



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

SB 1474 SD1 RELATING TO THE
MAUNA KEA SCIENCE RESERVE AUTHORITY

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

March 1, 2005

By

James Gaines
Interim Vice President for Research
University of Hawai'i System

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Chair Taniguchi and members of the committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on SB1474, SD1.

The University of Hawai'i has worked diligently on improving its management of the Mauna Kea Science Reserve, beginning with the adoption of a new Master Plan in 2000. The Master Plan was the result of an arduous, two-year process that included the input of many members of the community. The University is concerned that any effort to kill or replace the Master Plan before it has been given adequate time to prove itself would demean the effort put forth by the many dedicated community members who contributed to its development.

Since its adoption, the University believes that the Office of Mauna Kea Management, Mauna Kea Management Board, and Kahu Ku Mauna Council at the University of Hawai'i, Hilo, have provided a strong and independent voice in managing Mauna Kea. And, in spite of the many complex issues that surround the management of this most precious resource, the University of Hawai'i submits that it has made significant progress in implementing the Master Plan and is capable of continuing its management role on Mauna Kea.

The public dissatisfaction cited in this bill is largely related to processes that fall outside of the University's jurisdiction. In particular, it refers to the debate that has surrounded the proposed NASA/Keck Outriggers project — including the federal Environmental Impact Statement and state Board of Land and Natural Resource's contested case hearing. Both of these permitting processes are not University functions and would continue to prevail even if a separate management entity were to replace the University. The University feels it is capable of responsibly managing Mauna Kea. However, it would participate in discussions if the Legislature deemed such a study to be in the public's interest.

The University does not believe that a legislative audit — as proposed in this bill — offers the most effective approach to dissecting the Master Plan and analyzing the numerous University sectors engaged with Mauna Kea (e.g. Institute for Astronomy, Manoa Campus, Mauna Kea Support Services, System Administration, Environmental Health and Safety; Legal Counsel of the University of Hawai'i, University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Office of Mauna Kea Management, Mauna Kea Management Board, and Kahu Ku Mauna Council).

Additionally, in order to gather meaningful information and make informed recommendations such an audit would necessarily have to include: the State Department of Health's Office of Environmental Quality Control, Office of Hazard Evaluation and Emergency Response, Solid and Hazardous Waste and Water Quality; Department of Land and Natural Resources' Historic Preservation, Natural Area Reserves, Land Division, Conservation and Coastal Lands, Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement, Attorney General, the Board of Land and Natural Resources, and the CDUA process affecting all conservation use lands, not to mention the various federal departments and agencies that also impact the project approval process.

An audit of these many entities and their role in relation to Mauna Kea would be time-consuming at best and potentially overwhelming. We believe that those who have been directly involved in Mauna Kea issues since the adoption of the Master Plan 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 timely and meaningful recommendations back to this body. The University recommends that a legislatively mandated task force – rather than an audit – be considered to study the issues raised by this bill and to develop recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration.