

TESTIMONY ON CA 15, FUND FOR PUBLIC LAND

January 16, 2010

To: Charter Review Commission

From: George and Marian Wilkins

We urge you to support a Charter amendment to establish a fund to acquire public lands. In our view, taking this action could be the most important item that you or any other Commission has or will have taken for the future of Hawaii Island.

We also urge you to increase the recommended amount to be set aside to 2% which is the amount that voters overwhelmingly supported in the 2006 election. Your support will validate the will of the people.

We know that there are those who argue that we can't keep up the land (especially parks) that the county already controls. We agree that more should be done at both the state and county level. But we do not have to develop every piece of land that has been or will be acquired. The goal is to secure these lands while they are still available or available at a price the county can manage. It would be very shortsighted to look only at what we can do today.

We have seen what has happened and is happening to the open remaining desirable lands in recent years and they are going fast. Just in Kona we have lost Kohanaiki (Pine Trees) and will soon lose O'oma as well as smaller parcels. The public access guaranteed by developers does not always live up to expectations as we have seen many times over.

We also need to preserve forest and mountain lands, not just coastal areas. As soon as the economy picks up we are bound to see aggressive land development from mainland and local developers who know a good thing when they see it. We have a great opportunity to start now to build up our funds and also to issue bonds to acquire land. The information from other counties supplied by Finance Director Nancy Crawford shows how this can be done and deserves a good examination by the Commission.

Thank you for your hard work and for your consideration on this issue. Our grandchildren and yours will thank you, too.

73-1410 Kaloko Dr., Kailua Kona, HI 96740

325-6116