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County of Hawai'i
HĀMĀKUA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ACTION COMMITTEE
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February 12, 2026

Charles O'Neill, Director
Na 'Āina Kai Botanical Garden
4101 Wailapa Road
Kilauea, Hawai'i 96754
Email: Director@naainakai.org

**SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation – Na 'Āina Kai Botanical Garden,
Governing Board, and Director Charles O'Neill**

Aloha Charles O'Neill:

The Hāmākua Community Development Plan (CDP) Action Committee, representing the residents of the District of Hāmākua on the Big Island of Hawai'i, herein expresses its appreciation to the Na 'Āina Kai Botanical Garden, its Governing Board, and its Director, Charles O'Neill.

Through the actions of its Board and the advocacy of its Director, Na 'Āina Kai enabled the County of Hawai'i to acquire the property bordering Kawainui Stream as it enters the ocean between Pepe'ekeo and Pāpa'ikou. For over 25 years, this 80-acre parcel of unsurpassed beauty has been cared for with graciousness and benevolence toward the community by the custodians of Na 'Āina Kai. Access was never discouraged – there were no fences or "keep out" signs – and footpaths continued to lead visitors to the beautiful stream, waterfalls and estuary. As stewards of 'āina, Na 'Āina Kai is to be commended.

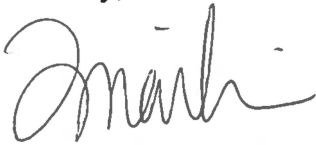
That stewardship will now transition to the Makahanaloa Fishing Association, a collective of over 150 members – fishermen and their families residing in the Pepe'ekeo and Pāpa'ikou area – under the administration of the County of Hawai'i. This transition reflects a shared understanding of the ecological importance of the estuary and stream within this

property, which serve as spawning grounds supporting fisheries along this coastline. It also provides assurance that the land will continue to be cared for with sensitivity and respect.

Much is owed to the previous caregivers, Na 'Āina Kai Botanical Gardens, by the people of the Big Island – particularly those of Hāmākua. Those who observed this transition understand that Na 'Āina Kai had opportunities to sell the property to outside investors who envisioned the possibility of subdivision. Such offers likely exceeded what the County of Hawai'i could attain. It is a testament to Na 'Āina Kai's commitment to 'āina and community that the acquisition by the County was made possible.

This letter conveys the deep appreciation of the people of Hāmākua for that commitment.

Sincerely,



Tisha Mahealani Maikui, Chair
Hāmākua Community Development Plan Action Committee

Tawn Keeney

Tawn Keeney (Feb 18, 2026 13:50:27 HST)

Tawn Keeney, M.D.

On behalf of the group nominating Kawainui Makai for acquisition by the County of Hawai'i

JL

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