



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

TESTIMONY

HCR 111 RELATING TO STRONGLY URGING THE GOVERNOR
TO RELEASE THE FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR THE
ACQUISITION OF PARADISE PARK IN MANOA

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Higher Education

March 31, 2004

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Director, Center for Conservation, Research & Training
University of Hawai'i

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Chair K. Mark Takai and Members of the Committee:

House Concurrent Resolution 111 encourages the Governor to release the funds appropriated by the 2002 Legislature for the acquisition of Paradise Park in Manoa. As stated in the resolution, the 152 acre site is ideally located for the establishment of a world-class research facility that will serve as the premier research and training center within the Asia-Pacific Region. The University of Hawaii is poised to take a leadership role in developing the Pacific Center for Ecosystem Science and strongly support the intent of the resolution.

The University has already secured a three-year \$9 million grant from the National Science Foundation to help establish research infrastructure in the field of conservation biology. The NSF grant will enable University researchers to establish field research sites where state of the art environmental sensor technology will be implemented which will provide critical information to enhance our ability to protect our precious island resources. These study sites give the university a strong competitive edge in securing a larger grant from the National Science Foundation as part of the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON). A potential \$80 million over a period of 20 years could be awarded to the University of Hawaii if we are able to compete successfully for one of the 10 or 12 NEON sites that will be selected. UH has already been identified as a prospective core site to house and administer the Pacific NEON core site because of its unique island and tropical ecosystem. However, the University and the State of Hawaii must be able to demonstrate its commitment to the NEON program and the acquisition of the Paradise Park site will go a long toward such a commitment.

The University's vision for the Paradise Park site is to establish a "multi-agency Conservation Campus" which brings together partner organizations from governmental agencies as well as non-governmental organizations to work together in addressing high priority conservation issues in Hawaii and in the Asia-Pacific region. The research that will be conducted at this site will not only address global environmental issues but also include research on issues related to human health. The sensor technology we are deploying to monitoring the environment provide the tools with which we will also be able to investigate the "ecology" of infectious diseases and we will be working with researchers from

the University's School of Medicine in this work. We have also discovered bacteria species associated with a group of native insects which have been shown to be resistant to some of the most potent antibiotics known. There is strong potential that our research on the immunogenetic association between bacteria and insect will lead to novel pharmaceuticals that will have significant impact on major human diseases.

With a relatively small investment of state funds to acquire an extremely valuable piece of property, the University has great potential for attracting significant extramural funding to develop a research and education facility that will establish Hawaii as the best place in the world for addressing global environmental issues and the impact of ecosystem health on human health.

Thank you.