

Date: June 15, 2016

To: Water Resources Committee
Maui County Council

From: Albert Perez, Executive Director
Maui Tomorrow Foundation

Re: WR-19: Water Availability Policy

Aloha Chair Baisa and Committee Members:

The Maui Tomorrow Foundation is **OPPOSED** to the two proposed bills, which would amend the County of Maui's Water Availability Policy. We ask that the Water Resources Committee **FILE** this Communication.

Allowing developers to escape responsibility for water source development will not create more water. It will only force the County to pay for source development, which will raise property taxes, and make housing less affordable for everybody, including existing homeowners.

Somebody needs to pay for water source development. Before Show Me the Water was adopted, developers would put in the pipes, then expect the County to find the water. Show Me the Water put a stop to that.

Right now, the Water Availability Policy exempts 100% affordable housing. That's a good thing. We need affordable housing, and we should provide water sources for those projects.

However, current workforce housing policy says that only 25% of new housing needs to be affordable. That means that 75% will be unaffordable.

Should we be subsidizing developers by providing water sources for unaffordable houses when most of our housing is going to out-of-state buyers? That's not justifiable. We should keep our Water Availability Policy **STRONG** so that affordable housing is given priority in water allocation.

When this committee met on January 6th regarding this topic, it was pointed out that changing water policy before updating our 24-year old Water Use & Development Plan (WUDP) would be putting the cart before the horse. Our Water Director said that he was working to come up with a draft revision of the WUDP within 6 months. After the news broke that HC&S would stop sugar cultivation, Director Taylor said in the Maui News that his comments were "out the window." However, the fact that such a big

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change in water use is occurring is even more reason to update the WUDP prior to changes in policy. When it comes to water resources, we need to err on the side of caution. Changing water availability policy now would be rushing the process; and make public input to the WUDP feel meaningless, much like recent attempts to weaken our community plans.

The Water Department's proposed changes are significant, and yet leave much to the interpretation of the Water Director. In the wrong hands, this could result in damage to our aquifers. Water allocation should be based on factual evidence - like the existing requirements for a report by a licensed engineer, and State DOH approval - certifying the existence of a long-term, reliable source of water. Water allocation policy should not change depending on the interpretation of whoever holds the Director position regarding what is an "adequate supply."

In summary, the wisest course is to continue safeguarding our water sources by keeping the Water Availability Policy UNCHANGED, with its current exemption for 100% affordable housing, and with a focus on aquifers and watersheds instead of just the pipes and pumps that extract the water from them. Update of the WUDP should be completed before any policy changes are considered.

Mahalo!