

GM 561



KŪKULU KE EA A KANALOA

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KAHO'OLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

811 Kolu Street, Suite 201, Wailuku, HI 96793
Telephone (808) 243-5020 Fax (808) 243-5885

LATE

TESTIMONY OF

MICHAEL NAHO'OPI'I, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OF THE KAHO'OLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION

On GM 561, For Consideration and Confirmation of Amber Namaka Whitehead as
Gubernatorial Nominee to the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission

Before the
SENATE AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Monday, April 15, 2008, 1:15pm. Room 414

Aloha Chairperson Tokuda, Vice-Chairperson English, and members of the Committee. Governor's Message No. 561 nominates Amber Namaka Whitehead to serve on the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) in the seat reserved for a representative of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO). On behalf of the Commission, I wish to express our strong support for Namaka and recommend her confirmation to a term with the KIRC that will expire in June 2012.

Namaka Whitehead represents the future of Kaho'olawe with her youthful perspective. Although she is relatively young, she brings a wealth of valuable talent and experience in terms of her educational accomplishments, her work history, and her practical experience on Kaho'olawe. Together she will become a valuable asset to the KIRC and to Kaho'olawe and the protection of its resources.

A graduate of Kamehameha Schools in 1997, Namaka went on to earn a B.A. in Hawaiian Studies and Botany from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 2002. She currently is enrolled in the Department of Botany in a PhD program specializing in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology.

Since 2004, Namaka has been employed by the Kamehameha Schools as an Ecologist for lands on Hawai'i, O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Maui. Namaka manages the natural resources, stewardship activities and partnerships for over 360,000 acres of land and she oversees and is responsible for a budget of 2 million dollars.

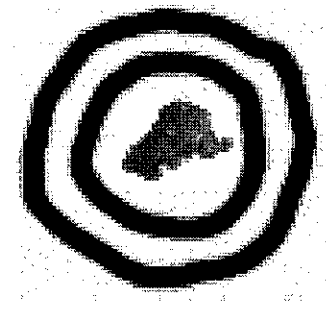
With the activities and achievements noted above, Namaka has been actively involved with the PKO for over 14 years. With each experience Namaka has grown and dedicated much

of her time and her young life to caring for Kaho'olawe. With each year of growth, she has also acquired more and more responsibility and has become an Access Guide for the PKO, which requires attention and responsibility to participants in visits to Kaho'olawe, to the operations undertaken by the PKO and to general caring for Kaho'olawe itself. Namaka has been trained in health and safety measures, in ordnance identification, in cultural customs and practices.

Namaka's youth, life experiences, and foresight speak volumes to the type of dedicated person she is to her environment, to the Hawaiian culture and to Kaho'olawe. She will be and already is an asset to the resource issues and policy issues facing the KIRC. As one of the next generation of PKO leaders and as a KIRC commissioner her leadership and expertise will take the KIRC and Kaho'olawe into a new era.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer this testimony in strong support of Amber Namaka Whitehead as a commissioner for the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission.

**KOHE MALAMALAMA O KANALOA
PROTECT KAHO'OLAWE FUND
P.O. Box 39
Kaunakakai, Hawai'i 96748**



Testimony in Support of GM 561

For Consideration and Confirmation of Amber Namaka Whitehead as
Gubernatorial Nominee to the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission
Before the
SENATE AGRICULTURE AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Monday, April 15, 2008
1:15pm, Room 414

Aloha Chairperson Tokuda and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Hawaiian Affairs. My name is Dr. Davianna Pomaika'i McGregor and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana in support of the appointment of Amber Namaka Whitehead to the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission, effective July 1, 2008. As I am doing field work in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Ms. Anela Evans is presenting this testimony on behalf of the 'Ohana.

As background, HRS 6K-5(a)(2) states, "Two members shall be appointed by the governor from a list provided by the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana." Mr. Robert Lu'uwai, whose term expires in June 2007 was appointed in accordance with this provision of HRS 6K-5(a)(2). Thus, the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana submitted the name of Ms. Amber Namaka Whitehead to Governor Linda Lingle.

Amber Namaka Whitehead has been a member of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana for the past 14 years. With each year, she has assumed increasingly more responsibilities for the participants who journey to Kaho'olawe with the 'Ohana, and for the overall operations of the 'Ohana and for the island itself. During the past year, for example, she worked on the reconstruction of the traditional Hale Halawai in Hakioawa, constructed of pili grass and 'ohi'a logs. For this project she not only helped to gather the logs from Hawai'i island and the pili from Moloka'i, she also went to Kaho'olawe once a month to lash and thatch all of these materials together.

A primary responsibility that Ms. Whitehead has assumed is that of access guide. In 2004 she underwent training in the identification of unexploded ordnance and

in safety and health measures and procedures to provide a safe experience in guiding those who visit the island. As a commissioner, Ms. Whitehead would thus contribute a first-hand knowledge of the unexploded ordnance, health and safety risks and challenges which the KIRC and its staff confront on a regular basis and for which the Commission develops policies.

Ms. Whitehead's true expertise, however, is the management and stewardship of natural resources. Ms. Whitehead earned a B.A. in Hawaiian Studies and a B.A. in Botany from the University of Hawai'i in May 2002. She is currently enrolled in the PhD program in the UH Botany Department, specializing in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology. She has jointly published two articles in science journals based on her research of Native Hawaiian ferns and the impacts of alien invasive species in Hawaiian forests.

For the past three and a half years, Ms. Whitehead, in her position of Ecologist, has managed the natural resources, stewardship activities and partnerships on 360,000 acres of lands owned by the Kamehameha Schools on Hawai'i, Maui, O'ahu, Moloka'i and Kaua'i with a \$2 million annual program budget.

Ms. Whitehead's activities and involvement with the island of Kaho'olawe has always been rooted in a deep love and understanding of the island as the living entity, Kanaloa which is at the heart of the KIRC mission. This is an important quality for a KIRC commissioner who will be developing policies for the island as a Native Hawaiian cultural reserve. She has been trained in and is knowledgeable about the various cultural customs and practices that have been part of the restoration of the cultural resources of Kaho'olawe.

Finally, Ms. Whitehead, having graduated from the Kamehameha Schools in 1997, is part of the younger generation who are assuming leadership of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. Moreover, Namaka has the confidence of this next generation of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana as they assume the responsibility of fulfilling the vision of kupuna, such as Uncle Harry Mitchell and makua such as George Helm, who laid the groundwork for the 'Ohana to restore the cultural and natural resources of the island.

Namaka will contribute a youthful and informed perspective to the KIRC as they plan for the future of the island. Ms. Whitehead has already demonstrated ability and dedication to restore Kaho'olawe/Kanaloa as a pu'uhonua or cultural refuge where the Native Hawaiian lifestyle and culture can flourish and become embraced by all of the people of Hawai'i - Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian alike.

Kelvin Ho
PO Box 769
Lawai, Hawaii 96765

April 14, 2008

Aloha e

I am writing as a member of the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana in full support of Amber Namaka Whitehead's nomination as a commissioner for the KIRC. I have been involved with the PKO since the early 90s and have had the opportunity to witness the growth and flowering of Namaka as she has matured over this time. Her presence and spirit is treasured in the 'ohana and we believe her to be a very wise choice for this position. On and off island she has demonstrated a dedicated commitment to preserving our culture and the well being of our island community. She is known for her traits of strength, perseverance, agility, focus, flexibility, diplomacy and ability to lift others through her leadership. Her depth of knowledge and passion for the preservation, cultivation and restoration of native plants makes her the perfect candidate for a position in an entity that is dedicated to healing and welfare of Kanaloa. On island she is the go to person when any of us has questions on native plants. She has come up through the ranks, serving selflessly on countless accesses hosting and safely introducing a myriad of groups in their first experiences of what the essence of Kaho'olawe is all about.

My understanding of a commissioner's kuleana is to serve as a bridge and to guide. I believe Namaka to be very well suited and prepared for this. The timing now to have a strong, dedicated, youthful kanaka wahine voice and perspective is very fitting. The 'Ohana unanimously and vigorously supports her selection. When the kupuna speak of her they pay her the highest compliment is saying "she is well raised" which reflects on the direct connection to her lineage and the outstanding job her family has done in raising a fine leader, steward and voice for all of Hawai'i.

Mahalo nui for the time you take in hearing this support and I fully trust you will be guided by what is best for Kaho'olawe as the piko of these islands.

Sincerely,

Kelvin Ho