of this water.

OHA sees that the applicant is claiming appurtenant rights with attached documentation, which is much appreciated. The Constitution of Hawai'i, in Article XI, Section 7, directs CWRM to establish criteria for water use priorities, while at the same time assuring appurtenant rights. This directive is reflected in the State Water Code (HRS§174C-63), which preserves appurtenant rights. As such, OHA advocates that the appurtenant rights demonstrated in this application be recognized by CWRM.

In an April 11, 2009 press release (*OHA hails recommendations on Nā Wai 'Ehā restoration*), OHA Maui Trustee Boyd Mossman said: "Maui's water future will not be bright unless we mālama the streams we depend on. We hope the state government continues these efforts and this direction so that Hawaiians and all the people of Maui will be well-served."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have further questions, please contact Grant Arnold by phone at (808) 594-0263, or e-mail him at granta@oha.org.

'O wau iho nō me ka 'oia'i'o,

Clyde W. Nāmu'o
Administrator

C: OHA CRC Maui