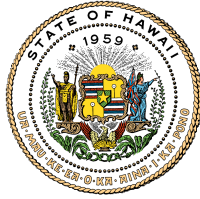


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the House Committee on
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Tuesday, April 1, 2025
10:45 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 & Videoconference

In consideration of
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 149
REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO
CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO ASSESS ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION
INITIATIVES NEEDED TO TRANSITION VOLCANO, HAWAII, INTO A BIOSPHERE
AREA THAT PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY
WELL-BEING AND COMPLEMENTS THE NEIGHBORING HAWAIIAN ISLANDS
BIOSPHERE RESERVE.

House Concurrent Resolution 149 urges the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to convene a working group to assess the initiatives needed to transition Volcano, HI into a biosphere area that would complement the neighboring Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve. **The Department appreciates the intent of the resolution, and offers comments.**

The Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve was a designation made in 1980 under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Program, which aimed to promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. However, the United States officially withdrew from UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve Program in 2017, and the Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve was delisted.

There was an initial period of active research in the Reserve, coordinated by the National Park Service, followed by a long period of decreased engagement. It does not appear that Hawai'i was compliant with the requirements of the program, and the delisting of the Reserve was an administrative act not related to the area's ecological value.

The Department continues to pursue conservation goals in the Volcano area, regardless of whether there is federal or international recognition. However, we are not sure that convening a 24-member high-level working group to focus solely on one village is an efficient use of resources.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY
CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
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

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:14:13 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yumi TR Kawano	Alaula Kipuka Refuge	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

We are in favor of a work study group being formed to analyze whether Volcano could be a part of a Biosphere connected to Hawaii Volcano National Park. It will be done to see about protecting as much of the rare native rainforests in our subdivisions before they disappear because of rapid development. Folks will still have the freedom to develop their land in accordance to their zoning, but preserving as much Ohia forest as can, which is also essential to replenish the underground watersheds with rain for our needed water catchment consumption.

We, Alaula Kipuka Refuge, restore rare rainforest as a nonprofit and show others too as a service to our community. We understand not only is it beneficial to restore native trees back on our island to help prevent future climate catastrophes like wild land fires; this will help fellow landowners and stewards to learn to wisely manage their forested lands for upcoming wildfires due to more frequent droughts. As we know this climate catastrophe is happening all over our earth. Let us all be a part of the solution. It's possible that our Volcano rainforested subdivisions could be an example of good change to the climate catastrophe.



MAMAKI Tea

HR143 Statement

100% pure māmaki leaves: Forest grown, dried and packaged naturally at Hawaii Forest Farms on the Big Island of Hawai‘i.

HR143

I am in full support of HR143

I am a small business and property owner in Volcano, Hawai‘i. Our farm, **Hawai‘i Forest Farms**, is a 30-acre property located on Amaumau Road. We grow and dry *mamaki*, an endemic Hawaiian plant traditionally used for tea. We began this journey in 2017 with just one customer, and today, we proudly supply over 30 wholesale customers who bottle, sell, and serve mamaki tea.

Since purchasing the property in 2016, we have been actively working in the forest to remove invasive species and create space to cultivate *mamaki*. Over time, I’ve developed a deeper understanding of the local forest ecosystem. The most pervasive and challenging invasive species we face are ornamental ginger and Himalayan raspberry. These, along with other non-native plants, are widespread and often overpower native forest areas.

In managing our farm, we’ve collaborated with at least three agroforestry experts, as well as faculty and researchers from the University of Hawai‘i, to refine our regenerative forest farming methods. We’ve also engaged with forest preservation groups such as the NRCD to explore conservation strategies for the back half of our property, which has remained relatively undisturbed since 2016.

Through this work, I can confidently say that **sustainable forest management is achievable**—both for agroforestry and forest preservation, as reflected in the proposed project and legislation.

Volcano is a uniquely welcoming and community-oriented place. We are fortunate to have strong networks of community members, volunteers, and nonprofits dedicated to causes such as forest preservation, arts, farming, and cultural expression. Our vibrant community center hosts a steady stream of events, including bi-weekly markets, and Volcano has a proud history of collaboration among Native Hawaiians, long-time residents, newcomers, and visitors alike. Our close ties with Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park and the scientific and conservation professionals who work there further strengthen our capacity for cooperative success.

While forest farming mamaki is a meaningful endeavor for me, it is not my primary profession. For the past 38 years, I have run a small business centered around a publication called *Environmental Business Journal*. This work has provided me decades of insight into the perspectives of environmental consulting and engineering leaders, many of whom focus on natural resource management, habitat protection, and ecological restoration—fields that closely align with the goals of this proposed project.

I believe the site proposed for the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Biosphere Reserve holds immense potential as a model for **sustainable forest management and restoration**. It could serve as a demonstration project for similar community-based forest efforts across the islands.

Although increased tourism may be a natural outcome of such visibility, I don't view that as a high priority or a necessary focus. In fact, many in the community value our village's relatively low profile, enjoying the balance where visitors flock to the park but not necessarily into our neighborhoods. That said, collaboration with the National Park is welcomed, and we appreciate the visibility that comes from its 1.6 million visitors in 2023. This exposure can help raise awareness of both the challenges and successes of this important initiative.

I reiterate my full support of HR143 and I look forward to supporting its implementation with my fellow community members.

Reference

Department of land and natural resources to convene a working group to assess environmental and conservation initiatives needed to transition volcano, hawaii, into a biosphere area that promotes environmental sustainability and community well-being

If passed, this effectively would put Volcano's native forest in the spotlight for its environmental value, bringing stakeholders together to look at the benefit of maintaining and improving the residential forested areas as a natural resource, as it pertains to supporting the conservation efforts and resilience of the Hawaii Volcano National Park Biosphere Reserve and the other forest reserves that it is majorly surrounded by, as a whole ecosystem.



Grant Ferrier
Hawaii Forest Farms
19-4610 Amaumau Road, Volcano, HI 96785, 858-602-7142
<https://www.hawaiiforestfarms.com/>
--

Grant Ferrier
CEO & Editor in Chief of Environmental Business Journal
c: 858-602-7142 [e:grant@ebionline.org](mailto:grant@ebionline.org)

 **ENVIRONMENTAL**
BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL INC.
ebionline.org

Hawaii Forest Farms, Volcano HI 96785; www.hawaiiforestfarms.com



Environmental Caucus of The Democratic Party of Hawai'i

March 30, 2025

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HR143 / HCR149: REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO ASSESS INITIATIVES TO TRANSITION VOLCANO, HAWAII, INTO A BIOSPHERE AREA

TO: Chair Nicole E. Lowen, Vice Chair Amy A. Perruso, and Members of the Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection

DATE: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 **TIME:** 10:45 a.m.

PLACE: Conference Room 325 and via videoconference

FROM: Environmental Caucus

Aloha Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and Members of the Committee,

We strongly support HR143 / HCR149, which requests the Department of Land and Natural Resources to convene a working group to assess environmental and conservation initiatives needed to transition Volcano, Hawaii, into a biosphere area. This visionary resolution aligns with Hawaii's commitment to environmental sustainability and community well-being and complements the neighboring Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve.

Key Reasons for Support:

1. **Promoting Environmental Sustainability:** Transitioning Volcano, Hawaii, into a biosphere area would enhance efforts to conserve its unique ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural landscapes, ensuring their preservation for future generations.
2. **Community Well-Being:** Biosphere areas emphasize sustainable human-environment interactions, creating opportunities for local communities to thrive economically, culturally, and socially while safeguarding natural resources.
3. **Strengthening Collaboration:** Establishing a working group fosters collaboration among government agencies, community representatives, scientists, and conservation experts to develop innovative strategies that address environmental challenges and promote sustainability.
4. **Supporting Hawaii's Climate Goals:** Biosphere areas play a vital role in mitigating climate change impacts through conservation and sustainable practices. This initiative

aligns with Hawaii's broader goals to protect its environment and adapt to a changing climate.

5. **Complementing Existing Efforts:** Designating Volcano as a biosphere area complements the work of the Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve, creating synergies that amplify the effectiveness of conservation and sustainability initiatives across the state.
6. **Cultural Preservation:** Biosphere areas honor and integrate the cultural heritage of local communities, including Native Hawaiian values and practices that emphasize the interconnectedness of people and nature.

HR143 / HCR149 represents a bold and essential step toward advancing environmental stewardship and community resilience in Hawaii. We urge the Committee on Energy & Environmental Protection to support this resolution and help pave the way for a sustainable future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HR143 / HCR149.

Respectfully submitted,

Melodie Aduja and Alan Burdick
Co-Chairs, Environmental Caucus

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 5:07:54 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Current Chairperson, Chuck Flaherty	Sierra Club of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Island Gorup	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Madam Chair and committee members,

The Sierra Club of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Island Group supports HCRs 143 and 149 with a recommended amendment to include working group invitations to kanaka maoli to ensure their rights and traditional and customary practices are fairly represented on the working group. Invitation could be extended to any or all of the following:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs

Moku O Keawe Aha Moku Council

Hawaii Island Council of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Club.

The native habitats in and around the Hawaiian Volcanoes National Park and the Haleakala National Park are facing numerous challenges, such as rapid 'ōhi'a death, pin-to-pin grubbing and grading of lots, invasive species, etc.

Community level engagement across public and private lands is the primary reason we exist to enhance quality of life in the places where we live and work, by convening and connecting people to the beauty and critical benefits we derive from nature. Native Hawaiians in biosphere region are culturally and spiritually grounded in nature, and the Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Region (HIBR) is already working hand-in-hand with native Hawaiian organizations and local community groups to advance food sovereignty and other shared issues. For instance, branding of local foods in a culturally authentic way for the HIBR was a goal coming out of 2019 Hawai'i workshop. Workshop attendees included Meriem Bouamrane from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which showed the importance of our HIBR.

In this difficult time, local community efforts are building from the ground up by a representative and resilient group of citizens, such as the Volcano Community Association, quietly making these special sites better places to work, live and play... for all species.

Please help further empower our local communities' work, including kanaka maoli interests in preserving, protecting, and restoring this unique international treasure.

Mahalo nui loa for your service to our state.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 7:57:38 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy Schuerch	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Hawai'i Island, Volcano I support the passage of HR143/HCR149. This Resolution is a start on the way to raise awareness at the State level and to work towards recommending ordinances at the County level to better steward our native forest.

I am sickened by the poorly permitted grading and grubbing, leading to ROD and invasive species in our neighborhoods. Along with the destructive increase in feral ungulates these together pose some of the biggest threats to our native forest. The new County administration is recommending changes in the zoning for the Volcano area that would increase housing density significantly and are also a concern.

Our native Ohi'a forest is a precious resource for the community. It provides habitat for native birds, improves the watershed, cools homes and is a draw for our visitors while supporting the local economy. I would like the County and State to incentivize small and large lot owners who are voluntarily committed to stewarding native Ohi'a forest rather than impose extreme hurdles in order to receive a Native Forest conservation designation. This Resolution supports progress towards these goals.

Mahalo for your consideration!

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 4:39:40 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Shine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Volcano, Hawai'i Island, I support the passage of HR143/HCR149. This Resolution is a start on the way to raise awareness at the State level and to work towards recommending ordinances at the County level to better steward our native forest.

Our native Ohi'a forest is a precious resource for the community. It provides habitat for native birds, improves the watershed, cools homes and is a draw for our visitors while supporting the local economy. I would like the County and State to incentivize small and large lot owners who are voluntarily committed to stewarding native Ohi'a forest rather than impose extreme hurdles in order to receive a Native Forest conservation designation. This Resolution supports progress towards these goals.

Mahalo for your consideration and for all you do.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/29/2025 7:26:43 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Culbertson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Representatives!

As a resident of Hawai'i Island and member of the 'Forest Stewards hui', I support the passage of HR143/HCR149. This Resolution is a start on the way to raise awareness at the State level and to work towards recommending ordinances at the County level to better steward our native forest.

I am sickened by the poorly permitted grading and grubbing, leading to ROD and invasive species in our neighborhoods. Along with the destructive increase in feral ungulates, these together pose some of the biggest threats to our native forest. The new County administration is recommending changes in the zoning for the Volcano area that would increase housing density significantly and are therefore a real concern.

Our native Ohi'a forest is a precious resource for the community. It provides habitat for native birds, improves the watershed, cools homes and is a draw for our visitors while supporting the local economy. I would like the County and State to incentivize small and large lot owners who are voluntarily committed to stewarding native Ohi'a forest rather than impose extreme hurdles in order to receive a Native Forest conservation designation. This Resolution supports progress towards these goals.

Mahalo for your consideration!

R A Culbertson

Honokaa

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 8:46:15 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ed Clapp	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a resident of Volcano HI. I strongly support this bill for forest protection.

i oppose the clear cutting and grubbing/grading of residential lots which destroy the forest.

my future votes will be contingent on how my representatives vote on this matter.

March 30, 2025

‘Ōhi‘a Lehua (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) are the official state endemic tree of Hawai‘i, this is the only place in the world they grow. ‘Ōhi‘a are a critical keystone species for the environment, ecosystems and culture of Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i Island has the largest ‘Ōhi‘a Forests in the world, from Mauka to makai. Unfortunately, Hawai‘i Island also has Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death in every district, it is still rampant.

We need more protections for ‘Ōhi‘a, people should not be able to clear ‘Ōhi‘a forests in the reckless manner allowed at present. Some of these ‘Ōhi‘a are hundreds of years old. ‘Ōhi‘a have a strong connection with Hawaiian culture, a kinolau of many important elementals, Pele, Kāne, Laka, and have medicinal properties and are used in cultural practices and Hula. ‘Ōhi‘a forest help gather water and recharge aquifers, we need to protect ‘Ōhi‘a to protect the watersheds. Many people do not learn, until too late, that they should not have cleared their land. We need more forest protections.

I support the passage of HR143/HCR149. This Resolution is a start on the way to raise awareness at the State level and to work towards recommending ordinances at the County level to better steward our native forest. Our native ‘Ōhi‘a forest is a precious resource for the community. It provides habitat for hundreds of other native and endemic species, improves the watershed, cools homes and is a draw for our visitors while supporting the local economy. I would like the County and State to incentivize small and large lot owners who are voluntarily committed to stewarding native ‘Ōhi‘a forest rather than impose extreme hurdles in order to receive a Native Forest conservation designation. This Resolution supports progress towards these goals.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Charlotte Godfrey-Romo

charlotte.romo30@gmail.com

1445 Wāianuenue Ave. Hilo, Hawaii 96720

March 30, 2025

To: Chair Lowen and members of
Committee of Energy & Environmental Protection
Fr: Makalapua Alencastre
Re: Support for HR143/HCR149

As a resident of Volcano, I strongly support the passage of HR143/HCR149. This Resolution is very important to begin to address multiple environmental issues facing Volcano areas while raising awareness towards recommending ordinances at the County level to better steward our native forests.

It is unacceptable that land areas are poorly permitted to allow for grading and grubbing which leads to the devastation caused by ROD and the introduction of invasive species. Along with the destructive increase in feral ungulates these together pose some of the biggest threats to our native forests. The new County administration is recommending changes in the zoning for the Volcano area that would increase housing density significantly which is also a concern.

Our native 'ōhi'a lehua forests are a precious resource for the forest ecosystem as it provides critical habitats for native birds and improves the watershed. Additionally, 'ōhi'a lehua is essential for Hawaiian cultural practices, many of which have been paused due to the outbreak of ROD affecting thousands of acres of native forests. This resolution brings together numerous stakeholders as a working group who have a kuleana to steward our 'āina.

Mahalo for your consideration and adoption of this important resolution!

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 1:51:01 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcia Stone	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the creation of a working group for the purpose of including Volcano, Hawaii in Biosphere Area. Volcano is a mostly intact montane rainforest and as such is important for the health of our land.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 2:32:03 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alika Leavey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Members

I am a volcano village resident and I support this reso. Mālama i ka nāhele!

Alika Leavey

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 3:05:09 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Golden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Request to pass this resolution, HCR 149 / HR 143,
Urgent Protection for ‘Ōhi‘a Forest in Volcano Region

Dear Chair Lowen and Committee Members,

I am writing to respectfully request that House Concurrent Resolution 149 (HCR 149) be passed. This resolution highlights the urgent need to protect the ‘Ōhi‘a forest in the Volcano region, an invaluable natural and cultural resource for Hawai‘i.

HR 143/HCR 149 call for increased support to preserve and restore the ‘Ōhi‘a forest, which plays a vital role in maintaining the island's ecosystem. ‘Ōhi‘a trees are keystone species that sustain local biodiversity, prevent erosion, and recharge groundwater systems critical to our communities. Unfortunately, this forest faces mounting threats from Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death (ROD) and other environmental pressures, underscoring the need for proactive conservation measures.

By advancing HR 143/HCR 149, we can prioritize efforts to safeguard this irreplaceable ecosystem, ensuring that future generations will continue to benefit from its environmental and cultural significance.

I urge you to consider moving this resolution forward to allow stakeholders and community members to voice their support for protecting our ‘Ōhi‘a forest.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Kathleen Golden

Volcano, Hawaii

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 3:16:04 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Peter Golden	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Subject: Request to pass this resolution, HCR 149 / HR 143, Urgent Protection for ‘Ōhi‘a Forest in Volcano Region

Dear Chair Lowen and Committee Members,

I am writing to respectfully request that House Concurrent Resolution 149 (HCR 149) be passed. This resolution highlights the urgent need to protect the ‘Ōhi‘a forest in the Volcano region, an invaluable natural and cultural resource for Hawai‘i.

HR 143/HCR 149 call for increased support to preserve and restore the ‘Ōhi‘a forest, which plays a vital role in maintaining the island's ecosystem. ‘Ōhi‘a trees are keystone species that sustain local biodiversity, prevent erosion, and recharge groundwater systems critical to our communities. Unfortunately, this forest faces mounting threats from Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death (ROD) and other environmental pressures, underscoring the need for proactive conservation measures.

By advancing HR 143/HCR 149, we can prioritize efforts to safeguard this irreplaceable ecosystem, ensuring that future generations will continue to benefit from its environmental and cultural significance.

I urge you to consider moving this resolution forward to allow stakeholders and community members to voice their support for protecting our ‘Ōhi‘a forest.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Peter Golden

Volcano, Hawai‘i

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 4:37:54 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phil and Lunel Haysmer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The forests in Volcano area are being destroyed by D9's and irresponsible developers. Individuals have no power to limit the rape of the forest. We need good legislation to retain the ecosystem that is so unique and precious.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 6:42:29 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marylene Chun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a Volcano resident and I support this bill to have the DLNR create a working group to assess the transition to a Volcano forest biosphere.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 9:17:47 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kim Weisenborn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for scheduling this important hearing. My name is Kim Weisenborn, and I am a member of the Volcano community who helped draft this resolution with the support of Representative Jeanne Kapela. I moved to Hawai‘i in 2016 to work as a biologist with the National Park Service, focusing on monitoring native ecosystems across the Hawaiian Islands and other Pacific Island communities. In 2020 I relocated to Volcano to be closer to Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park and the unique natural landscape that draws over one million visitors annually.

Volcano, Hawai‘i, is a one-of-a-kind place, nestled within an intact, native, and endemic forest ecosystem. This area is bordered on three sides by substantial tracts of native forest that are formally protected from exploitation by both the State of Hawai‘i and the National Park Service. These protected areas include: Puu‘Maka‘ala Natural Area Reserve and Kahauale‘a Natural Area Reserve (both meeting the same standards as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve), ‘Ōla‘a Forest Reserve and Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Together, these areas create a protective environment for the Volcano region.

Our goal is to designate the greater Volcano area as a Biosphere Reserve to support the continuity of these forest ecosystems, offering a framework for sustainable living and development. Through collaboration, local populations can manage the interactions between human activity and the natural world, improving quality of life while ensuring environmental sustainability.

For the Volcano community, such a framework is essential. We rely on rainwater catchment from our unique micro-climate, which is increasingly threatened by climate change, jeopardizing both our water supply and overall climate resilience. Other threats, including Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death (ROD), human activity, increased fire risk, invasive species, and deforestation are accelerating the degradation of this biosphere, endangering local wildlife and the integrity of the ecosystem.

This resolution represents a monumental step toward supporting sustainable living within our natural landscape, while recognizing the economic and ecological benefits of preserving these rare ecosystems. The protected areas surrounding Volcano attract millions of visitors each year, contributing billions of dollars to the local economy. This is a clear incentive to focus our efforts

on stewarding the land in ways that ensure the persistence of the native forests that provide essential ecosystem services.

I strongly urge you to pass this resolution to establish a working group that will assess the long-term value of stewardship and sustainable management for the future of our community and its unique environment. This resolution is a critical step toward ensuring that our natural resources are preserved for future generations. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kim Weisenborn

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 5:29:32 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Wilcox	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a voting resident of Volcano, HI, I support this bill. It is vital to actively conserve and enhance our incredibly economically and environmentally valuable natural forest ecosystem.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:32:53 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danielle Pacific	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for bringing this important resolution to the forefront. As a steward of a small portion of this native forest in Ola'a, I am in full support of any efforts to protect the air and land quality of this precious watershed and biosphere. Please prioritize the health of the forest above other human-interventions such as new buildings, roads and air-routes that would remove more trees and pieces of this ecosystem. We have made more than enough harmful impact as it is!

Mahalo
Danielle Pacific

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:34:25 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steven C Hess	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HR143 because the Volcano area needs further recognition of its unique biological and cultural resources that will encourage the State of Hawaii and the County of Hawaii to protect these resources and prevent further degradation by development and invasive species. Sincerely, Steven C. Hess, Ph.D.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 6:41:33 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Lowen and Committee Members,

This resolution highlights the urgent need to protect the native ‘Ōhi‘a forest in the Volcano region, an invaluable natural and cultural resource for Hawai‘i.

The IUCN in describing the threats to the Volcano Biosphere Region states “The potential threats to the park’s geological values are very low. However, the threats to the park’s biological values are high overall. Growth of settlements around the Park appears to be unavoidable, and hence it is important to ensure that any impacts on the Park and area resources be mitigated with wise community planning. This must be a collaborative endeavor among the National Park administration and the local communities. Addressing climate change, which is the key concern for the future of the site, will require a global collaborative approach. Furthermore neighboring settlements are only partially developed. When fully occupied, the human population within the threshold of the Park (HVNP) might be 25,000. The impacts from a population of this size might result in the loss of the landscape gradient that now buffers the natural forest canopy.”

HCR 149 calls for increased support to preserve and restore the ‘Ōhi‘a forest, which plays a vital role in maintaining the island's ecosystem. ‘Ōhi‘a trees are keystone species that sustain local biodiversity, prevent erosion, and recharge groundwater systems critical to our communities. Unfortunately, this forest also faces mounting threats from Rapid ‘Ōhi‘a Death (ROD) and other invasive species underscoring the need for proactive conservation measures. The Volcano Community Association and residents are willing to collaborate with interested parties to achieve these goals.

By advancing HCR 149 we can prioritize efforts to safeguard this irreplaceable ecosystem, ensuring that future generations will continue to benefit from its environmental and cultural significance.

I urge you to consider passing this resolution to allow stakeholders and community members to voice their support for protecting our ‘Ōhi‘a forest.

Malama ‘ohia lehua and ‘apapane that depend on the canopy.

Diane Ware

808-967-8642

99-7815 Kapoha

Volcano HI 96785

April 1, 2025

Representative Nicole Lowen, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Environmental Protection
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 436
Honolulu, Hawaii. 96813

Re: HCR 149:

Requesting the DLNR to convene a working group to assess environmental and conservation initiatives needed to Transition Volcano, Hawaii, Into A Biosphere Area That Promotes Environmental Sustainability and Community Well-Being and Complements the Neighboring Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve.

Dear Representative Lowen,

I am writing in strong support of HCR 149, which calls for an urgently needed study and legislative action to preserve the Volcano biosphere.

I am a resident of Volcano Village and a member of the Volcano Community Association.

This area is contiguous to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which is an UNESCO biosphere reserve, two Natural Area Reserves of Pu'u Maka'ala and Kahauale'a, as well as the Ola'a Rainforest. Most importantly, these conservation areas are forested in ohi'a, a keystone species of Hawaii's forests, and now seriously threatened by spreading Rapid Ohi'a Death.

These sensitive ecosystems and conservation areas support the Ola'a and Pahoa aquifers and thus, its rainfall and water capturing capacity is part of the critical water infrastructure for all communities served by them.

The Volcano biosphere is also an unique and fragile ecosystem that supports biodiversity. The expansive rainforests span an unusually steep climatic gradient, from wet mid-elevation forest, to sub-alpine to alpine vegetation. Much of this is native or endemic to Hawaii, and home to many threatened endemic bird and insect species.

Current environmental threats include reckless human activity involving unregulated clearing, grubbing and grading. Invasive animals (wild pigs) and plants, such as alien flammable grasses, compound the problem of forest degradation, loss of forest canopy and decreased resilience to climate change.

In conclusion, the preservation of the Volcano biosphere must be studied fully in order to support the current and future water needs, not just for the Volcano area, but for all East Hawaii communities relying on the Ola'a and Pahoa aquifer systems. An intact Volcano biosphere will also ensure preservation of unique biodiversity found no where else in the world and which supports local businesses, including tourism and eco-tourism.

Thank you for your support of HCR 149.

Sincerely



Kathleen Mishina
kmmishina@gmail.com

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:19:01 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Suzanne Robotham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing to declare my strong support for HR143 and HC149. I have lived in Volcano for over 20 years and in that time developers have begun clearing the land pin-to-pin, destroying old growth rainforest. Volcano needs to be designated a biosphere not just to enhance the lives of the residents and visitors to the area but to provide a safe space for our native birds and trees so they can thrive. I believe that by creating the biosphere surrounding Hawaii Volcanoes National Park we will also ensure the health of the flora and fauna within their borders with our buffer zone. As you know, the park welcomes over a million visitors per year who contribute to our economy while on island so it is imperative we work together to ensure it's health. Please vote YES to create the working group and I look forward to seeing Volcano designated a biosphere. Mahalo

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:54:10 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Ramsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Pleasw support the creation of a working group to assess initiatives and processes to designate Volcano, Hawaii, a biosphere area.

The forests, especially the trees in them and the surrounding communities, the habitat and the current care of them, is necessary to a healthy environment locally AND for our islands.

Support these bills. We are situated to lead the effort toward a sustainable natural environment for our children. We are situated to guide thoughtful development of land being altered in the rapid process of home-building particularly.

Thank you for reading this request,

for hearing my plea for the `aina,

Elizabeth Ramsey,

decades-long resident of the Volcano community

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 8:54:24 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emily Herb	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a long time resident of Volcano Village, i would like to submit testimony strongly in favor of HR143 and companion resolution HCR149. Our native forests are one of Hawai'i most valuable assets and should be preserved to support the biodiversity of our unique and precious native trees, plants, birds, insects and other species.

March 31, 2025

Dear Chair Lowen,

I am writing in support of HR 143. As a resident of Volcano for over 30 years as well as a former Department of Education environmental educator based in Volcano Village and the present Volcano Art Center Nialani Forest volunteer coordinator, I am deeply involved and committed to the health of our unique Biosphere Region.

Volcano is a small, but growing community nestled within a native montane rainforest ecosystem. We are surrounded on three sides by protected forests and we are a necessary bridge between these habitats. The `ohi`a trees that are the keystone species of these forests are unique to Hawai`i and support the forests' health, our watershed, the survival of some of our last remaining Hawaiian honeycreepers, our native bat, as well as native insects. These trees are now severely impacted by an invasive fungus that is progressively spreading across the area. With the simultaneous explosion of the pig population, our native forest is in trouble.

It is our responsibility, as reasonable community members, to protect this unique forest ecosystem however possible. By limiting forest clearing on house lots to a minimum, we may be able to promote longterm survival of what's most important in Hawai`i- the native natural environment.

Thank you for accepting my testimony.

Julie Williams

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:01:43 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen Ez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We really need this in Volcano!! I've resided here for 33 years and have watched this village grow. The past few years have brought SO MANY new residents. This has and is creating too many houses with too little resources. When I moved here in the late 80's it seemed all my neighbors were concerned about keeping trees on their lots because this is a rainforest. How lucky I have been to have lived in a rainforest for so long.

Now, however, I see way too many lots that are being clear cut from stake to stake. My guy (partner) lives at the Golf Course. Last year the lot next door to him was sold to a builder before anyone even knew that lot was for sale. IF WE KNEW.. both I and the neighbor on the other side would have purchased it. We never got that chance due to GREED. The builder cleared every tree on that lot except for one Ohia. This ohia then ended up in a large pile of tree trash; we still can't tell if it will survive.

So we beg of you to pass this bill AND... find a way to prohibit builders from clear cutting. It would be lovely is somehow the builders would not be allowed to buy before the neighbors know a lot is for sale. We would have built something that fit the lot well. Instead this house is now extremely close to neighbors on both sides and it's really pissed off the neighborhood.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:10:41 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Asta Miklius	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HR143/HCR149 to better steward our native forests.

Poorly permitted grading and grubbing in areas such as Volcano increases the spread of rapid 'ōhi'a death and invasive species. This, and the wildly destructive increase in feral ungulates, pose dire threats to our native forests. The county-recommended changes in the zoning for the Volcano area that would significantly increase housing density are also a concern.

Our native 'ōhi'a forest is a precious resource for the community. It is a vital watershed, critical habitat for native birds and is a draw for visitors. I would like the county and state to incentivize small and large lot owners who are committed to stewarding native 'ōhi'a forest rather than impose hurdles in order to receive a conservation designation. This resolution supports progress towards these goals.

Thanks you for your consideration,

Asta Miklius

Volcano, Hawai'i

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:18:27 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Janet Peiffer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Janet Peiffer, am testifying in SUPPORT of HR 143 and HR149.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:27:42 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kallie Barnes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of House Resolution 143, which requests the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to convene a working group to assess the environmental and conservation initiatives necessary for transitioning Volcano, Hawaii, into a designated Biosphere Area. This initiative will promote environmental sustainability, enhance community well-being, and complement the neighboring Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve.

This measure is long overdue for the Volcano community. As we continue to witness poor development practices that bulldoze entire properties, leaving nothing but space for invasive species to proliferate, it is increasingly clear that we must do more to protect our precious natural resources. We need to incentivize developers and community members to leave as much native forest intact as possible. Volcano, Hawaii, sits directly next to both forest reserves and the National Park. This proximity offers a massive opportunity to collaborate and contribute positively to the management of these critical surrounding ecosystems.

The proposed Biosphere Area designation would enable the Volcano community to play an active role in environmental conservation rather than being a hindrance to the efforts of the State and the National Park Service. By transitioning Volcano into a Biosphere Area, we can ensure that conservation efforts are aligned with the needs of the local community, while also helping to preserve native habitats and mitigate the spread of invasive species.

The working group proposed in HR 143 will be crucial in identifying and addressing the specific challenges faced by the Volcano region, such as the preservation of native species, sustainable land-use practices, and the mitigation of environmental impacts from development. Importantly, it will also provide a platform for collaboration between local communities, environmental experts, cultural practitioners, and government agencies, ensuring that conservation efforts are meaningful, inclusive, and effective.

In addition to environmental benefits, the Biosphere Area designation will promote sustainable eco-tourism and provide opportunities for education, employment, and a stronger local economy—all while protecting the rich biodiversity of the area. The Volcano community, through this initiative, can be part of the solution to managing and preserving our unique and globally important ecosystems.

I urge the Committee to support HR 143 and the establishment of this working group. This measure presents a tremendous opportunity to create a lasting, positive impact on the Volcano community, its residents, and the surrounding ecosystems, ensuring that future generations of Hawaiians and visitors alike will continue to benefit from this remarkable region.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kallie Barnes

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 11:20:05 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carol Magarian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support Bill HR143, to convene a working group to TO ASSESS ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVES NEEDED TO TRANSITION VOLCANO, HAWAII, INTO A BIOSPHERE AREA THAT PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND COMPLEMENTS THE NEIGHBORING HAWAIIAN ISLANDS BIOSPHERE RESERVE.

I live in the unique community of Volcano and encourage the Legislature to preserve and protect this important initiative. Thank you, Carol

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 11:47:38 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reed Bertollette	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is essential to support the conservation efforts and resilience of the Hawaii Volcano National Park Biosphere Reserve and the other forest reserves that it is majorly surrounded by, as a whole ecosystem.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 12:42:31 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathleen Geiger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kathleen Geiger and I am a resident of Cymbudium Acres in Volcano Village, Hawaii. I am in support of HR143/HCR149. This is a unique biosphere home to tens of thousands of plants, birds, insects and other living things. The forest canopy habitat is vital to the survival of these unique species. This island has become the most affordable in the state, so many people, developers and land/home flippers are coming and clear cutting lots, completely destroying the forest, thus threatening the survival of these endangered plants and birds. The efforts of the Volcano Community Association and other organizations to educate newcomers to the fragility of our forests has fallen on deaf ears. We must have legislative protection to save this beautiful and culturally important biosphere. Mahalo for your consideration.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 1:26:02 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Larsen-Jeyte	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park was designated an International Biosphere Reserve in 1980. 55 years later, we are asking for a designation of Biosphere Area because of the recent trend of habitat loss in the communities surrounding the National Park. As the subdivisions grow around Volcano Village more invasive species enter the native forest threatening the ohia and other native trees. Native forest songbirds lose their traditional homes. As more homes are built some clearcutting of forests denude the landscape and create water runoff decreasing the ability for rain to reach the aquifers. We ask for Legislative support in transitioning to a Biosphere Area which can promote environmental sustainability and community well being.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 2:13:48 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffrey Mermel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! There are several residential subdivisions adjoining Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. The subdivisions are also native Hawaiian forests That need protection just like the nearby national park.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park is a International Biosphere Reserve.

As a 50 year resident of Volcano Village, I strongly support the creation of a task force to see how the adjoining community to the park can be created into some kind of protected buffer zone.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 2:49:42 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Galase	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of the neighborhood, I am in strong support of this measure. There are far too many lots being cleared pin to pin. These developments disregard the benefit of building in harmony with the land and retaining native forest.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 3:05:08 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steven Mosciatti	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please adopt this resolution and take every possible measure to protect this tropical montane rainforest that is completely unique on our planet. It is biologically precious and must be preserved. Please prevent the current trend of pin-to-pin lot clearing. Put a stop to the pace of reckless development that stems from ignorant self-centeredness, greed, and a complete lack of concern for the aina.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 3:08:19 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Philip Blair Norris	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Philip Blair Norris, and I am writing in support of HCR149. I was born and raised on Oahu, but have lived here in Volcano Village with my wife for the past three years. Growing up on Oahu, I did not experience what it is like to live in an endemic cloud forest of 'Ōhi'a and Hāpu'u and others, serenaded by endemic manu such as 'Apapane and 'Io wheeling in the skies above.

On Oahu, introduced and invasive flora and fauna dominate most all urban areas, and the vast majority of those of us who call Hawaii home don't know any better, because native species generally haven't existed in these places for many decades.

Even on Hawaii Island in these upper elevation forests, is not uncommon to see acre sized lots cleared from "pin to pin". This means that a decision to develop a property was made with absolutely zero regard for the ancient native forests that would be sacrificed, after thriving for hundreds of years, previously unmolested by man.

These forests provide the habitat and food sources for native birds and create the climate to produce one our most precious resources, clean fresh water, without which, mankind cannot survive.

I support HCR149 with a sense of urgency, as we continuously disregard preservation of our natural treasures in order to promote un-checked development. Collectively, can we please do the right thing, for once?

Mahalo nui loa,

Philip Blair Norris

808-551-7884

pbnorris64@gmail.com

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 3:57:23 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Serafina Gajate	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this resolution to protect our native forests. As we see our neighborhoods being rapidly developed by outside investors with little interest in Hawai'i other than to artificially increase the cost of housing through rentals and AirBnB's to line their own pockets, it becomes obvious we need some sort of legal protections that in place. This resolution has the opportunity to not only benefit our native flora and fauna, but also prevent gentrification and the the sad reality of Hawaiians being priced out of Hawai'i.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 4:36:48 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Evelyn Wight	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HR143 and HR 149. It is heartbreaking to watch housing lots being clear cut and to witness the continued loss of native forest and birds here in Volcano. Although adding the Volcano region to the Hawaiian Islands Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO may not stop clear cutting of native forest on private property, it may increase awareness and knowledge which may help slow those losses. The suggested working group is already quite large and could probably be streamlined, but I suggest including realtors along with the many other voices listed therein.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 7:28:37 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Steve Haumschild	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Vice chairs,

Please consider this testimony in support of both HR143 and HCR149 to preserve our delicate and beautiful native forest of Volcano Hawaii

HCR-149

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 11:00:11 PM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorraine R. Ellison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

March 31, 2025

I am writing in support of HCR149 and ask that you support HCR 149 by convening a working group to assess initiatives to have areas of Volcano, Hawaii transition into a Biosphere Area. This will support the neighboring Hawaii Island Biosphere Reserve and is truly visionary and positive.

Please support and pass this resolution. Thank you.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 9:08:11 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicola Van De Car	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have lived in Volcano my whole life, and I've seen it change. Some of those changes have been good, with folks coming in and buying up a dozen acres to work on reforestation and protection, the development of Volcano Charter School and the Thursday Evening Market.

But there are also so many properties that are being bulldozed, so many people moving in and changing the character of this sweet, small town. The native birdsong is being drowned out by mynahs and doves, as the 'apapane and 'omao venture up the mountain in search of a quieter, safer habitat. We're losing not just land, but the layered, delicate relationship between the forest and those who live here—the songs that tell us where we are and what time of year it is.

Volcano is not just a pretty place to vacation or a quirky town to “discover.” It’s a living ecosystem, a cultural and ecological treasure, and a community that’s learned to live with and alongside these native forests. The balance here is fragile. When forests are cleared for speculative development or short-term rentals, we don’t just lose trees—we lose shade, soil stability, water catchment, habitat, and the invisible threads that hold everything together.

Designating Volcano as an environmental preserve would offer some protection—not just to the land, but to the values that shape life here. It would allow thoughtful growth while preserving the quiet, wild character that makes Volcano unique. It would signal that we value native species, native knowledge, and the kind of future where people and forest can still coexist.

HCR-149

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 10:14:23 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrew J Sutton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a resident of Volcano, I support the passage of HR143/HCR149. During my 30+ years living on Hawai`i Island I have watched, with sadness and disgust and heartbreak, as parcel after parcel of native 'Ohi`a rainforest has been mowed down by new and existing landowners and real estate speculators in their misguided haste to "improve" the land. These pioneer trees are critical to the island's ecology and culture, and their erasure in the name of development through reckless land scraping is unacceptable. Laws currently on the books for the purpose of regulating clearing and grubbing are ineffective because they are scoffed at wholesale by land owners and developers. Laws without enforcement are just words on paper.

The explosion of Rapid `Ohi`a Death, especially on Hawai`i Island, along with the recent boom in perceived housing needs and attendant aggressive land development is making the problem exponentially worse.

We need to change hearts and minds on this issue, and having the state--DLNR or other responsible agency-- convene a panel to address this critical need, as outlined in HR143/HCR149 is a reasonable step towards raising awareness and imaging new possibilities for addressing the issue.

Whatever the panel recommends in its findings, it also needs to be supported to take action in order to produce the needed change. And this will doubtless involve other agencies, and will need committed funding to move forward. I urge our elected lawmakers to support this bill for the health of our islands. Respectfully.



ReplyForward

Add reaction

HCR-149

Submitted on: 4/1/2025 10:42:30 AM

Testimony for EEP on 4/1/2025 10:45:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heidi Fickinger	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a long-time resident of Hawai'i Island. committed to restoration and preservation of our native forests. I work as a volunteer for multiple restoration/conservation organizations, both private and public to remove invasive species and replant native species. In the nearly 20 years I have lived on Hawai'i Island and for years previously coming to the Island, I have seen incredible destruction of the native forests Island wide. The Volcano area has always been an island of native forest, but which is now, due to climate change and the drastically increased subdivision for people moving to the Island, the forest is under dire threat. Not only does this imperil native species of plants and birds, but it has significant adverse consequences to the water aquifers that the native forest creates. In human terms, this means the amount of fresh water available for us will become less and less. I ask that the legislature move forward to create this biosphere and help to reverse the trend that has been on-going for 200 years. Whether we realize it or not, we need the 'aina in its native form to survive and thrive. Culturally, we need to educate people to how the original Hawaiians knew that they needed to care for it, carefully and did so. A concerted effort to educate the public, provide funds where possible to encourage participation in preservation, conservation and restoration will ensure that we all live well and healthily in partnership with the 'aina.