

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, February 14, 2023
8:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 430

In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 702
RELATING TO THE STATE PARKS

House Bill 702 proposes to require the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) to conduct a study of the carrying capacity of Mākena State Park in the County of Maui and appropriates funds. **The Department opposes this measure and provides the following comments.**

Mākena State Park is comprised of Oneloa (Big Beach) and Pu'u Ōla'i (Little Beach). At nearly two-thirds of a mile long (3,800 ft) Oneloa is one of Maui's largest and one of its most undeveloped beaches. Due to the remote location, Mākena State Park is one of 7 park units across the State with a live in Park Caretaker, who is specifically assigned to Mākena to maintain the park's natural amenity's and limited built infrastructure.

The bathymetry of the shoreline creates a significant shore break, and there is a history of severe spinal injuries. The Department's Division of State Parks (State Parks) contracts the services of Maui County Lifeguards, and the length of the beach requires that two towers are in place. The annual current contract cost for lifeguard salaries is \$1,610,237 dollars. The lifeguards have not indicated to State Parks that current patronage exceeds their ability to provide adequate coverage and ocean safety.

Management of rubbish requires only one 8-yard dumpster to collect all the trash gathered throughout the park daily by the Park Caretaker, it is emptied twice a week. Due to the lack of water and comfort stations, there are 10 standard and 2 ADA porta potties within the park that are serviced 3 times per week at a cost of \$27,600.00 annually.

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
LAURA H.E. KAAKUA
FIRST DEPUTY
M. KALEO MANUEL
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

There is Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds that has been deployed for planning and environmental review for the construction of a comfort station and rinsing showers, but that is now subject to a legal challenge that may jeopardize the ability to construct the amenities before the CIP funds lapse. Dune protection measures are underway by replanting with native coastal plants and roping off about 150 feet of dune sections towards the south end of the park where iwi has been inadvertently exposed due to coastal processes.

Current parking at both paved parking lots is comprised of 108 total marked stalls with plans for the north and south parking lots to also include paving and striping of the shoulder areas of the entry road. This will add 97 stalls to the north parking lot and an additional 41 to the south parking lot. However, this will not significantly add stalls or patronage, as these shoulder areas are already being used informally for parking. The new striping and paving will organize how the public parks in these areas. 246 cars will be the approximate total parking capacity. There is an appearance of overcrowding based on cars parked along the exterior county roadway. This is due to out of state visitors who frequently park along the mauka shoulder of the roadway to avoid paying the parking fee. When others see the cars along the roadway, there is a tendency to follow suit as others may think the lots are full. However, the interior lots rarely are all full. There is discussion among staff to install exterior fencing to better manage the flow of people and to further ensure that capacity is regulated by reducing the exterior parking, as the park boundary is very porous.

In FY22, Mākena fees from out of state visitors totaled \$933,705.25. With better boundary management, it is anticipated that this income will increase. The additional \$676,532 needed to cover current lifeguard cost is derived from other park unit revenues deposited into the State Park special fund.

State Parks is examining new and improved methods of destination management at targeted park units heavily patronized by visitors, but currently Mākena patronage and the ability to manage vehicle load, collect rubbish and ensure no impact from human waste, coupled with the spacious geography of Oneloa, a study to determine absolute capacity or establishing a reservation system is unwarranted at this time.

The only crowding that is discernable and where impacts may be more prevalent is Pu‘u Ōla‘i (Little Beach) which has only 400 linear feet of shoreline and is separated by a short but technical 0.8-mile trail from Oneloa. There are no porta potties close by, and there are archeological resources nestled between the small beach and Pu‘u Ōla‘i. Before the early closure of Pu‘u Ōla‘i at 4 pm on weekends, (7:00 pm is the closure time for Oneloa and the rest of the park), weekly drum circles that included illegal fire used in conjunction with dancing, use of alcohol and controlled substances and crowds of upwards to 400 people would gather on this Pu‘u Ōla‘i (Little Beach). However, the early closure has eliminated this illicit activity and weekly crowding.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



MAUI TOMORROW

Protecting Maui's Future

Testimony before the
House Committee on Water & Land

February 14, 2023

H.B. No. 702 – Relating to State Parks
STRONG SUPPORT

By Albert Perez
Executive Director
Maui Tomorrow Foundation

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

The Maui Tomorrow Foundation **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** HB 702. Thank you for hearing this important bill.

In the 1980s when the Wailea-Mākena area began experiencing rapid growth, developers made plans to build beachfront condos at Oneloa (or Big Beach), which was then a long, isolated stretch of sand surrounded by kiawe. Realizing what was at stake, citizens began a successful effort to convince the Legislature to acquire the land. The result is Mākena State Park, now one of the most popular beach parks on Maui. The waters offshore are still some of the cleanest in the state, and endangered hawksbill turtles are known to nest there.

Today this park is under immense pressure as a result of increasing tourism numbers. Residents are often unable to find parking. A carrying capacity study is needed to determine whether the Park's environmental, cultural, psychological or social carrying capacity have been exceeded. If such a study is not conducted, Mākena State Park will be at risk of losing its 'sense of place' due to the impacts of overtourism on the ecosystem and landscape. Many would argue that this has already occurred, but there is no objective way of knowing without conducting a carrying capacity study.

The Division of State Parks has already taken action to manage overtourism on Kauaʻi, through its adoption of the Hāʻena State Park Master Plan. This plan aims to improve the long-term management of the park and visitor satisfaction by implementing transportation and parking management practices; as well as establishing a target for a reduction in the number of daily visitors.

Similarly, in recent years crowding at Waianapanapa State Park near Hāna had impacted the adjacent community and overall visitor experiences. In response, a reservation system was launched, with fees for visitor entry and parking, while Hawaiʻi residents are still able to park there for free.

Mākena State Park deserves the same consideration, and a carrying capacity study will be the first step.

I urge you to support this important bill.

Mahalo,

Albert Perez
Executive Director
Maui Tomorrow Foundation