

From: Todd Yamashita molokaitodd@gmail.com

Subject: DMAP Molokai: Leadership Issues

Date: May 27, 2022 at 8:14 PM

To: keith.a.regan@hawaii.gov

Cc: Keani Rawlins-Fernandez keani.rawlins@gmail.com, Regan, Keith A keith.a.regan@hawaii.gov, Caroline Anderson caroline@gohta.net



Aloha Keith, taking time out of my long weekend with my family to write you this urgent letter.

I joined the DMAP process because I believe in community building processes, especially here on Molokai where the community has a track record of uniting around common challenges and concerns.

I joined DMAP knowing that there was a cohort the year before who had done work on objectives already identified by the greater community.

Halfway through the process we asked about the details about the selection of these objectives and found out that a smaller pool of objectives, the ones that we were tasked to work on, we're actually distilled and selected by HTA staff. That created a lot of mistrust.

Also at this same meeting the committee doubled in size. We again asked about the selection process and it was basically shared that they had just invited more people halfway through the process.

At the same meeting, it was decided by the committee that next steps should include the greater community... It was decided by HTA staff to ignore this input.

Finally, all the meetings up to this one HTA had requested input about open dates. HTA staff did their best to select times that suited the volunteer committee.

At the most recently planned meeting, there was no request for meeting times. HTA set its own date and more than half of the attendees noted that there were competing meetings and many other community functions at the meeting time.

Over and over again, HTA staff were asked by multiple volunteer committee members to please change the meeting date. At no time did HTA staff offer to change the meeting time instead they reiterated it was what was most convenient for them.

I don't know if you know what it's like to live month and month.... To raise four kids with a poverty level income. My story is similar to just about everyone else I know here. And yet we all volunteer to meet for the basis of community building because our community is all we have.

I currently serve on a dozen different boards in committees. There isn't one I can think of that has been nearly as problematic as this process.

From the beginning of this process, Caroline has displayed a lack of leadership and planning; a lack of empathy and patience; and has demanded a top down approach rather than employ a work ethic that is based in service.

Caroline's lack of transparency about the DMAP process has created confusion and mistrust and now several members, myself included, have left the process because of the high level of disorganization, dysfunction and alienation being caused by Caroline's lack leadership.

Molokai is in a bad way right now. I guarantee you the racial hate and violence that is happening will continue trending toward extremism. People are already getting beat up and someone will probably be killed over the influx of outsiders and active displacement happening here in real time.

You guys have a leadership opportunity to heal and progress. I hope you can see from your heart even just a glimpse what is happening here. The signs on the street and the hate that is building.

You need to know that I will live the rest of my life with the ongoing impacts of tourism. This is not a game for any of us forced to live with the impacts of tourism and gentrification.

This process is important to me, my family and community and we deserve a functional process dedicated to the service of our community... A process intent on getting real feedback and metrics in order to guide the responsible management of tourism.

We also need a community liaison that is service based in practice and spirit. Members of our committee reminded Caroline several times that it is public money... Our money that funds all of this... And that to treat us like we are lucky is straight up disrespectful.

Regardless of why this is happening or whose fault it is, this fragile community and ecosystem deserves a level of partnership and support that is complimentary to it's value. And right now I would describe HTAs approach as colonial violence: we've been given a process that is condescending, distrustful and corrosive to healthy outcomes. Please do better for the sake of my community and family.

Sincerely,
Todd Yamashita

[Submitted to Civil Beat April 11; [Published online April 20, 2022](#)]

What's Missing from this Map?

Hint: It's the Island of Molokai

Much more than ever, when people hear I'm from Molokai they remark on how it must be special to come from a place where visitors need to be invited.

When I first began to hear this more than a decade ago, I was polite about the small island of Molokai with its population of 7,400, being possibly confused with the privately owned island of Ni'ihau that hosts a population of roughly 130 Hawaiians. Was it confusion?

A bold hand-painted sign in town reads "Tourists Not Welcome". The other side of the sign reads "Visit, Spend, Go Home" and faces outgoing visitors heading back toward the Ho'olehua airport. It's been a few years now and the sign continues its prominent display from a homestead lot by the highway.

Before you get on the bandwagon of discussing the civility of this particularly polarizing sign, let's instead realize it is a symptom of a community under pressure.

I'm here to report that the reintroduction of tourism after a two year hiatus has created an anxious response from this community. The root cause? Post-COVID gentrification. Let me explain.

Look on Zillow. There are no single-family homes available for sale because the urban exodus created by remote work has led people to relocate here.

We have one airline we can no longer afford. Tourists eager to return, have snatched up every discounted seat weeks, and sometimes months ahead. More so than ever, locals who need to book essential travel are lucky to find an open seat at all.

Residents like me who work part-time off-island no longer have that option. Members from my own family have had major medical procedures set back by months due to seat availability and scheduling issues.

If you know Molokai however, you know about our stubborn resilience. We are also known to be resourceful.

Over a dozen community members and leaders including Senator Lynn DeCointe, Maui County Council Finance Chair Keani Rawlins and Hawaiian rights activist Walter Ritte came together this week as participants of the Destination Management Action Plan or DMAP, a statewide project administered by Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA).

The conversation was, yes, heated at times (this is Molokai folks). But when it finally carried on after several hours of debate, this scrappy group came up with something quite surprising.

The Molokai group, in meeting-overtime, listed at least three items worth highlighting: That Molokai, as a destination, be removed from all future HTA marketing efforts; That the single HTA position on Molokai, that was axed during the pandemic, be restored; And finally that HTA support community efforts in understanding visitor impacts in order to determine Molokai's visitor capacity.

The final overarching ask? That these ideas be brought directly out of committee to the general public so that the community here can engage and decide what is best for itself.

But will Molokai disappear if removed from the map?

Molokai had the lowest unemployment in the state during the pandemic. Sustainable Molokai, a local NGO known for its broad reaching sustainability efforts, has doubled its employee base to over 30 people with other organizations following their lead.

We are witnessing the return of our youth engaged in island-wide community building efforts that include conservation, agriculture, renewable energy and workforce development.

Caring for the people, places and the things we love... We are stubborn about that too. As the world's special places continue to disappear, Molokai's ability to cling to it's values is of important relevance.

Indeed Molokai is removing itself from one map and placing itself onto another. A map that points to a place that isn't necessarily a destination, but a place that is more well known: home.

I can't claim to know how things here will work out. But I do know, like us, there are communities all over Hawaii suffering the deep impacts of tourism, gentrification and inequity.

This is just to let you know we're in it too. That perhaps there are creative alternatives to this idea that Hawaii needs to be a destination for someone else, from somewhere else.

Mahalo,
Todd Yamashita

Yamashita is a fourth generation resident of Molokai and father of two boys. Yamashita sailed on the Hōkūle'a Worldwide Voyage, is board president of Ho'āhu Energy Cooperative Molokai, publisher of the Molokai Dispatch, Molokai operations manager for Hawai'i Marine Animal Response, and is a published children's book author, an instructor, and curriculum developer for Molokai youth.

Maui News

What's been accomplished in phase 1 of Moloka'i tourism action plan?

May 27, 2022, 12:04 PM HST

** Updated May 27, 12:06 PM*



The Hawai'i Tourism Authority has published a 4-page outline of the progress of Phase 1 of the Moloka'i Destination Management Action Plan. Photo Courtesy: HTA

The year one progress report for the Moloka'i Destination Management Action Plan was recently published by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority.

For phase 1 of the community-based plan that is divided into three year-long phases, there are six high-level actions with 11 sub-actions in the Moloka'i plan that are part of the [Maui Nui Destination Management Plan 2021-2023](#).

Here is the progress, according to a [four-page report](#) by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA):

- **Action A:** To develop communication and education programs to encourage responsible visitor behaviors. The progress: An Aloha Ambassador Volunteer Program is being developed at Moloka'i airport.

- **Action B:** Support the growth of Molokaʻi businesses by encouraging new product development focused on regenerative tourism, while continuing support of traditional leisure tourism to increase jobs for residents. The progress: The County of Maui's Office of Economic Development held business/organizational capacity webinars through the Kuhaʻo Business Center on Molokaʻi. Requests for proposals were issued for three programs: community enrichment, kūkulu ola and aloha ʻāina.
- **Action C:** Promote Molokaʻi to attract kamaʻāina and specific visitor segments who appreciate and understand the Molokaʻi lifestyle. The progress: Two projects were funded — Molokaʻi Paniolo Heritage Kamehameha Rodeo and Workshops; and the Molokaʻi Holokai Hoʻolauleʻa. Two requests for proposals were issued to support agritourism and cultural tourism activities. And, the Molokaʻi advisory group was formed. It is now called the Molokaʻi Advisory Group and Steering Committee, and has held two meetings.
- **Action D:** Enhance resident-visitor relations by strengthening existing cultural/community-based organizations and actions. The progress: Funding was provided to the Keawanui Food System Revitalization Project and for critical habitat improvements within the Anapuka Predator Proof Fence Project. Funding for the rodeo and workshops and Molokaʻi Holokai Hoʻolauleʻa — and the requests for proposals for the three previous mentioned programs — also is part of this sub-action.
- **Action E:** Provide accommodations that meet the needs of the target segments. The progress: Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau reached out to community members who identified Mālama Park as a community infrastructure in need.
- **Action F:** Engage partners to determine a path forward that will enhance interisland transportation options for both residents and visitors. The progress: Maui County has been working with US Rep. Kai Kahele's office to examine how to get Molokaʻi Airport designated as "essential service." It is recommended that residents contact his office to further advocate for this designation.

The Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority works with the County of Maui's Office of Economic Development, Office of the Mayor's Community Liaison for tourism, and the Maui Visitors and Convention Bureau.

HTA also provided funds to the Hawaiʻi and Maui visitor bureaus to hire a destination manager in August 2021 to assist HTA in implementing the plan. Other state, county and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and the visitor industry also have been integral to advancing the plan, according to the HTA.

BFED Committee

From: Todd Yamashita <molokaitodd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 1, 2022 11:24 AM
To: BFED Committee
Cc: Keani Rawlins-Fernandez
Subject: Yamashita HTA Testimony: Supporting Docs
Attachments: DMAP Molokai Leadership Issues - Letter to Keith.pdf; What's Missing from this Map.pdf; What's been accomplished in phase 1 of Moloka'i tourism action plan_ _ Maui Now May 27.pdf

You don't often get email from molokaitodd@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Aloha, thank you for holding this space for public feedback. Attached please see the following in support of my live (BlueJeans) testimony later today:

- Civil Beat article about HTA's Molokai meeting in April
- HTA Release about the same meeting and input from that meeting (as contrast)
- Emails providing HTA leadership and HR about failures taking place on Molokai

Mahalo,
Todd