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Mea o Ke Kalana o Maui

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DEPARTMENT OF 'ŌIWI RESOURCES
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6 Mei 2026

TO: Commission on Water Resource Management
P.O. Box 621
Honolulu, O'ahu, HI 96809
via e-mail: dlnr.cwrm@hawaii.gov

FROM: John Kaponō'ai Molitau, Director
Department of 'Ōiwi Resources
200 South High Street
Wailuku, Maui, HI 96793

SUBJECT: **APPLICATION FOR SURFACE WATER USE PERMIT (SWUPA) FOR
PROPOSED NEW USE IN A DESIGNATED SURFACE WATER
MANAGEMENT AREA AT TMK 4-6-007:002 AND TMK 4-6-007:008,
APPLICANT NĀ 'AIKĀNE O MAUI, INC.**

Aloha kākou,

The Department of 'Ōiwi Resources has reviewed the application and offers the following comments and recommended conditions to ensure alignment with ongoing and future planning efforts in this culturally significant area.

We are in full support and appreciate the efforts of Nā 'Aikāne to advance restoration and traditional customary use within this area. This application for surface water use represents an important step forward. Additional planning efforts are underway to further enhance current restoration and adaptive management outcomes and ensure that the master plan, for the broader Lahaina Royal Complex in its entirety, remains achievable.

In this regard, the application does not fully account for forthcoming comprehensive master planning that will guide the restoration of Lahaina Royal Complex, including Moku'ula,

Mokuhinia, Nalehu, Kalolo, Kamehameha Iki, Pākalā, Halekamani, the former Kamehameha III school site, and the former library site. This master plan for the County of Maui is led by the Department of ‘Ōiwi Resources and the Office of Recovery. This master plan is expected to influence future water demand, land use, and site configuration. Additional requests for water are anticipated in the coming years and will be necessary to support the full restoration of Lahaina Royal Complex. Any approval should therefore include language clarifying that current water use and allocations remain subject to modification based on the outcomes of the finalized master plan.

The application references an “interim” use. While interim actions may proceed, they should be clearly framed as transitional steps toward a fully restored Lahaina Royal Complex and a part of a larger adaptive land management strategy rather than a permanent land use pattern. Greater specificity would help ensure that interim uses do not unintentionally constrain future restoration efforts.

The application also proposes “diversified agriculture,” including the planting of ‘Ulu, or breadfruit trees, within the project area. While such efforts may provide short-term benefit, careful consideration is warranted in areas identified for future restoration, particularly within Mokuhinia/Moku‘ula. The establishment of long-term plantings in these areas may present challenges if removal becomes necessary to support restoration efforts. To minimize potential conflict, agricultural activities, specifically the planting of large trees, should be limited or excluded from areas anticipated for restoration.

Given the cultural significance of the project area, the Department of ‘Ōiwi Resources serves as the lead entity for coordination and oversight for the County of Maui. This kuleana ensures that implementation is guided by ‘ike Hawai‘i and remains aligned with long-term cultural stewardship and restoration objectives. Consistent with this oversight role, land use decisions within the project area should be carefully evaluated to avoid creating foreseeable conflicts with future restoration efforts.

The Department of ‘Ōiwi Resources remains committed to working in coordination with Nā ‘Aikāne o Maui to support implementation in a manner that aligns with long-term restoration and cultural stewardship objectives. We remain supportive of the intent and ongoing efforts of Nā ‘Aikāne o Maui and recognize the value of taking meaningful steps forward at this time. We honor their consistent effort to restore this sacred wahi pana. We look forward to continued coordination and discussion to ensure that present efforts are aligned with future goals.

Letter to CWRM
May 6, 2026
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Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments. We welcome further discussion on how to collectively advance a thoughtful and effective path toward the restoration of these sacred lands. I can be reached at (808) 270-1719 by phone or at John.K.Molitau@co.maui.hi.us.

Aloha,



John Kaponō'ai Molitau, Director
Department of 'Ōiwi Resources

Cc
Managing Director, Josiah Nishita
Deputy Managing Director, Erin Wade
Department of Parks Director, Pat McCall
Nā 'Aikāne o Maui, Inc.

