

AH Committee

From: Clay Trauernicht <trauerni@hawaii.edu>
Sent: Thursday, June 27, 2019 12:57 PM
To: AH Committee
Cc: Gordon Firestein
Subject: personal testimony RE: 270 acres of development in the area between Launiupoko and Puamana Beach Parks

Dear Affordable Housing Committee Members,

First, I am a staunch supporter of expanding affordable housing in Hawaii. However, I wish to offer personal testimony on the proposed development between Launiupoko and Puamana Beach Parks. Especially in light of the unprecedented fire events that threatened lives, destroyed homes and other infrastructure in August 2018 on West Maui, I urge the committee to exercise extreme caution and carefully consider our current vulnerability to fire with respect to any proposed housing developments in the region. In short, although the conditions brought on by Hurricane Lane have been described as a 'worse case scenario', the quantity/extent/condition of hazardous fuels and the risk and rates of fire ignitions remain unchanged on West Maui. While it is true that building on undeveloped lands removes brush within the immediate footprint of the development, the risk of fire posed by the surrounding landscape remains high for both existing and proposed developments. I would further argue that any proposed development in this area be required to integrate and adhere to 'firewise' principles supported by the available science which, ultimately, should be incorporated into all planning efforts and integrated into county codes. Briefly these principles would include, at minimum, adequate access and turn-arounds for fire vehicles that enable them enter and exit safely and to get between homes and wildland areas with hazardous fuels; a minimum of two ingress/egress points for safe evacuation by residents in the event of an emergency, adequate access to pressurized water for fire suppression efforts; and the application of firewise principles to parcel-level vegetation management and home construction (eg. <https://disastersafety.org/wildfire/protect-your-home-from-wildfire/>). There are other design principles, such as irrigated 'green-strips' of vegetation around communities that can significantly reduce fire risk, that must be on the table moving forward to ensure community safety.

Even with these measures in place, nothing has been done to reduce the risk of fire across the larger landscape and reduce vulnerability to existing communities in the area. We are now living in a post-plantation era which means extremely high fire risk nearly year round in many areas of the state. Ignitions are one aspect of this risk, but there is also little to no accountability or incentive for landowners, especially of larger parcels, to actively reduce fire risk through vegetation management, or brush reduction. The high fire risk on West Maui, and our very recent, first-hand experiences, force us to consider the threats and implications of new developments beyond the immediate project footprints. I therefore urge the committee to look at the bigger picture and consider the options that lie within their power to ensure and improve the safety of Maui County residents as development expands.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require further information

Sincerely,

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