



COMENTS ON SCR167

REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS TO ASSESS ITS READINESS AND ABILITY TO ASSUME STEWARDSHIP OF THE SACRED HAWAIIAN GROUNDS OF MAUNA ALA.

Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs
Hawai'i State Capitol

April 1, 2025

1:10 P.M.

Room 224

Aloha e Chair Richards, Vice Chair San Buenaventura, and Members of the Senate Committee on Hawaiian Affairs:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA's) submits **COMMENTS** on SCR167, requesting that OHA assess its readiness and ability to assume stewardship of the sacred Hawaiian grounds of Mauna'ala. **OHA is already in the process of conducting such a study and would be happy to submit it to the legislature in advance of the next session.**

Under Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapters 10 and 10H, OHA is mandated to assert leadership on critical matters that preserve and protect Hawaiian cultural practices, protocols, and wahi pana. In response to objections concerning the process that the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) engaged in to select the current caretaker of Mauna'ala, OHA expressed its interest and willingness to assume the stewardship of this wahi pana. **OHA's goal in doing so is to ensure that the Hawaiian community remains connected to and has a voice in how we care for the final resting place of our Ali'i.** OHA has proposed to maintain the current co-stewardship structure already in place with the Ali'i Trusts, with the key distinction that OHA would replace the DLNR as the state steward of Mauna'ala.

On February 6, 2025, OHA's Board of Trustees approved the administration's request to pursue Phase II due diligence on OHA's proposal to assume stewardship of Mauna'ala, with the following deliverables already under development:

1. Transaction Memo
2. Goals and metrics for acquisition
3. Post-acquisition work plan including environmental, community engagement/actions, improvements, cultural objectives
4. Staffing plan and budget

OHA projects these deliverables will be ready well in advance of the next legislative session. OHA is also attaching the Phase I report setting forth in greater details OHA's statutory mandate and cultural commitments to stewarding the final resting place of our Ali'i.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



Keoni Souza - *Chairperson*
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Board Packet

IV. New Business

- B. **Action Item ILM 25-02:** Approve the completion of due diligence and to coordinate the land transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs*



OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Action Item

COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENTS & LAND MANAGEMENT

January 22, 2025

ILM#25-02

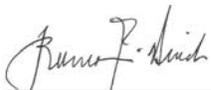
Action Item Issue: Approve the completion of due diligence and to coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Co-prepared by:  Jan 17, 2025

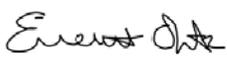
Ku'ikeokalani Kamakea-'Ohelo Date
Director of 'Oiwī Wellbeing and 'Aina Momona

Co-prepared by:  Jan 17, 2025

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Chief Executive Officer

Reviewed by:  Jan 17, 2025

Keoni Souza Date
Chairperson, ILM Committee

Action Item ILM #25-02: Approve the completion of due diligence and to coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

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Action Item ILM #25-02: Approve the completion of due diligence and to coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

I. PROPOSED ACTION

Approve the completion of due diligence and authorize the CEO to:

- 1) Coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs;
- 2) Execute and/or procure all necessary agreements, instruments, applications, and other appropriate documents necessary for phase two due diligence to inform the potential transfer of land from the DLNR to OHA;
- 3) Take all other reasonable actions necessary and appropriate to implement the foregoing.

II. ISSUE

Should the Board of Trustees approve the completion of due diligence and authorize the CEO to coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, for the following purposes and in accordance with the following directional outcome from the Mana i Maui Ola: OHA's 15-Year Strategic Plan for 2020-2035:¹

- Strengthened 'Oiwī (cultural identity), Ea (self-governance), 'Aina Momona (healthy lands and people), Pilina (relationships), Waiwai (shared wealth), Ke Akua Mana (spirituality)²;
- Strengthened capability for 'ohana to meet living needs, including housing³; and
- Strengthened economic capability and resilience for 'ohana, Native Hawaiian communities, and Hawaiian-owned Businesses to build and sustain generational wealth and economic systems that are regenerative, sustainable and reflective of 'ike kupuna⁴.
- Strengthened sense of long-term permanence for OHA beneficiaries; and
- Successful establishment of an ahupua'a and konohiki system which includes housing, food production, utility and broadband infrastructure, economic development, and malama of iwi kupuna.

Stewardship of Mauna'ala reinforces OHA's commitment to maintaining sacred lands with cultural integrity and reverence; supports spiritual, cultural, and emotional well-being by ensuring a connection to the past and to Hawaiian heritage; and exemplifies Native Hawaiian self-determination through asserting cultural and historical governance over this sacred site.

¹ See https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/MiMO_StrategicPlan-I.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

III. BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION

A. Legal Basis for Land Transfer & Alignment to OHA's Strategic Plan

Legal Basis

The legal bases for the proposed action are rooted in Hawai'i Revised Statutes (H.R.S.), Title 1, Chapter 10, which describes the purposes and powers of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Per H.R.S. § 10-3, OHA's purposes include, in relevant part: "(1) The betterment of conditions of native Hawaiians," and "(2) the betterment of conditions of Hawaiians."

Per H.R.S. § 10-4 (2), OHA, under the direction of the Board of Trustees, shall have to power to "acquire in any lawful manner any property, real, personal, or mixed, tangible or intangible, or any interest therein; to hold, maintain, use, and operate the same; and to sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of the same at such time, in such manner and to the extent necessary or appropriate to carry out its purpose."

Per H.R.S. § 10-5, in relevant part, the Board shall have the power in accordance with law to:

(1) Manage, invest, and administer the proceeds from the sale or other disposition of lands, natural resources, minerals, and income derived from whatever sources for native Hawaiians and Hawaiians, including all income and proceeds from that pro rata portion of the trust referred to in section 10-3...

(2) Exercise control over real and personal property set aside to the office by the State of Hawaii, the United States of America, or any private sources, and transferred to the office for native Hawaiians and Hawaiians...

(6) delegate to the administrator, its officers and employees such powers and duties as may be proper for the performance of the powers and duties vested in the board.

Alignment of Land Acquisition to OHA Strategic Plan

OHA's Strategic Plan, "Mana I Maui Ola"⁵ (Strength to Wellbeing) includes three foundations: 'Ohana (family), Mo'omeheu (culture), and 'Aina (land and water). OHA recognizes these foundations have the power to affect the wellbeing of Native Hawaiians. Therefore, these foundational aspects of Kanaka 'Oiwī are woven into OHA's plans to affect change in the areas of education, health, housing, and economics. Through these four directions, OHA has implemented strategies, aligned with our

⁵ For Mana I Maui Ola Strategic Plan (2020-2035), see <https://www.oha.org/about/mana-to-maui-ola>.

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foundations and directions to achieve our envisioned outcomes for a thriving and abundant Lahui.

To malama Hawai'i's people and environmental resources, and OHA's assets, toward ensuring the perpetuation of the culture, the enhancement of lifestyle and the protection of entitlements of Native Hawaiians, OHA must enable the building of a strong and healthy Hawaiian people and Lahui, recognized nationally and internationally. Through the identification of health outcomes determined to strengthen 'Oiwī (cultural identity), Ea (self-governance), 'Aina Momona (healthy lands and people), Pilina (relationships), Waiwai (shared wealth), and Ke Akua Mana (spirituality), OHA must advance policies, programs and practices that strengthen the health of the 'aina and mo'omeheu, and further strengthen Hawaiian resource management knowledge and skills to meet the needs of Kanei'olouma.

By executing this land transfer with the Hawai'i State DLNR, OHA has an opportunity to accomplish the following Mana i Maui Ola strategic outcomes:⁶

4.1. Preservation and perpetuation of Hawaiian language, culture, traditions, identity and sense of Lahui.

Mauna'ala, as a sacred site and the final resting place of our ali'i, holds immense cultural and historical significance. It symbolizes the continuity of Hawaiian sovereignty and the depth of the Hawaiian people's connection to their history. By placing this site under the stewardship of OHA, an organization dedicated to advancing the well-being of Native Hawaiians, the cultural and spiritual importance of Mauna'ala would be respected and amplified in ways that prioritize Hawaiian values and practices.

OHA, as an entity focused on promoting the welfare of their people, is uniquely positioned to protect and manage such a sacred site in a culturally sensitive and informed manner. With a deep understanding of Hawaiian traditions and language, OHA would be able to ensure that Mauna'ala is preserved in a way that aligns with Hawaiian cultural practices, guiding its management with respect for the traditions and protocols that have governed the site for generations. This alignment with Native Hawaiian leadership ensures that Mauna'ala is not just preserved physically, but that its cultural significance continues to be upheld and honored.

One of the key benefits of this transfer would be the opportunity to further incorporate Hawaiian language and cultural practices into the site's management and interpretation. With OHA's commitment to language revitalization and cultural preservation, the site could become a hub for educational programs and cultural activities that prioritize the Hawaiian language. Hawaiian language signage, guided tours, and educational materials could be provided to ensure that visitors not only learn about the

⁶ See https://www.oha.org/wp-content/uploads/MiMO_StrategicPlan-1.pdf.

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history of Mauna'ala but also engage with the language that is an integral part of the Hawaiian identity. This would help nurture the Hawaiian language in a living, functional context and increase its visibility in public spaces.

This potential transfer offers OHA an opportunity to reinvigorate traditional Hawaiian cultural practices, including ceremonies and protocols, which have historically been part of Mauna'ala. These practices, which are rooted in Hawaiian cosmology, spirituality, and identity, are best understood and carried out by those who are deeply embedded in the Hawaiian community.

Through the stewardship of Mauna'ala, OHA would be positioned to strengthen Hawaiian identity in both a cultural and political sense. It would serve as a symbol of Eā and Native Hawaiian and self-determination, affirming the ability of Hawaiians to care for and maintain their sacred places and cultural heritage. The continued presence of Mauna'ala within the Hawaiian community under OHA's leadership would provide a tangible connection to Hawaiian royalty and history, reinforcing a sense of pride, unity, and resilience within the Hawaiian people. By transferring the site, the state would be acknowledging the importance of Native Hawaiian governance over its cultural and historical assets, reinforcing the broader movement toward cultural sovereignty and self-determination for future generations.

4.2. Increase community stewardship of Hawai'i's natural and cultural resources that foster connection to 'āina, 'ōhana, and communities.

As a sacred site with strong ties to Hawaiian history, Mauna'ala is an integral part of the collective identity of the Hawaiian people. By placing the stewardship of this site under the care of OHA, it empowers the community to take an active role in preserving and nurturing both the physical and cultural aspects of the land. This process would not only honor the history of the site but also strengthen the relationship between Hawaiians and the land by promoting greater involvement from local communities in its preservation.

OHA has long prioritized initiatives that bring Native Hawaiians closer to their cultural heritage and natural environment. If Mauna'ala were managed by OHA, the land would be stewarded in a way that integrates Hawaiian cultural practices, values, and traditions. Such stewardship involves not just the physical care of the site but also the revitalization of cultural practices, such as traditional agricultural methods, ceremonies, and community gatherings. In this way, OHA can help foster a holistic sense of connection to the 'āina, reinforcing the Hawaiian worldview that the land is sacred and must be cared for as a living entity. This shift would naturally encourage communities to engage more deeply with their natural surroundings and participate in hands-on activities that promote environmental sustainability.

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By involving families and local groups in the caretaking of Mauna'ala, OHA would facilitate programs that allow individuals of all ages to engage with the land in meaningful ways, whether through educational workshops, volunteer efforts, or cultural ceremonies. These activities would not only serve as opportunities for learning but also strengthen the intergenerational transmission of Hawaiian cultural knowledge.

Incorporating community-based stewardship models into the management of Mauna'ala would also foster a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility among local residents. The more that individuals feel personally connected to the land and its cultural heritage, the more likely they are to participate in its protection. OHA has a history of engaging Hawaiian communities in meaningful ways, and its efforts to include the broader Hawaiian public in the decision-making process surrounding the mausoleum would empower local communities to take charge of their cultural spaces. This would be a vital step toward re-establishing the trust between Native Hawaiians and governmental institutions, ensuring that the care of these sacred places reflects the collective will of the community.

As OHA continues to work toward Ea for Native Hawaiians, empowering the community to steward sites like Mauna'ala aligns with the greater goal of fostering resilience and sustainability in both the natural and cultural landscapes. The increased sense of belonging that comes with direct involvement in the care of sacred sites would deepen the connections between Hawaiians, their 'ohana, and 'aina, creating a more sustainable future for the preservation of the land and culture. In this way, the stewardship of Mauna'ala by OHA would not only enhance local engagement but also contribute to a broader movement of cultural revitalization and environmental protection throughout Hawai'i.

4.3. Increase restoration of Native Hawaiian cultural sites, landscapes, kulaiwi and traditional food systems.

Stewardship of Mauna'ala by OHA would allow for a more culturally grounded approach to its management, rooted in Native Hawaiian traditions. By returning this sacred site to the control of an organization committed to the well-being of Native Hawaiians, OHA could facilitate the revitalization of cultural practices and the restoration of the land in a way that aligns with Hawaiian values and worldviews.

OHA's greater involvement in managing Mauna'ala could lead to the restoration of the surrounding landscape in a manner that honors traditional Hawaiian environmental knowledge. Hawaiians have a deep-rooted connection to the land, and traditional practices such as sustainable agriculture, water management, and forest restoration are vital to the long-term health of Hawai'i's ecosystems. By utilizing indigenous methods of land stewardship, OHA would be able to restore the kulaiwi of Mauna'ala to a state that reflect its spiritual significance.

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The transfer of Mauna'ala to OHA also poses the potential to strengthen community involvement in the restoration process. Community-based restoration projects would empower individuals and families to take an active role in reclaiming their cultural heritage. This active participation would not only restore the physical landscape but also help re-establish cultural practices and a sense of belonging, as individuals reconnect with their ancestral traditions.

OHA remains committed to creating best practices for co-stewardship of this historical site, including following Hawaiian protocols (loina) and kapu in managing Mauna'ala; collaborating with the ali'i trusts, royal societies, and Hawaiian civic clubs through the Malama Mauna'ala Working Group; engaging stakeholders and the broader community to ensure alignment with cultural and historical values; and, emphasizing community-led governance, traditional ecological knowledge, and culturally respectful practices in site management.

B. Location and General Property Information

Mauna'ala is located in the ahupua'a of Nu'uaniu in the moku of Kona on the island of O'ahu. The parcel is situated adjacent to Nu'uaniu Avenue located at 2261 Nu'uaniu Avenue



Image 1. Location of 2261 Nu'uaniu Avenue on O'ahu.



Image 2. Map of TMK (1) 2-2-021:012.⁷

The parcel is specifically identified as TMK (1) 2-2-021:012 and is a residential parcel zoned for residential use encompassing 3.341 total acres. The property is owned by the DLNR and has trust land status. Per the City and County of Honolulu, the total property assessed value is \$2,691,500 for 2025.⁸

C. Cultural & Historical Significance

Mauna'ala remains one of Hawai'i's most revered and treasured places, embodying the spiritual, cultural, and historical legacy of the Hawaiian Kingdom. It stands as the eternal resting place for Hawai'i's ali'i, with the exception of King Kamehameha Pai'ea and HM King William Charles Lunalilo and includes many consorts and significant members of Hawai'i's royal families. This sacred wahi kupuna (ancestral place) is unparalleled in its significance, housing the remains of leaders who shaped the history and identity of Hawai'i.

Mauna'ala's importance extends beyond its role as a burial site; it is a living testament to the continuity of Hawaiian culture, governance, and identity. The royal

⁷<https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=1045&LayerID=23342&PageTypeID=4&PageID=9746&Q=982153089&KeyValue=220210120000>.

⁸ Ibid.

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mausoleum is home to five publicly known tombs-the Kamehameha Tomb, the Kalakaua Crypt, the Wylie-Rook Tomb (Queen Emma's 'ohana), the John Young Burial Place, and the Tomb of Princess Abigail Kawananakoa-along with numerous unmarked graves believed to belong to kaukau ali'i (chiefly retainers) and other significant individuals. Surrounding the Mauna'ala Chapel, these graves are complemented by the treasured artifacts within the Chapel, including kahili (feather standards), pulo'ulo'u (kapu sticks), pews, and biers.

Despite its immense cultural and spiritual value, Mauna'ala has suffered from decades of mismanagement and neglect under the stewardship of the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). The lack of consistent inspections and culturally appropriate care has diminished the sanctity of this sacred site. For example, the caretaker's residence, built in the 1990s, has required extensive renovations twice, with the latest costing \$300,000. Such neglect underscores the inadequacy of a "state department" approach to the stewardship of a site as sacred and significant as Mauna'ala.

The recent burial of Princess Abigail Kinoiki Kekaulike Kawananakoa in March 2024 highlights the ongoing importance of Mauna'ala as a living site of cultural and historical relevance. The sacred grounds continue to serve as a place of reverence and connection for the descendants of Hawai'i's ali'i and the broader Hawaiian community.

The stewardship of Mauna'ala must be elevated to reflect its profound significance. The grounds and structures demand meticulous care and preservation guided by traditional Hawaiian protocols and values. This stewardship should involve a collaborative approach, engaging Native Hawaiian organizations, royal societies, and other key stakeholders to honor the ali'i interred there and the cultural integrity of the site. Mauna'ala's continued care and protection are imperative for the preservation of Hawaiian identity, history, and spiritual well-being, ensuring that this sacred wahi kupuna remains a beacon of Hawaiian heritage for generations to come.

D. Current Stewardship Model

The current stewardship model raises serious concerns about the wisdom and appropriateness of the DLNR as stewards of Mauna'ala. Since 1967, Mauna'ala has been under the custody of DLNR. Prior to this, it was managed as an inventory property under the Department of Accounting and General Services, and before that, it was included in the Public Works inventory.

Over the past 70 years, the role of Curator at Mauna'ala was filled by individuals who upheld traditional values and practices. 'Iolani Luahine, respected Kumu Hula, Lydia Namahana (Taylor) Maioho served as Curator until 1995, after which her son William "Bill" Maioho assumed the position. Upon Bill Maioho's passing, the veneration of stewardship seemed wane. The upkeep and monitoring of the degradation of the Caretakers

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house became evident by even the general public and visitors. Even though Bill's son, William Bishop Kaihe'ekai Maioho intended to uphold the family's stewardship as Kahu, it became obvious that Kaihe'ekai, could not uphold the tradition. He resigned in June 2023. Though the Curator position was a state appointment, tradition honored descendants of High Chief Hoapili, with few exceptions. Notably, the title "Kahu" was first introduced by Bill Maioho, replacing prior designations such as "Curator," "Caretaker," or "Custodian."

In 2024, DLNR diverged from tradition by appointing Doni Leina'ala Chong as both Curator and Administrator, breaking from the longstanding practice of selecting individuals with ties to the Hoapili lineage. While non-Hoapili appointments are not unprecedented, the real issue lies in the DLNR's complete disregard for stakeholder engagement during the selection process. Historically, appointments involved consultation with key Native Hawaiian stakeholders, including royal societies, ali'i trusts, and civic organizations, as demonstrated in the selection processes dating back to the 1940s with William Edward Bishop Kaihe'ekai Taylor.

Under the guidance of DLNR's Chair, multiple missteps undermined the integrity of the selection process and stewardship:

1. **Disregard for Stakeholder Input:** Letters from OHA, Hawaiian Royal Societies, and the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs were ignored, sidelining key voices in decisions regarding Mauna'ala's care.
2. **Deviation from Established Processes:** The hiring process used for selecting the previous Kahu in 2015 was disregarded. Instead, the position was framed as that of an "Administrator" rather than a "Kahu," diluting the role's cultural and spiritual significance.
3. **Neglect of Infrastructure Needs:** Persistent neglect of the caretaker's residence and the grounds has led to ongoing deterioration. The caretaker's home is currently undergoing its second extensive renovation since its construction in the 1990s, with costs nearing \$300,000.

This pattern of neglect and exclusion underscores the unsuitability of DLNR as stewards of Mauna'ala. The lack of culturally grounded oversight has not only disrespected the sacred nature of this site but also jeopardized its physical and spiritual integrity. These failures highlight the urgent need for a new stewardship model led by OHA, which possesses the cultural expertise and community trust necessary to honor and protect Mauna'ala for future generations.

E. Property Condition

Structures & Existing Infrastructure

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Mauna'ala is home to several notable structures and infrastructure that reflect its historical and cultural significance. The main feature of the property is the mausoleum itself, which houses the remains of many ali'i, including King Kamehameha II, King Kamehameha IV, Queen Emma, and other members of the royal family. The mausoleum building is a unique structure, designed in a blend of traditional Hawaiian and Western architectural styles. Its exterior features a large, imposing stone structure with a prominent dome, offering a solemn atmosphere that matches the sacred nature of the site. Inside, the mausoleum is decorated with various commemorative plaques, historical markers, and symbols representing the Hawaiian monarchy. Other existing structures include the Kalakaua Crypt, the Kamehameha Tomb, the John Young Tomb, the Charles Reed Bishop Tomb, the Wyllie Tomb, the Abigail Kawananakoa Tomb, the caretaker's residence, a comfort station, and site areas.

Adjacent to the mausoleum is the Kapuaiwa Royal Mausoleum Chapel, which has also served as a place for quiet reflection and prayer. This chapel has been part of the site since its creation and is integral to the site's spiritual significance. It has been maintained and used for ceremonial purposes, with occasional royal events and memorials held within its walls. The chapel, with its simple yet elegant design, also embodies the fusion of traditional Hawaiian and Christian influences that were prevalent during the period of the Hawaiian monarchy. Its architecture, while modest, reflects the reverence Hawaiians held for their royalty and the sacredness of the space.

In addition to the main structures, Mauna'ala is also equipped with certain practical infrastructure elements, such as pathways, fencing, and lighting. These elements are intended to provide both safety and accessibility to visitors while maintaining the site's integrity. Other Infrastructure includes historic wrought iron fences and gates. Roadway, markers, stone walls, and other elements on the site are also contributing features.

Despite the existing structures and infrastructure, there is ongoing conversation regarding the need for further restoration and revitalization of Mauna'ala. This includes potential updates to infrastructure, such as enhanced visitor facilities, more educational signage, and the development of programs that engage the community in cultural and historical education. Renovations occurred in 1922, 1974, 1987, and 2024 respectively. There is ongoing cyclical maintenance of structures and grounds. With respect to the Mauna'ala cottage repair and renovation project, the residential curator's underwent necessary interior repair and renovation during the period of July 2024 through November 2024. A trailer is in position as a temporary office until the cottage renovation is completed. Previous maintenance efforts for the structures located at Mauna'ala are listed below:

- Kawananakoa Tomb - Cleaning the surfaces of the tomb at least every other year to remove mold growth and annual inspection.
- A major restoration of the Chapel was done from 1978 to 1984.

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- The Kamehameha Tomb and Charles Reed Bishop Monument were cleaned and repaired in 1987.
- Extensive work was done on the Kalakaua Crypt in 1992.
- Additional work was conducted between 2008 and 2012, including the repair of walls and fences, repairs to the Chapel, repairs to the Kalakaua Crypt, repairs to the Kamehameha Tomb, and minor repairs to the John Young Crypt in accordance with the Existing Condition Report for Mauna'ala from December 2007.

Access, Easements, and Restrictions

Access to the property is primarily provided via Nuuanu Avenue, leading visitors to the entrance of the mausoleum. However, given the site's sacred nature, the primary intent is to limit and regulate the number of visitors to ensure the solemnity and dignity of the space. Access is typically restricted to those with specific purposes, such as visiting the gravesites of Hawaiian royalty, participating in cultural ceremonies, or engaging in educational activities.

In addition to public access, the Mauna'ala property is subject to various easements that allow for the provision of essential utilities and services. These easements enable the installation and maintenance of infrastructure such as water, electricity, sewer, and telecommunications systems that are necessary for the operation and upkeep of the site. However, these easements are carefully regulated to minimize their impact on the visual and environmental integrity of the property. Utility lines and other infrastructure elements must be discreetly integrated into the landscape to avoid disrupting the cultural and aesthetic aspects of the mausoleum and its surroundings. Any changes or expansions to these easements typically require approval from relevant authorities to ensure they align with the property's cultural preservation goals.

Restrictions on the Mauna'ala Royal Mausoleum property are primarily focused on maintaining the site's sanctity and cultural significance. Due to its role as the final resting place for members of the Hawaiian royal family, there are strict guidelines regarding the activities allowed on the property. Unauthorized construction, alterations, or modifications to the structures or landscape are prohibited, ensuring that the historic integrity of the mausoleum remains intact. Additionally, activities such as commercial filming, large-scale events, or public gatherings that might disrupt the solemn nature of the site are often restricted. These measures help protect the sacredness of the space and ensure that it remains a place of reverence and reflection for all who visit.

As the site is sacred to Native Hawaiians, cultural protocols are paramount. Ceremonies or rituals must be conducted in a manner that aligns with Hawaiian customs and is often overseen by cultural practitioners or elders. To preserve these practices, certain restrictions are in place to prevent activities that could infringe upon the land's spiritual significance. These protocols often extend to the types of events or visitors allowed at the site, ensuring that the space is used appropriately and respectfully.

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Mauna'ala property is also subject to zoning and land use regulations that provide additional restrictions and guidelines for its management and preservation. These regulations ensure that the site remains consistent with its cultural purpose and prevents any activities that could potentially damage or detract from its significance. The land use and zoning restrictions help safeguard Mauna'ala as an important piece of Hawaiian heritage, supporting ongoing efforts to maintain its historical integrity for future generations.

The drainage systems at Mauna'ala are an essential component of its infrastructure, ensuring that water is effectively managed to protect the site's historical structures and surrounding landscapes. Given the property's location in Nu'uaniu Valley, where rainfall can be significant, proper drainage helps prevent flooding and water accumulation that could damage the mausoleum, chapel, and gardens. The system is designed to channel excess water away from critical areas, such as burial sites and cultural landmarks, to maintain the site's integrity. Additionally, the drainage system plays a role in preserving the lush landscaping and native vegetation by promoting proper water flow without causing erosion or waterlogging. Careful management of drainage is vital to maintaining both the aesthetic and environmental quality of the sacred site.

Utilities

While primarily a cultural and historical site, Mauna'ala is equipped with essential utilities to support its operation and maintenance. Electric power is supplied to the site, providing lighting for the mausoleum and surrounding grounds, as well as electricity for any on-site facilities such as the chapel and administrative buildings. The electric infrastructure is necessary to ensure the safety and functionality of the site, particularly for lighting key areas and supporting maintenance activities. However, given the historic and sacred nature of the property, there is a focus on ensuring that the infrastructure remains unobtrusive and respectful of the cultural significance of the location.

Water services at the Mauna'ala property are crucial for both the maintenance of the grounds and the preservation of the site's landscaping. The property relies on water for irrigation, keeping the gardens and surrounding areas lush and visually appealing. Proper hydration of plants also helps preserve the cultural and environmental integrity of the site, especially as efforts are made to restore and rejuvenate native Hawaiian plant species. Additionally, water is necessary for sanitation and for maintaining cleanliness in any structures such as restrooms or facilities used by staff or visitors. Like the electric infrastructure, water systems are integrated in a way that minimizes their visual impact, ensuring that the natural beauty of the site remains the focal point.

The property also utilizes a sewer system to manage waste and ensure the site remains clean and hygienic for visitors and staff. Given the nature of Mauna'ala as a sacred site with historical and ceremonial importance, the sewer system is an essential

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component to ensure that the mausoleum and its surrounding areas are properly maintained. Waste management infrastructure is important not only for the comfort of visitors but also for environmental health, particularly since the site is situated in an area with unique vegetation and wildlife. The systems in place are designed to meet the functional needs of the site while also being respectful of the surrounding environment.

Telecommunications infrastructure, including telephone and internet services, is another important utility on the Mauna'ala property. These services are necessary for operational purposes, allowing staff to manage the site efficiently, communicate with visitors or other government entities, and maintain a level of security at the site. While the primary function of the site is cultural and historical preservation, telecommunications are crucial for the modern operations of the mausoleum, including managing visitor information, scheduling events, and addressing logistical needs. However, it is important that such systems are discreetly integrated into the property to avoid disrupting the serene and traditional atmosphere of Mauna'ala.

Refuse and garbage collection is also an essential utility for Mauna'ala, helping to maintain the cleanliness and integrity of the site. Waste management services are necessary to handle the trash generated by visitors, staff, and any events held on the property. Given the site's status as a public space, responsible waste disposal is crucial for both environmental sustainability and the respect for its cultural significance. Regular garbage collection ensures that the property remains pristine and suitable for reflection, ceremonies, and visits. In line with efforts to preserve Hawaiian traditions, there may be opportunities to incorporate sustainable waste management practices, such as recycling and composting, to further reflect values of environmental stewardship in the care of Mauna'ala.

Environmental & Cultural Resources

In addition to the royal resting places of our ali'i, the mausoleum itself is an important cultural resource. Designed in a blend of traditional Hawaiian and Western architectural styles, the structure represents a fusion of cultural influences that marked the era of Hawaiian monarchy. The building's design reflects both Hawaiian reverence for their rulers and the Western aesthetic that became prevalent during the 19th century. The intricate stonework, the large dome, and the religious symbols embedded in the structure provide insight into the cultural exchanges that shaped the Hawaiian kingdom. As a historical and architectural landmark, the mausoleum serves as a physical reminder of the kingdom's history, governance, and cultural identity.

The surrounding gardens and landscaping at Mauna'ala also serve as significant cultural resources. The property is home to lush tropical plants and trees that not only beautify the site but also hold cultural importance, and in some cases registered historic status.

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However, of the utmost importance remains the mana and 'ike from our ali'i that reside at Mauna'ala. Cultural protocols associated with Mauna'ala, including the ceremonial practices and the respect shown to the site, are an essential part of its cultural resources. The site is governed by Hawaiian traditions, which dictate the proper ways of interacting with the land and the royal graves. Ceremonial events, including annual memorial services for the royal family and other cultural observances, continue to be held at Mauna'ala, reinforcing its role as a living cultural site. The practice of honoring the ali'i through hula, chanting, and other cultural protocol is an important cultural resource that perpetuates Hawaiian traditions. These cultural practices help maintain a strong connection between the past and present, ensuring that the site remains a vibrant space for learning, remembrance, and cultural continuity.

F. Stakeholder Engagement Process

Over the past year, OHA's Executive Administration, Strategy & Implementation Division, alongside OHA's Legacy Land team, have been consulting with the DLNR, the Governor's office, State legislators, the ali'i trusts, royal societies, and Hawaiian civic clubs through the Malama Mauna'ala Working Group, as well as community members about the proposed land transfer.

Throughout these engagements, OHA was fortunate to have Senator Lorraine Inouye sponsor Senate Bill 4⁹ which seeks to transfer all rights, powers, functions, and duties of the DLNR regarding the stewardship of Mauna'ala to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. As this piece of legislation could effectuate a full transfer of Mauna'ala to OHA, it is imperative that this bill be monitored and supported to the fullest extent throughout the 2025 legislative session.

G. Preliminary SWOT Analysis

With the information gathered to date, a high-level preliminary SWOT analysis of a potential transfer of Mauna'ala into OHA's Legacy Lands portfolio is provided below for consideration.

Strengths

- Strategic Alignment: Aligns with Ch. 10 mandate and Mana i Maui Ola strategic directions and outcomes
- Purchase Price: No purchase price
- Stakeholder Concurrence: State legislators, the ali'i trusts, royal societies, and Hawaiian civic clubs supportive of transfer to OHA

⁹ See https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2_025114lls/SB4_.pdf.

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Weaknesses and Proposed Mitigation Strategies

- Reluctancy from DLNR
 - *Work with DLNR to come to a unilateral agreement about what is best for the future of Mauna 'ala*
- Risk Exposure: Fidelity to property boundaries, royal burial site, access, theft, and flooding/drainage issues
 - *Develop action plan with community to support compliance measures and safety updates*
- Environmental Concerns: Invasive species
 - *Develop/support a vegetation maintenance plan for invasive species mitigation and repurposing opportunities*

Opportunities

- Ensure Permanency: Ensure the proper preservation and malama of ali'i at rest; Ensures lands are held in trust for the benefit of Native Hawaiians
- Stewardship: Potential to demonstrate stewardship of sacred 'aina
- Facilitate Ea: Support beneficiary rights to practice self-determination, self-governance, and cultural religious/spiritual practices

Threats and Proposed Mitigation Strategies

- Public Perception: As always, OHA will be exposed to public critique
 - *Manage, communicate, and operate with integrity*
- Stability of Transfer: Unless a title transfer, management authority can be overturned with change of administration
 - *Work with DLNR, State Legislators, and Governor's office to formalize a permanent agreement*

IV. TIMEFRAME

The timeframe surrounding the potential acquisition of this parcel is quite unique in nature due to the verbal support expressed by the Governor's Office. Should the strict timeline below be executed by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Administration and BOT, the Governor has verbally expressed interest in announcing the transfer at his next State of the State address scheduled for January 21, 2025. This presents an excellent opportunity for OHA to publicly announce progress and efforts underway alongside support from the Governor of the State of Hawai'i.

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V. RECOMMENDATION

Approve the completion of due diligence and authorize the CEO to:

- 1) Coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs;
- 2) Execute and/or procure all necessary agreements, instruments, applications, and other appropriate documents necessary for phase two due diligence to inform the potential transfer of land from the DLNR to OHA;
- 3) Take all other reasonable actions necessary and appropriate to implement the foregoing.

VI. ALTERNATIVES

- A. Take no action. Cease all further efforts.
- B. Further information is needed. Do not approve the completion of due diligence and do not authorize the CEO to coordinate the transfer of Mauna'ala, Nu'uaniu, O'ahu to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

VII. REFERENCES

1. See https://www.oha.org/wpcontent/uploads/MiMO_StrategicPlan-1.pdf.
2. See <https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=1045&LayerID=23342&PageTypeID=4&PageID=9746&Q=982153089&KeyValue=2202101200>.
3. See https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/sessions/session2025/bills/SB4_.pdf.
4. See https://ksdigitalfiles.ksbe.edu/elearn/huakai/maunaala2/maunaala_en/maunaala_main.Html.
5. Hawaii Administrative Rules, Title 13, Department of Land and Natural Resources, Subtitle 6, State Sarks, Shapter 146, Hawai'i State Park System, 1981.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

DIVISION OF STATE PARKS
P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N.S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Tuesday, April 1, 2025
1:10 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224

In consideration of
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 167/SENATE RESOLUTION 136
REQUESTING THE OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS TO ASSESS ITS READINESS AND
ABILITY TO ASSUME STEWARDSHIP OF THE SACRED HAWAIIAN GROUND OF
MAUNA ALA

Senate Concurrent Resolution 167/Senate Resolution 136 requests the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) to assess its readiness and ability to assume stewardship of the sacred Hawaiian ground of Mauna 'Ala. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources' (Department) offers the following comments:**

The Department is open to discussions on the stewardship of Mauna 'Ala. lands as we are currently engaged with OHA on the transfer of Kahana Valley. We are engaged in a thoughtful, phased approach to the land transfers. We mutually agreed to a clear process for sharing of relevant documents, permitting OHA ample opportunity to conduct due diligence, and engage with the community. The Department believes that starting with Kahana will provide an opportunity to develop best practices, governance structures, and management capacity before considering additional lands, including Mauna 'Ala.

1. Historical Background

Mauna 'Ala - the Royal Mausoleum, is the final resting place of Hawaii's monarchy and one of the most revered and sanctified cultural spaces in Hawaii, as such is a designated State Monument to honor, protect and perpetuate this wahi pana. Recently there has been considerable discussion and attention directed at Mauna 'Ala, and its prominence and unique value as a revered spiritual space merits and requires thoughtful discussion. *No matter the jurisdiction, ensuring the continuity of stewardship and reverence in perpetuity is the most crucial and absolute outcome.*

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Mauna ‘Ala’s eminent spiritual, historic and cultural value was recognized and confirmed 125 years ago when Queen Lili’uokalani petitioned the United States Congress, who passed Resolution 28 on May 31, 1900, proclaiming that the Royal Mausoleum be withdrawn from the “*sale, lease, or other disposition of public land laws of the United states.*” After the Overthrow, there was a critical need to ensure the protection of Mauna ‘Ala in perpetuity.

This wahi pana is under the spiritual and collective possession of the entire Hawaiian community and will always be so. The Department, through the Division of State Parks (State Parks), is simply the current steward in a history of stewardship ranging from Monarchy to Territory, to Statehood. Chapter 13 - 146 Hawaii Administrative Rules provides a legal framework to maintain sanctity and protection.

The Kalakaua crypt and the five tombs at Mauna ‘Ala contain the iwi of over 50 Kalakaua and Kamehameha Ali‘i and close advisers. The last person to be entombed was Abigail Kawananakoa, who died in December 2022 and was placed in her tomb in 2023. This will likely be the last tomb and individual to be interred at Mauna ‘Ala. The chapel at the Royal Mausoleum State Monument was completed in 1922 and prior to the construction of the tombs, was the initial final resting place of Ali‘i. The chapel was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

2. Collaboration between the Department and Ali‘i Trusts

There is a Memorandum of Understanding executed between the Department and the Ali‘i Trusts in 2014 that enables and clarifies the collaboration of the financing and execution of projects needed to maintain, renovate, and repair the tombs, gravesites, chapel, buildings, and landscaping at Mauna ‘Ala. State Parks and the Ali‘i Trusts have meetings to discuss these needs.

Over the ensuing decade there have been joint CIP projects with the Ali‘i Trusts for the grounds and tombs. Last year, the Kawananakoa Foundation funded major renovation of landscaping and replacement of several royal palms. Most recently, all of the royal palms (which represent each Ali‘i) and coconut trees on site were inoculated to protect them from the invasive and deadly coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB). This first phase was funded by Kamehameha Schools, and second set of CRB inoculations will be funded by State Parks.

There are three new projects underway funded by State Parks special funds: 1) restore the front fencing and finials, 2) renovate the John Young Tomb, and 3) reposition the entranceway curbing to enable Queen Emma’s kamani tree to expand its root base to minimize damage to the historic curbing and enable the tree to thrive, and evaluate the need for additional support of a prominent branch that extends over the entrance.

3. Mauna ‘Ala Curator

State Parks staff assigned to Mauna ‘Ala include the Royal Mausoleum Curator, an exempt civil service position. The Curator helps to schedule and enable group access on numerous historic occasions throughout the year and when the general public enters the grounds. With advanced coordination, the Curator conducts huaka‘i (a tour for a specific visitation request) that is tailored to educate and enhance knowledge and respect for Mauna ‘Ala.

There are two dedicated Park Caretakers that along with the Curator provide the daily routine maintenance of the grounds and comfort station. Labor, utilities and maintenance costs in 2024 was \$135,713. The Curator's Cottage recently underwent extensive repairs and remodeling that cost \$325,000 funded by State Parks Special Fund revenue. A new roof and solar panels are scheduled to be installed next. Due to adjacent homeless encampments State Parks hired a private security company that installed and operates a security camera system that is directed at various access locations of Mauna 'Ala. Cameras are monitored after closure at night and the company will contact HPD if there are trespassers.

4. SCR 167 Comments:

OHA is being directed to “develop educational programs to educate the public in the history and cultural significance of Mauna ‘Ala”. The Department has determined that the provision for the Department to “draft guidelines of stewardship that integrate the collective Hawaiian ‘ike to ensure that traditional cultural kuleana practices inform the Department's stewardship practices” is better served as a fundamental precedent of developing an educational program. OHA needs to consult with the Ali'i Trusts and other pertinent members of the Hawaiian community to quantify – if this is tenable – “the collective Hawaiian ‘ike” of Mauna ‘Ala. Therefore, the Department proposes to amend page 2, lines 23 to 27, to read as follows:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Office of Hawaiian Affairs is requested to draft guidelines of stewardship that integrate the collective Hawaiian ‘ike to ensure that traditional cultural kuleana practices inform the Department’s stewardship practices; and

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony SR136: James JKC Maioho

March 30, 2025

TO: Senate Committee On Hawaiian Affairs

CC: Committee Chair, Senator Tim Richards of Kohala

Senators,

As you and others continue in your commitment and dedication to finding a pono solution to the care and Stewardship of Mauna Ala, let us reflect in this moment that Mauna Ala (RMSM) was established as (and remains) a family burial plot. Built specifically for one family, the Kamehameha Dynasty, and their retainers, it now also houses our Kalakaua cousins.

Mauna Ala finished October 30, 1865, was born out of sadness, necessity, and loss to this family. The grounds also house several pre-Christian, ancient, and powerful Chiefs of these lines.

The Iwi of the Kamehameha's are and have been protected by one family for over 200 years. For over 150 years the Iwi of our Ali'i (Kaihe'ekai) have been the Kuleana of the descendants of Ho'olulu to protect physically and spiritually these, their own Ohana, and steward, as residents, this formally private family plot, which is imbued with the Mana of these great and powerful individuals.

Mauna Ala was never open to the public until 1947. Prior to that, one would have to know their mo'okuauhau and be able to recite as prior to the completion of the Kalakaua Crypt, the caskets still lay open in the mausoleum.

While we believe it is positive that the Senate direct OHA and the DLNR to perform these reports and tasks as charged, any such actions that are undertaken without the guidance of the Ohana that have carried out this Kuleana for the last 206 years, would *not* be a properly informed and Culturally pono product.

My fear is that one the Parks Department will continue its invasive rampage of tourist friendly modernization and that both OHA and the DLNR fail to really understand the true purpose of Mauna Ala and the true role of a Keeper or "Kahu". They will be tempted to introduce even more pageantry and newly devised protocols etc. that may present well on a Founders Day. That pageantry has no bearing the other 350 days of the year. One must KNOW the place to properly Steward.

The care of these Iwi and the stewardship of these grounds must be performed and fulfilled by the holders of the Ike necessary to do so and these State bodies need to publicly embrace this in order for the Lahui to have any confidence in their pursuits.

Respectfully submitted,

James Jay Kaleimamahu Crowningburg Maioho

Descendent of Ho'olulu and Kaihe'ekai

Kahu of Mauna Ala