



The Senate

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Concerns on Public Land Development Corporation Must Be Addressed

Honolulu -- "Insuring that the residents of Hawai'i directly benefit from the thousands of acres they own as public lands throughout the State -- and putting in place 21st century partnership strategies to protect and appropriately steward these lands now and for future generations -- these are the reasons I voted for the Public Land Development Corporation -- Act 55, which was passed by the 2011 Legislature," said Hawai'i Island Senator Malama Solomon (District 1, Waimea, Hamakua, North Hilo, Rural South Hilo and Hilo).

But implementation of Act 55 has drawn a wave of concern during recent statewide public hearings on PLDC draft Administrative Rules.

"I am sorely disappointed that there is so much misinformation, but I also understand the concern. Our public lands are a 'treasure' that must be protected. Listening to the concerns raised, the Governor and the PLDC have agreed to work with the State Senate and House Committees on Water/Land and prepare a Strategic Plan that clarifies the vision, mission, goals and values of the PLDC, putting public benefits as the top priority," said Sen. Solomon.

"Our state is very unique in the nation. The State owns and manages most of the public lands, while in other states, the federal government is the owner and manager. This legislation is patterned after the Federal National Park Mission statement, which is to conserve the scenery, the natural and historic objects and to provide for the public's enjoyment of these features in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations," said Sen. Solomon, who supported the legislation that created the PLDC as Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Water, Land and Housing.

"Our committee and others in both the House and Senate spent a great deal of time in public hearings drafting this legislation to be sure environmental, cultural and sunshine laws and regulations were honored and that the end product really would put public interest first," Sen. Solomon said.

"It is my hope and vision that PLDC creates a vehicle to replicate what I call "The Yosemite Model" -- which incorporates the National Park Mission Statement, protecting the great beauty and environmental integrity of this national treasure, while providing recreational choices, employment and income generation to support essential health and safety services and caretaking."

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“Some of the concerns raised reflect misunderstandings. PLDC projects shall comply with EIS (HRS 343), Historic Preservation (HRS 6E), Hawai’i Sunshine Law (HRS 92), Prohibition on sale of ceded lands (HRS 171-64.7), and Wage Rate Schedule (HRS 104). There’s a laundry list of guidelines that delineates precautions imposed to insure that PLDC-initiated partnerships “improve our communities, create jobs, and expand public benefit.”

“For some, partnerships are a new way of doing business, but in today’s economic climate, partnerships are the only way we can effectively improve public benefit and make things happen without raising taxes or fees,” said Sen. Solomon.

Also, PLDC partnerships must have (1) value and significance to the community, (2) help preserve culture, agriculture, conservation and preservation; (3) be self-sustaining, (4) have a positive economic impact, and (5) have long-term value, according to the PLDC Operating Framework – 2012.

The agreement by the Governor and PLDC to prepare a PLDC Strategic Plan was announced in a letter Sen. Solomon wrote to Kalbert Young, Chair of the Public Land Development Corporation (PLDC), specifically in response to concerns expressed at statewide public hearings regarding the intention of the PLDC’s purpose and mission.

“Concerns raised related to Native Hawaiian land rights seriously got my attention,” said Sen. Solomon, who has been at the forefront of protection of Hawaiian lands and rights issues for nearly 30 years, beginning with serving as one of the first elected Trustees Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

“Act 55 creating PLDC says that PLDC will pay OHA any ceded land revenues as required by HRS 10-13.5. Further, to the extent that the PLDC has a role in addressing other Native Hawaiian issues, the legislature and governor have agreed to do everything in our power to ensure that the PLDC works collaboratively with the appropriate agencies.”

For more specifics on the PLDC Operating Framework, Mission, Vision, Values, Key elements, go to:
<http://manage.hawaii.gov/gov/faq/public-land-development-corporation-pldc>.

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