



East Maui Watershed Partnership

East Moloka'i Watershed Partnership

Kaua'i Watershed Alliance

Kohala Watershed Partnership

Ko'olau Mountain Watershed Partnership

Leeward Haleakala Watershed Restoration Partnership

Mauna Kea Watershed Alliance

Three Mountain Alliance

Wai'anae Mountains Watershed Partnership

West Maui Mountains Watershed Partnership

url www.hawp.org

Testimony of Trae Menard, Chair of the Hawai'i Association of Watershed Partnerships, to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources October 18, 2016.

Aloha. My name is Trae Menard and am providing testimony in my capacity as Chair of the Hawai'i Association of Watershed Partnerships and from my perspective as the coordinator of the Kaua'i Watershed Alliance for the past 11 years.

Watershed partnerships are voluntary alliances between public agencies and private landowners who recognize that the best way to protect our forested watersheds and the source of our fresh drinking water was through collaborative management across landscapes. Starting with the East Maui Watershed Partnership, which formed in 1991, there are now 10 active watershed partnerships on all of the major islands with 74 partners, containing 2.2 million acres, roughly half of the entire state. The East Maui Watershed Partnership was one of the first watershed partnerships in the world and now the watershed partnership model is replicated nationally and globally. As such, Hawai'i is now broadly recognized as a leader in watershed management.

The fundamental concept behind the watershed partnership model stems from the realization that the only way to address the primary threats to the forest is to work across landowner boundaries and apply the necessary management actions consistently and at a large scale. Before the partnerships, these actions were occurring mostly on state and federal lands, with very little private landowner cooperation, resulting in fragmented protection. For example, before the Kaua'i Watershed Partnership formed in 2002, there was very little communication between the state and the private landowners, virtually no forest protection actions taking place on private land and very little interest in conservation. Today, private landowner partners account for over 600,000 acres, or 26% of the total statewide watershed partnership lands and are committed to the protecting watersheds and conserving native forests. The partnership meetings are a forum to discuss a variety of environmental topics, ranging from endangered species, invasive species, water issues and pollution. Whenever federal agencies are planning a particular action, like critical habitat designations or endangered species listings, they contact the watershed partnership first to facilitate communication with the key landowners.

For the past 25 years, the coordinators of these partnerships and their staff have been constructing fences and removing destructive feral, hooved animals from thousands of acres of priority forested watershed areas throughout the state and controlling invasive plants, some of which use significantly more water than native vegetation. In many cases, they've been active in preventing and controlling wildfires, combating forest diseases and pests, like Rapid Ohia Death, planting native trees and restoring degraded areas, and educating the public about the cultural, economic and environmental importance of Hawai'i's forests. All of these actions are detailed in watershed management plans, which are developed by the

Protecting and sustaining the forest, the water and the people of Hawai'i.

coordinators and approved by the partners in each partnership and then implemented by the coordinators and their staff. The coordinators are responsible for compiling most of the environmental documentation and acquiring permits, with help from staff at the State's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) and holding public meetings. A typical day for the coordinators and their staff can include working with local hunters on the location of the next fence, managing complex helicopter operations in bad weather, hiking miles through dense forest and rugged terrain, crossing raging streams or rappelling off cliffs. This is a difficult and dangerous job that requires highly skilled, trained and dedicated staff, willing to do whatever it takes to achieve the goals.

Governor Ige, in his address to the World Conservation Congress, made the commitment to protect 30% of our watershed forests by 2030. That's 235,000 acres, fenced and free of damaging feral, hooved animals. We are currently protecting 15%, 5% of which became protected in the last five years. If we are to meet this ambitious goal, we need maintain the pace of adding new fenced and managed acres while maintaining the acres already protected. Daunting as it may seem, the watershed partnerships are fully prepared to make this goal a reality. We have the technology, the experience, and the proven track record of success. What we need is a consistent flow of funding, and this is where agencies like the Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture and even the Department of Defense can play a decisive role. We have a long history of working with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S Forest Service, The Natural Resource Conservation Service and the U.S. Army and hope to continue that relationship in the coming years.

In closing, I want to leave you with a quotation from Hawai'i's first Territorial Forester, Ralph. S. Hosmer. "In Hawai'i, the most valuable product of the forest is water, rather than wood. It follows that conservation of its watersheds by keeping them permanently clothed in protecting forests, is the chief duty of the forester". The first foresters in Hawai'i recognized the importance of watershed protection to sustain our fresh water resources and now it is our duty to carry out their vision and secure the future of Hawai'i for its people.

Mahalo for inviting me to present the to the committee.

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