

From: [Kathleen Mishina](#)
To: [WPCtestimony](#)
Subject: Testimony to WPC for Special General Plan Meeting on March 10, 2025
Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2025 10:54:37 AM
Attachments: [Testimony to WPC re General Plan 2045 page 1 o3.pdf](#)
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Aloha to all members of the Windward Planning Commission,

I am emailing my written testimony for the upcoming WPC meeting for the General Plan 2045.

My 3 page testimony is attached.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Kathleen Mishina
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March 4, 2025

Louis Daniele III, Chair
Windward Planning Commission
Hawaii County Planning Department
Aupuni Center
101 Pauahi Street, Suite 3
Hilo, Hawaii 96720

RE: Testimony for Special General Plan Meeting, March 10, 2025

Dear Mr. Daniele,

I am submitting testimony in support of the General Plan 2045. It is a solid plan for addressing many environmental issues with a strong focus on sustainability and resiliency for our island communities. At the same time, we want sustainable development and infrastructure planning to ensure island communities can meet the future needs of its people.

I am a resident of Volcano Village and I would like to address **Section 2: Collaborative Biocultural Stewardship**. This part of the General Plan validates the values that we, in Volcano Village, hold dear. These include the preservation of the Volcano biosphere where people live, work, and support sustainable property and land management practices to preserve the ohia forest overlay. However, current County zoning and regulatory measures fall short of ensuring sustainable stewardship of the Volcano biosphere. Regulatory measures are in dire need of revision because careless and unregulated activities continue to destroy the forest overlay. When coupled with climate change, this trend will lead to further forest degradation, loss of watershed protection and loss of endangered species found nowhere else in the world.

Volcano Village is a threshold community for the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (HVNP), which is designated as an UNESCO World Heritage Site for its biocultural significance, as well as an UNESCO International Biosphere Reserve.

Volcano Village is located in what can be regarded as a "biosphere reserve buffer zone (BRBZ)" and/or a "biosphere transition zone" since the Village, Volcano Community Golf Course and Mauna Loa Estates share boundaries with the core biosphere area of the HVNP, Keauhou Bird Conservation Center (State of Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Three Mountain Alliance/Kamehameha Schools), Ola'a Rainforest and two Natural Area Reserves of Pu'u Maka'ala and Kahauale'a. The very close proximity of the Volcano Village area to these protected biocultural assets reinforces our community's value to preserve the biosphere and ohia forest.

Evidence of climate change is upon us in the Village and greater Volcano area, as we observe drier seasons, ohia tree/forest die back, increasing numbers of invasive plant and animal

species (insects, wild pigs, plant disease vectors) as well as unregulated clearing and grading. The cumulative effect has many of us very concerned.

The County's General Plan 2045 recognizes climate related changes impact our fragile ecosystems. I support the sections on Collaborative Biocultural Stewardship and Addressing Climate Change in their entirety.

I am in very strong SUPPORT the following policies and actions, which are especially relevant for us in Volcano Village and to the implementation of our Volcano Community Plan priority on forest overlay protection.

1. **Collaborative Biocultural Stewardship**

Objective 1: Increase biodiversity and resilience of native habitats

Policy 1.3: **preservation and restoration of...forests....**aquifer recharge areas that have the inherent capacity to prevent, minimize, or mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Policy 1.14: Partner with**communities** to

1.14 a) Implement State Wildlife Plan (SWAP)

1.14 g) Expand native and/or endemic forest cover

Actions

1.c. Consider establishment of clearing limits within the Code and increase tree removal mitigation requirements, limiting the clearing of native vegetation during development.

1.g. Support programs designed to prevent introduction and establishment of invasive species....particularly those that serve as disease vectors.

1.h. Develop buffer policies to protect native forests, wildlife....and other native habitats.

1.i. Create incentives for landowners to retain and re-establish forest cover....

1.l. Amend the Code to incentivize the establishment of threatened and endangered endemic plant species within their habitable ranges during development approvals.

1.m. Review the Code and consider amendments to encourage site clustering of development in order to avoid critical environmental areas and assets.

1.o. Study, develop, and establish **Biosphere Reserve Buffer Zones**, either

separately or as an overlay district, to guide development within native forests through regulatory measures and economic incentives.

In closing, there are many challenges to preserving the integrity of our native habitat, watersheds, as well as cultural and historic assets. Our island has unique biodiversity that is threatened by climate change and careless human activity.

The General Plan 2045 is a very important road map for communities like Volcano Village. Through the policies and actions proposed, we, at the community level, have the opportunity to collaborate with the Planning Department to preserve the environment and lifestyle we value not just for ourselves, but for future generations.

Therefore, please keep the entire section of Collaborative Biocultural Stewardship intact, as written, because our community of Volcano Village will be using it to go forward with our community long range plan.

My sincere gratitude to everyone who worked so hard to put this General Plan 2045 together.
Sincerely,



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