

**Congressman Kaiali'i Kahele Testimony
To accompany PP presentation
South Kona National Heritage Area
6.15.2021**

Slide one (South Kona National Heritage Area)

Aloha Chair Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, Members of the Committee and Honored Guests.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of my bill, H.R. 1925, the South Kona National Heritage Area. I thank my friend and colleague, Congressman Ed Case for joining me as an original cosponsor. It is with great excitement that I stand before you today to showcase one of the most beautiful, precious and pristine areas in the state of Hawai'i.

This legislation will help preserve and protect some of Hawai'i's most immaculate shorelines while enhancing economic activities connected to our visitor, coffee, macadamia, flower and tropical fruit industries. Designating the area as a National Heritage Area would benefit the economy, protect the alluring beauty of Hawai'i Island and enhance the vibrancy of Hawai'i's multicultural and Native Hawaiian communities.

Slide two (State Map)

The State of Hawai'i comprises eight major islands. They are Ni'ihau, Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, Maui, Kaho'olawe and the Island of Hawai'i, also referred to as the Big Island.

Slide three (South Kona Coast Heritage Area)

The South Kona National Heritage Area is located on the South Western region of Hawai'i Island. This unique region boasts numerous intact and significant Native Hawaiian cultural sites that date to pre-Western contact, tens of miles of undeveloped coastline and intact marine and terrestrial ecosystems that support dozens of threatened and endangered plant and animal species. Many Native Hawaiians and residents share a

strong connection to this place through generations of stewardship, cultural practices and traditions.

Slides four (Areas of Note)

Along the coast, there is Honomalino Bay, Kapua Bay, Pōhue Bay and Ka Lae (South Point). Pōhue Bay is one of the few “untouched” places in Hawai‘i. The area is home to a number of historic trails, heiau (sacred sites/temples), petroglyphs and other cultural features. It’s also a prime nesting area for the endangered hawksbill sea turtle. Honomalino is a black sand beach and is one of the most picturesque sites on Hawai‘i Island.

Slide five (Importance)

The proposed National Heritage Area begins at Ka Lae, also known as South Point, and is the southernmost point of the 50 United States. The Ka Lae area is a registered National Historic Landmark District and is a site of one of the earliest settlements in the Hawaiian Islands.

Our proposed area ends just before Miloli‘i Fishing Village at Honomalino Bay.

Within this geographic area there are numerous archaeological features like petroglyphs, heiau (temples), burial sites, caves, ancient trails & house sites and a fully preserved hōlua slide at Ahole near Kapua Bay.

Slide six (South Kona Wilderness Area - HI Rev Stat § 6E-81)

The South Kona Wilderness Area, proposed by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in the 1970s, was established in 2011 by the State of Hawaii for the preservation of the culturally and historically rich south Kona area.

The 22,000-acre area includes extensive archaeological sites including ancient homesites, pōhaku (stone) trails, a hōlua slide (lava sledding), a heiau (temple) and burial caves.

The State sought to preserve and protect native Hawaiian plants and animals, provide for a wilderness area with minimal man-made structures; and prevent additional development in the area.

Today, the lands are administered by the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources. Lands included in the area include: Honomalino, Okoe, Kaulanamauna and Manukā.

Slide seven (Ala Kahakai)

Traversing the South Kona National Heritage Area is the 175-mile Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, a trail that runs more than a half of the coastline of the Big Island of Hawai‘i.

The trail networks facilitated trading between upland and coastal villages and communications between ahupua‘a and extended families.

It enabled gathering of food and water and harvesting of materials for shelter, clothing, medicine, religious observances and other necessities for survival.

In the South Kona area, it traverses the Kapalilua Region, which includes Ho‘okena-Kauhakū, Ho‘opūloa, Miloli‘i, Okoe Bay, Honomalino and Kapu‘a sites.

Slide eight (Cultural Practices)

In ancient times Native Hawaiians would frequent this area to partake in various cultural practices and traditions. One of these practices was he‘e hōlua or lava sledding. There is a well-preserved 500-foot long hōlua near Kapua Bay.

In Hawai‘i, traditional and customary gathering rights and cultural subsistence practices are codified in the Hawai‘i State Constitution. These rights include access to the ocean to harvest the bounties of the sea.

Native Hawaiians perfected the craft of ‘opihi picking. ‘Opihi have always held a great significance to native Hawaiians. They were used as food, jewelry or plant fertilizer. The picking ‘opihi was known to be very dangerous and there is an old Hawaiian proverb that says he i‘a make ka ‘opihi “the ‘opihi is a fish of death,” which speaks of the hazard when picking ‘opihi amongst the waves.

Slide nine (Pa‘a Pono Miloli‘i)

Pa‘a Pono Miloli‘i Inc. was formed in 1980 and fully incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) non-profit in 2004 for the purpose of preserving and protecting the cultural, historical, environmental and archaeological life and heritage within the ahupua‘a (land division) of Ho‘okena, Pāpā, Ho‘ōpūloa, Miloli‘i, Omoka‘a, Kalihi, Honomalino, Okoe and Kapu‘a.

It has successfully performed federal, state, and county environmental and cultural impact assessment requirements. Additionally, it has partnered on several projects with grantors, including the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, National Oceanic Atmospheric Association, Hawai‘i Community Foundation, Conservation International (The Hawai‘i Fish Trust), the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center.

Slide ten (Endorsements)

It is with great joy that community voices have expressed support for the South Kona National Heritage Area. I am deeply grateful for their support including from the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce, Ala Kahakai Trail Association, Hawaiian Islands Land Trust, Lā‘i‘ōpua Homestead Association, The Nature Conservancy Hawai‘i and The Trust For Public Land Hawai‘i.

I am honored that Wendy Laros, President and Chief Executive Officer for the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce will be testifying on behalf of the Chamber in support of the legislation.

Furthermore, I am committed to a fully transparent process, ensuring that all local stakeholders are aware of the process and able to participate, sharing their comments and getting any questions answered.

Slide eleven (A'ohē hana nui ke alu 'ia / No task is too big when done together by all.)

Closing Statement

Chair Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and Members of the Committee, I look forward to working with you to preserve and protect our precious natural resources. Again, mahalo nui loa (thank you very much) for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 1925, the South Kona National Heritage Area.

I yield back.