

EACP Committee

From: wailuanui@exede.net
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 2:35 PM
To: EACP Committee
Subject: EACP-51 Testimony
Attachments: Presentation of Jerome Kekiwi - IoTask.docx

Aloha,

This testimony is being submitted for the EACP Committee's hearing Tuesday, 8/11/20 at 1:30 regarding East Maui Water Systems. Mr. Kekiwi is planning to testify, if he has an opportunity to do so.

Many thanks,

Mahealani Wendt
on behalf of
Jerome Kekiwi, Jr.
President
Na Moku Aupuni o Ko'olau Hui

**PRESENTATION OF JEROME KEKIWI, JR.
PRESIDENT, NA MOKU AUPUNI O KO`OLAU HUI**

before the Environmental, Agricultural and Cultural Preservation Committee
Shane Sinenci, Chair
Maui County Council

August 11, 2020

Aloha. My name is Jerome Kekiwi Jr. and I am the President of Na Moku Aupuni o Ko`olau Hui. We are an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose members are the lineal descendants and current residents of Ke`anae-Wailuanui. We grow taro, fish, hunt and gather to feed our families as a way of life.

When you look at the maps showing 33,000 acres of state lands where much of the EMI ditch system water comes from, that's where our ancestors lived, and that's where we, their descendants, still live today.

The EMI ditch system is like a 100-year-old rundown jalopy. It is miles and miles of leaky, broken-down jimmy-rigged pipes, tunnels, flumes, siphons, intakes, sluice gates, and dams. Overall, it is in poor condition, not well maintained with many abandoned reservoirs. Available data demonstrates beyond a doubt that the system is chronically inefficient, wasting precious resources, and nobody's really getting a full measure of satisfaction out of it.

Not the surrounding landowner, public trustee State of Hawai`i. Not the County and its upcountry small farmer customers. Not the ranchers. Not the large agribusiness company Mahi Pono. Not OHA and Hawaiian Home Lands public trusts whose beneficiaries have vested interests.

Water was restored to our taro farmers, who are eligible beneficiaries of these latter public trusts, after a 30-year legal battle. But they live under threat of having these gains eroded by systemic dysfunction.

The system as currently operated is a huge environmental, social, cultural, economic and governance liability for all concerned.

So we want to thank those who took leadership in seeing this study through. It is an opportunity for all of us to join together and make transformative change for a higher good, to leave a good legacy for future generations. If followed, the I.O.Task recommendations would transform the old, decrepit jalopy into a state-of-the-art conveyance for the public good, driven by values of healthy environment, responsible government, and pono social outcomes.

Our community supports the study's overall approach. Having said that, we want to make clear that we fought for our water and would strongly oppose any effort to reduce our allocation under the current interim instream flow standards. Having said that, we understand that a better-managed system would benefit everyone, and we support that outcome. **Ultimately, the people of East Maui would like to manage the system as co-managers and co-trustees.**

A lot went into these recommendations, into developing a 10-year methodical and comprehensive road map that the County, in partnership with communities and other stakeholders, could follow to accomplish a state-of-the-art transformation.

Successful execution of this plan would require stable, sustained, visionary, enlightened leadership, over a long period of time, by policymakers, elected officials and communities. It would require skilled planners, engineers, hydrologists, economists and

other experts. It would require maximum, ongoing engagement with community stakeholders as equals. It would require a commitment for the long haul. We understand it is very challenging to see long-term plans through to completion when key decision makers are elected officials whose terms may be interrupted mid-stream.

But we did it. Our community did it. Our families led the fight for restoration of water. They dug in and sustained their fight to restore water to the East Maui watershed over many decades. Many of our kupuna died along the way but we did not give up because to us, the sacrifice was our duty and kuleana, for the good of the people and the environment.

We continued our striving because we knew it was for the good of future generations. Not only for our children, but for Maui's children, for Hawai'i's children.

So if our little village of taro farmers can do it, so can other leaders who care do it. It is so critical for the future well-being of us all.

If together we can commit to carrying out the plan laid out in this report while remaining flexible and responsive to one another, we would support it. Current management and oversight is outdated, inefficient, a tragic waste of precious resources.

It is time for change.

We are open to partnering and training with tech-savvy people to monitor stream flows and collect other relevant data throughout our ahupua`a.

Our community members are developing facilities where we can host gatherings in furtherance of ahupua`a based `āina management, where we can host those who support and are willing to join us in our `āina conservation efforts.

The East Maui watershed lands are overwhelmed with invasives. The ditch system is in a severely degraded state. We support community-inspired efforts to reform the status quo.

###