



Maui Nui Seabird
Recovery Project

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Healthy Families and Communities Committee

Testimony of Jay F. Penniman
Manager, Maui Nui Seabird Recovery Project

Aloha Chair Hokama & Members of the Committee, my name is Jay Penniman and I manage the Maui Nui Seabird Recovery Project. Our mission is to restore the native seabird populations of the islands of Maui Nui. Seabirds are ecological engineers. Their ancestors built the fertile soils in which our native plant community evolved. The marine nutrients they transported to the terrestrial habitat created the conditions in which water from rain and fog drip is captured and transported to the aquifers that we depend upon for our agricultural and domestic uses.

We and numerous other conservation organizations spend an inordinate amount of our annual budgets on feral animal control, primarily feral cats. I have attached a 2018 survey of 14 Maui Nui conservation organizations expenditures on feral cat control to this testimony. We are spending well over a half a million dollars EVERY YEAR to protect our native wildlife. Cats are an ecological disaster. They are directly responsible for helping drive 63 species of birds, mammals, and reptiles to extinction worldwide. In the United States alone cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year.

Cats are the obligate host of the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. This parasite is clearly implicated in the deaths of our endangered ilio-holo-i-ka-uua – The Hawaiian Monk Seal. The parasite lives for over a year in soil and sand. Numerous studies link infection with toxoplasmosis to human psychological diseases and other wildlife diseases.

Maui Humane Society has been practicing a policy of Trap Neuter and Return, or TNR, for feral cats brought to them. The scientific literature clearly documents that TNR programs fail to control feral cat populations. Native wildlife populations continue to suffer in the presence of neutered cats on the landscape. Please stop funding this policy. A far better method, if feral cats are not euthanized, is to implement a cat sanctuary program as has been successfully done on Lānaʻi. The Lānaʻi Cat Sanctuary is self-supporting (about \$600,000 annual budget). These cats are healthier than feral cats on the landscape, they are not subject to traffic maiming and fatality, and they have regular veterinarian care. People who love their cats and feed colonies should be required to get their cats off the landscape and into fenced enclosures; it will be better for the cats and our native and endangered wildlife.

Feral chickens are another growing problem on Maui that requires attention of this committee. Feral chickens are the ready vector for avian influenza if it were to arrive here from Africa, Asia or Europe where it has infected people with symptoms such as fever, muscle aches, and conjunctivitis to severe respiratory distress, pneumonia, organ failure, and death. Other diseases potentially transmitted through feral chickens to people are *Campylobacter*, *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and West Nile virus. We need to prohibit the outdoor feeding of feral chickens and implement control measures now.

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2018 Wildlife Protection Feral Cat Control – Maui Nui

1) National Park Service - Haleakala National Park	\$ 200,000
2) US Fish & Wildlife Service – Kealia Ponds National Wildlife Refuge	\$ 14,560
3) Hawai'i Department of Land & Natural Resources - Division of Forestry & Wildlife	\$ 65,000
4) University of Hawai'i - Maui Nui Seabird Recovery Project (Nakula, Kahikinui, Kam III)	\$ 50,000
5) University of Hawai'i - Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project (Nakula NAR)	\$ 17,000
6) Hawai'i Islands Land Trust – Waihe'e Dunes & Nu'u Landing	\$ 3,760
7) Sempra Energy – Auwahi Wind – Leeward Haleakala (DHHL)	\$ 44,000
8) TerraForm Power – Kaheawa Pastures I & II, Makamakaole	\$ 37,200
9) National Science Foundation – Daniel K. Inoye Solar Telescope (AWS)	\$ 4,000
10) Kapalua Resort Association (Hawea Point)	\$ 10,500
11) The Nature Conservancy - Moloka'i - Mo'omomi Preserve	\$ 7,200
12) The Moloka'i Land Trust – Mokio Preserve	\$ 14,800
13) Pulama Lāna'i – Department of Land & Natural Resources	\$ 90,000
14) Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission – Natural Resources	\$ 5,500

14 Organizations Annual Feral Cat Control Costs **\$ 563,520**

Maui Nui = The County of Maui – Maui, Molokai, Lāna'i, & Kaho'olawe