



## Hawaii Agriculture Research Center

Administration: P.O. Box 100, Kunia, HI 96759

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a member of the  
**Kunia Water Cooperative**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEES ON  
AGRICULTURE  
AND  
WATER, LAND, & OCEAN RESOURCES**

**HOUSE BILL 1571**

**Relating to Agriculture**

February 7, 2011

Chairmen Tsuji and Chang and Members of your Committees:

My name is Stephanie Whalen. I am Executive Director of the Hawaii Agriculture Research Center (HARC). I am testifying today on behalf of the center and our research and support staff. I also am the President of the Kunia Water Cooperative and I am testifying on its behalf

**HARC strongly supports House Bill 1571 supporting the improvement of the irrigation infrastructure for the Waiahole water system.**

HARC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support agriculture in Hawaii through research and infrastructure preservation. Its experiment station is located at the urban/agricultural boundary in the Kunia agricultural area, essentially the gateway to this agricultural district. It has been stated in the past as being located among some of the best agricultural lands in the state. In the sugar era it produced some of the highest yields on record. It continues to show that with other crops.

HARC recently agreed to an agricultural easement on the property to protect this land for agricultural production in perpetuity. This prevents the encroachment of urbanization in the future as desired by the surrounding communities and expressed in the Central Oahu and Ewa Development plans.

The only source of agricultural water for HARC is the Waiahole Irrigation System. The Board of Water Supply limited the use of potable water to domestic use on this parcel and where available to other agricultural operations in the area. Without water there can be no viable agriculture on this land as it receives very little rainfall.

The federal government and the state hold this agricultural easement requiring that the land remain in agriculture. Consequently, there is a public interest in ensuring that water is available to this property.

The Kunia Water Cooperative was established to represent the producers using the Waiahole Irrigation System. It has 9 members and over 50 farms being serviced. For the majority of farms this is the sole source of water for their crops. For much of the acreage in the Kunia area developing a well is not an option as the aquifer under most of these lands allocation has already been meted out.

The system is made up of a series of natural dikes and tunnels, 7 siphons, and open ditches. The system remarkably uses gravity to transport water for 25.3 miles through the central plain. Cooperative members along the ditch help in maintaining the integrity of the ditch as the Waiahole Irrigation System maintenance crew is too small to deal with all the maintenance issues for this system.

Three of the seven siphons have been repaired but the other four remain perilously deteriorated. If one or more of these siphons collapse it would take several months to get the system back in service. It took over 18 months for one of the siphons in the Wahiawa Irrigation System to be replaced after the major storm took it out a few years back. Considering the number of farms, the diversity of crops, and the 1,000s of acres of this prime agricultural area support for irrigation, infrastructure needs to be a high priority.

It is the Kunia Water Cooperative's and HARC's desire that this system be made less risky over the next several years by approving this proposed measure and advancing it to the next committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Hawaii's agricultural needs.

**Halm's Enterprise  
966 Robello Lane  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817  
a member of  
Kunia Water Cooperative**

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ON AGRICULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND & OCEAN RESOURCES**

**HOUSE BILL 1571**

**Relating to Agriculture**

February 7, 2011

Chairman Tsuji, Chairman Chang, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mike Irish. I am CEO of Halms Enterprises. I am testifying today on behalf of my company and its employees and as a member of the cooperative.

Halms Enterprises strongly supports House Bill 1571, Relating to Agriculture, which proposes support for the improvement of irrigation infrastructure for the Waiahole water system.

This water system is an integral part of agriculture in the Kunia area, where we have our farm. This farm produces vegetables for many of our Kim Chee products for Halms, as well as taro leaf for our subsidiary company, Keoki's Lau Lau.

The Waiahole water system has been in place since 1915, and is in dire need of repair. Damage to the system could be fatal to the farms, as there is only 3-5 days of water storage if a siphon fails. We are requesting Capital Improvements in the amount of \$2 million - \$250,000 for plans and \$250,000 for design, as well as \$1,500,000 for construction of one siphon, totaling \$2 million.

The agricultural community in Hawaii has changed drastically over the years. What once was land used to grow pineapple and sugar cane has evolved to encompass different types of produce as well as crops used to sustain ecological technology for our future generations. Please support our farmers in Hawaii, and help us to provide our state with the products and ecological technology that we need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Hawaii's agricultural needs.

2/04/2011

House Committee on Agriculture  
Chair – Rep. Clift Tsuji  
House Committee on Water, Land and Natural resources  
Chair – Rep. Jerry Chang

Meeting Date: February 7, 2011 @ 11:15 A.M.  
House Conference Room 325  
Hawaii State Capital 415 S. Beretania St.

**RE: Joint House Committee hearing on HB1571.**

Joint Chairman Tsuji and Chang,

This letter is in **FAVOR** to the **House effort to issue \$2 million dollars in general obligation bonds to repair and maintain the Waiahole Ditch System on Oahu.** If passed, this money will be used to repair and replace badly corroded siphons that run along the 27 mile length of this important water delivery system.

I am in favor because the water delivered to West Oahu by this system is used to produce food for the State of Hawaii (Jefts Farm, Aloun Farms, Fat-Law Farms) as well as provides water for the seed industry in Hawaii, an industry that pumps \$222 million dollars annually into the State of Hawaii.

I request Hawaii lawmakers to seriously consider and to pass this legislation that will repair an aging water system that supports our agricultural industry.

I urge the House Committee on Agriculture and the House committee on Water, Land, and Natural resources to pass HB1571.

Sincerely,

Michael Austin  
PO Box 26441

Honolulu, Hawaii 96825

## hashem3 - Casey

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**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Friday, February 04, 2011 8:26 AM  
**To:** AGRtestimony  
**Cc:** john.mchugh@pioneer.com  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB1571 on 2/7/2011 11:15:00 AM

Testimony for AGR/WLO 2/7/2011 11:15:00 AM HB1571

Conference room: 325  
Testifier position: support  
Testifier will be present: No  
Submitted by: John McHugh  
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Submitted on: 2/4/2011

### Comments:

I have been in agriculture in Hawaii for 37 years. During that time access to land and water have been critical for the success of agriculture in our state. Currently one of the major irrigation water distribution systems, the Waiahole Ditch, is showing its age at over 100 years. The failure of the Ditch system is not an if but when certainty. The farms using that water contribute significantly to the economy of the state. Because of this I urge you to approve HB1571 which will appropriate funds needed to repair the Ditch and/or replace those critical portions of it which are in urgent need of attention. By doing this we can assure that the farms using the system continue to contribute significantly to the economy of the state of Hawaii by providing good paying jobs with excellent benefits and paying state taxes.

Mahalo.

John J. McHugh, Jr. Ph.D.  
Agronomist and Research Scientist  
Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.  
Kunia, Hawaii