

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

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
WATER & LAND

Tuesday, March 28, 2023
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

In consideration of
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 50
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO PROVIDE
UPDATED STATISTICS AND FACTS RELATING TO THE DECLINE OF PALILA ON
MAUNA KEA AND INVESTIGATE THE FACTORS CAUSING THE DECLINE OF THE
PALILA POPULATION.

House Concurrent Resolution 50 requests the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to investigate causes of palila (*Loxioides bailleui*) decline, update facts and statistics on palila, and provide a report to the Legislature. **The Department supports this measure.**

The following is a summary of current and planned efforts by the Department to monitor and manage palila. Annual palila population surveys are conducted by the Department and the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit (PCSU), University of Hawai'i, and other partners. A recent report published by the Department, PCSU, and US Geological Survey showed that palila continue to decline on Mauna Kea, with population estimates of 1,432, 1,312, and 678 in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively (Genz et al. 2022, <https://dspace.lib.hawaii.edu/handle/10790/6858>). The 2021 population estimate of 678 palila is the lowest estimate since annual surveys began in 1998. The Department began conducting quarterly palila population surveys in 2022 to more closely monitor the palila population and funding is being sought to analyze the resulting data collected in 2022 and 2023.

The Department has applied for funding from the United States (U.S.) Department of Defense to conduct a demographic study on palila to better understand causes of population decline and plan recovery actions for palila. If funded, this project will commence in Fiscal Year (FY) 24 and include monitoring of palila nests to determine whether invasive predators such as cats are implicated in the decline. Further funding to research sources of palila population decline is being sought from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

DAWN N.S. CHANG
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LAND
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Three to four aerial shooting operations are conducted annually by the Department to remove the remaining sheep within Palila Critical Habitat. Approximately 25 “Judas” sheep with radio-transmitters are used to locate and target the remaining sheep herds. In 2022, 267 sheep were removed via four aerial shoots. There are around 4,000 acres of Department of Hawaiian Home Lands within the Palila Critical Habitat fence that the Department is unable to access to complete animal control.

There remains approximately 7.7 miles of Palila Critical Habitat fence to be replaced. Capital Improvement Funds (CIP) awarded in 2020 and 2021 at \$500,000 per year for two years are currently being used to complete the remaining five miles of fence replacement along the Parker Ranch border. That fencing work is under contract. A CIP request for \$200,000 awarded in the FY 23 supplemental budget will be used to purchase materials to complete the 2.7 mile fence replacement on the Kukaiau Ranch border. The existing new and old fence continues to be maintained to address ongoing vandalism, damage from washouts, and gates being left open allowing sheep and goat ingress.

The Mauna Kea Forest Restoration Project continues to carry out reforestation in key areas within Palila Critical Habitat, as well as predator control and invasive plant management to benefit palila. Since 2007, the project has planted approximately 230,000 trees to restore and improve habitat conditions for palila. Plots are surveyed to monitor the forest recovery.

The Palila Hui is currently finalizing an action plan that outlines recovery actions for palila for the period 2023 to 2027.

Mitigating the risk of wildlife is another critical management action for palila. Fuel breaks and fire breaks continue to be maintained. The Department is in the planning process to expand these fuel breaks to minimize the risk of a major fire in the region. We are seeking funding from U.S. Department of Defense to increase this effort and to maintain water sources for firefighting.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

HCR-50

Submitted on: 3/24/2023 11:23:51 AM

Testimony for WAL on 3/28/2023 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cards Pintor	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support this resolution.

Mahalo nui,

Cards Pintor