

From: [Paul Giambruno](#)
To: [DLNR.BLNR.Testimony](#)
Cc: kpuas@hawaii.edu; [Belleau, Gina](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony in Strong Support of Agenda Item L1 (Decommission Kalihiwai Reservoir)
Date: Wednesday, November 12, 2025 8:00:18 PM

Dear BLNR:

My name is Paul Giambruno, and I am representing the Giambruno family which owns a home in Kalihiwai Valley.

I am writing to express my strong support for the decommissioning of the Kalihiwai Reservoir. The structure poses a significant and unacceptable risk to the residents of Kalihiwai Valley and to the many people who visit Kalihiwai Beach.

Should the dam fail, the resulting flood would cause devastating loss of life and extensive property damage. The steep topography of the valley would funnel floodwaters rapidly toward homes and public areas, **leaving no time for evacuation.**

Given the age of the dam and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, the risk of failure cannot be ignored. Decommissioning the reservoir represents a responsible and proactive measure to protect public safety.

I **STRONGLY** urge the Board of Land and Natural Resources ("BLNR") to issue the permit to Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association to decommission the Kalihiwai Reservoir.

Sincerely,

Paul Giambruno
gampic@gmail.com

From: [Sybil Nishioka](#)
To: [DLNR.BLNR.Testimony](#)
Cc: [Belleau, Gina](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony in Strong Support of Agenda Item L1
Date: Thursday, November 13, 2025 7:56:27 AM

Aloha,

I have pasted below my written testimony for your November 14, 2025 BLNR meeting in strong support of Agenda Item L1- the Decommissioning of the Kalihiwai Reservoir. Please distribute my written testimony to the board members.

In addition, and depending on time, I would like to testify via Zoom please. I saw the Zoom link on the agenda, but will I need a password?

Please confirm that you received my email and whether I will be able to Zoom. Let me know if there is anything else you may need from me.

My written testimony follows. Mahalo for your time and assistance.

Sybil Nishioka
(808) 651-7773

November 14, 2025

RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF AGENDA ITEM L1

Authorize the Chair to Issue, Amend, Manage or Revoke Dam Safety Permit No. P86 for the removal of the Kalihiwai Reservoir (KA-0024) to Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association and others. Authorize the removal of the reservoir from the HRS 179D Inventory of Regulated Dams; and authorize an amendment to the Board's April 28, 2023 Order to allow 12 months from the issuance of the permit to start construction.

Dear Chair Chang and Fellow BLNR Members,

My name is Sybil Nishioka. My family has lived and worked in Kalihiwai Valley for the past 125 years. It is where my grandfather chose to live and settle after sailing around the world and falling in love with Kaua'i. It is where he raised his family, working the soil and fishing the waters. After the war, and having served in the army, my father, the youngest of seven children, moved to O'ahu where he attended college, worked, got married and raised our family. Although I was born and raised in Honolulu, I knew from a very young age how special Kalihiwai Valley is. We spent all our summers here, and I distinctly remember at the ripe old age of 7, declaring that this is where I would live when I grew up.

Kalihiwai has always been my refuge and place of healing. During tumultuous teen years, I would escape for a weekend and stay with my aunty in the valley to "chill." As a young adult, I moved to Los Angeles where I lived for 11 years, always returning a couple times a year to get my dose of Kalihiwai. In 1988, I decided that it was time to live my dream and moved to Kaua'i for good. That was 37 years ago.

The house I live in was built on family land by my parents when they retired in 1985, about 60 feet from the river's edge (although some land has since built up over the years). It was basically a family vacation home where the grandkids could spend their breaks, making cherished memories like I did. At the time, they fought for a variance to the height requirements for new construction that went as high as 15' above sea level, depending on your location. Both my parents were engineers and they knew that flooding (at least in my dad's lifetime) had never reached 15' in the valley, and a tsunami...well, it wouldn't matter how high you built it, it would go. (Our family lost two homes to the tsunamis in 1946 and 1957.) They were granted the variance and were able to build it at 8' off the ground. They told me to move in permanently after Iniki, when the house I was renting in Kīlauea was severely damaged and not being repaired.

They are both now gone, but like my grandfather, it is here where I chose to raise my son, and it is still my refuge and place of healing, despite some of the challenges of living along a river near to the ocean. Those challenges include evacuations during tsunami threats and the regular flooding of the river that would oftentimes come under the house. Most were minor inconveniences and rarely rose more than a few feet. Life in Kalihiwai Valley was grand for nearly 30 years.

Then the flood of 2018 hit. Like Iniki, this event would affect me to my core. For years after, the sound of rain would cause anxiety, and thunder and lightning would send my body into uncontrollable shivers. It has gotten better, but when particularly bad weather hits, it returns, especially with the knowledge of another threat that looms—one I had only learned about after that flood, and what we are discussing today. It is compounded with the changes in weather and sea levels due to climate change.

Up until 2018, thunderstorms never bothered me. When my son was little, I remember comforting him during storms and saying things like, "Wow! Look at the fireworks going off in heaven!" It indeed was more fun than fear. On rare occasions, I would move my car to the roadside which was a few feet higher, but only if it seemed like the rain was heavier than usual or warnings issued.

The night of April 13-14, 2018, didn't seem to be raining enough for me to evacuate or even move my car to the roadside. I don't think any of us in the valley realized how much it was raining in the mountains, feeding the rivers that would eventually cause massive destruction around the island. It must have been after midnight when I heard the goats crying in the field next door. Like I normally do, I grabbed my flashlight to go check on them, but I never got the chance. When I turned on the porchlight, water was already 5' – 6' up the stairs violently rolling and rising! I had never seen anything like it! I noticed a puzzling beam of light under the water and couldn't figure out what that was. In a panic, I ran back in, grabbed the dog and cat, and headed to the bedroom. I barricaded the door with plastic sheeting and towels, and if worse came to worse, thought we would go in the tub or climb on the bathroom counter. All I could do was sit there and pray... my heart sinking when the sound of the goats eventually fell silent. A car horn was going off, and I prayed no one was in it. It felt like Iniki all over... I could possibly die.

When the water eventually receded in the morning, palm trees had fallen along one side of my house blocking the stairs, and debris was blocking the other stairs. When I finally climbed down, I was shocked. Nothing under the house remained except my flooded car that was faced sideways, trapped by a column. I realized that the beam of light I had seen earlier through the

water was actually the headlights from my car that had short-circuited. Everything else was gone—even a sink had been ripped out leaving a clean concrete pad. The water had nearly reached the full 8' height that my father fought for.

Neighbors came to check on everyone, but just minutes later, firemen were making the rounds to tell us to evacuate immediately because of the threat of the Kalihiwai reservoir above us. Whaaat? I had no idea what that had to do with us, but there was no time for questions. We had to act quickly and seek higher ground. Most of our cars had been flooded, so we had to walk. Luckily, one of my neighbors up the valley and on a hill said I could stay there. I didn't even have a chance to grab a change of clothes as they helped me with my pets and trudged through the mud. A few hours later, the river did indeed rise again almost to the same heights, and to this day, I don't know if it was from the reservoir or just more inundation of rain.

The aftermath was heartbreaking, especially for my neighbors who were ground-level and lost everything. I felt guilty thinking about the things I lost when they didn't even have a place to live, but it still aches to know that decades of photos, letters and memorabilia that were stored downstairs are gone. Because flood insurance has been cost-prohibitive, I live with the added burden of paying for damages on my own. My electric lines and outlets under the house had to be replaced, along with a water heater and a car. Contents from my entire storage shed with gardening equipment and tools from my carpentry hobby were also unusable. For a couple years afterwards, I would recall items that were lost... "Oh yeah, that was in the cabinet downstairs."

Life on the river with the threat of floods from rain and tsunamis is something those of us who choose to live here have made. We are no different than many others who live in inundation zones, left to nature's mercy. I hope that the storm of April 2018 was truly an anomaly and doesn't happen again, but now that it has come to light that there is an additional manmade threat—something that can be potentially more devastating but totally avoidable—action needs to be taken now for decommissioning and removal of the Kalihiwai Reservoir before the unthinkable happens. None of us in the valley can rest easy knowing that this threat exists. We remember what happened with Kaloko. Please support your engineering division's recommendation and vote today to authorize the Chair to act.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

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November 13, 2025

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State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources
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RE: TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF AGENDA ITEM L1

Authorize the Chair to Issue, Amend, Manage or Revoke Dam Safety Permit No. P86 for the removal of the Kalihiwai Reservoir (KA-0024) to Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association and others. Authorize the removal of the reservoir from the HRS 179D Inventory of Regulated Dams; and authorize an amendment to the Board's April 28, 2023 Order to allow 12 months from the issuance of the permit to start construction.

Aloha Chair Chang and Members of the Board of Land and Natural Resources,

My name is Amy Ono and I am a member of the Akana and Hanchett families of Kalihiwai Valley. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **strong support** of your engineering division's recommendation to issue a permit to remove the Kalihiwai Reservoir.

For many generations, my 'ohana has lived and worked in Kalihiwai Valley. I spent many years of my life visiting Kalihiwai and building my connections to this place, our history, our kuleana, our culture, and our extended 'ohana. These connections are very important to me, I have done the same for the next generation and I will continue to do so to the extent of my resources and ability. Kalihiwai Valley is not just a place, it's 'ohana and home.

Over the last several years, flooding during the winter has become intense and excessive to the extent that our family's home and property was directly affected in significantly negative ways. For years now, valley residents have been waiting for the Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association to decommission its reservoir. In the meantime, our community is very concerned, especially during the wet season – currently in progress – as flooding seems to get worse every year. We remember what happened with Kaloko and it's alarmingly scary for those of us located makai of this reservoir. We have been incredibly fortunate thus far that there has been no loss of life due to the reservoir flooding, now it is time to ensure the safety of our Kalihiwai Valley community. Although we have been very patient, the time is now to finally move forward with decommissioning.

Please support your engineering division's recommendation and vote today to authorize the Chair to act. Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration.

Very truly yours,



Amy Ono

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