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**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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**Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson**

**Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND**

**Thursday, March 18, 2021
8:30 AM**

State Capitol, Via Videoconference, Conference Room 430

**In consideration of
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 30/HOUSE RESOLUTION 23
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO
ESTABLISH A TASK FORCE TO PROPOSE A COMMUNITY-BASED
STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM FOR POLIHALE STATE PARK ON THE ISLAND OF
KAUAI.**

House Concurrent Resolution 30/House Resolution 23 requests the Department of Land and Natural Resources to establish a task force to propose a community-based stewardship program for Polihale State Park on the island of Kaua'i. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) appreciates the intent of these measures and offers the following comments.**

The Department appreciates the recognition of management deficiencies at Polihale State Park, which contains sensitive cultural and natural resources, as well as acknowledgement of the modern history of illicit and damaging activities by park visitors. The Department's Division of State Parks (State Parks) took the unprecedented step of closing this park to the general public for several months in 2020 after inappropriate uses involving vehicle access on the beach had reached a crescendo, triggering the need for prompt action for public health and safety due to COVID-19 related protocols.

Since 1987, State Parks has overseen a stewardship program statewide, comprising over 35 separate agreements to assist with stewardship, education and management of cultural sites, natural areas, trails and facilities within the Hawai'i State Park system. Such agreements greatly enhance the care and management of park resources.

SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ROBERT K. MASUDA
FIRST DEPUTY

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AQUATIC RESOURCES
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CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

The increased attention Polihale State Park has received due to the spotlighting of recent management problems, State Parks is prioritizing attention to this park unit, including requesting funding for park improvements and community-based planning. State Parks has already been approached by and entered into discussions with lineal and cultural descendants as well as other interested parties and we believe that a stewardship agreement will be achieved in the near future. We therefore feel that the goals of this resolution will be met without formal legislation.

The Department is acutely aware of the issues plaguing Polihale State Park, and therefore has budgeted existing capital improvement project (CIP) funds to initiate a management plan effort for Polihale State Park. We included CIP requests for park improvements in the current budget request as well as our 6-year CIP plan, with an aim toward creating a set of vehicle and transportation improvements to greatly enhance dune and beach protection measures. It is our hope that these requests will be supported, and that staff capacity can also be increased commensurate with economic recovery moving forward.

Adding a community-based stewardship component to this mix will increase capacity to properly educate the public on proper visitor behavior, and achieve a more appropriate balance between recreation and stewardship of the sensitive cultural and natural resources of Polihale.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these measures.