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TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WATER & LAND
HEARING ON MARCH 28, 2023 AT 9:30AM IN CR 430

HCR 153 / HR 154

March 28, 2023

Aloha Chair Ichiyama, Vice Chair Poepoe, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) submits comments on HCR 153 / HR 154 requesting DHHL to conduct a study that evaluates possible methods of flood remediation and flood aversion for areas of the island of Molokai populated by beneficiaries of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended.

In December 2022, the Hawaiian Homes Commission approved the South Molokai Shoreline Erosion Management Plan (SM-SEMP) which can be accessed on pages 215-325 of this link [HHC Agenda master \(hawaii.gov\)](#). The approved SM-SEMP permits DHHL to begin the planning process for the “Developing Community Resilience for Molokai Coastal Homesteads” project, to take place over the next two years. This effort will be rolled into the subsequent preparation of a Community Resilience Plan for the ahupua'a of Kalama'ula, Kapa'akea, Kamiloloa and Makakupa'ia, and the DHHL-owned portion of Mālama Park in the ahupua'a of Kaunakakai. This next project is supported by funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF). The project is scheduled to begin in 2023 and will continue for the next two years.

While the SM-SEMP meets the definition of a shoreline erosion management plan, the document will be utilized in the near term as a technical background study that will provide best practices, site-specific data and recommendations for action to support the next phase of work, which will be preparation of a Community Resilience Plan for the project area's ahupua'a.

One outcome of the SM-SEMP planning process has been identification of additional climate change-related impacts such as groundwater upwelling, cesspool failures, and flooding from stormwater runoff during heavy rain events. A more comprehensive, ahupua'a-based approach, in coordination with other landowners, governmental agencies at all levels, and Molokai-based nonprofits will be needed to

adequately address erosion and flooding impacts affecting low-lying coastal homestead areas.

Now that the HHC has approved the update of DHHL's General Plan, it is anticipated that the next update of the Molokai Island Plan will have an evaluation of projected sea level rise and other climate change-related impacts anticipated to occur within the twenty-year planning timeframe, with an emphasis on adaptation and mitigation measures and ways to increase community resilience in a more extreme climate.

DHHL also intends to initiate the following next steps.

- Bring a homestead-specific analysis of climate change-related risks and vulnerabilities, via GIS mapping, to the HHC in the next several months.
- Conduct a workshop for the Commission to generate recommendations and direction on prioritization of DHHL responses to climate change impacts – to include a summary of climate change-related legislation in 2023 and proposed legislation for 2024 – and an annual update on statewide initiatives.
- Continue to include climate change-related policies in the General Plan update process, then implement via the Island Plan and Regional Plan updates.
- Continue to work on a more coordinated approach to DHHL representation and involvement in various disaster preparedness and community resilience planning processes, policies, and implementation activities at the federal, state and county levels.
- Schedule cross-training on climate change and community resilience planning for the Planning Office, Land Management, and Land Development Division staff.
- Continue to include considerations of sea level rise, climate change and hazard vulnerability in the criteria for evaluating land exchanges and acquisitions.
- Initiate island-specific climate change “deep dives” in 2023 to present more detailed updates on climate change and sea level rise impacts for each island.

Molokai people are the experts on their island home, and most if not all either grew up on the shoreline or spent many hours of their childhood there. Many still use the shoreline and nearshore waters regularly for subsistence. They have seen the changes that have occurred over time, and their participation in shoreline erosion mitigation, climate change adaptation and coastal stewardship activities will be crucial to the success of DHHL's implementation efforts in the coming years.