

TESTIMONY
BY CONGRESSWOMAN PATSY T. MINK
in the House Resources Subcommittee on
National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands
in Support of HR 1906, a Bill Authorizing Expansion of
Pu'uhoonua O Honaunau National Historical Park

April 16, 2002

Chairman Radanovich, Ranking Member Christensen, and Members of the Subcommittee

First, I want to thank the Subcommittee for holding this hearing on HR 1906, which authorizes the expansion of Pu'uhoonua O Honaunau National Historical Park, a unique national treasure located in South Kona on the island of Hawaii.

I introduced HR 1906 with Representative Abercrombie in May 2001. Senator Daniel Akaka also introduced a bill, S 1057, in June 2001, to expand the boundaries of the Park. The major difference between the bills is amount of land authorized for expansion. HR 1906 authorizes 805 acres whereas S 1057 authorizes 397 acres. I submit a map showing the current area of the Park (180 acres), the area authorized by S 1057 (397 acres), and the area authorized by HR 1906 (805 acres).

Pu'uhoonua O Honaunau National Historical Park, formerly known as the City of Refuge National Historical Park, was authorized by an act on Congress on July 26, 1955 (60 Stat.376) . . . for the benefit and inspiration of the people. . ." The park was formally established in 1961. All the lands included within the park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The overall management goal for the historical park is for the resources to accurately represent a slice of time ranging from pre-contact (circa 12th - 13th century) to about 1930, when Ki'ilae village was completely abandoned. The objectives developed to meet that goal focus on preservation, stabilization, and restoration of the park's cultural and natural resources.

A significant portion of the ancient Hawaiian village of Ki'ilae lies outside of the current park's boundaries. The proposed addition of 805 acres, located within the traditional land divisions of Ki'ilae ahupua'a⁽¹⁾ and Kauleoli ahupua'a, contains significant cultural and natural resources, which complement the Park's mission of preservation and rehabilitation of Hawaiian natural, cultural, and historic resources. These lands contain at least 800 cultural sites, structures, and features; at least 25 caves (or cave openings), many of which are refuge caves; a minimum of 10 heiau (temples); more than 20 platforms; 26 enclosures; over 40 burial features (or highly probable burials); trails and trail remnants; a minimum of 6 residential compounds; a holua slide; several canoe landing sites; a water well; numerous walls and wall remnants; and a wide range of agricultural features.

Ancient Native Hawaiian burial sites are a particularly sensitive issue in Hawaii. Many descendants of the Ki'ilae villagers live in the area and want to make sure that the graves of their ancestors are respected and that archeological and historical sites are preserved. There are also important landmarks and rock formations on the land, which have been used by Native Hawaiians for generations to locate their fishing grounds.

The area is also a place of great natural beauty and spiritual renewal. The Pu'uhoonua was a place of safety

and refuge where people who had violated kapu (taboo or sacred law) could flee to avoid what otherwise would be certain death. After being absolved by a kahuna (priest) they could go free. People often went to the Pu'uhonua during times of war to avoid the conflict.

Ki'ilae Village, which is part of the area that would be added to the park by this bill, was also an important trading place for Native Hawaiians from the 12th century. The land provides a critical link to Hawaii's past and protects an ancient landscape in the face of encroaching residential sprawl along the Kona coast.

The coastal waters in this area are pristine class AA because of the lack of development in the area and the fact that the coast is rocky and, therefore, little soil drains into the ocean. We have already experienced severe problems in other locations along the Kona coast where rain runoff from soil brought in for development polluted AA-class coastal marine resources.

The local community strongly supports incorporation of the full 805 acres into Pu'uhonua O Honaunau National Historical Park. I submit for the record a copy of Hawaii County Council Resolution 149-01 in support of HR 1906 and the 805-acre expansion. I also submit testimony from Hawaii County Council Member Nancy Pischio and the more than 150 communications sent to the Council Member by her constituents over the past two weeks in support of HR 1906.

Despite my desire to see the full area authorized, I would support amending HR 1906 to make it identical to S 1057, which passed the Senate on October 17, 2001, in the hope that we will be able to promptly send a bill to the President. S 1057 contains an authorization for up to 397 acres, and includes the 238-acre parcel considered most critical for protection by the National Park Service. Senator Akaka was successful in securing an appropriation of \$500,000 toward acquisition of this parcel in FY2002, but we must have an authorization before these funds can be spent. The 238-acre parcel (Parcel A on the map) has been purchased by the Trust for Public Land, which is holding it in trust for the National Park Service. The owner of Parcel B (the additional lands authorized in S 1057) has indicated a willingness to donate a major portion of these lands to the park.

I wish to ask that this Subcommittee request the National Park Service do a reconnaissance study of the remaining 400+ acres not covered by S 1057 to establish the extent of the historical, cultural, and natural resources in the portion of Kauleoli ahupua'a south of Parcels A and B.

On behalf of the people of Hawaii, I extend a warm aloha to Chairman Radanovich and Ranking Member Christensen for your assistance in holding this hearing. I would be very grateful for your continued assistance in moving the bill through the Subcommittee and Committee and to allow its final passage by the whole House.

Thank you.

1. An ahupua'a is a traditional Hawaiian land division that extends from the uplands or mountains to the sea.

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