HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE RENEGOTIATION OF LONG-TERM LEASES ON MOKAUEA ISLAND WITH PERSONS WHO RESIDE ON THE ISLAND AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EDUCATIONAL CENTER ON THE TRADITIONAL METHODS USED IN SELF-SUSTAINING HAWAIIAN FISHING VILLAGES.

WHEREAS, in Keehi Lagoon, between Honolulu Harbor and the Honolulu International Airport and less than half a mile from the bustling metropolis of downtown Honolulu, lies the small, ten-acre Mokauea Island; and

WHEREAS, maps dating as far back as 1817 show the fishing village at Mokauea Island, the site of Oahu's last Hawaiian fishing village and one of hundreds that thrived in pre-European times, these villages were a repository of an impressive and significant body of maritime skills including knowledge of the sea, currents, tides, seasonalities, and the building and handling of finely crafted canoes and fishing equipment; and

WHEREAS, Mokauea Island's fishing community was once entirely self-sufficient due to a functional fishpond, cultivation of vegetable and medicinal plants, as well as limu, and a healthy supply of reef fish in the surrounding area; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, the State attempted to evict the remaining seventeen families from Mokauea in order to build an airport runway extension, and several fishers were arrested for trespassing on land their families had lived on for generations; and

WHEREAS, in June of 1975, in a final eviction attempt, the State burned down five fisher's homes, and these actions were recorded by local media and caused a public outcry; and

WHEREAS, the State negotiated a sixty-five year lease with the islanders in 1978, agreeing to let them stay if they would rebuild their houses according to the building code and establish an educational program for local students to learn about traditional fishing and the reef environment; and
WHEREAS, the United States Navy provided labor and machinery to construct a fishpond on the eastern side of the Island and consultants from the University of Hawaii helped Island residents stock it; and

WHEREAS, the fishers and their families rebuilt their homes, and the Mokauea Fishermen’s Association began their work restoring and reviving the fishing village with the cooperation of the United States Army and groups of students, teachers, scholars, and scientists; and

WHEREAS, over the next thirty years, the fishpond faced challenges ranging from invasive species to pollution and was ultimately abandoned; and

WHEREAS, similarly, the Mokauea Community’s plans to rejuvenate the Island have faced many obstacles since that time, the costs of rebuilding together with the high cost of living in Honolulu generally have forced many families off the Island, and by 2005, only a handful of families remained on the Island and none possessed the financial or time resources needed to set up an educational program or the needed facilities without assistance; and

WHEREAS, since 2005, Kai Makana, a not-for-profit, tax exempt corporation, has been leading the effort to environmentally and culturally restore Mokauea Island by adopting the original vision of the Mokauea Fishermen’s Association, and its goal is to recreate a living example of a traditional Hawaiian subsistence fishing village as a learning center that will allow for scientific studies and the perpetuation and practice of Hawaiian fishing and seafaring culture; and

WHEREAS, projects planned or underway include the clearing of invasive species, identification and reintroduction of appropriate native plants, restoration of the fishpond, and regular removal of marine debris; and

WHEREAS, infrastructure is also being planned, including renewable energy systems, water production, wastewater and solid waste management, a community organic garden, telecommunications, and security, and these efforts are being supported by a diverse collection of community members, schools,
private businesses, and government agencies, who share an
interest in preserving Mokauea as a unique Hawaiian fishing
village; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
Twenty-fifth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
of 2010, that the Governor is urged to designate the appropriate
state agency to renegotiate long-term leases on Mokauea Island
with persons who reside on the Island and agree to participate
with an educational center on the traditional methods used in
self-sustaining Hawaiian fishing villages; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the designated state agency is
urged to renegotiate and enter into long-term leases for lands
comprising the entirety of what is commonly known as Mokauea
Island, Keahi Lagoon, Oahu, not to exceed sixty-five years in
duration, with persons who reside and have continuously resided
on Mokauea Island, or the lineal descendants of those who reside
and have continuously resided on Mokauea Island, since July 25,
1978, pursuant to a lease between the State and the Mokauea
Fishermen's Association, now known as the Mokauea Fishing
Village Association; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the lessees are urged to, in
consideration of the leases granted by the State in cooperation
with the state agency, agree to participate in, and become an
essential part of, an educational center where students,
teachers, and other members of the public can learn the
traditional methods used in a self-sustaining Hawaiian fishing
village; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state agency is requested
to establish a monitoring system and enforcement mechanism to
ensure compliance with these agreements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the designated state agency and
the lessees are requested to establish the Mokauea Island
Advisory Committee to:

(1) Advise the state agency on matters related to the
management of the leases, including eligibility
requirements for applicants for leases and the
monitoring of lessee compliance with participation in
the interpretive programs; and
(2) Provide guidance to the lessees in fulfilling their obligation to participate in the interpretive and caretaking programs on Mokauea Island; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the designated state agency is requested to include on the Mokauea Island Advisory Committee:

(1) One member representing the state agency, as designated by the director or chairperson of that state agency;

(2) Two members of the Mokauea Fishing Village Association, as designated by the Association;

(3) One member representing Kai Makana, as designated by the Governor;

(4) One member of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, as designated by the Corporation; and

(5) One member of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, as designated by the Board; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the President of the Mokauea Fishing Village Association, the President of Kai Makana, and the Executive Director of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation.

OFFERED BY:  

MAR 10 2010