



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

SB 1474 SD1 HD1
RELATING TO THE MAUNA KEA RESERVE AUTHORITY

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

March 22, 2005

By

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Interim Vice President for Research
University of Hawai'i System

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Chair Waters, Vice Chair Shimabukuro, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. The University remains concerned about the intent and potential impact of SB 1474 SD1 HD1, and offer the following testimony.

Since the state auditor's management audit of the Mauna Kea Science Reserve was issued in 1998, the University continues to work purposefully, diligently, and successfully to ensure the recommendations were followed, implemented, and adhered to, including:

- Development of a completely new internal University guiding document, the Mauna Kea Master Plan, approved by the UH Board of Regents in June 2000. This plan was developed over a period of 2 years, by a community-based advisory committee, and chaired by two faculty members at UH Hilo's College of Hawaiian Language, Dr. Pila Wilson and Mr. Larry Kimura.
- Establishment of the Office of Mauna Kea Management, based at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, and the establishment of two important, community-based advisory bodies: the Mauna Kea Management Board, and Kahu Ku Mauna, the Office and Board's cultural advisory council.
- Establishment of the Mauna Kea Ranger corps, hired and led by OMKM to serve as the University's eyes and ears, provide public health and safety information to visitors, resource protection and oversight, and a visible day-to-day presence.

Additionally, the University is currently working toward completing several initiatives aimed at securing greater and more appropriate active management authority, including:

- SB 904, currently working its way thru the legislative approval process, will give the University the authority to promulgate administrative rules governing public use of University-held lands, including Mauna Kea. This is in keeping with the auditors report of 1998, and the 2000 master plan;
- The transfer of Mauna Kea Support Services from the UH Manoa Institute for Astronomy to the UH Hilo Office of Mauna Kea Management, to consolidate ALL management functions;

- In January, the Board of Regents approved acceptance of commercial activity permitting responsibilities from the DLNR, and authorized OMKM to manage this function.

In summary, the University has and continues to put mechanisms in place to ensure community input, review, advice, and consultation on ALL aspects of management and future development are addressed. The creation of a separate management authority would potentially undo all of the work done to date to create a far better stewardship situation for Mauna Kea than in place previous to the Master Plan and the creation of OMKM.

The public dissatisfaction cited in this bill has largely been focused on the proposed NASA/Keck Outrigger Telescopes project. These issues – from the federal EIS to the state Board of Land and Natural Resource’s contested case hearing – are processes that fall outside of the University’s jurisdiction and control. Additionally, this dissatisfaction has been expressed primarily by those actively engaged in these processes, and efforts to halt new development. Again, DLNR’s permitting processes, and the University’s active, day-to-day management and stewardship responsibilities are very separate functions.

If a review of the University processes and Master Plan is desired, we believe that those who have been most directly involved in Mauna Kea issues over the past four years are already well aware of what’s working and what’s not. The University believes it would make sense to bring these parties to the table to engage in a joint effort to make recommendations back to this body. The University would willingly participate in a legislatively mandated task force – including broadly based interests – rather than the auditor, to study the management issues raised by this bill and develop recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.