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STATE OF HAWAII
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HRD09/4473

June 15, 2009

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

RE: Request for comments on Department of Land and Natural Resources – Division of State Parks' Surface Water Use Permit Application – Existing Use, Nā Wai 'Ehā Surface Water Management Areas, Maui; TMKs: 3-3-003:002, 3-3-003:012; SWIM ID: 2304.

Aloha e Ken C. Kawahara,

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is in receipt of the above-mentioned letter dated May 27, 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.

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Additionally, OHA sees that this applicant is growing taro in 'Īao Valley State Park for educational purposes. 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. As such, we appreciate and support the applicant's use of this water for this purpose.

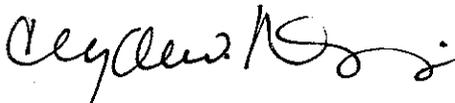
We urge that this use also be considered reasonable and beneficial and being consistent with the public interest. HRS §174-2(c) affords that the water code be liberally interpreted to allow domestic uses, agriculture, scenic beauty and the maintenance of proper ecological balance as all being maximum beneficial uses. As such, this applicant's educational use in a state park is surely consistent with the public interest. This use is also economic, efficient and for a purpose, which speaks directly to the definition of a reasonable-beneficial use, as found in HRS §174C-3.

OHA sees that the applicant is claiming appurtenant rights. 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 in 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