



Aha Kiole Advisory Committee

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1483,
RELATING TO THE MOLOKA'I
IRRIGATION SYSTEM.

Submitted to: Hearing of the Committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair Representative Faye Hanohano and Members of the Committee

Hearing Date: February 2, 2011, 8:30 a.m.

Submitted by: Vanda Hanakahi, Kiole, Moloka'i (Chair)

Aloha Chair Hanohano and Members of the House Committee on Hawaiian Affairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of H.B. 1483, the bill that directs the Department of Agriculture to provide water to Moloka'i Irrigation System users who lease tracts of land under section 207 of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended, at a reduced rate. This bill requires the DOA to forgive past due bills for the provision of irrigation water for Moloka'i homestead farmers.

Water is a critical component to the needs of Native Hawaiians on Hawaiian Homestead lands in Moloka'i and is desperately needed for agricultural purposes and to actually survive. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 specifically was created to enable Native Hawaiians to return to their lands and to promote self-sufficiency. However, this self-sufficiency cannot be achieved without water. On Moloka'i, the cost of water is probably the highest in the State of Hawai'i and the lack of it causes an extreme hardship for homestead farmers who must depend on their farms to exist.

The Aha Moku System of land and ocean management is in full operation on Moloka'i in all of the five moku: Kaluakoi, Palaau, Kawela (Kona), Koolau, and Halawa. Primarily, the residents on all five moku are homesteaders. Dependent on traditional resource management that balances the ecosystem, the Aha Moku System is also dependent on water. And, Native Hawaiian families who are descendant from the original homestead farmers who live in these five moku are in desperate need of assistance now.

In 1926, my great-grandfather, Moke Maka'iwi came to Moloka'i from the lush taro lands of Waikapu on Maui to the dry arid lands of Ho'olehua on Moloka'i. This was the 2nd homestead created by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act. The original and first homestead was also on Moloka'i in Kalamaula. The obstacles facing my ancestors were immense and include high

winds, untamed land and a lack of sufficient water to farm. Faced with the mandate of “making the homestead productive” or everyone in Hawai’i would lose the homestead program completely, through pule, the water came. For two straight weeks, the rain bombarded Moloka’i and the roads ran like rivers. In the 1960’s and 1970’s it became apparent that an irrigation system was needed to ensure productive farming. Water allotments to Hawaiian communities began.

When the Moloka’i Irrigation Ditch was created for the homesteaders to be used for agricultural purposes, the agreement made between the Dept. of Hawaiian Home Lands, the homesteaders and the Dept. of Water Supply was that sufficient water be given to the homestead farmers to be used for their farming. Over the years, the federal mandate that homesteaders be given two-thirds of the water allotment has either been forgotten or lost its strength. Now, the costs for water for homesteaders are more than the families can handle and still survive.

Our Native Hawaiian homesteaders on Moloka’i, descendants of the original homestead created in Hawai’i need to be able to sustain their farms, their environment and their lands with enough water to survive, and to thrive.

We urge the passage of H.B. 1483.

Mahalo nui loa,

Vanda Hanakahi, Kiolo, Moloka’i, Chair

Aha Kiolo Advisory Committee

P.O. Box 507

Ho’olehua, HI 96729

Phone: 808-336-6184

Email: kaiwilauula@yahoo.com

clee2 - Matt

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2011 7:40 PM
To: HAWtestimony
Cc: pennysfh@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Testimony for HB1483 on 2/2/2011 8:30:00 AM

Testimony for HAW 2/2/2011 8:30:00 AM HB1483

Conference room: 329
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Penny Levin
Organization: Individual
Address: Wailuku, Maui
Phone:
E-mail: pennysfh@hawaii.rr.com
Submitted on: 1/31/2011

Comments:

I am a member of the Taro Security and Purity Task Force but testifying as an individual. The improvement of the Molokai irrigation system, resolution of issues related to funding for repairs and water distribution on the system, and restoration of equitable water resource distribution to Hawaiian homesteads on Molokai is in line with the recognized needs of Molokai taro farmers as noted in the task force 2010 Report to the Legislature, pg.38.

Please support HB1483.
Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.