

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR OF
HAWAII



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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**Testimony of
SUZANNE D. CASE
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Wednesday, May 13, 2020
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 016**

**In consideration of
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 770
SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE
ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY COMMITTEE, GUBERNATORIAL
NOMINEE, LOYAL ARCHIE MEHRHOFF, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 6-30-2023**

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) expresses its support for Governor's Message 770 on the confirmation of Dr. Loyal Mehrhoff as a gubernatorial appointed member of the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC).

Pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 195D, the ESRC advises the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the Department on matters relating to endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species. The seven-member ESRC makes recommendations based on a full review of the best available scientific and other reliable data with consideration of the cumulative impacts of the proposed action on the recovery potential of impacted species.

Dr. Mehrhoff possesses an extensive career in endangered species listing, botany, species recovery, and consultation, as well as landscape conservation and climate change issues. Previously Dr. Mehrhoff was the Endangered Species Recovery Director for the Center for Biological Diversity. Dr. Mehrhoff has served as Field Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Islands Office in Honolulu, Chief of the Biological Resources Management Division at the National Park Service in Fort Collins, Colorado, Center Director at the U.S. Geological Survey's Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center in Honolulu, and a research botanist at the Bishop Museum. Dr. Mehrhoff has exceptional regulatory, administrative, and statistical knowledge that greatly benefits the ESRC and makes him an ideal appointee for the ESRC for a second term.

The Department supports and recommends Dr. Mehrhoff's confirmation for the ESRC.

SUZANNE D. CASE
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ROBERT K. MASUDA
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

He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve

Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu, Hawai'i

Testimony on behalf of He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve

Strongly Supporting the gubernatorial nomination of Loyal Mehrhoff to the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC)

Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Environment,

May 12, 2020

Aloha Chair Gabbard and the members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Environment,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for the gubernatorial nomination of Loyal Mehrhoff to an at-large seat on the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (ESRC). I am a life-long conservationist and have served as a member on this committee for the past two years.

Loyal has a lifetime of experience in the conservation of endangered species and their habitats in Hawai'i. He has a well-rounded understanding of both the problems and potential solutions in conservation. He is also well-versed in the science and policy realms in conservation that intersect with the work before the ESRC. He has both the background and the temperament to fulfill his role on the ESRC. In my two years of service on the ESRC I have witnessed Loyal not only hold applicants to account, but I have also seen him going above and beyond the call of duty to work with applicants to find solutions in the application process.

On top of all that, I can both personally and professionally attest to the fact that Loyal is an honest man with the utmost integrity. He is held in high regard in the conservation community, and his presense on the ESRC will lend credibility to that council. I hope that you will join me in supporting his gubernatorial nomination to the Endangered Species Recovery Committee.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,



Kawika Winter, Ph.D.

Reserve Manager, He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve

Statement from Dr. Loyal A. Mehrhoff to the Agriculture and Environment (AEN) Committee on the Endangered Species Recovery Committee (May 10, 2020):

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Endangered Species Recovery Committee? As I mentioned in my original Statement to the Committee, I have been involved in the conservation of Hawaii's endangered plants and animals since 1991. I served on the Endangered Species Committee (ESRC) since 2017 and would like to continue helping the State and others make good conservation decisions. I believe my experience and expertise has benefited the ESRC and will continue to do so if I am reappointed. The ESRC plays an important role in Hawaii's efforts to conserve threatened and endangered species by functioning as an advisory group to review and comment on the scientific and regulatory aspects of conservation. It is also a unique and innovative approach to reviewing Habitat Conservation Plans and Safe Harbor Agreements.
2. How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the Endangered Species Recovery Committee? The purpose of the ESRC is to serve as a consultant to the Board of Land and Natural Resources and the Department of Land and Natural Resources on matters relating to endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species. As a field biologist with expertise in conservation biology, I would continue to use my experience and expertise to provide thorough and timely reviews of projects, reasoned and scientifically supported recommendations, and fair and respectful treatment of projects and project proponents. The people bringing proposed projects to the State and ESRC have invested large amounts of time and resources into those projects and they deserve a professional and timely review. Over the last three years I have witnessed a significant increase in the complexity of issues coming before the ESRC. This is especially true of habitat conservation plans related to wind energy projects and their potential impacts on Hawaiian hoary bat populations.
3. Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Endangered Species Recovery Committee, why do you believe that you're qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of the Endangered Species Recovery Committee. I have experience in field studies on Hawaiian endangered species as a Research Botanist with the Bishop Museum and as a botanist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I have also done research on the differences between rare and common mainland species for a Master's degree and post-doctoral studies. I was the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey's Pacific Island Ecosystems Research Center, here in Hawaii, where we did extensive research on endangered Hawaiian birds and plants. From a land management perspective, I was the Endangered Species Program Manager for endangered species in the National Park System and then became Chief of the National Park Service's Biological Resource Management Division. These experiences, in particular, were oriented towards undertaking actions to manage endangered species while still accomplishing the mission and objectives of the Parks. From a regulatory perspective, I have extensive experience with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managing endangered species programs that placed Hawaiian species on the list of endangered species, prepared recovery plans, and had responsibility for developing and implementing compliance monitoring for the Northwest Forest Plan that protected northern spotted owls and old-growth ecosystems in Washington, Oregon, and California. In 2014, I retired after five years as the Field Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Island Fish and Wildlife Office in Honolulu, where we managed programs for over 500 endangered species in Hawaii and the Pacific. I worked with a non-profit conservation organization, the Center for Biological Diversity as their Endangered Species Recovery Director from 2015 to 2019.

I have previously been on the ESRC with both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. I also served on the ESRC from 2017 until the present and would be honored to continue serving on the ESRC if reappointed.

4. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service? I hope to help maintain the high quality of the ESRC's recommendations and advice to the State. In particular, I expect to continue to focus on ensuring that recommendations are scientifically-based, consistent, fair, and aimed at long-term success.
5. Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the Endangered Species Recovery Committee? I would describe myself as someone who is fair, science-based, and values transparency. I think it is very important to ensure that groups like the ESRC are respected as entities that make sound, logical recommendations based on facts, have clear and transparent processes that are fair to applicants, and that operate in a timely manner.
6. Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the Endangered Species Recovery Committee? Aside from serving on the ESRC for the past three years, my time as the Field Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office would be my most pertinent experience. This position required taking a big picture view of endangered species, while at the same time following legal and policy directives related to Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, and Section 7 consultations. This position required that decisions be science-based, legally defensible, fair, timely, and well documented.
7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service on the Endangered Species Recovery Committee? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest? It is possible that I could have potential conflicts of interest, or appearances of conflicts of interest, on issues in front of the ESRC. I have been involved in many conservation issues over the almost 30 years that I have been working on Hawaii's endangered species as a researcher, manager, or regulator. The vast majority of these issues will not have conflicts, but it is conceivable that a potential conflict could occur. If an appearance of a conflict materializes, I will discuss it in depth with the ESRC Chair to ensure that the integrity of the ESRC is maintained. If appropriate, or if requested, I will recuse myself from making recommendations on an issue or will agree to take any course of action the Chair requests of me.