
HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES TO
RECOGNIZE MOKAUEA ISLAND AS A CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL
RESOURCE AND INCLUDE MOKAUEA ISLAND ON THE NATIONAL
REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.

1 WHEREAS, Mokauea Island is a group of islands located in
2 Keehi Lagoon, Kalihi Ahupuaa, Mokauea ili, Honolulu (Kona)
3 District, island of Oahu, State of Hawaii; and
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5 WHEREAS, Mokauea Island is the site of Oahu's last Hawaiian
6 fishing village and one of only two remaining in Hawaii; and
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8 WHEREAS, Keehi Lagoon was once a thriving fishing community
9 with over 13 fishponds, seven fisheries, and home to alii; and
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11 WHEREAS, in pre-European times, Hawaii had hundreds of
12 fishing villages which were a repository of maritime skills
13 including knowledge of the sea, currents, tides, seasonalities,
14 and the building and handling of canoes and fishing equipment;
15 and
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17 WHEREAS, Mokauea Island's fishing community was once
18 entirely self-sufficient due to a functional fishpond,
19 cultivation of vegetable and medicinal plants, as well as limu,
20 and a healthy supply of reef fish in the surrounding area; and
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22 WHEREAS, descendents and family members of the Mokauea
23 fishing village residents can trace their genealogy back 900
24 years to the second migration of Polynesians to Hawaii; and
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26 WHEREAS, references to one of the Mokauea islands are
27 included in Ka Mo'olelo O Hi'iakaikapoliopole (The Epic Tale of
28 Hi'iakaikapoliopole) and in Namakalehu, which describes the story
29 of when the second wave of Polynesians first stepped foot in
30 Hawaii on a reef near one of the Mokauea islands; and
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32 WHEREAS, in 1839, Kamehameha III's Constitution and code of
33 laws assigned Keehi Lagoon to be the royal fishing grounds and



1 placed as kapu, recognizing the abundance of fish in the area
2 and the need to preserve and protect the natural resource; and
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4 WHEREAS, the 1902 Federal Fish Commission Report revealed
5 that by 1900, half of the Hawaiian fishponds either had been
6 destroyed or were inoperable, but that the remaining half
7 produced over 560,000 pounds of fresh fish annually; and
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9 WHEREAS, from 1900 to 1972, the fishponds and islands of
10 the Keehi Lagoon area were drastically altered or destroyed by
11 dredging to the extent that none of the fishponds recorded by
12 the 1900 Commission remain in existence today; and
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14 WHEREAS, in 1972, the State attempted to evict the
15 seventeen families living on Mokauea Island to build an airport
16 runway extension, but several fishers refused to leave and were
17 arrested for trespassing on the same land their families had
18 lived on for generations; and
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20 WHEREAS, in June of 1975, as a final eviction attempt and
21 without due process, government agents burned down the homes of
22 five fishers, destroying both their means of livelihood and
23 their personal belongings; and
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25 WHEREAS, important cultural artifacts have been found on
26 the island, including an unfinished, pre-1900, near shore koa
27 fishing canoe that narrowly escaped destruction in the 1975
28 fires; and
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30 WHEREAS, eviction of the fishers was publicized and the
31 fishers formed the Mokauea Fishermen's Association to pressure
32 the state and federal agencies to negotiate; and
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34 WHEREAS, Governor George Ariyoshi, in response to public
35 pressure, ordered a formal historical study of the area and its
36 fishing community by the State Historic Preservation Officer;
37 and
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39 WHEREAS, the State Historic Preservation Officer issued a
40 report in response to the Governor's order and found Mokauea to
41 be "an area of important historic concern", which qualified the
42 island community for preservation status under federal and state
43 law; and



1 WHEREAS, as a result of the preservation status, the
2 Mokauea Fisherman's Association negotiated a 65-year lease with
3 the State; provided that they rebuild their homes according to
4 the building code and establish an educational program for local
5 students to learn about traditional fishing and the reef
6 environment; and

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8 WHEREAS, the fishers and their families then rebuilt their
9 homes, and the Mokauea Fishermen's Association began restoring
10 and reviving the fishing village with the cooperation of the
11 United States Army and groups of students, teachers, scholars,
12 and scientists; and

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14 WHEREAS, the United States Navy provided labor and
15 machinery to construct a fishpond on the eastern side of the
16 island and consultants from the University of Hawaii helped the
17 residents stock it with resources; and

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19 WHEREAS, over time, the fishpond on the island faced
20 challenges ranging from invasive species to pollution and was
21 ultimately abandoned; and

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23 WHEREAS, only a handful of families remain on the island
24 and none possess the resources needed to establish an
25 educational program or the necessary facilities without
26 significant assistance; and

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28 WHEREAS, since 2005, significant progress has been made
29 toward achieving the goal set by the Mokauea Fisherman's
30 Association to recreate a living example of a traditional
31 Hawaiian subsistence fishing village such that it becomes a
32 learning center allowing for scientific studies and the
33 perpetuation and practice of Hawaii fishing and seafaring
34 culture; and

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36 WHEREAS, many school groups and community organizations
37 have participated in restorative efforts and free-choice
38 learning experiences on the island, helping to ensure the
39 transmission of Hawaiian traditional ecological knowledge; and

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41 WHEREAS, to allow for the continuation of the educational
42 and cultural programs associated with Mokauea Island and the
43 families of the Mokauea Fisherman's Association, formal



1 recognition of its importance by state and federal agencies is
2 essential; now, therefore,

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4 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
5 Twenty-sixth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
6 of 2012, that the United States National Register of Historic
7 Places is urged to recognize Mokauea Island as a cultural and
8 educational resource and include Mokauea Island on the National
9 Register of Historic Places; and

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11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that formal recognition of the
12 cultural and educational importance of Mokauea Island is in
13 keeping with State Historic Preservation Officer's 1975 report
14 noting the island's historic importance; and

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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that formal recognition of the
17 cultural and educational importance of Mokauea Island is in
18 keeping with the Hawaii State Legislature's goal to protect
19 Hawaii's distinctive cultural heritage; and

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21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
22 Resolution be transmitted to the United States Secretary of the
23 Interior, Chief of the National Register of Historic Places, the
24 Governor, the Chairperson of the Board of Land and Natural
25 Resources, and the Administrator of the State Historic
26 Preservation Division.

