



# Kamehameha Schools®

State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources  
Commission on Water Resource Management

Time: 9:00 a.m.  
Date: October 24, 2023  
Place: J. Walter Cameron Center Auditorium (Hybrid), Maui

TESTIMONY  
by Jason Jeremiah  
Natural and Cultural Ecosystems Division | ‘Āina Pauahi Group

RE: **NON-ACTION ITEM B.2** Update on Water Resources in the Lahaina Aquifer Sector Area, and **NON-ACTION ITEM B.3** Briefing on Site Visit to Lahaina Aquifer Sector, Water Resources and Systems of Kaua‘ula, Maui held on October 18, 2023, at request of Chairperson Dawn Chang, with Commission Staff, and Community Stakeholders

Aloha e Chair Chang and Members of the Commission:

I am providing testimony on behalf of Kamehameha Schools (“KS”) in connection with Action Item B.2 regarding the update on Water Resources in the Lahaina Aquifer Sector Area, and B.3 regarding the briefing on the Site Visit by Chairperson Chang on October 18.

KS approaches its real estate portfolio of ‘Āina Pauahi (KS Hawai‘i lands) through culturally-rooted stewardship. This includes stewardship of a diverse portfolio of approximately 371,000 acres of land on five islands. Through ‘ōiwi stewardship, our organization strives for outcomes such as *Waiwai* (wealth, prosperity), *Lawa Kūpono* (sustainability), and *Honua Ola* (well-being) in order to build resilient communities across Hawai‘i for the betterment of our Lāhui (Native Hawaiian community).

Water resources are inseparable from ‘āina and a source of life for our ‘āina and lāhui. Water is an integrated resource that is essential to healthy ecosystems from the uplands to near shore marine waters. Resilient, thriving communities depend on a holistic management approach that embraces water resource use in a reasonable, prudent, and sustainable manner that does not unduly compromise traditional and customary rights, dependent ecosystems and species, or future generations.

Surface water resources, while providing critical and substantial flows to ‘āina momona, suffer from dilapidated transmission and irrigation systems, degraded aquatic ecosystems and water quality, and challenging regulatory requirements.

Groundwater resources offer room for strategic source and infrastructure development, modernization and optimization of existing systems, and exploration of innovative treatment and reuse technology.

Long-term, sustainable allocation of water is ultimately tied to how effectively we *jointly* manage these two sources of water. Concurrent stewardship, conservation, education and research activities will further help ensure supply in perpetuity.

While KS supports the use of water and water infrastructure development for reasonable agricultural and related purposes, we also honor the cultural and ecological integrity of our natural streams, springs, wetlands, and other waterways. We do believe that a meaningful balance can be struck to satisfy both on and off-stream uses. This will, however, not be easy. With degraded landscapes, diminished recharge, climate change, sea level rise, and so many other challenges, landowners, government agencies and other stakeholders must have the courage to make hard decisions and necessary trade-offs.

KS is committed to good 'āina stewardship and in collaboration with our lessees, government leaders, and local communities, we seek to protect, manage, and restore the natural, cultural and water resources.

We continue to advocate for and actively engage in 'āina and watershed protection, restoration and improving water stewardship on 'Āina Pauahi by:

- Exploring the potential to use alternative sources of water;
- Encouraging conservation measures;
- Using water resources directly for educational purposes when possible and appropriate;
- Evaluating surface water diversions statewide to ensure that water resources are being used for beneficial cultural or agricultural purposes as defined by law; and
- Assessing the cumulative impacts of groundwater withdrawal.

#### **'Āina Pauahi in the Lahaina Aquifer Sector:**

KS is committed to the restoration of Lāhainā including our landholdings which can provide hope and resilience for a stronger system of ahupua'a management.

In the Lāhainā Aquifer Sector, KS owns 2,456 acres of legacy lands. These lands were part of our original endowment of lands that was passed down from Ruth Ke'elikōlani to Ke Ali'i Pauahi. KS owns 1,296 acres of land in Paunau ahupua'a consisting of the headwater of Kahoma Valley as well as parcels of land along Kahoma Stream. The lands of Ku'ia consists of 1,151 acres that sit directly ma uka of Lāhainā.

KS has two long-term tenants in Ku'ia that depend on surface water from Kaua'ula Stream. Maui Ku'ia Estate Chocolate operates a cacao farm, while Ku'ia Agricultural Education Center is an 'āina-based educational program focused on sustainable agriculture.

KS works closely with the Commission staff, community and others in addressing an improved management of the multiple users off of Kaua'ula stream. Our Ku'ia Pipeline Project is one such project that will help to improve the management and delivery of water resources. The project will improve the delivery of surface water to KS' agricultural tenants in Ku'ia while allowing water to pass through our system to a kuleana user for traditional and customary usage.

We also submitted Water Use Applications for existing and new uses in early August 2023. In the process of creating our permit requests we worked in conjunction with community and tenants to request a reasonable amount of water that could support our off-stream agricultural and traditional and customary practices while ensuring in-stream health for our species and ecosystems.

#### **Conclusion:**

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide our mana'o and experience in water resource management and especially in the 'āina of Lahaina. We remain committed to collaborating with communities, government agencies, our lessees, and other stakeholders to protect, manage and restore water resources on 'Āina Pauahi across Hawai'i and the broader landscapes of Hawai'i.