

Written Testimony in Support of the BNLR Proposal to Decommission the Kalihiwai Reservoir

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chad K Pacheco and I am a resident of Kalihiwai Valley. I am writing in strong support of the BNLR's proposal to decommission the Kalihiwai Reservoir.

In 2018, my family and I were ordered to evacuate our home due to concerns of a possible dam breach during heavy rains. The fear and uncertainty we felt that day have stayed with us ever since. Every major storm brings that anxiety back — the worry that something beyond our control could threaten our homes and our lives.

Beyond my personal experience as a resident, I also served on the State K9 Search and Rescue team that responded to the Koloko Dam breach in March 2006. I witnessed firsthand the devastation, destruction, and loss that can occur when a dam fails. That experience changed me — it made the potential danger of these structures very real. I've seen the aftermath, and I never want to see our community experience that kind of tragedy.

Decommissioning the Kalihiwai Reservoir is not just a matter of infrastructure — it's a matter of safety, peace of mind, and responsibility to the people who live downstream. While I respect the history of the reservoir and the role it has played, I believe it is time to move forward with a plan that truly prioritizes human safety and community well-being.

Mahalo for allowing me to share my testimony and for considering the perspectives of those who call Kalihiwai home.

Respectfully,

Chad K Pacheco

Resident, Kalihiwai Valley

November 12, 2025

Board of Land and Natural Resources

State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources
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**Re: Testimony in Strong Support of Agenda Item L1
Issue a Permit to Finally Decommission the Kalihiwai Reservoir**

Dear Chair Chang and Fellow BLNR Members,

My name is Carrie Souza. For the past 30 years I have been blessed to live in Kalihiwai Valley, where I raised my son. We are honored to help steward kuleana land, which is also riparian. We are lucky to live next to the Kalihiwai River, and our home is about 30 feet from the river bank. We can see, hear, and feel the seasonal changes of this special place.

Kalihiwai River is an important resource for our entire community. On a daily basis, I see local families from across the North Shore fishing, swimming, paddling, and more. The river also provides important habitat for native stream animals -- including 'ōpae, 'o'opu, and wī -- as well as native waterbirds. We see native birds in and along the river almost every day, including 'ālae ula, 'auku'u (herons), and ae'o (Hawaiian stilts). Koloa ducks have become less common over the years, but we still see those too. In fact, this year, we had a family of 'ālae ula nest in or near our yard so we got to watch their chick grow up.

Over the last decade or so, the flooding on Kaua'i's North Shore and in Kalihiwai has been really bad. Climate impacts are real. Given our proximity to the river, flooding threatens my home and the physical safety of my family and neighbors.

During the 2018 floods, I fled to higher ground in the middle of the night, with nothing but my car and a few items I was able to gather. I went home when the flood waters receded, but was immediately evacuated by the fire department who told me that the walls of Kalihiwai Reservoir were caving in. The fire department wouldn't even let me go back to get my cat -- they

said it was too dangerous. Immediate Mandatory Evacuation. It was scary.

What is even more scary is that seven years later, the Kalihiwai Reservoir is still NOT in compliance with Dam Safety Standards. Moreover, Jack Gushiken, the former ditch operator for Kilauea Sugar, Guava Kai, and Common Ground, who opened the valve to stop the reservoir from overtopping in 2018 has passed away. We are even more worried about what will happen without him.

And, it's not raining any less. We still get regular, heavy rains, especially during the winter. The river has already flooded several times and it's barely November. It's raining right now, as I'm writing this testimony.

It's difficult for those who don't live in the valley to fully understand how frightening the flooding was and continues to be. Our community meetings have been contentious and those of us who live in the valley have been verbally attacked and accused of being selfish because we want the reservoir and the Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association to comply with the law. It doesn't seem like that big of an ask, especially when lives are at stake.

For years now, my neighbors and I have patiently waited, assuming that the Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association would choose to do the right thing. Decommission its reservoir for the safety of the people. Instead, they have repeatedly delayed, most recently working with 'Aina Ho'okupu o Kilauea to try to keep the reservoir open, despite committing to close it time and time again.

The time for action is long overdue. Please vote today to authorize Chair Chang to issue a permit to decommission the Kalihiwai Reservoir. And, please ensure that the Kalihiwai Ridge Community Association actually follows through this time. Too much is at stake.

Mahalo for your time, consideration, and understanding!

Carrie Souza
Kalihiwai Valley Resident