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October 06, 2025

Memorandum

To:

From: Game Management Advisory Commission  
Board of Land and Natural Resources

Subject: Hawai'i GMAC Letter of Support for DOCARE Recruit Academy

The Game Management Advisory Commission (GMAC) affirms its strong support for the continuation of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) Recruit Academy, recognizing that the success of Hawai'i's game management programs is inseparable from the presence of credible and effective enforcement. GMAC's statutory role is to advise the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) on matters of game management; however, the ability to implement sound policy is contingent upon DOCARE officers who enforce hunting regulations, game laws, and broader resource protection statutes. The commission emphasizes that a reliable and ongoing recruit pipeline is essential to ensuring continuity in enforcement capacity and, by extension, the long-term sustainability of game management programs statewide. GMAC's support underscores that DOCARE recruit training is not an outlying matter but a core requirement for effective resource stewardship.

**The Hawai'i Game Management Advisory Commission would like to provide this letter in support of the continuation of the Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement – Recruit Academy for the following reasons:**

1. Standardized Training

Ensures all recruits receive consistent, high-quality training tailored to DOCARE's unique mission, environment, and enforcement challenges.

2. Specialized Curriculum

Focuses on natural resource laws, cultural resource protection, maritime operations, and wilderness survival — areas that general law enforcement academies may not cover.

### 3. Professional Development

Builds professionalism, discipline, and a strong work ethic early in officers' careers.

### 4. Cohesion & Teamwork

Recruits train together, forming strong bonds and camaraderie that translate into effective teamwork in the field.

### 5. Community Trust & Visibility

Demonstrates to the public that officers are well-trained, competent, and committed to safeguarding natural and cultural resources.

### 6. Cultural & Environmental Awareness

Incorporates training specific to Hawai'i's laws, ecosystems, and cultural practices, ensuring officers protect resources with sensitivity and respect.

### 7. Recruitment & Retention

A dedicated academy attracts motivated candidates who value conservation law enforcement as a career path, improving long-term retention.

### 8. Safety & Preparedness

Provides critical skills in defensive tactics, firearms, vessel operations, and field safety to keep officers and the public safe.

### 9. Adaptability

Prepares officers to respond to diverse incidents, from illegal fishing to wildfire assistance, search and rescue, and cultural resource protection.

### 10. Agency Pride & Identity

Builds a sense of identity and belonging within DOCARE, reinforcing the unique mission and values of the division.

### 11. Leadership Development

Creates a pathway for future leaders by instilling responsibility and decision-making skills from the start.

### 12. Public Education & Outreach

Trains officers to serve as ambassadors, educating the public about conservation laws and promoting voluntary compliance.

### 13. Operational Readiness

Graduates leave the academy fully prepared to begin fieldwork without extensive additional training, reducing ramp-up time.

### 14. Positive Morale

Having a formal academy shows investment in officers' careers, boosting morale and motivation.

**This letter requests that the Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement recruit academy receive additional funding for the following reasons:**

#### 1. Strengthened Protection of Natural & Cultural Resources

Extra funding ensures recruits are fully trained to enforce laws protecting Hawai'i's fragile ecosystems, endangered species, marine resources, and cultural sites.

#### 2. Enhanced Public Safety

More resources improve training in firearms, defensive tactics, maritime operations, and emergency response, keeping both officers and communities safer.

#### 3. Specialized Training Needs

DOCARE's mission is unique compared to general law enforcement. Extra funds allow for a specialized curriculum on ocean enforcement, environmental crime investigation, and cultural sensitivity.

#### 4. Recruitment & Retention of Quality Officers

Additional funding makes the academy more attractive to recruits, improving retention rates by investing in career-long skills, leadership development, and morale.

#### 5. Faster Operational Readiness

Well-funded training ensures graduates can enter the field fully prepared, reducing the need for costly post-academy remedial or supplemental training.

#### 6. Community Trust & Visibility

Demonstrates to the public and stakeholders that the State is investing in the protection of resources, fostering confidence in DOCARE officers as highly trained professionals.

#### 7. Cost-Effective Long-Term Investment

Upfront investment in training reduces long-term costs from turnover, accidents, liability claims, and enforcement inefficiencies.

#### 8. Modern Equipment & Facilities

Funding provides recruits access to up-to-date technology, safety equipment, vessels, and training facilities that reflect real-world conditions.

#### 9. Stronger Interagency Collaboration

A well-funded academy enhances DOCARE's ability to train alongside other law enforcement and emergency agencies, strengthening Hawai'i's overall public safety network.

#### 10. Climate & Disaster Preparedness

Officers trained with additional resources are better prepared to assist in natural disaster response, wildfire suppression, flooding, and search-and-rescue operations.

#### 11. Workforce Development for Hawai'i

Investment creates stable, long-term careers in conservation law enforcement, supporting local families and building future leaders in public service.

#### 12. Legislative Accountability & Success Story

Funding the academy showcases the Legislature's commitment to safeguarding Hawai'i's natural and cultural heritage, providing a tangible return on investment that the public can see and appreciate.

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