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**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA**

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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on  
WATER AND LAND**

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023  
12:30 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**In consideration of  
SENATE BILL 1549  
RELATING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Senate Bill 1549 proposes to appropriate funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) Division of Forestry and Wildlife to manage hotspots at trailheads as part of the Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access Program (Program). **The Department strongly supports this measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated the Department's Executive Budget request.**

The Department acknowledges the Hawai'i Tourism Authority's Destination Management Action Plan initiative, which identified a series of destination "hotspots" across the state that are presenting management challenges to the agencies tasked with managing the hotspot areas. Program staff are currently actively engaged in a strategic planning effort to address the challenges associated with visitor use and have initiated programs and projects statewide to help mitigate the impacts of a rapid rise in outdoor recreation.

The funding proposed by this Act will allow the Department to put personnel and planning efforts in motion to address a number of these hotspots, including trailheads in the Koke'e region of Kaua'i, the Maunawili Falls and Ka'iwa Ridge trails on O'ahu, multiple areas on Maui, Naha Trail on Lāna'i, and Pololū Valley, Waipi'o Valley, and Maunakea on Hawai'i island. The positions proposed will increase the Program staff by over 50% statewide, enabling enhanced, active, ongoing management of the Division of Forestry and Wildlife's recreational inventory.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this measure.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 9:10:01 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bill Stormont	Testifying for Department of Land and Natural Resources	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha. I am a Department employee authorized to be available remotely for any questions the Committee may have. Mahalo.



# SIERRA CLUB

## HAWAI'I ISLAND GROUP

February 11, 2023

Senate Committee on Water and Land  
415 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Strong Support of SB1549

Aloha Madame Chair and Members of the Committee on Land and Water

The Hawai'i Island Group of the Sierra Club of Hawai'i has voted to be in strong support of Senate Bill 1549, relating to funding for the Nā Ala Hele program of the Department of Land and Natural Resources.


Nā Ala Hele is the State of Hawai'i Trail and Access Program, created to manage public resources related to hiking. The program manages trail access and conducts trail maintenance in order to provide important public services including recreational opportunities, experiences related to cultural history and historic trails, and economic opportunities where possible for commercial trail vendors. Nā Ala Hele trails are also important for access into natural areas for management, research, hunting, and wildfire response.

One of the primary missions of the Sierra Club is "To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth...". The Nā Ala Hele program and its staff share in this mission.

We know that nature improves our mental, physical, and social health. With more than 100 hikes and service projects to care for Hawai'i's special places each year, our trained leaders have worked with the Nā Ala Hele program and its staff to create opportunities for everyone to experience the transformative power of the outdoors—from trekking and restoring trails, such as the Ala Loa Trails of each island, to reforestation in Hakalau and the Waikōloa Dry Forest on the island of Hawai'i.

The resources, information, and support provided by the program and staff of Nā Ala Hele to residents and visitors alike have been and are essential to their health and well-being. It has contributed immeasurably to the fact the residents of Hawai'i are continually ranked as the healthiest in the nation and so we ask the members of the Senate Committee on Water and Land to vote in support SB1549.

Mahalo,



Charles Flaherty, Chair

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/9/2023 6:02:19 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/9/2023 11:09:21 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Beth Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This legislation is long overdue, but its reach is too limited. The problems surrounding trails and trailheads have gone on for years, it is getting worse, and the state has failed to do much of anything for many trails because of lack of funding. As a hiker, I find this aggravating, especially as I see more and more unmanaged trails permanently closed. Trails are being closed, just as the number of hikers is increasing. Surveys have indicated hiking is the most popular land recreation in the state, yet hikers are losing access to spectacular trails because DLNR isn't given the funding to manage and fix problems associated with our trails. Neighbors next to popular trails complain, often rightfully so, because trails aren't managed, and the solution is one that results in a huge loss for hikers—the closing of these trails. We need to fund management and maintenance, not just personnel to supervise and police hotspots like trail heads. That approach is completely inadequate and doesn't solve much. The State really needs to invest funds to permanently take care of our resources.

Management should include things like relocating trailheads out of neighborhoods, and providing parking and restroom facilities for trails. Charge fees for the parking and fees for entry to popular trails. If necessary, provide security and park staff, and restroom facilities. Please start providing funding for management to DLNR and stop closing our precious hiking trails. Local hikers really value these trails. They shouldn't lose access to them because of the tremendous increase in tourism, and the advent of social media telling the world about our favorite, treasured trails.

Twenty to thirty years ago my family and I, like everyone else, could access any trail on Oahu without encountering parking problems and crowds. People were respectful, there wasn't abuse and overuse of the trails, people didn't bother the nearby neighbors, and it was a wonderful experience in nature.

I live around the corner from the Ka Iwa Ridge Trail (Lanikai Pillbox trail) in Lanikai and have witnessed that situation deteriorate over the years. We used to hike that trail regularly and often we had it to ourselves, or would pass only a few others on the trail. This is a trail that needs relocation of the trailhead out of Lanikai, entry by reservation and fees for non-residents, and parking and restroom facilities provided somewhere in Enchanted Lake near Kalaniano'le Hwy. All of this costs money, but it is critically necessary.

I am a member of Hui Maunawili Kawainui Coalition and we have been working with DLNR to protect and preserve Maunawili Valley, including the Maunawili Trail. We advocated to

temporarily close down that trail to stop the destruction, overuse and abuse of the trail, loss of native species, damage to ancient loi terraces, vandalism at Queen's Retreat, and pollution of the watershed, especially Maunawili Stream, and stop the filth and trash and disrespect of sacred places by hikers. The disturbances to the neighbors next to the trailhead was unacceptable and they suffered severe loss of their quality of life. We are working with DLNR to restore the area, relocate the trail away from sensitive archaeological areas, relocate the trailhead outside of the neighborhood, and provide parking and restrooms and require historical, environmental, cultural education prior to any entry. There will be management and maintenance and security for the trail. Entry will be by reservation only, no doubt when the trail reopens, and there will be fees for non-residents. Entry for this trail may become very restricted to entry for stewardship and education only.

Christian Palmer, an environmental anthropologist who has actively hiked throughout the state for the past thirty years, wrote in a 2021 Civil Beat article that he estimates almost half of our trails are currently closed. Many of these trails are not part of the Na Ala Hele trail system, but it makes keeping Na Ala Hele trails open and managed and maintained even more critical for hikers.

Many trails have been closed down because of liability issues, but we have an average of 65 drownings in the ocean every year and we aren't closing beaches. One of the safest trails on the island, Haiku Stairs, is being labeled "dangerous" because the city wants to tear it down because of the problems hikers have created for the nearby neighbors. Haiku Stairs is one of the most spectacular hikes in the world, historically significant, a very popular hike, yet somehow the City has been unable to apply very simple management solutions, such as restricted entry by reservation, parking outside of the nearby neighborhood, water fountains and restrooms, etc. to solve the problems surrounding this hike. Management of trails is not rocket science. We don't have to tear down something as incredibly unique and spectacular and world class as Haiku Stairs because of some problems in a small neighborhood on the island. That is absurd.

Other places around the nation and the world have figured out how to manage and protect their valuable natural resources. Hawaii has begun, but we have a long ways to go and we need to step it up, invest the monies, and help DLNR Department of Forestry and Wildlife secure, maintain and manage our trails, protect nearby neighborhoods, and keep trails open for the benefit and enjoyment of local residents, and visitors as well.

Mahalo for considering my views.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/11/2023 8:00:52 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Catherine West Dale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/11/2023 10:51:20 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
matthias kusch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support SB 1549. We desperately need additional resources for the Na Ala Hele program here on Hawai'i Island and around the state. Without your support, we will continue to see a degradation of state trails. Our residents and our tourists should be able to access the tremendous amounts of trails available, but are unimproved (read: overgrown and impassable). This small expansion of the program can significantly reduce the stress on existing trails, by spreading out the numbers among many miles of trails around the island.

But only with your support! Vote yes on SB 1549.

Thank you for your consideration,

Matthias Kusch



**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/11/2023 11:50:54 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Edwin Petteys	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. For many years, the Na Ala Hele program has struggled to manage its growing trail and access system with minimal staffing and resources. This has led to inconsistent and reactive attempts to fulfill its responsibilities, and an inability to manage at a truly programmatic level. SB1549 is an opportunity to help this vitally important program to gain the staff and resources it needs to move into proactive and more comprehensive program management. I ask your support of SB1549 to help this program. Mahalo for your consideration.

Edwin Petteys, resident of Hawaii Island.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/11/2023 4:43:47 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Nash Witten	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a primary care physician working in Wai'anae and Hale'iwa, I strongly support this bill to better support the DLNR and Na Ala Hele trail system.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/12/2023 2:48:19 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Deborah Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Water and Land Committee:

I ask your support of SB1549. It seeks to better equip our Statewide Trail and Access System known as Nā Ala Hele, with sorely needed funds to properly fix and maintain the “hot spots” that are being “loved to death.” Too many of Hawai`i’s most cherished outdoor spaces have become unpleasant for our own residents to enjoy, due to overcrowding and overuse.

Hawai`i’s trails and outdoor spaces have never been more accessed than they are today. Never has it been more important to protect them and manage them for future generations in light of the heavy usage occurring. The Nā Ala Hele Program was established in 1988 to develop a statewide trail and access system capable of meeting the challenges that are faced today. For decades, state government has expected the Nā Ala Hele Program to do the job without long-term, stable, and adequate staffing and resources. These are complex challenges but well-worth the effort to ensure that our state’s trails are trails we can be proud of.

The spirit of aloha on the trails and in Hawai`i’s beautiful outdoors will be nurtured when we residents feel that we can afford to share our special places with outsiders, without damage and loss to the very resources we hold dear.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Deborah Chang

Resident of Hawai`i Island

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 8:49:28 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Toni Withington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I storngly support this funding of additiional staff for the Na Ala Hele Trail System. Safe and well-interpreted trails are vital to no only residents but to handle areas of exceptional heavy visitor traffic.

Pololu Valley trail in Kohala is a good example of where Na Ala Hele is helping to solve serious health and safety issues like illegal parking and personal hygene, while offering daytime stewards to help visitors understand the cultural significance of impacts on the trail and valley floor.

Please, support this funding. It is very important to the North Kohala community,

Toni Withington, Hawi

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 10:38:01 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teri Takata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**I am submitting testimony in support of SB1549. As a resident of North Kohala for almost four decades, I have enjoyed the Pololu Valley trails along with other Na Ala Hele managed trails in my area. I can not imagine the loss if these trails were not protected and managed! Please consider also the significance of these trails to the history of our island. Why would we want to jeopardize losing these trails now to neglect or mismanagement? This funding is not just for the residents and also not just for tourists. This funding is the best possible use of funds; it supports everyone and their enjoyment of these lands.**

**Thank you,**

**Teri Takata**

**Hawi Hawaii**

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 11:03:00 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jack Hoyt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I use the coastal access trails in North Kohala regularly at least a few times per week and have for many years. At the moment these trails are not regularly maintained due primarily to a lack of funds (which suits me just fine despite my age). However, for my wife and numerous neighbors only some sections are accessible due to the fast growing coastal trees and plants. Providing additional funds for trail management and upkeep would make it possible for many many residents to enjoy the full benefits of this wonderful resorce. Mahalo, Jack on the road to Kapanaiia

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/13/2023 1:07:23 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Joe Carvalho	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am support for funding SB1549 for stewarding trails. It has been a blessing so far for Pololu where we have stewards providing information and education for tourists.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 6:34:12 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Annette Lancaster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I support SB1549 on funding for DLNR staff to increase policing/management of Na Ala Hele trailheads. Ha'iku Stairs, which isn't currently a Na Ala Hele trail, would be a great candidate for consideration to be a part of the Na Ala Hele program. If ever there was a hotspot trail, it's the Ha'iku Stairs. There is a fixable solution for this particular trail and that is through managed access, eliminating the current negative issues surrounding it and opening it to share the wonder of this engineering marvel and connected communications history. Please help save and fully manage Ha'iku Stairs. Doing so will honor the past achievement of its creation, provide a world class hiking experience for people to enjoy now, and ensure its important history is cemented in the future. Mahalo for your consideration.



**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 9:56:18 AM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Elizabeth Roney deYoung	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support! The expanded stewardship of the land and trails with adequate staff and interpretation has made a significant difference in pilot programs.

Na ala hele provides safe, well marked access to our land to residents and visitors alike. More support for this program will provide places for people to go either by foot, bike, ATV or horse that is healthy and safe for the islands and the people.

Another really important aspect is ensuring that the existing and future trails that are currently public land and public access remain so. Our history is of place and these places must be secured to allow everyone to learn the history and enjoy the natural surrounding!

Vote yes to fund this program. It's part of the solution.

**SB-1549**

Submitted on: 2/14/2023 1:43:28 PM

Testimony for WTL on 2/15/2023 12:30:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
David Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Department of Land and Natural Resources trails and access program needs an increase in operational funds and personnel to provide enhanced service to the public and address an increase in forest and outdoor recreation.