



**EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
HONOLULU**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

**Testimony of Governor Linda Lingle**

**Commission on Water Resource Management  
Public Meeting on East Maui In-Stream Flow Standards**

**Thursday, October 15, 2009  
Paia, Maui**

Members of the Commission Staff and Members of the Community:

I am here tonight to discuss an issue of far-ranging importance to the people of Maui and the people of the State of Hawai'i.

It is the fundamental issue of whether we will enable agriculture to survive in our state by ensuring that farmers have access to adequate water to grow their crops.

I am not here tonight to talk about the technical and scientific aspects of in-stream flow levels. There are many able people in this audience who can provide that information.

I am here to talk about achieving a meaningful, reasonable, and balanced decision by the Water Commission, and to offer caution that the decisions the Commission makes will have profound consequences for the future of Maui and our state as a whole.

The Commission will determine the allocation of stream water to meet a public trust. Included in that deliberation is the examination of the beneficial uses for the water. I believe because of its importance, water for agricultural operations should be given the same level of protection as that given to domestic consumption, the protection of traditional and customary Hawaiian rights, and the protection of fish and wildlife to achieve a proper ecological balance.

Our state Constitution specifically calls for the conservation and protection of agricultural lands, promotion of diversified agriculture, and assuring agricultural self sufficiency. Agriculture depends on water. Agriculture, and the water it needs for sustainability, is a part of the public trust.

Water is a natural resource that is essential for life and when used with care and understanding, is a benefit to the community. Maui has a long history of depending on water from streams to meet the needs of its population – for growing crops, drinking, and for the preservation of habitat and ecological resources. Of all of the islands, Maui has the greatest dependence on surface water to meet these needs.

Under these conditions water that is returned or retained in streams on Maui is done at the expense of those who depend on this water on a daily basis. This is fundamentally different from the situation that occurred on O‘ahu involving the Waiahole Ditch where the closure of a plantation meant the return of excess water that was no longer needed for agriculture.

This matter before us is about water to meet the public interest. It is about Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company (HC&S) and upcountry farmers in Kula who rely on this water.

This is about whether we will be able to preserve almost 35,000 acres of agriculturally productive land on Maui and protect the jobs of more than 800 workers and their families who depend on water for their livelihoods.

This matter is about the residents of Maui who must depend on these streams for their drinking water and part of their electric power from the HC&S bio feedstock. It is also about providing for in-stream species and habitat conservation. It is about Hawaiian traditional and customary uses. And it is about the preservation of vast green open spaces and their contribution to our environment and our way of life.

This is a matter that impacts our core value that Hawai‘i should remain a viable agricultural state in the midst of continued urbanization.

The Commission will answer these questions by the decision they make in December. That decision will have consequences far beyond the streams we are discussing now.

As Governor of Hawai‘i, it is my responsibility to advocate for the decision that brings the most good to our community. I believe that decision must allow current users of these streams to continue to receive water in amounts that permit them to thrive – and that allow agriculture in our islands to survive.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.