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General Plan Action Committee
Maui, Hawaii

Testimony on the Maui Island Plan

Dear GPAC Members:

Soon you will be making decisions of potentially historic significance regarding the new Maui Island Plan. It is within your power to launch a proud and lasting environmental legacy for Maui Island, one in tune with that essential goal of “productive harmony” between people and the environment, called for in our National Environmental Policy Act nearly 40 years ago.

What better place than Maui to demonstrate American “exceptionalism” to the rest of the United States, and indeed the world, with regard to the serious environmental challenges we face? You have the power to take those great small steps that are being made by many enlightened citizens here – and turn them into giant steps by the entire island community!

We see remarkable efforts toward clean, renewable energy, from solar panels on private roof tops to a row of wind turbines on West Maui. Yet we lack a collective pathway for achieving energy self-sufficiency and reducing our green house gas pollution to a level consistent with the kind of world we want for our children.

We see local residents and farmers growing healthy foods for local use. Yet we see vast agricultural lands used for growing exports, and our markets filled with foods from many thousands of miles away.

We are concerned about the plight of our coral reefs, and express words of commitment to protect them. Yet we rush ahead with development detached from much needed institutional and governing mechanisms for resolving huge problems,

such as pollution from the land and overfishing. We forget that the words “*economics*” and “*ecology*” are joined at the roots.

We admire many dedicated people trying to stem the bleeding of our watersheds, and end the extinction of our native wildlife, but we have yet to provide the wherewithal to curtail Maui’s extinction crisis by embarking on a massive campaign for restoring our native forests and wetlands.

I am extremely encouraged to see that your Heritage Resources committee has drafted many excellent goals, policies, and actions on behalf of Maui. This is very commendable, progressive, cutting-edge material. I include a few suggestions for the draft in the written copy of my testimony today.

To use a baseball metaphor: You are loading the bases, it’s the 9th inning, so please hit a grand slam for the Maui Island Plan!

Please create an environmental legacy that will be remembered and honored long after we are gone.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tony Povilitis, Ph.D.

A few Suggestions on the Heritage Resources Draft of the Maui Island Plan (1/21/09):

1. Many policies/actions call for measures to control pollution. Consider establishing a science panel that can investigate the precise sources and consequences of land-based pollution of coastal ecosystems. This is needed to help set meaningful standards and management practices, and to ascertain if efforts will be sufficient to get the job done.
2. Use strong, affirmative words for policies/actions needed to solve real problems and demonstrate county leadership. Examples: “prohibit” rather than discourage “stream alteration” (policy 2-4.3a); “adopt” rather than “encourage” a *kapu system* (policy 2-2.1b); “facilitate and support” rather than simply “support” greater coordination and collaboration (policy 2-2.1f).
3. “No-net-loss” (objective 2-5.3) would not be an appropriate objective for wetlands that have been destroyed or degraded and need restoration. “Protect and Recover” would be more consistent with policy 2-5.3b (p. 20).